

SMPTE ALMANAC

By Michael Dolan

Sponsored by Television Broadcast Technology



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.

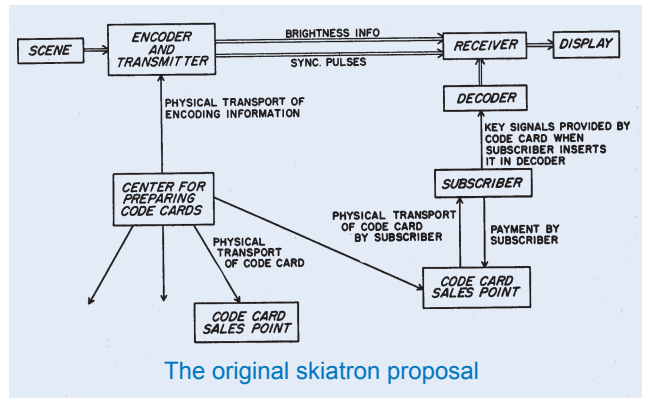
25 Years Ago in the *Journal*

The August 1978 *Journal* reported in "Considerations Regarding the Use of Digital Data to Generate Video Backgrounds," by Eugene Leonard: "Considering the probable future of digital technology over the next half dozen years, it should become possible to do television production using a stage that is entirely empty, except for the actors. Subsequently the background scenery and even the foreground props would be filled in by digital electronics. The technical advances that could make this possible include advanced framestores with greatly expanded digital memories—more bytes at less cost with reduced access time—and new holographic techniques. With such equipment, electronic backgrounds would look just as real and substantial as the actors themselves and could be panned over, zoomed in on, and lit up just as actual studio or location scenery could be. A "tagged video" keying technique would be used to "position" such "scenery" and we can conceive that digital "libraries" would be developed as sources for the scenic designers to draw from."

50 Years Ago in the *Journal*

The August 1953 *Journal* reported in "Fundamental Problems of Subscription Television: the Logical Organization of the Telemeter System," by Louis N. Ridenour and George W. Brown: "The general problem of encoding a picture for transmission and decoding it at the receiver is considered, with special reference to the privacy problem of subscription, or pay-as-you-see television. Alternative ways of indicating the price of the program and acknowledging its payment are described...it may be worth noting that the entertainment world is faced with a difficult financial problem posed by the broad public acceptance of television entertainment. A scheme which enables each viewer of a television program to pay a relatively modest "admission" fee would make possible much higher budgets for such special programs, with a consequent improvement in the quality of program material. Perhaps the most fundamental problem in

subscription television is that of providing suitable means for rendering a broadcast television program private."



75 Years Ago in the *Journal*

The September 1928 *Journal* reported on the "Progress in the Motion Picture Industry:" "The amateur who takes and projects motion pictures is now having set before him an equipment that rivals that of the professional in perfection and completeness...it is readily seen that many of our homes are destined to be Hollywoods in miniature. Portable cameras of professional size have received due attention...provided with straps to go around the chest and shoulder of the cameraman, who thus becomes his own tripod. The literature of motion pictures in colors has been neglected lately in the face of other more recent developments. There has been considerable discussion pro and con as to the usefulness of motion pictures for educational purposes...one school reports visual instruction as yielding 37% better grades. A description of a new panchromatic negative has been published giving speeds under four kinds of light. The use of the incandescent lamp for studio illumination is spreading...particularly when panchromatic film is used. A new lens with a speed of f/1.8 is now on the market. There are 21,642 theatres in Europe, 20,000 in the United States, 3,700 in the Far East, 3,598 in South America, 1,019 in Canada, 644 in Africa. The talking motion picture was the point of greatest public interest during the early part of 1928. Several historical reviews of past progress in sending pictures by wire and radio have been published, notably one on the American Telephone and Telegraph—Bell System...among the purely facsimile systems one sends a line screen negative that is received and recorded by a stylus on potassium iodide starch paper."