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UNVEIL TODD-AO,

TODD-AO IMPRESSIVE

BIG SCREEN'S NEW CLICK

By Whitney Williams

Hollywood caught its first glimpse of a new filming process yesterday, and even from the rough prints shown it was immediately evident that a sensational new large screen, wide angle system is at hand for the road-showing of top feature pictures.

First announced 15 months ago, but viewed by only a very few top industry figures, Todd-AO, inspired by Michael Todd, and developed by Dr. Brian O'Brien and the American Optical Co., is a 70m process which makes use of a wide angle lens up to 128 degrees, nearing that of the human eye. On the same order as Cinerama, but vastly superior, since it's photographed with only one camera and projected by one machine instead of three, it gives the spectator a terrific sense of audience participation. On the curved screen in Metro's Stage 2, it can be viewed from any angle or seat without distortion.

A single-camera system, it requires the use of only one normal projection booth, unlike Cinerama which requires both three cameras and three booths, latter placed at screen level. Two special projection machines must be installed for showing of films in new process, however, but these can make interchangeable use of both Todd-AO's 70m film, CinemaScope and the standard 35m, switch demanding only a turn of a dial. The projection machines, being manufactured by Philips Co. of Holland, will cost around \$4,000 each.

A new high fidelity sound system with six channels, three tracks on either side of the 65m picture frame, accompanies Todd-AO, plus one control channel. This, according to Dr. O'Brien, who heads the research staff of more than 100 scientists at American Optical, is the most expensive item in a theatre equipping for Todd-AO, but cost "won't be prohibitive," he said.

Todd-AO cameras, which approximate the size of a Mitchell but with a slightly larger head to accommodate the wider 70m film, now have four lenses, to cover anything from a close-up to distant scenic shots. These range from the huge 128-degree wide angle lens (bug-eye), down through 64, 48 and 37-degree lenses. The cameras, made by Todd-AO, the equipment subsidiary of Magna Theatres, will not be sold, only leased.

Process as staged yesterday at Metro, where Stage 2 has been converted into a screening room for Todd-AO, was shown on a screen measuring 51 feet across, 60 feet along the curve which is 13 feet deep at the center, and 25 feet in height, for an aspect ratio of 2-1. This is within inches of the same size screen as Cinerama.

Two series of films in the process were shown, ranging all the way from strict closeups to longshots in which mountains across the desert stood out clearly. All done in Eastman-Color, first segment included footage photographed in Europe by Todd, and the second mostly test scenes for "Oklahoma!" directed by Fred Zinnemann and Agnes DeMille.