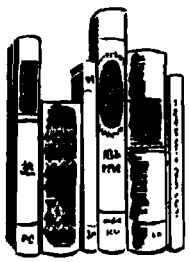

books reviewed

An Alphabetical Guide to Motion Picture, Television, and Videotape Production

By Eli L. Levitan. Published (1970) by McGraw-Hill Book Company, 330 W. 42 St., New York, NY 10036. 797 + xvi pp. Illus. Diagrams. Tables. 7.5 by 9.5 in. Price $24.50.

As the title indicates, this is a collection of words and phrases commonly encountered in the production of motion-picture and television programs, with descriptions — sometimes quite extensive — of their meanings and usages. Also included are many lengthy and detailed reviews of materials, equipment, processes and techniques. Several thousand entries answer questions on almost every phase of motion pictures and television from A&B editing to zoom lenses. The text is liberally illustrated with excellent diagrams and photographs, and a few color illustrations have been included as well.

This is indeed an unusual book, containing a wealth of information of a practical nature. The text is informal, like a series of stories about the selected terms, often with a great deal of background information. An immense amount of time and effort must have been expended in gathering up all of this information and arranging it in such an easily understood, entertaining form. In this work the author was assisted by an editorial advisory board, made up of 13 well-known figures in the motion-picture and television industries.

The book is intended mainly for use as a source of reference by working people in motion pictures and television, to help them to become better acquainted with the terms used by others engaged in related activities. For the most part, the information has been presented in simple, nontechnical language, enabling readers with minimal technical training or background to grasp without too much effort the meanings and usages for the selected terms. Especially interesting and informative are the explanations for motion-picture craft practices and techniques. How can night scenes be filmed in broad daylight? How is the invisible man photographed? How can you pour a cup and a half of coffee? What makes a model's hair stand on end? How do you get artificial fog, snow and rain effects? Why do the wagon wheels appear to stand still or even turn backwards while the horses are in full gallop across the prairie? The answers to these and many other mystifying questions will be found in this book.

Motion-picture and optical terms take up by far the greater part of the book. Under the A's, for example, there are only six television terms out of a total of just over 100. In this section of the book, taking up 44 pages, the subject of animation has been allotted 13 pages, with 18 illustrations. Of much greater concern, however, is the inadequacy and, in some instances, the inaccuracy of the descriptions given for television terms. Readers unfamiliar with these subjects may be confused, and perhaps even misled, by some of the descriptions that are given.

For example, the definition for the term "vectorscope" on page 733, reads as follows: "An electronic control used for setting or adjusting the color balance in a videotape recording." This of course is not correct — a vectorscope is a monitoring device for measuring the phase and amplitude of the color subcarrier modulation.

A 15-page section describes videotape recording, editing, equipment and program production. These subjects are reviewed in considerable detail, but the methods of videotape editing described, i.e., the use of the "talking clock" and kinescope recording, are not in general use in the television industry. Readers would have been much better served by descriptions of modern electronic editing equipment and techniques.

Generally speaking, terms from the fields of light and optics have excellent definitions and descriptions, but there are a few lapses in these categories as well. On page 153 the term "density" is defined as "the degree of opacity in a photographic image." Another example appears on page 342: "Illumination — Any light with enough intensity to affect the film's sensitive layer (s) of emulsion."

After the term "ASA" on page 39, the following statement appears: "ASA (ANSI) standards accompanied by a number, indicate the speed of sensitized materials used in the motion-picture industry." No doubt readers will also be shocked when they read in the very next entry: "ASA exposure indexes — Veteran cameramen who have been relying for years on ASA ratings may be shocked by the news that ASA exposure indexes are not intended for use with motion picture films."

The author states in the Preface that "the descriptions and explanations of processes and techniques place the emphasis on the essential information needed for their practical application rather than on the superficial and more technical aspects of the processes and techniques themselves." Simplification of highly specialized subjects is a goal greatly to be desired. But those who set out to simplify have a special responsibility to ensure that factual information is not distorted in the process.

This is an extremely interesting and informative book, full of information that would be very difficult to obtain from any other source, but readers would be well advised not to rely too heavily on any of the definitions or descriptions for television and videotape terms.—*Rodger J. Ross,* 784 Duchess Dr., Cooksville, Ont., Can.

