

SMPTE ALMANAC



By Michael Dolan

In this column we provide interesting historical briefs from the 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 January 1982 *Journal* published in: "Freedom, Democracy, and Communications—An Overview" by Fay Kanin: "...as part of the first major implementation of U.S.-Chinese cultural relations after China's 30 years of cultural isolation. Under the auspices of the United States International Communication Agency (an arm of the State Department), I was invited in May of this year to accompany the first five American motion pictures to be sent to mainland China in a generation. Since there is no U.S. trade agreement in film with the People's Republic, the movies were to be shown in five of China's largest cities as an example of "Film Weeks." (The Chinese have sent five films in return that are traveling in the U.S. right now.)...The Chinese had selected and screened ten films, and subsequently chose *Singin' in the Rain*, *Shane*, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, and *The Black Stallion*. I don't think anyone involved—American or Chinese—anticipated the overwhelming, mind-boggling, runaway success of this first American Film Week. In Beijing, the Chinese had planned to show the films in 16 theaters, five times a day. But the demand was so enormous, with people queuing up in the streets for tickets at 4 a.m., that the number of theaters was increased to 18, and the showings to eight performances daily...and in over 1000-seat theaters. Reels were bicycled, literally, from one movie house to another..."

50 Years Ago in the Journal

The January 1957 *Journal* reported in "High-Speed Explosive Argon-Flash Photography System" by Robert G.S. Sewell, Lawrence N. Cosner, Henry W. Wedaa and Rolland Gallup: "The use of explosively produced shock waves in argon as a means of obtaining brilliant illumination for photographing transient events has been known for a number of years. Many investigators, especially in the field of ballistics, have taken advantage of this phenomenon to produce high-quality photographs in the submicrosecond exposure range. The application of this phenomenon, however, appears to have been

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limited to single-exposure photographs with still cameras, or to multiple exposures with relatively expensive high-speed cameras and auxiliary equipment. The use of multiple sparks for obtaining a series of submicrosecond photographs was developed by Cranz-Schardin in 1928-29. The system described here replaces the multiple sparks of the Cranz-Schardin system thereby simplifying the apparatus, reducing the cost, and providing a greater level of illumination...The system combines the submicrosecond exposure advantages of argon flash with the advantages of still cameras to achieve an extremely high-framing-rate motion-picture system at a very low cost."

75 Years Ago in the Journal

The January, 1932 *Journal* reported in "A Portable Non-Intermittent Ciné Projector" [translated from *Revue d'Optique*]: A portable projector made by *Etablissement Gaumont Franco-Film Aubert* is described. The projector is of very small weight and is arranged for carrying in a case. The film moves with a constant motion past the axis of the light source and the projection lens, the image being maintained stationary upon the screen by a combination of the movement with an optical "compensator." It is claimed that due to these features, wearing of the film has been very much reduced and the motion is extremely silent in operation...The whole projector is enclosed in a metal casing and can be carried easily on a sling strap...Film is said to last five times as long when it is run in this continuous manner."

