



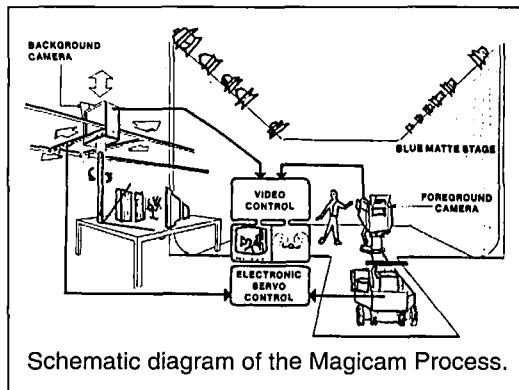
# SMPTE ALMANAC

By Michael Dolan

*In this column we provide interesting historical briefs from Journal articles of days past. The purpose of this column is primarily entertainment, but we hope it will also stimulate your thinking and reflection on the Society's history, how far we have come in the industry, and (sometimes) how some things never change. This is not meant to be an authoritative reference, and no attempt is made to correct any past errors or omissions of the Journal. We simply hope you enjoy the material.*

## 25 Years Ago in the Journal

The October 1977 *Journal* reported in "Magicam—The Process and Production Techniques," by Matza and Gale: "With the use of miniature scenes and models, it is possible to synthesize realistic images by combining a scene containing normal size objects with a scene containing miniature objects....The resulting synthesized image is generated from the foreground and background scenes using an advanced matting technique....The Magicam system is, in essence, an electronic servo control system coordinating the movements of two cameras, one of which records a foreground action against a blue screen while the other records a miniature set intended to serve as a background for the live-action foreground. The foreground camera may be either a film or video camera....The Magicam uses a master/slave arrangement common to many other movement simulators, in which an operator controls the master unit which, in turn, sends out commands to an electronic servo system which controls the slave....With the Magicam process there are three physical limitations that must be observed: first, the lens of the miniature camera cannot go through (or must not hit) any walls.....Second, the travel range of the background camera support gantry is 4x4 ft. With a scale factor of 12:1, this represents 48x48 on the foreground stage....Third, the camera operator must be careful not to pan and tilt off the blue cyclorama area, because any area that is not blue will not matte out."



## 50 Years Ago in the Journal

The October 1952 *Journal* reported in "Animation for Individual Television Stations," by Ernest F. Hiser: "With the advent of television and the consequent increased use of the animated film for advertising, it

has become necessary to devise quick and inexpensive methods for the small studio to produce such films....The problem is, how can such work be produced by the average small studio art department at a time and price ratio that will allow for speed, revamping, and the visual appeal necessary for local and short-contract sponsors?....The staff artist does not need to be a photographer to do

animation, as the photographic part of the process is mostly a fixed thing, and all the camera operations necessary for the methods used are easily applied....A simple camera stand with an interchangeable animation board which will work equally well under the camera and over the illuminated tracing table. Using the same board for two purposes will also eliminate error in register and layout....To obtain smooth motion in human and animal figures, or similar complicated, multi-planed objects, drawings such as those made by commercial animators will have to be approximated."

## 75 Years Ago in the Journal

The Fall 1927 *Journal* reported in "The Needs of a Trick Photographer," by Fred Waller: "In order to make the purpose of this paper clear, I will first define "trick photographer". This unfortunately is the nearest term that I know for describing the person in a big studio who is called upon to do the parts of a production which are out of the usual run....In a recent picture starring Mr. Meighan it was necessary to show a hail storm destroying the wheat fields in the great Canadian belt. The set called for a road and pathway in the foreground, a farm house and barn in the middle distance, and behind this a great expanse of undulating country. In order to slow the movement of the swaying fields and falling of the miniature hail, a cranking speed of about twelve times normal was necessary, and even though this small set was literally surrounded with lights it was not possible to stop down sufficiently to give the same comparative focal depth as we would have had if the scene really had been made in natural size. Our inability with the ordinary lens to get foreground, middle distance, and background all reasonably sharp is in my opinion the only thing that might make the audience feel that the scene was not an actual one."