The History and Practice of the Art of Photography

By Henry H. Snelling. Facsimile reprint of original (1849) edition. New introduction by Beaumont Newhall. Published (1970) by Morgan and Morgan, Inc., 400 Warburton Ave., Hastings-on-Hudson, N.Y. 10706, in collaboration with the George Eastman House, Rochester, N.Y. 157 pp. incl. new matter. Illus. 4 9/16 by 7 3/16 in Boards, embossed in replica of original binding. Price $5.95.

Both the teacher who believes in teaching science from the historical approach and the expert devotee of the history of the photographic process will find a treasure in this facsimile of the first bound volume on the subject to be printed in America.

As each fetus repeats the biological evolution of the human race, so the student may be instructed by being led along the path through which evolved the ideas of the human race. He may be taught scientific concepts by being introduced to them in the same order in which they were originally conceived. Snelling put together much of the thinking of the first ten years following Daguerre's famous announcement, in simple easily understood style, with helpful woodcut illustrations. By following Snelling's directions, a student might make his own coated paper and expose and develop it. Some of the material, of course, is quaint, such as the descriptions of light-sensitive extracts of flowers, but this too can be thought-provoking to the student and amusing to the expert.

Mr. Newhall's very brief introduction, written with his usual grace, tells who Snelling was and how the book came to be written. It is interesting to note that "initiation into the secrets of the trade was by personal instruction and tuition fees were an important part of an established daguerrean artist's income." Snelling's book opened doors.—*Edit.*

Collecting Classic Films

By Kalton C. Lahue. Published (1970) by Hastings House Publishers, 10 E. 40 St., New York, NY 10016. 159 pp. Illus. 6 by 9 in. Price $6.95.

The author, a motion-picture historian and an avid collector of classic films, in this book shares his know-how with the growing number of collectors of early films. ("Classic" films usually means to the collector films produced between 1896 and 1930.) Most collectors, according to the author, are also interested in such items as lobby cards, posters and other artifacts of the filmic past.

The book lists sources of classic films and to the adventurous the author suggests several ways of acquiring such memorabilia. For example, the collector may approach the owner of a neighborhood theater for permission to clean out a junk room where possible treasures may be found. Real estate agents handling closed and abandoned theaters can also be approached for permission for a "treasure hunt."

A number of practical suggestions are offered about the acquiring and upkeep of equipments such as projectors, light sources, screens, splicers, etc., and the author explains what to look for and what to avoid in purchasing them.

An especially interesting chapter is on "Adding Color to the Classics." The earliest practice, the author tells us, "one which developed almost concurrently with the motion picture itself, made use of hand-colored frames, a laborious process which was gradually semi-automated by the introduction of stencils to the coloring process." The author then explains in explicit detail how the collector can tint his own films. He also describes how the collector can add sound ("mood music") to his silent films.

The book contains about 100 photographs from early films. — *Edit.*

Lillian Gish — The Movies, Mr. Griffith and Me

By Lillian Gish with Ann Pinchot. Published (1969) by Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632. 388 pp. incl. index. Introduction by Brooks Atkinson and Peter Glenville. Illus. 6 by 9 in. Price $7.95.

This interesting book recounts much of the history of the motion picture from the days of the penny arcade and the nickelodeon in the early years of this century down to the present day. It is told by a great lady, Miss Lillian Gish, whose amazing acting career spans the same period of years and still continues on the stage and in television. Actually the book is as much a biography of the great pioneer director, David Wark Griffith (1875–1948) as an autobiography of Miss Gish. It is also a biography of her well-known and very talented sister, Dorothy Gish, who acted with her in many films,

and their mother, Mary McConnell Gish, whose influence on their lives was considerable.

Lillian Gish first met Mr. Griffith through the good graces of her friend, Gladys Smith, better known as Mary Pickford, with whom Miss Gish appeared in 1913 in *The Unseen Enemy*, her first screen production. It was made in the old Biograph studio at 11 East 14th St., New York, where Griffith made his first pictures. While the book does not list all her screen productions, the total would probably exceed one hundred, and would include most of the great actors and actresses of two generations. Probably the role for which she will be the longest remembered is that of Elsie Stoneman in the great film classic, *The Birth of a Nation*, produced and directed by Griffith in 1915. Many new camera techniques, such as the close-up, fades, panorams, soft-focus, were used for the first time by Griffith and his cameraman Wm. G. (Billy) Bitzer as described in Chapters 11 and 12.

