

Letter to the Editor

Re: The New SMPTE Leader and Position of Sound

Dear Sir:

In reviewing the use of the new SMPTE leader our attention was drawn to what appears to be a recent practice of bringing the sound up into the leader. This is a trend that is not in accord with accepted practice, nor will it improve the programming.

There is no doubt that the reasons for desiring to participate in this type of practice is to make the sound simultaneous with the first frame. It is also rather obvious that moving the sound into the leader will give appreciably more time in a short spot. It is very obvious that it is possible to pick up almost a second in the audio, which is an appreciable portion of a short multi-second spot.

There are arguments against this practice:

One of the strongest arguments is that of splicing. If the sound is up into the leader either the film cannot be spliced without cutting the sound, or if it is cut and spliced before the sound starts there will be approximately one second of leader before the first frame.

In operation there is a reaction time of the operator. If he is waiting to see the first frame before he makes a switch the reaction time alone will probably cause him to up-cut the sound.

One of the more subtle problems is that of starting times of projectors. Since it takes a period of time for the sound to stabilize, the projectors are normally started between a compromise of stability and lead time. Moving the sound into the leader can take almost a second away from the starting time of a projector. The results of this are quite obvious, in that many projectors will not be up to speed and there will be the complaint of wowing.

There is also a more subtle argument, and that is the argument of loudness. This obviously is a subject of great concern to all people in the television business. There appears to me to be a definite advantage in this argument of loudness if there is a

short pause between the end of one message and the start of the next message. We are sure all recognize that loudness is something that cannot be defined and that rapid-fire delivery can be offensive.

We believe it is obvious that the cons outweigh the pros in this argument. It is, in our estimation, not only very bad practice, but it is also contrary to all published standards on leaders. Basically a leader is a leader and is for the purpose of cuing and not for the purpose of carrying a message. We believe that it is up to everyone involved in the television business to do all that we can to stop this practice before it gets such a firm hold on the industry that control is lost.

Good control of this will assure us smooth continuity as well as increase our pride in program continuity and acceptability by the public.

May 26, 1966

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Comment: If the air time is so important, it might be well to make a special television projector with a sound pickup ahead of the picture gate and place the sound record directly adjacent to the corresponding frame. The pickup could be connected with a delay device such as a magnetic drum or belt which would hold the sound record for the time of arrival of the picture in the gate. No splicing problem would be incurred, as any straight-across splice would affect the same part of the records. With today's quality of magnetic recording and reproduction, there should be no quality problem. The only problem is economics — is the improvement of quality worth the cost?—
Deane R. White, SMPTE Engineering Vice-President.

standards and recommended practices

Proposed American Standards

Two proposed American Standards are published here for a trial period and public review. Comments should be addressed to Alex E. Alden, Staff Engineer, at Society Headquarters prior to August 15. The proposals have been submitted to ASA Sectional Committee PH22. Consequently, all comments received through journal publication will be reviewed prior to conclusion of action by that Committee.

Proposed American Standard PH22.40, Dimensions of Photographic Sound Record on 35mm Motion-Picture Prints,

is substantially a reaffirmation of the earlier issue, modified editorially to facilitate its use.

Proposed American Standard PH22.148, Specifications for Film Image Area Used for Review Room Viewing of 35mm and 16mm Motion-Picture Prints Intended for Television Transmission, is a new standard based on the SMPTE Recommended Practice RP 13, Safe Action Area for Television Transmission. It is concerned with that part of the image which is assumed to be seen on the majority of properly adjusted home television receivers.—A.E.A.