

Movies in Color at Last Perfected



Scene from "Becky Sharp," the first full-length, all-color moving picture, with Miriam Hopkins as Becky. Inset, left: Robert Edmond Jones, color director for the film. Inset right: Walt Disney, daddy of Mickey Mouse and first producer to employ the new color process.

By WILLIAM C. UTLEY
HOLLYWOOD, which of late years has probably contributed as much as literature to the shaping of American tastes and habits, is now going to work on our color sense. Producers of moving pictures in the next year are going to spend \$150,000,000 in Hollywood, more than they ever spent before in any one year, and a considerable part of this vast sum will go into the making of pictures which not only move and talk, but will appear on the screen in the natural colors of their scenes and characters.

It is not rash to predict that whole new schemes of decoration, new styles in dress, new fads in make-up for women will be the result. If you don't believe this is possible, think back for a minute. Mae West says, "Come up and see me some time," and soon it is a catch phrase that sweeps over the nation. Dolores Del Rio dances a number called the Cariocha, and before long we see thousands of couples doing the Cariocha on New York's St. Regis roof, in Los Angeles Cocoanut grove and in the Crystal Palace ballroom at Paw Paw lake, Michigan. A popular movie, "It Happened One Night," shows long sequences with Clark Gable riding in a cross-country bus; a few weeks later a Florida bus line reports that its women passengers have increased some 25 per cent.

In 1927 Al Jolson sang a song called "Sonny Boy" in a picture entitled "The Jazz Singer." It was the first time the shadowy figures of the screen had ever been endowed with the power of speech. The picture revolutionized the entire industry and lifted it from a doubtful and often slapstick quality to one of the most important influences in American life. The picture grossed \$3,500,000. Now after many years of effort, moving pictures have been given another dimension, so to speak. We are allowed to see them in their true colors. Thackeray's "Vanity Fair" has been made into a movie called "Becky Sharp," in which the old varying shades of gray are banished in favor of full reproduction in natural color, bringing to life the polychrome resplendency of Becky's colorful time and sphere in every hue on the spectrum.

Another Step Forward.
Color, say the producers and most of the critics, may be just as much a revolution as was sound eight years ago. It will not come so swiftly, however, for color is expensive, delicate to administer. Mistakes will undoubtedly be made, for color in the hands of a master can make the motion picture a thing of incomparable art, but a bungler could make it as frightful as a Christmas neck-tie. There will be both masters and bunglers. There always have been, in Hollywood.

Color in motion pictures is really almost as old as the cinema itself. Only natural color is new. The first colored movie, like so many other "firsts," was produced by Thomas Alva Edison in 1864. It was "Anna Belle, the Dancer." Every separate panel of film was tinted by hand, like we sometimes tint photographs today. All the colors were there, but not as you would see them if you looked at them in the flesh. The tinting artist was a sort of artistic embalmer. You looked at Anna Belle and said, "My, don't she look natural; they sure did a good job on her." Yet so eager was the firm audience for color, many films, some over 1,000 feet in length, were colored by this long and laborious process.

Since Edison's attempt more than 250 methods of making colored films have made an appearance. These are basically split into four different groups as to process: hand tinted, chromatic, the-industry and new film.

Back in 1928 and 1929, fresh from sweeping triumphs in movies with sound, Warner Brothers decided to go the whole hog and make them in color, too. "On With the Show" and "Gold Diggers of Broadway" led the rush to color. But at that time only part of the spectrum could be reproduced and outlines were blurred. To make matters worse, the boom in color caused overproduction and forced the Technicolor Motion Picture corporation to turn out an inferior product. The resultant hops have kept most producers shy of color ever since.

Responsible for Progress.
Although there are other companies—41 of them—in the field, who may later produce better color films, it is Technicolor which is responsible for the present state of perfection. It was named for the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the alma mater of Dr. Herbert T. Kalmus, who began experimenting with color cinematography (which is the elegant word for "shooting" movies) upon his graduation in 1914.

Meriam G. Cooper in the fall of 1925 returned from tropical jungles with a film called "Chang." Not even the success of this film could placate Cooper for the loss of exquisite jungle beauty when it was reproduced in varying shades of gray, rather than in all its primitive, colored splendor. Cooper determined to create color movies and associated himself with Dr. Kalmus.

