Television Specialist Mission in Southeast Asia

Abridged From a Report by RUDY BRETZ

Rudy Bretz, Vice-President of Television Systems Planning, National Education Sciences Corp., 1360 S. Anaheim Blvd. Anaheim, Calif., recently returned from three months in Southeast Asia, where he was sent by the U.S. State Department as a television specialist. He spent three weeks with Televisi Republik Indonesia in Djakarta, a month with Talivishen Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur and two weeks in Singapore. While in Southeast Asia he taught production techniques to station personnel and evaluated drama, music, panel discussions and other local television programs. Upon his return he presented a detailed report of his trip to the State Department from which this abridgment has been made.

Kuala Lumpur

(*Mr. Bretz gave a short course in Kuala Lumpur for the staff of Talivishen Malaysia, which had been broadcasting for only a few months.*)

The course which I gave was very well organized, due mainly to the efforts of the very excellent team of Canadians who, under the Columbo Plan, had been guiding the Malaysian staff through the first few months of operation. The cour.e . . . lasted ten days in all, comprising ten lectures of an hour-and-a-half each, five studio demonstrations of the same duration, one demonstration of the new mobile unit and four experimental productions, making a total of 30 hours of instruction. The course was repeated since neither the lecture room nor the studio was capable of holding the total number of staff members who wished to attend. The average enrollment was 50 persons per section for a total of 100 in all.

People from all departments of the organization were included among the students, representing such varied interests as make-up, newsfilm, technical operations, graphic art, etc. It was manifestly impossible to satisfy the wide range of specific needs represented without going into details of each subject which would not interest the great majority of the students.

Accordingly it was decided that the basic philosophy of production and the concepts involving the methods and procedures of television directing would be the basic content of the course. Thus a staff member with the potential of eventually becoming a director would have the advantage of starting his television career with a good basic understanding of the medium, and would have a clearer image of the challenges ahead. From a shorter range viewpoint, an understanding of the director's problems can make today's scene designer a better designer today, the script assistant a better script assistant, and the stagehand a better stagehand, and so on. The content of the course was as follows:

Lectures 1 and 2 — The Nature of Television: How TV is a different medium from radio, film or theater; the difference between programs of illusion and programs of actuality; the function of production techniques in relation to program content.

Lecture 3 — The Creative Use of Cameras: The purposes of camera decisions; pictorial composition; the importance of staging to good camera handling.

Demonstration 1: Good and bad staging and the camera shots which can result; the values of camera movement.

Lecture 4 — Camera Lenses: Relation of focal length to field of view; *f*-stops; depth of focus; perspective in long and short lenses, zoom lenses.

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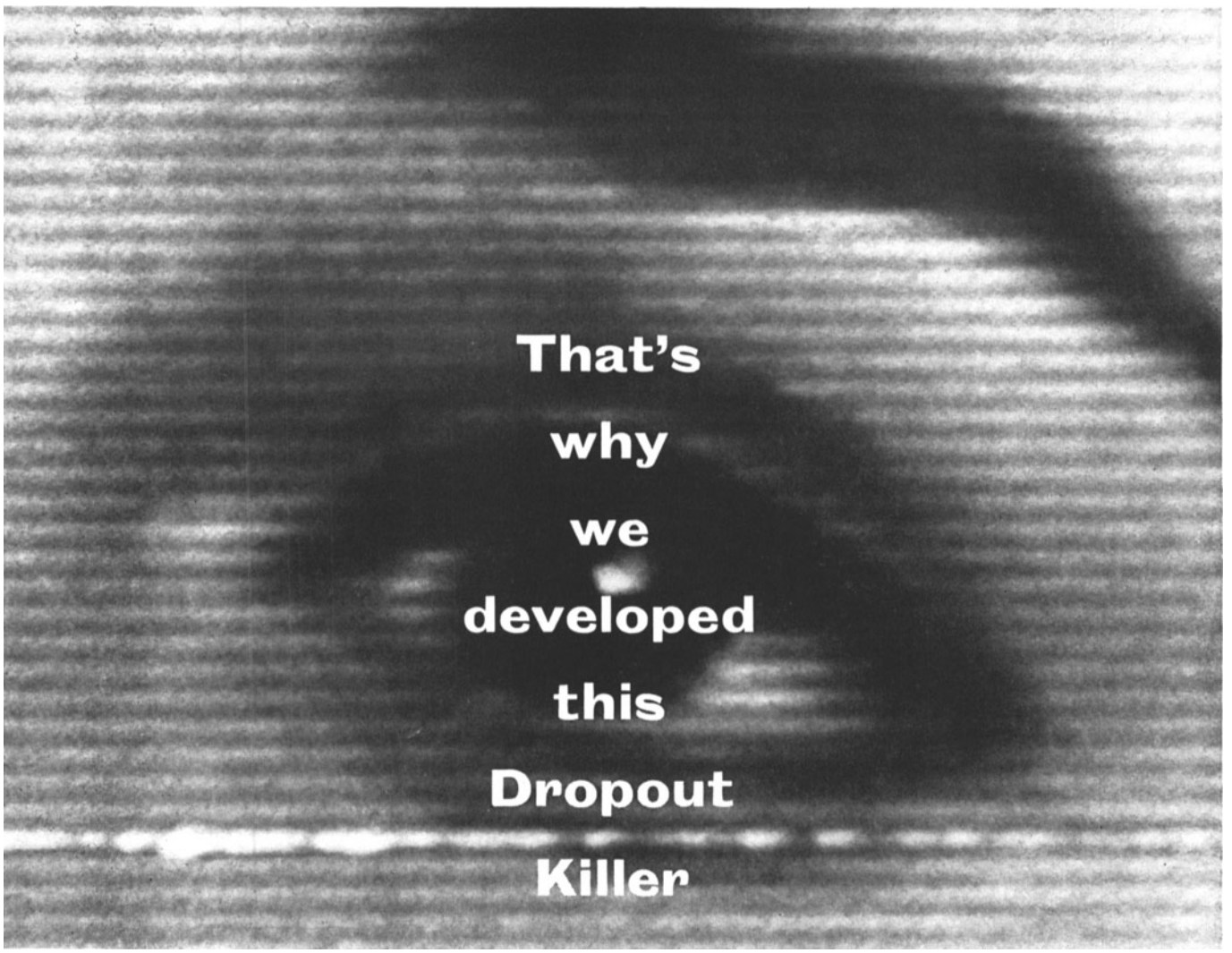