By 1896, short motion pictures of about one reel (1,000 ft) were being shown in the United States as a novelty in vaudeville theaters, usually at the end of the program. By 1900, the novelty aspect had worn off and the movie might have been dropped except that an actors' strike encouraged theater owners to show more motion pictures. A demand was created for film projection equipment but the buying dropped off as soon as the actors' strike was settled. The projection manufacturers then offered the projectors at bargain prices and penny arcade owners began buying the surplus stock so that they could show projected pictures as well as peepshow images. Soon the nickelodeon came into existence as projectors were installed in vacant stores, a piano player was hired and chairs set up. By 1908 between 8,000 and 10,000 nickelodeons were estimated to be in operation. Details of these early years are given in Chapters 5 and 6. Some information is included on the work of such pioneers as Edwin S. Porter, who in 1903, made *The Life of an American Fireman* and *The Great Train Robbery*.

Biograph's first two-reel picture, *Enoch Arden* was released in 1911 under the title, *After Many Years*. Griffith's next most ambitious effort was a 4-reel picture *Judith of Bethulia* in which Miss Gish appeared; it was released in 1914. Although quite elaborate outdoor sets were built for this production, the largest sets ever built by Griffith and among the largest built by anyone were the Babylon sets for *Intolerance* for which the walls were over 200 feet high. That picture opened at the Liberty Theater in New York on Sept. 5, 1916. As originally edited it ran 8 hours but was cut to run 2½ hours, which Miss Gish considered a mistake as the picture thereby lost much of its great impact.

In the Biograph studio in New York, Cooper-Hewitt mercury-vapor lamps were used as the primary light source but in California where Griffith began making pictures in 1913, sunlight was used because for many years the majority of the pictures were made on outdoor stages. The film stock was only blue-sensitive

and panchromatic film was not much used until about 1924. The exterior scenes for *The White Sister* and the entire picture *Romola* (in which Miss Gish appeared), both made in Italy, were on panchromatic film. For a good many years films were processed by hand by the rack-and-tank method and those by Griffith were developed under the supervision of Joe Aller who came to be a well-known laboratory technician in Hollywood.

For some of the scenes in *Intolerance,* Griffith used a rope-manipulated elevator to raise the camera several feet up and down; this device was, essentially, the forerunner of the modern camera crane. In 1921, he pioneered in the use of sound on records synchronized with the projected film for *Dream Street,* utilizing an invention of O. E. Kellem. The results were crude and the scheme was abandoned after the first showing of the film.

The book recounts many of Miss Gish's experiences working under Mr. Griffith's direction and, later, under other well-known directors. In the course of the years she met and worked with many people some of whom are legends in the film world, such as John and Lionel Barrymore, Richard Barthelmess, Chaplin, Coleman, Noel Coward, Garbo, Fairbanks, Mary Pickford, Blanche Sweet, the Talmadge sisters and others. Stand-ins were nonexistent in the early years and, under Griffith, Miss Gish was asked many times to do very difficult scenes requiring great physical endurance, such as the escape over the river ice-cakes in the picture *Way Down East* (1920) and the Mojave desert scenes at 130° F in the picture, *The Wind* (1928). She conditioned herself for much of her work by taking fencing lessons, interpretive dancing (with Martha Graham) gun marksmanship and other vigorous activities. One of the most difficult experiences for her and her sister was making some of the scenes for *Hearts of the World* which were filmed in France during World War II in ruined villages only a short distance behind the front lines.

Unfortunately from the historical standpoint, very few dates are given. Perhaps it was hard to establish exactly when many events took place but the book would be a more useful documentary reference had more dates been included. Another factor is that there is a lack of continuity as accounts of events are broken up by the telling of other stories and a chapter or so later the original account is resumed. The addition of a list of all the pictures in which Miss Gish acted would have made a useful reference at the end of the book especially if the year could be given during which each picture was released. These are only minor criticisms however, as the book is a valuable record of the beginnings and development of one of the most important mediums of expression and communication — the motion picture. It is a remarkable record of information both factual and anecdotal and deserves examination by all who have a serious interest in motion pictures. — *Glenn E. Matthews,* 55 Stoneham Rd., Rochester, NY 14625.