Their work progressed slowly, but in 1921 they were able to make "Toll of the Sea," with Anna May Wong, a color picture. It caused no furries of excitement. Then in 1925 the boom came—and went. Two years later Dr. Kalmus improved his process so that a full and faithful range of colors could be shown and images could be given definite outline. By this time nobility in Hollywood could be interested—except young Walt Disney, best known as the father of "Mickey Mouse."

Disney had never allowed precedent to interfere with his art. He believed in Technicolor and backed his belief with a "Silly Symphony," called "Flowers and Trees," produced by the new process. It was artistically successful. It was followed by "Three Little Pigs," which certainly needs no introduction anywhere in the world where there is a motion picture house and which has often been said (seriously) to have done more than any other, one thing to take the mind of the world off the gloom of depression.

Whitneys Take It Up.
Certainly Mr. Disney's porkers ended the depression for Technicolor, for they it was who interested John Hay ("Joek") Whitney and his cousin, Cornelius Vanderbilt ("Sonny") Whitney in color movies. The Whitney millions bought 15 per cent of the shares of Technicolor Motion Picture corporation and organized Pioneer Pictures, Inc., to produce pictures by that process.

One of the first steps of the Whitneys was a wise one. From the New York stage they brought Robert Edmond Jones, whose design work for "Rebound," "Mourning Becomes Electra," "Ah, Wilderness!" and other plays had established him as the leader in his field.

With Jones as the minister of the palette, Pioneer produced an experimental two-reeler, which proved definitely that natural colors had arrived on the screen. The picture, "La Cucaracha," grossed \$250,000, more than any short in black and white had ever drawn.

Final "arrival" of natural color to the screen. Some critics were cold to it, but they felt that way not because of imperfections in color reproduction, but because of the tremendous possibility that abuse may, and in their opinion, will, destroy color films. As the reviewer of the sophisticated and wary New Yorker said:

"What someone else, someone other than Mr. Jones, someone, say, with a weakness for pretty postcards, may do with the marvels of the new scientific advance I shudder to think I may some day know."

More of Them Planned.
Pioneer Pictures has on its schedule eight more color movies. It has been reported that the next one will contain songs and dances. Every motion picture studio in southern California is already beginning to experiment once more with the colored cinema, or is actually planning the production of a film in natural colors. It costs about 30 per cent more to make a picture in colors than to make it in black and white, not counting additional staging extravaganzas.

It has been conservatively estimated that there will be at least ten full length color features made during 1930, that in three years half the films will be in color and that by the end of five years at least 90 per cent of all the films made in Hollywood, at least, will be in color. One of the most ambitious of the new color movies will be the one now in production at the Disney studios. It will be the first full-length animated cartoon ever made, and will be called "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," based, of course, upon the fairy tale of the same name. What a stupendous undertaking this is may be understood from the fact that somewhere between 80,000 and 100,000 separate drawings and exposures will be necessary to a cartoon of this length. It has already been in the making a year and a half and Disney estimates that it will take another year and a half to complete it. The cost will approximate \$350,000.

Only this fall will you begin to see animated cartoons other than the Disney product on the screen in all the primary colors. That is because Disney, with his customary foresight, acquired a year's exclusive contract on the use of full Technicolor for animated cartoons. That contract expires some time this month. The other cartoons you have seen in colors of late were made by the old two-color process.

Technicolor is made in the subtractive color process which has been mentioned. There are three separate magazines of film which run through the camera. Each of them photographs one of the primary colors from which all colors are compounded. From each of the negatives a matrix (which may be loosely termed as similar to an engraved plate such as is used in printing) is made.

