

Book Reviews

Three-Dimensional Photography:

The Principles of Stereoscopy

By Herbert C. McKay. Published (1951) by American Photographic Publishing Co., 421 Fifth Ave. So., Minneapolis 15, Minn. 334 pp. 98 illus. 6 × 9 in. Price \$5.75.

Herbert C. McKay, FRPS, ASC, well known to readers of *American Photography* for his monthly column "Notes from the Laboratory" and for his observations on developments in photography and comments on stereoscopy, has compiled a text that is of interest to amateur photographers but it's hardly a book that has much appeal to professional photographers or serious stereographers. Some of the theories on which the principles of stereoscopy are based are blithely ignored, some are attacked. It certainly is not to be recommended as a reference work for any motion picture engineer interested in the stereoscopic process.

The author preaches such adroit doctrines as: "It has been repeatedly demonstrated that a beginner knowing nothing whatsoever about photography will have a greater success in stereo than in conventional photography"; and "... the fact remains that the gravest trouble encountered by projectionists in the stereo field is the result of taking too much care."

The inference, to me at any rate, is that knowledge of stereoscopic theory, skill in photography, and careful craftsmanship are handicaps rather than helps in the stereoscopic art.

To sustain the mood, the author, in referring to the projection of stereo slides has this to say, "... You drop the stereogram in the projector and enjoy it. The headaches have all been removed. There is nothing more than this that is absolutely essential." Then, in taking stereograms of close objects, "Some stereographers erroneously use a narrow base when making any stereogram nearer than ten feet."

He evidently means that if you're photographing a flower at a distance of 2½ ft with the normal base (lens interaxial) of 2½ in. and there is not provision on the

camera for converging the field of each lens to a plane 2½ ft away or nearer you'll come out with a perfectly good stereogram. This conflicts with some of the basic theories of stereoscopy.

To quote the author again: "Those who have seen modern stereo projection, now predict that stereo movies will soon be developed; they do not know that stereo movies were presented in a Broadway theatre a quarter century ago, and in many other theatres throughout the land. They do not know that polarized light stereo movies were featured at both the Chicago (1933) and New York (1939) World's Fairs. There is little to be done in that field, it has all been done time after time and any amateur can with a minimum of ingenuity make his own stereo attachments which will enable him to project perfect stereo movies." It will interest all to know that "There is little to be done in that field, it has all been done time after time" And, that anyone with a minimum of ingenuity can make and project *perfect stereo movies*. I'm afraid it takes just a bit more doing than Mr. McKay seems to indicate.

But let's have some more light on the subject from the author: "... we have not emphasized the distinction between motion pictures and still projection, for one very good reason. Optical projection remains the same no matter whether the projected images are changed twenty times a second or twenty times an hour. A system which will work with one, will, with few exceptions work with the other." This reviewer and his associates have been concentrating through the years on these "few exceptions," to the exclusion of the seemingly more direct and simpler methods. All serious workers in cine-stereoscopy must take into consideration the problems of uneven illumination, differential vibration between members of the stereoscopic pair and other things that can detract from complete visual comfort for the audience viewing three-dimensional motion pictures.—*J. A. Norling*, Loucks and Norling Studios, 245 W. 55th St., New York 19.

The Indian Film

By Panna Shah. Published by I. K. Menon and the Motion Picture Society of India, Sandhurst Bldg., Sandhurst Road, Bombay 4, India. 289 pp. incl. 22 pp. of appendix, bibliography and index. 20 illus. $5\frac{1}{2} \times 8\frac{1}{2}$ in. Price Rs. 10/-.

Dr. Panna Shah has put film makers both of the East and the West very much in her debt by this searching study of the conditions of the motion picture industry in her native country. Thoroughly versed in the film literature of the western world, Dr. Shah has a useful yardstick for measuring Indian accomplishments. The conditions she reveals are indeed depressing. In chapter after chapter she castigates Indian producers, distributors and exhibitors alike for the poor quality of Indian films and the wretched conditions under which they are shown. Yet her criticisms are not merely destructive. It is evident that they are inspired by a strong and sincere wish to see indigenous Indian films of high quality achieve success in India itself and spread a greater knowledge of India to the rest of the world.

Though vital statistics of the Indian industry are seemingly scanty and inaccurate, Dr. Shah collates them to the best possible effect to show a state of affairs resembling that of the U.S. industry some thirty years ago, when bankruptcies, ever-changing amalgamations and sudden standstills of production were prevalent. Nor are these conditions surprising in a country where so high a proportion of the population lives in the villages, which are seldom or never reached by films. And there are the further limitations of multiplicity of languages and tremendous differences of taste and cultural background.

The history of the Indian film is thoroughly covered, and there are chapters on Indian film stars, on audiences, on censorship, on mythology, and on the social influence of films, which is evidently the author's particular field of study. This is a book which all should read who wish to learn more about the second largest film industry in the world.—*Raymond Spottiswoode*, Kingsgate, Sudbury Hill, Harrow-on-the-Hill, Middlesex, England.