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RCA Film Recording

Electronic Flash, Strobe

By Harold E. Edgerton. Published (1970) by McGraw-Hill Book Co., 330 W. 42 St. New York, NY 10036. 362 + xiv pp. Illus. Diagrams, 6 by 9 in. Price $22.50

It is interesting to read that flash photography with an electric spark was first used by Fox Talbot as far back as 1851, in the very early years of photography. Apparently his idea was to take instantaneous photographs of people in action. He was somewhat disappointed because he could not get a flash "capable of lighting up a whole apartment, and that nearly equally in all parts."

Since then many workers in many countries have developed the techniques, and Dr. Edgerton is one of the most distinguished of them. He has prepared this book "first, to present the theory and applications of the electronic flash system, and second, to give a description of the typical electronic flash systems in general use today ... I have made considerable effort to keep the material practical and realistic ... Theory is kept to a minimum and I return again and again to actual devices and circuits."

Strictly speaking, the term in the title, "strobe" or "stroboscopic," means multi-exposed picture. However, it has been much used in popular writing to include also single flash photography.

The book covers the theory of the electronic flashlamp and its spectral output, circuits for electronic flash equipment, requirements and equipment for single flash photography, including very short flashes (10^{-6} to 10^{8}) and special problems for nature photography, an extensive discussion of the stroboscope, and many specialized applications ranging from underwater photography to a photon typesetting machine. There are two complete chapters on photometry and exposure calculations. Throughout there are numerous references to original literature. The book closes with an appendix listing over 45 current manufacturers and suppliers of electronic flash equipment, mostly in the United States, but also in England, Denmark and Germany. — *Pierre Mertz*, Consultant, 66 Leamington St., Lido, Long Beach, N.Y. 11561.

The Emergence of Film Art

Ed. Lewis Jacobs. Published (1969) by Hopkinson and Blake, 7 E. 35 St., New York, NY 10016. 453 pp. Illus. 6 by 9 in. Paperbound. Price $3.95.

The history of film, no less than the history of the world and no less than the history of an individual depends, if it is to be communicated at all, upon a process of selection. The essays in this book were chosen, according to the Editor, "first to provide insight into creative film expression and, second, to present an historic overview of the medium's artistic development."

Mr. Jacobs's "overview" covers the years from 1900 to the present and the countries of France, Germany, Russia and Sweden as well as the United States. The book consists of a collection of 40 essays by well-known directors (including Eisenstein, Flaherty, Antonioni and Bergman), playwrights and critics. It is divided into three main sections: I. The Silent Film; II. The Sound and Color Film; and III. The Creative Present. Within these main sections the essays are arranged under headings that make it easy for the reader to follow the historical progression of the art of the film and to identify both the social forces and the technical achievements that have influenced its development.

There are three essays under the first subheading — Creative Pioneers — all by Mr. Jacobs. In the first essay he discusses the work of Georges Méliès whom he credits with being the "movies' first great craftsman and the father of its theatrical traditions." In the second essay he credits Edwin S. Porter with being the "father" of editing. In the third essay he discusses the life and work of D. W. Griffith with emphasis on the influences that made Griffith the dominant influence in that particular era of motion-picture history.

Like all anthologies and collections of writings chosen to present a certain theme, this book is uneven, some of the essays being very, very good and others being, if not horrid, at least pedestrian. This reviewer, an admirer (with some reservations) of Ingmar Bergman, responded to his essay on "Why I Make Movies" with the thought that Bergman should confine himself to making movies and leave the explanations and evaluations to others.

However, in discussing work of this kind it is all too easy to carp at this or that and to forget the perceptivity required of the Editor in selecting the significant statements from an enormous amount of material. Mr. Jacobs deserves a special accolade for the admirable way in which the book is organized which makes it easy for the reader to follow the course of film history from its beginnings to the present. —*Edit.*

The Technique of the Film Cutting Room

By Ernest Walter. Published (1969) by Hastings House, Publishers, Inc., 10 E. 40 St., New York, NY 10016. 282 pp. Illus. Diagrams. 5.5 by 8.5 in. Price $11.50.

