

April 18, 1955

Cantinflas Toplines Todd-AO '80 Days'

Cantinflas, the Mexican star, has been signed by Mike Todd to top-line "Around the World In 80 Days," to be filmed by the Michael Todd Co. in the Todd-AO process. Cantinflas is also interested in an ultra-modern theatre center to be built by Prince Hohenlohe in Mexico City, which will have a 3,200-seater equipped for Todd-AO. Development will also have two office buildings, each 22 stories.

Although a top b.o. draw in Latin America, Cantinflas has never made a picture for an American producer or company. He once had a tentative deal with RKO, but called it off.

Todd left Saturday for NY, then hops to Miami on a quick trip during which he'll talk with Loew's prexy Nicholas M. Schenck regarding possibility of Loew's releasing Todd's "Around the World In 80 Days" and "War and Peace." It appears unlikely that "80 Days" will now go out under the Columbia banner, with William Goetz associated in the production, as originally talked. Todd denied London reports he planned to drop production of "War and Peace," terming them "ridiculous."

April 19, 1955

Tugend Will Produce Todd-AO '80 Days'

Harry Tugend has been signed by Mike Todd to write and produce "Around the World In 80 Days," the Jules Verne classic which will star Cantinflas and will be shot in the Todd-AO process. Tugend, who originated the Hope-Crosby "Road" pictures at Paramount, recently completed for Ray Milland-Revue Productions a full season of filmed tv programs.

Signing of Tugend means that William Goetz, originally set to do the film for the Michael Todd Co. and Columbia release, is out of the situation.

With Todd in the east and Tugend unavailable for comment, the date and place of shooting "80 Days" could not be learned yesterday. It's understood Todd is in Florida meeting with Nicholas M. Schenck, prexy of Loew's, regarding latter company releasing his pictures.

April 23, 1955

TODD-AO LOOKS BETTER A YEAR LATER; 'OKLA.', SIX-TRACK SOUND IMPRESSIVE

By Joe Schoenfeld

A number of closely guarded showings of "Oklahoma" in the Todd-AO process have been held on Metro's Stage 2 in recent days for select groups of trade and press VIP's. Arthur Hornblow, Jr., producer for Magna and Rodgers & Hammerstein of the film version of the R&H classic, has been hosting the screenings and, while he has been explicit that there be no reviews of the picture itself, he places no restrictions on comment on the process.

It's been nearly a year since the Todd-AO process was first unveiled on a rented Metro stage by Joseph M. Schenck, head of Magna, Michael Todd and Dr. Brian

O'Brien, optical scientist who developed Todd-AO from ideas furnished by Todd. Last June 22, the refinement on the Cinerama-type entertainment down to a single 70m strip of film, rather than the three cameras and projectors used by Cinerama, was demonstrated on a 25-year-old Erdeman projector, originally owned by Paramount, showing some rough newsreel type of film and "Oklahoma" test scenes. Yet, crude as the film and projection were, the startling audience participation effect achieved on the 51' by 25' screen (60 feet wide along the curve), along with its amazing photographic clarity, moved the attending newspapermen and trade observers to raves. DAILY VARIETY itself editorialized:

"Todd-AO has every indication of being one of the greatest theatrical bonanzas of all time."

That opinion still stands, fortified by the obvious tremendous improvement in the process as it was seen Wednesday night. Some four reels of "Oklahoma" were shown via the universal Phillips projector (can show all dimensions at 24 and 30-frame speeds merely by twist of a dial) and, despite the fact that this was a much-used work print and only one reel was temp-dubbed with the Todd-AO six-track sound it was a demonstration that excited the imagination regarding the future of roadshow motion picture production and exhibition. What it does is take a long-lived, highly popular form of entertainment at a critical period in its history and wrap it up in a brand new, exciting package that will pull tremendous audiences all over the world.

Impressively answering the question of many 35m film diehards,

the footage seen clearly and unequivocally demonstrates the ability to tell a dramatic story in the Todd-AO process—even down to the most intimate scenes. This is graphically shown in the smoke-house scene involving Curly (Gordon MacRae) and Jud (Rod Steiger), an extremely tight situation for any camera yet never out of perspective on the massive screen.

But perhaps the greatest improvement in the Todd-AO process as seen Wednesday night, in contrast to the single-track sound at the showing a year ago, is in the six-track sound, which has a clarity and separation that's unsurpassed by any other sound system now around. It's incomparable to anything except a live performance under perfect acoustical conditions.

At the demonstration, the one reel temp-dubbed with the six-track sound contained the "Everything's Up To Date in Kansas City" number sung and danced by Gene Nelson, Charlotte Greenwood and chorus. Unlike stereophonic sound and other methods, at no time is there a sudden or confusing sound emanation from strange angles. Todd-AO sound uses seven horns (five behind the screen and two surrounds, latter off the sixth track).

The sound is so good, in fact, that it's safe to predict that one of the dramatic highlights of the opening of "Oklahoma" July 17 at the Rivoli in New York will be the three-minute overture via the six-track sound system.

At the demonstration, incidentally, Hornblow gave particular credit to Mike Todd for the development of the sound system, and then admitted that it wasn't adopted by the "Oklahoma" producers without a struggle.

With all the great promise evident in the process, one thing was obvious at the demonstration showing the other night—that "Oklahoma" isn't entirely the perfect vehicle to show off the audience participation qualities of Todd-AO. In short, "Oklahoma," albeit a much-needed "star" tee-off for the new process, actually only scratches the surface of Todd-AO's potential. A far greater fulfillment is promised by such upcoming productions as "South Pacific," "War And Peace" and "Around the World In 80 Days."