The Film Industry in Six European Countries

By Film Centre, London. Published (1950) by Unesco, Paris; U.S. sales agent, Columbia University Press, 2960 Broadway, New York 27. 156 pp. Many tables. $5\frac{3}{4} \times 8\frac{3}{4}$. Paper covered. Price \$0.65.

This is one of the series "Press, Film and Radio in the World Today" which Unesco is publishing in following out its constitutional obligation to "further by all possible means the use of the instruments of mass communications in the work of advancing the mutual knowledge and understandings of peoples."

Beginning on the strong basis of a Danish report "Bctænkning . . . angaaende Bio-grafvaesenet" published in 1950, a detailed study and comparison are developed for the other two small countries, Norway and Sweden, then chiefly a statistical study is presented for Italy, France and the United Kingdom. Making Denmark the special part of this study is logical enough when the facts are in on the Danish film industry: for instance, Denmark a country of only about 4,000,000 persons produces more films a year than Belgium, The Netherlands and Switzerland together. This small book has an amazingly large amount of text and statistics about costs and results in exhibition, distribution and production.—V.A.

Charlie Chaplin

By Theodore Huff. Published (1951) by Henry Schuman, 20 E. 70th St., New York 21. i-xi + 354 pp. + 80 pp. illus. 6×9 in. Price \$4.50.

The filmic Charlie Chaplin is here given perhaps as well as he can now be portrayed in a book, unless a book were to contain even more than this volume's generous collection of 80 pages of illustrations. But of looking at stills there is soon an end, and we go back whenever possible, generation after generation the world over, to seeing Chaplin films. And how seldom we hear them referred to nowadays as "old" films.

For the many who would like to find out how old is each Chaplin film, this is an excellent reference. One appendix

gives biographical sketches of the people professionally associated with Chaplin; another appendix indexes thoroughly all the films: the Keystones in 1914, the Essanay Films of 1915-16, Mutual Films in 1916-17, the First National releases of 1918-22, and the seven released by United Artists in 1923-1947. Casts, release dates, length of films and other data are given.

There is considerable text which will varyingly inform or interest readers. Not only is the production of each film described but also there is given a frame of timely reference of general and film business conditions, international and domestic political factors, and, without being unnecessarily scandalous about it, an adequate notice of what was happening in the personal lives of those on or off the sets. If this is not a thoroughly knit and compact picture of the individual Chaplin, perhaps we can forgive the biographer at this time when it is doubtful if such could be accomplished even autobiographically. On one point, however, the author is clear: the artist Chaplin has ever been striving wholly and honestly to accomplish more and more with the film, to make each film somehow a greater accomplishment than the preceding one.

That Chaplin's success has been continual and consistent may properly be doubted by biographer and reader according to his own artistic taste. This book gives a solid basis for our understanding the peculiar qualities of Chaplin and his use of the film medium which led George Bernard Shaw to call Chaplin "the only genius in motion pictures."—V.A.

The Little Fellow

The Life and Work of Charlie Chaplin

By Peter Cotes and Thelma Niklaus. Published (1951) by Philosophical Library, 15 E. 40th St., New York 16. 160 pp. incl. 32 pp. illus. 5½ × 8¾. Price \$3.75.

There is less about motion pictures in this book than in the book briefly reviewed above. There is much more of an effort by the coauthors to accomplish a psychological analysis of Chaplin's background, development and work. There is a deal of detail beginning generally with Chaplin's

efforts to earn his way at the age of eight, then on through his growing artistic and financial successes. At the age of 11 he successfully achieved the part of Billy in *Sherlock Holmes* only by having his mother drill him with the script, for he had not yet learned to read or write.

The authors seem fairly occupied in setting consistently right the considerable record of matrimonial matters, of which the public may have an undue aftertaste from many doses of strong headlines and lurid inks. The explanations of why Chaplin's first three marriages were ill fated and his present one apparently the contrary are plausible and interesting enough; but the authors do not quite explain how anyone, genius or otherwise, could often create such unbelievably bad working conditions for himself and then accomplish the almost superhuman in completing the motion picture he wanted — but at other times to be the effective genius from the start in training and directing as in *The Kid*.—V.A.

Acoustical Terminology is American Standard Z24.1-1951 sponsored by the Acoustical Society of America in cooperation with The Institute of Radio Engineers. This latest edition was approved July 31, 1951, and is now available at \$1.50 from the American Standards Assn., 70 E. 45th St., New York 17. A number of special committees worked to revise this standard since the first edition was published in 1942. The section on speech and hearing has been thoroughly revised to bring it into agreement with the most recent experimental results. Twelve sections, including six tables, and a thorough index make up this 50-page standard.

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