Although the number of books relating to motion-picture film techniques has steadily increased over the past decade, few have contained such a wealth of useful practical information as is to be found in Ernest Walter's *The Technique Of The Film Cutting Room*. In view of Mr. Walter's long experience as an editor who has worked on such recent films as *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness, The Haunting, Shoes of the Fisherman,* and many other major productions, the advice given in his book represents the views of a master craftsman in his particular field.

Perhaps it should be emphasized that most of this well-written work deals with film cutting as undertaken in the editing department. A relatively short section is concerned with negative cutting procedures as practiced in film laboratory cutting rooms. The title of this excellent work may therefore appear slightly ambiguous, although both the flyleaf and

The film footage counter comes of age

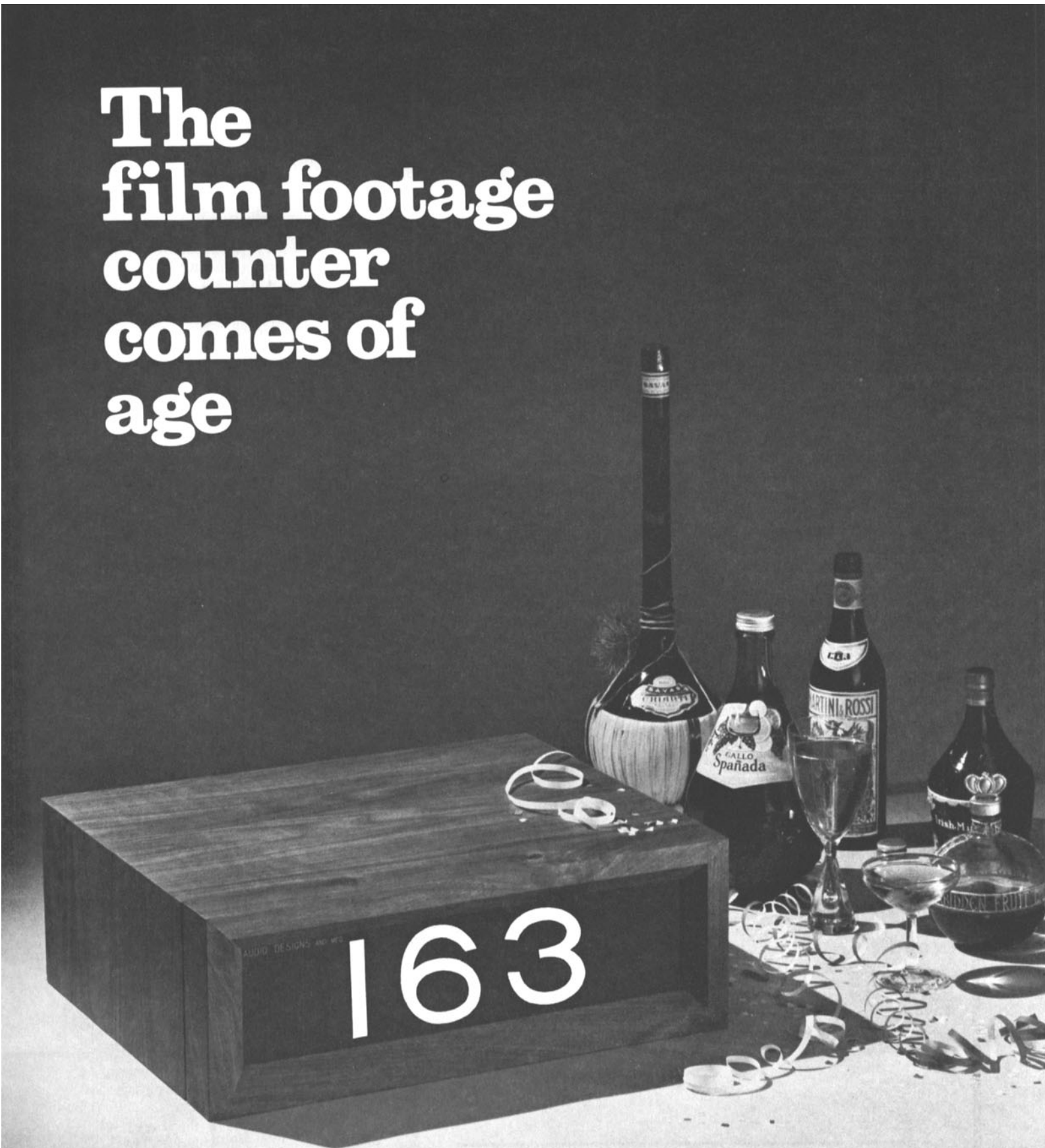

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Table of Contents clearly indicate the main areas with which Mr. Walter so adequately deals.

