

nice quiet afternoon at the pictures when you have a lion in your lap.

However, I am now inclined to believe that the biggest ultimate contribution of 3-D may not be on the spectacular and sensational side. Instead it may be the considerable gain in intimacy which the process makes possible in close-ups (particularly when colour is also used), and the increased feeling of "being in the picture yourself" through the fact that inanimate objects as well as animate ones are given a striking nearness and "roundness" and solidity in close-focus. From your theatre seat you can apparently reach out and lift the telephone from its hook, or help yourself to a cigarette from the box on the card-table at which the characters are seated.

To achieve this illusion, the technique seems to demand an object in the foreground—for instance, a tent-ropes which seemingly stretches out into the theatre—to fix the perspective and establish a point of "visual contact" between the audience and the actors. Then the effect really can be striking—more striking to me as a portent for the cinema's future than any of this spear-at-your-throat business. It may be that the effectiveness of such comparatively simple settings will ultimately lead Hollywood to rediscover the stage-play.

There will probably be another result—and here I am afraid the deep thoughts of the Censor tend to obtrude. Next to the tent-ropes, card-table type of scene, the most technically interesting ones I have encountered so far have been those in which three-dimension has been allied with colour to make the most of the round, rosy contours of the female form, very much in close-up. Hollywood is not likely to be slow to realise the possibilities of this kind of "intimacy." Up till now, sadistic violence has been very much more a cause of censorship headaches than sex. Now I should not be surprised if the situation is ultimately reversed. But though the problem is a difficult one and will need close watching to prevent abuse, my own view is that a censorship headache caused by exploitation of sex-interest is to be preferred—because it arises from fundamentally more normal instincts—to one caused by over-emphasis on brutality and violence.

If asked to assess the significance of 3-D in the history of the cinema, I would suggest that it is about equivalent in importance to the use of colour. Three-dimension is more capable of being exploited for sensationalism and stunting than colour, and it has come upon us more swiftly (though it had, of course, been experimented with for many years, and one such early experiment is, in

"Don't you think this three-dimensional business can go too far?"

(C) Punch

fact, now being revived around New Zealand). Consequently it has seemed more portentous. But, like colour, it is only a physical and superficial adjunct to the motion-picture. I doubt if it will materially assist in the actual telling of the story. Thus, third-dimension is not nearly as important a discovery as

FAINT PRAISE FOR 3-D

TWO-DIMENSIONAL film men and critics continue to poke fun at the struggles of 3-D in its swaddling clothes. The latest collection of quips contains comment from both sides of the Atlantic. The Hollywood producer Nunnally Johnson explained the scriptwriting technique for wide screen 3-D: "Just sit down at the typewriter. Only, from now on, put the paper in sideways."

"For the moment," said Richard Breen, screen writer, "it is safe to say that 'Hamlet' is out of the question unless it can be staged on a roller-coaster."

In London, Dillys Powell complained of "Men in the Dark": "If I must be placed in the position of a firing squad victim I want my eyes bandaged."

that of talk and sound, which added a new method of dramatic expression to the film and so opened up a vast field of material, in stage-plays and fiction, which could not be adequately presented on the silent screen.

It is useful, on points like this, to be able to quote representatives of the film industry. Sam Goldwyn, for example: "Neither 3-D nor any other 'D' will change the fundamental values of picture-making. . . . There are some basic principles that must be kept in mind in this critical period. First and foremost, no picture can ever be better than its story. . . . Without a good story to start with, neither sound nor colour ever helped a producer make a good picture. These elements make good pictures better, but they cannot do the job by themselves. It is exactly the same with 3-D." And finally, the item from *Variety* about the producer who claimed he was going to shoot his next picture in a process "much better than 3-D," i.e., 4-D. "It means," the film-maker explained, "that I'm using 3-D and I've got a story, too."

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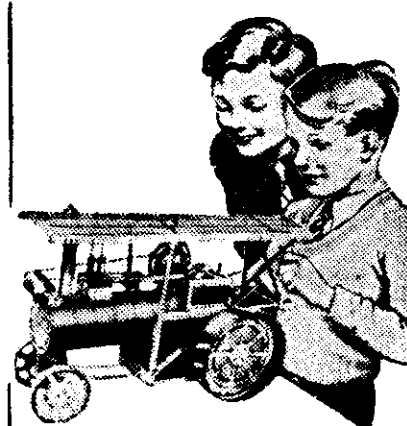
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