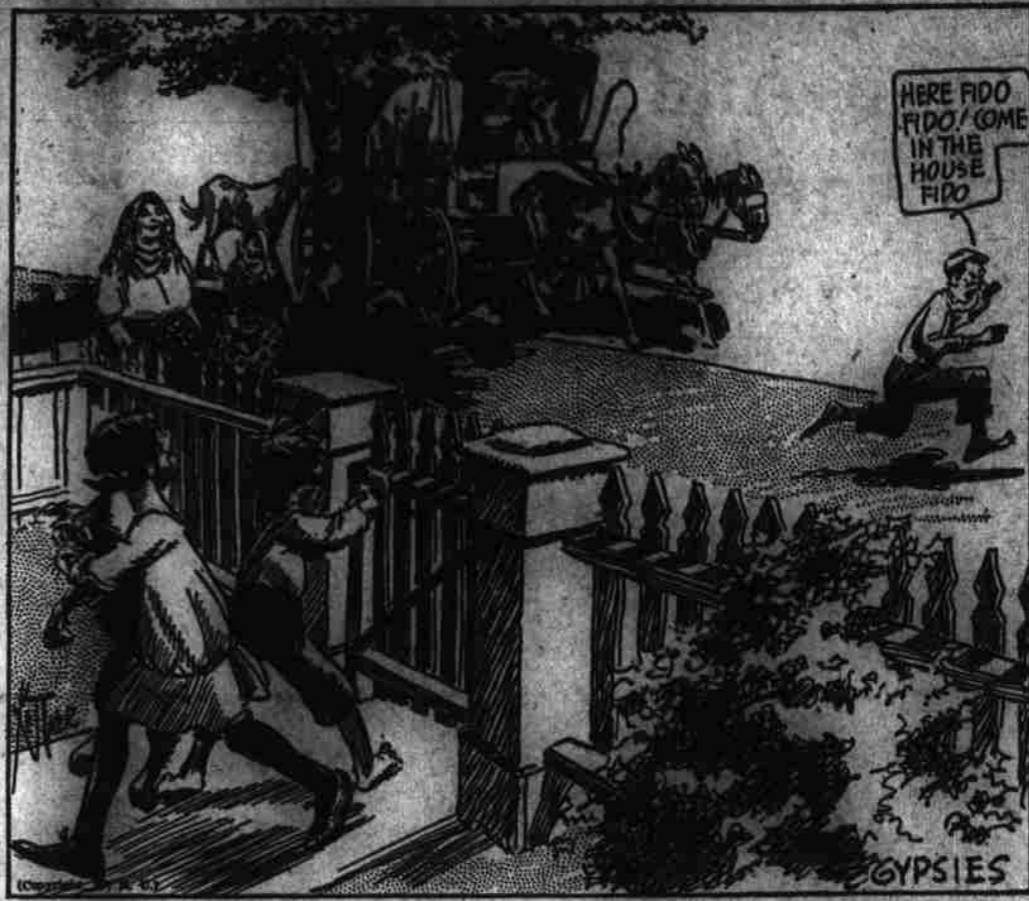
How It's Done.
A properly prepared film holds the master black. Color impressions are transferred from the matrices to this master film by the use of what are called subtractive primary dyes, in a process of imbibition. The dyes used are cyan (minus red), magenta (minus green) and yellow (minus blue). All colors must be transferred to the master black before the color print is ready.

Such an explanation is, of course, vague at best, but is about all that can be accomplished within the limits of a short article.

The process is foolproof, in that it is impossible to alter the colors. The camera registers the colors exactly as it sees them. The only human errors possible are lack of care in preparing the matrices and lack of precision in printing the film.