The books opens by explaining the role of the editor in film production, and discusses the materials available for picture and sound recording. Various types of editing equipment are then reviewed, and considerable attention is paid to the many routine procedures which apply in editing both picture and sound.

The many requirements to be met by an editor after a production has finished at the studio, are then dealt with. These include post-synchronization of soundtracks, the introduction of optical effects and other techniques too numerous to mention. Two sections of particular interest relate to the editing of music and dubbing sound.

In Section 12, Mr. Walter deals with negative cutting, protective masters, and the preparation of the answer print. The value of the earlier part of this section might be enhanced by inclusion of illustrations showing typical leaders, and internationally accepted symbols relating to all optical effects normally encountered, although some of these do appear elsewhere in the book.

The book concludes with an examination of the final responsibilities facing an editor after successfully achieving an answer print suited to domestic release. These include foreign version sound, title and censorship requirements, to mention but a few.

This is a book which will prove invaluable to those hoping to become film editors, and is a work which will prove of great interest to technicians in all areas of the film industry.—*I. B. M. Lomas,* Technical Director, Film House Laboratory. Toronto, Canada.

To Kill a Messenger:

Television News and the Real World

By William Small. Published (1970) by Hastings House Publishers, Inc., 10 E. 40 St., New York, NY 10016. 302 + xi pp. 6 by 9 in. Price $8.95.

This book answers many questions that serious observers of television news and documentary programs have asked themselves — such questions as: Who decides what is newsworthy? How do TV technicians get to the scene of a sudden disaster while it is taking place? Who decides what shall be shown? How much real influence does TV have on the thinking and behavior of TV viewers throughout the nation?

The author, who is News Director of CBS News in Washington and Past President of the Radio and Television News Directors Association, answers these and many other questions in this book. Although it is a serious and, at times, a frightening book, it is written in a lively, intimate style, highlighted with in-depth discussions of past and recent great events and social trends — violence — anti-war protests — assassinations — and the 1968 TV coverage of the streets of Chicago during the Democratic Convention. The author declares that the Chicago coverage "was probably the turning point."

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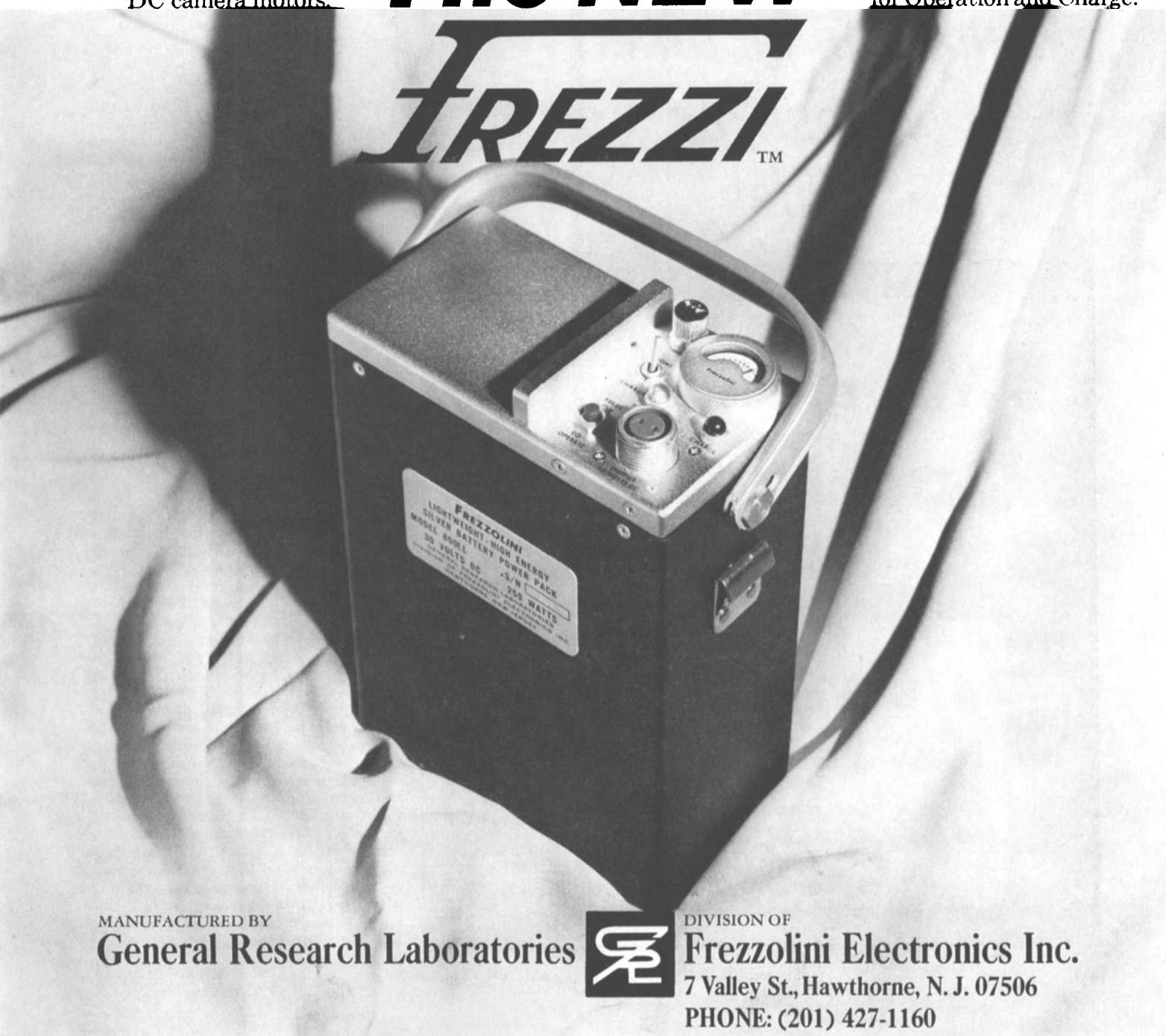

