BOOK REVIEW

Mein Weg mit dem Film (My Experiences with Film): Oskar Messter, *Max Hesse Verlag*, Berlin-Schoneberg, 1936 (150 pp.).

This book was written at the request of Oskar von Miller to form a foundation for the collection of historical data and apparatus that Messter gave to the German Museum in Munich. A short historical résumé of the work of Edison, Lumière, Anschutz, the Skladanowsky brothers, and others prefaces the book.

The name of Oskar Messter has been connected with the German motion picture industry since its beginning, and there are very few branches to which Messter has not contributed.

As early as June 3, 1896, Messter built and sold his first projector. In the same year he built his first camera, and because he was unable to obtain film, he used 8-exposure Kodak film which he slit to a width of 35-mm.

After his first cameras had been built, Messter designed and built the first undercut gate to protect the film from scratches. For the film movement he built a four-part Maltese cross instead of using the 5- and 7-part cross which had been used up to this time. As early as 1900 he built a working model of a projector using mirrors to produce an optically intermittent movement.

In 1916 he obtained a patent on a variable shutter, and later on a camera with an automatic device for fades and dissolves.

In 1896 he constructed a film perforator which perforated 120 frames per minute. For his first developing outfit he built a drum having a capacity of 60 feet of film, and later designed a processing machine for continuous developing, fixing, and washing.

He obtained a patent in 1900 for an optical printer for trick work. To keep the negative and positive in good contact, air pressure was used in the gate.

As early as 1897 he built and sold a projector using 35-mm. film which exposed pictures along each half of the film width. It was used for amateur and teaching purposes.

A patent was granted to him for synchronizing a player-piano with the projector. He employed a musical director to write music to accompany the film, and in 1903 started work on synchronizing a gramophone with the projector. More than 500 theaters were equipped by 1913 with this apparatus.

Messter became greatly interested also in color photography, and built a camera with three lenses in 1898. To get slow-motion photographs he also designed a high-frequency camera. His first camera was capable of taking 64 frames per second. Later he built special cameras for Krupp for bullet photography, as well as cameras for recording instruments on aeroplanes.

During the War he constructed cameras for time-lapse photography from the air. He also built a camera of the machine-gun type for aerial shooting practice.

Besides these extensive activities he owned and operated a motion picture studio, where he made his first releases, each 18 meters in length. His first studio was opened in November 1896. It was independent of daylight, and used four arc lamps (50 amp.) for illumination.

The actors were his friends and members of his family, and later members of the opera and theaters were used in the casts. While these short films were being produced Messter worked diligently to improve his cameras and projection equipment.

The slow evolution of the industry is carefully presented in the book with the aid of many pictures and diagrams. The sections dealing with early work in sound recording are especially interesting. This book represents a valuable contribution to the historical development of the industry, and should be read by those interested in the growth of the motion picture.

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