

PMPEA "Hands-On" Equipment Seminar

As the SMPTE members were preparing to register on Sunday, 16 October, for the 119th SMPTE Conference in Los Angeles, a related event was taking place at the 20th Century-Fox Lot Theater about a block from the Century Plaza Hotel. This was the third Hands-On Equipment Seminar sponsored by the Professional Motion Picture Equipment Association (PMPEA). Like the first such seminar two years ago, at the time of the 117th Conference, this one was well received by SMPTE members and others in the film industry.

Three prominent speakers highlighted the program and those attending were encouraged to assemble around and use the equipment exhibited and to talk with the speakers and PMPEA representatives.

Lighting and Cameras in Feature Films

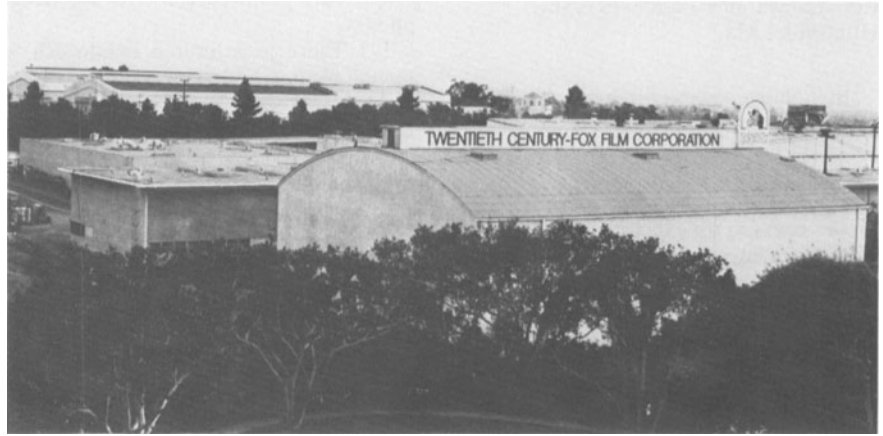
Haskell Wexler, ASC, was the first speaker. As Director of Photography for *Bound for Glory*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, Mr. Wexler gave the audience the benefit of his experience regarding lighting and cameras. The topics covered and questions fielded related to the use of silk, dacron and plastic sheet materials to diffuse light; softlites; and large white styro-foam panel reflectors to provide soft invisible fill lighting. Considerable attention was given to the new HMI (metal-halide-discharge) lamps that are seeing increasing use in Europe for "daylight" filming indoors. The flicker problems that were formerly so serious with HMI lamps have now been solved, Mr. Wexler noted. He was preparing to experiment with a new Kobold HMI lamp that promised twice the light output from a source half the size of previous HMI lamps.

Production Sound Mixing

Jim Webb, Production Sound Mixer for *All the President's Men* and *Nashville*, next gave an illustrated talk on special techniques of production sound mixing. His experience has been quite successful in using individual radio microphones for each actor in a scene and combining this with multi-channel recording. The post-production work required with this approach is considerable but the results are quite remarkable, and there is the useful option of deciding later on which track or tracks to incorporate into the final mix for each scene.

The Steadicam Camera-Stabilizing System

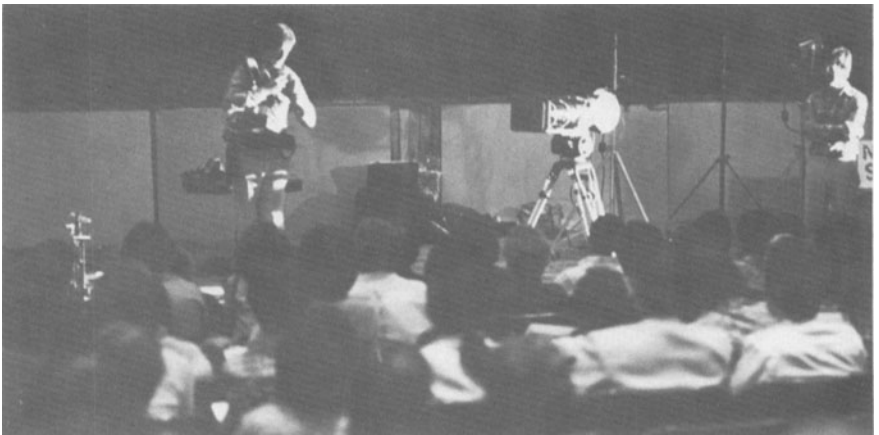
Garrett Brown donned a harness and then quickly and easily attached to it a camera-stabilizing arm and mount which he had devised. This Steadicam system, available from Cinema Products, has the remarkable feature of damping out almost completely the body motions of a camera-



The PMPEA Seminar was held in a theater on the 20th Century-Fox lot, adjacent to the Century Plaza Hotel.



Haskell Wexler was very generous with his time and advice during his informal presentation.



Garret Brown, the inventor of the Steadicam, spoke to the PMPEA audience.

man who must film and move with a handheld camera. Mr. Brown fielded numerous questions about the Steadicam — how much it weighed, where the center of gravity was, how long it took to learn to use it effectively (less than a day for most people). The Steadicam can tilt, pan and roll smoothly through sizable angles. It has been very successfully used on about every

kind of vehicle and even on horseback. One version was shown which was developed for use with helicopters. It was all a most impressive demonstration.

The PMPEA may be commended for their program. PMPEA President Chadwell O'Connor expressed special thanks to 20th Century-Fox for making the theater available.