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The title of the book refers to a charming custom prevalent in ancient Persia and other unenlightened countries of killing the messenger who brought bad news. "Television has changed America to an indoor country," the author states, "it delivers everything to the living room and much that comes in is neither welcome nor invited. The public has turned its anger on the messenger, the bearer of bad tidings."

Although the author does not explicitly designate Vice-President Agnew as the killer of the messenger, it may reasonably be concluded that the Vice-President's attack on the television networks and other media supplied some of the motivation for this thoughtful book. It would certainly be outside the bounds of propriety to describe this book as a counterattack, since it is much more than that, but it does do a great deal toward setting the public straight as to who the television newsman is and what he does. — *Edit.*

The Art of the Moving Picture

By Vachel Lindsay. Published (1970) by Liveright Publishing Corp., 386 Park Ave. South, New York, NY 10016. 324 + xxv pp. 5½ by 8½ in. Price $6.50.

This book was first published in 1915 and a second edition, revised by the author, appeared in 1921. Although most students of film history have been aware of this book it has long been out of print. The publishers are to be congratulated for making this significant work again available.

In 1915, Vachel Lindsay had achieved recognition as a poet. However, it may be that his future reputation will rest more securely on this book than on his poems. His poems ("The Eagle That Is Forgotten," "Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight" and others familiar to readers of anthologies now seem dated, while his views on the (then) new art and science of the motion picture are often strikingly original even when judged by contemporary standards.

Indeed, he even anticipates Marshall McLuhan — "Edison is the new Gutenberg. He has invented the new printing." In another chapter in the book, the author states, "The invention of the photoplay is as great a step as was the beginning of picture writing in the Stone Age." The autor's "turn of the century" style with its admonitions to "dear and patient reader" and such like circumlocutions may delight some readers and may annoy others. However, the quaintness of the style cannot obscure the surprisingly modern evaluations by the author.

The chapter on "Hieroglyphics" is especially original for the time in which it was written — indeed for any time. Some readers may feel that the author is reaching a little far to relate motion pictures to the hieroglyphics of ancient Egypt. Perhaps the author felt that he was reaching a little far — "I will leave the spiritual interpretation of the angle [its hieroglyphic representation] to Emerson, Swedenborg or Maeterlinck," he states — but quaint or deeply poetic, the book is certainly a valuable addition to motion-picture history. — *Edit.*