OUR COMIC SECTION

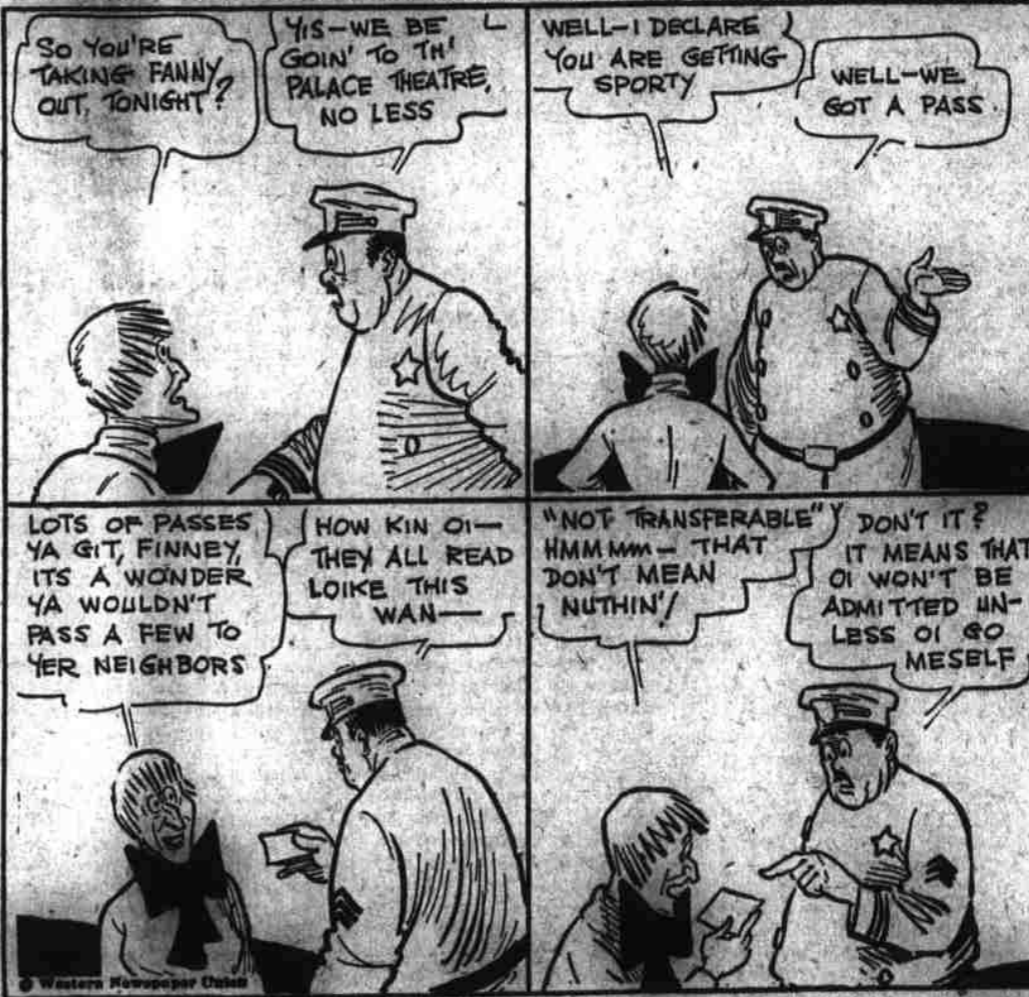
Events in the Lives of Little Men



FINNEY OF THE FORCE

By Ted O'Loughlin
© By Western Newspaper Union

No Passing



THE FEATHERHEADS

By Osborne
© Western Newspaper Union

Time Change



SLIMNESS ALONG WITH SIMPLICITY



Every line in this dress is cleverly contrived to "lie" about your weight. The unbroken line from shoulder to hip adds to your height, the diagonal closing "slices" you down and the panel skirt gives you a trim hip line. Why it makes you "feel" slimmer, just to look at this frock. Notice how cleverly it avoids waistline emphasis, but adds four buttons for smart accents. About the house, you'll appreciate the unhampered freedom of the easy fitting sleeves and bodice. Run up several in printed, cottons for about-the-house and make a dark printed foulard for smart town wear.

Pattern 9350 may be ordered only in sizes 36, 38, 40, 42, 44, 46, 48 and 50. Size 36 requires 3 1/4 yards 60-inch fabric.
Send FIFTEEN CENTS in coins or stamps (coins preferred) for this pattern. Be sure to write plainly your NAME, ADDRESS, CITY, STYLE NUMBER and SIZE.
Complete, diagrammed sew chart included.
Send your order to Sewing Circle Pattern Department, 232 West Eighteenth street, New York.

SMILES

NOT SEEN AGAIN
"What a lot of friends we lose through their borrowing money from us."
"Yes, it's touch and go with most of them."—Calgary Herald.

Had Only One
"Ah," said the vicar, gently, "how pleasant to see you again! And is this your most charming wife?"
"This," said his former curate, reprovingly, "is my only wife."—Stray Stories.

That's Too Vague
Heard in the Tube—How old should you say she is?
"Oh somewhere in the middle thirties!"—London Everybody's Weekly.

Come Again, Sir
The Man—Can I see the office boy?
Stenographer—No, sir. You can see the manager, but the office boy is busy figuring.—Brooklyn Eagle.

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