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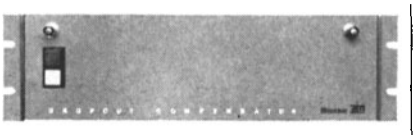

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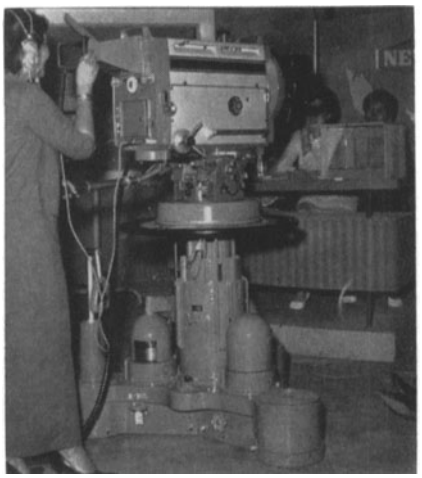
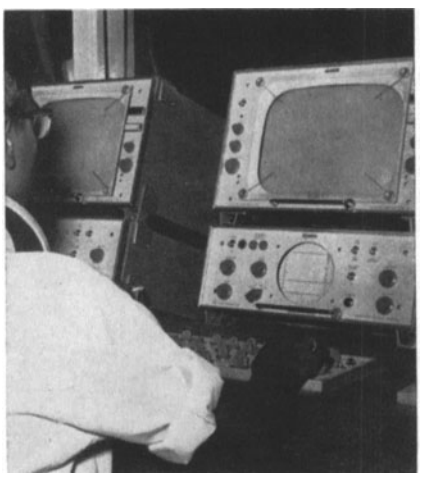


Two trainees are "on" as Miss Normah binte Kassim tries her camera capability.



Television Malaysia control room technicians monitor as trainees test classroom theories in actual programing.

Trainees listen as Mr. Bretz emphasizes a point in informal "after-class" discussion session.

Demonstration 2: These qualities of lenses were all demonstrated in the studios.

Lecture 5 — Shots in Sequence: The theory behind switching from camera to camera was discussed; basic rules such as screen direction were outlined and transitions such as the fade, the dissolve and its alternatives were covered.

Demonstration 3: The effects of good and bad cutting were shown. The importance of matching camera shots for good cutting was demonstrated and the de-focus transition was shown.

Lecture 6 — Lighting: The theory of lighting for television was discussed. Simple practical procedures were outlined and the most important lighting instruments were described.

Demonstration 4: Methods of lighting the studio for simple standard production and for special lighting effects were demonstrated.

Lecture 7 — Outside Broadcasts: The advantages of outside programing were discussed, together with the importance of emphasizing the place of an event, problems of camera placement and special equipment involved.

Demonstration 5: The new mobile unit van and equipment were demonstrated, including all major technical and production gear, a-c generator and microwave equipment.

Lecture 8 — Control Room and Directing Procedures: The system of studio operation in use at Talivishen Malaysia was compared and contrasted with other methods.

Lecture 9 and 10 — Special Effects: The effects to be obtained through the use of mirrors, prisms, scanning reversal, rear projection, matting effects, split screen, wipes, and animation with graphic materials.

Demonstration 6 — Special Effects: Many of these techniques were demonstrated in the studio using simple materials.

Experimental Production 1: A producer experimented on an interview program with a moving camera shot which traveled completely around the guest while he was talking.

Experimental Production 2: A producer staged a short but highly dramatic episode including a flash-back scene, using students from the course as "actors."

Experimental Production 3: Using the outside broadcast equipment a producer experimented with the pickup of a sepak raga game. One camera was placed on top of the O.B. van for a high-angle shot on the event and interviews with "players" were held in front of the ground level camera.

Experimental Production 4: Another producer used the outside broadcast equipment to produce a song and dance variety show which took place outside the TV studio building and involved action up and down the outside staircase with the road, gate and path approach to the building playing an important part.

Djakarta

The potential for an effective public service medium exists in Djakarta, where television programing has been going on for more than a year. The people are young and imaginative and eager. Morale is high. What is lacking is "know-how," the ingredient which can be slowly acquired by trial and error or may be supplied rapidly in large doses by such consultation and guidance as my mission was able to provide.

Several staff members thanked me for my contribution by making such statements as, "You brought us light. Before, we were only groping. You showed us where we were right, and when we were wrong you showed us why, and directed us toward improved methods." The number of questions I received during my last few days concerning a future return were both gratifying and indicative of the need that I was able to alleviate but not satisfy in the short time I could be available.