

TECHNICAL NEWS

Atema 166 Flatbed Editor From Sweden

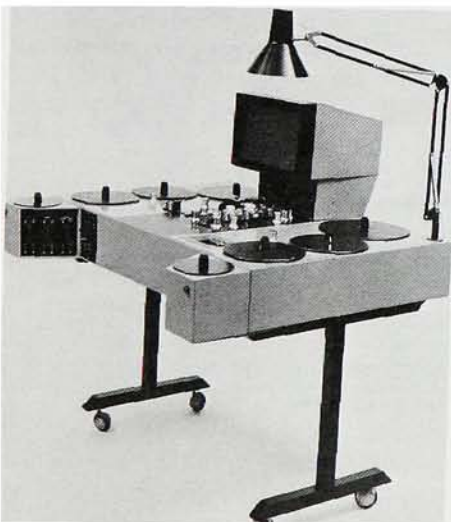
The Atema 166 is a six-plate editing table that will perform all of the normal editing functions, just like other editing tables of its type, but the sound transport system of this machine is so stable that you can *record* either directly from the 1/4" recorder by means of a synchronizer unit, from track to track on the machine, from optical to magnetic, from single system stripe to centre track, or from edge track to centre track. It can be locked to another table, to a 16mm projector, or to a 16mm dubber. All the functions of a mini-dubbing theatre are built in.

The Atema 166 is the beginning of a system which will enable small production units to do a lot of things themselves that they now have to farm out, and to do it at far less cost than buying separate editing, transferring and dubbing equipment.

The wow-flutter figure is an average of .08. The machine is pre-wired to take as accessories a six-channel mixer, a synchronizing module to lock the recorder and a mini-computer to locate scenes.

The machine is totally modular for fast servicing, and weighs just 170 lbs. Switching to Super 16 requires only the flick of a lever.

There will be more information on this machine in future issues, and details are available from Alex L. Clark, 3751 Bloor St. W. Islington. (416) 231-5691.



New Helicopter Camera Mount

The new Continental Camera Systems 35mm Mark 10 Helicopter Mount is the first breakthrough in this area for some years. The new mount features a vibration isolated seat which separates the camera and the cameraman from engine vibration, and variable speed zoom and focus controls. The mount is designed to break down into three parts for transport in a specially-fitted shipping case, and may be installed in either side of a helicopter in a matter of minutes. The unique design of the Mark 10 mount enables it to shoot from angles not previously possible, including straight forward. Canadian distribution of the system is by Cinequip, 41 Scollard St., Toronto. (416) 920-5424.

Camera motor and lens control batteries are housed in the counterbalance.



Angenieux Periflex Viewfinder System

The Periflex viewfinder system which permits filming in various camera positions such as overhead or low angles while viewing the image in an erect position is now available for almost all Angenieux Type "A" lenses. The Periflex system, which consists of the Angenieux orientable viewfinder and an intermediate adaptor to the type "A" viewfinder lens replaces the regular

viewfinder with four screws. No optical test equipment is needed to install the system.

Contact Alex L. Clark Ltd., 3751 Bloor Street West, Islington, Ontario. (416) 231-5691.



150XR Fluid Head Tripod

Alex L. Clark also has Canadian distribution for Cinema Products' new ultra-smooth fluid-head tripod for studio film and TV cameras, weighing up to 150 lbs. Made of magnesium and weighing only 25 lbs., the new 150XR Fluid Head features completely independent variable pan drag and tilt drag adjustment. A removable camera mounting plate permits the camera to be snapped instantly into place and adjusted forward or backward to accommodate different lenses and film weights.

Alex L. Clark, of course, is the Canadian distributor for all Cinema Products material, including the CP-16R single system reflex camera, the shoulder pod for the CP cameras, and all associated accessories.

Cinema Canada is pleased to welcome Robert Rouveroy C.S.C. as a regular contributor. Questions and comments directed to him may be sent to Cinema Canada, 6 Washington Ave., No.3, Toronto M5S 1L2.

LENSCAPS

by Robert Rouveroy C.S.C.

Within the last decade we've seen so many new developments, gimmicks, improvements, inventions, knickknacks etc. in film equipment that we may lose

sight of the premise that the nuts in the camera are generally of less importance than the nuts behind it. So it might be of value to discuss the relative merits of the seemingly endless parade of new products available to the professional filmmaker.

In 35mm gear the advances are apparently not so rapid: possibly the higher cost of such equipment forms a natural barrier to many improvements. And of course, the built-in conservatism of 35mm cameramen has blocked many needed improvements. It wasn't so long ago that 16mm was deemed mickey mouse by them and in some handbooks 16mm is still rated as a sub-standard gauge. But then, it is curious to learn that many 16mm cameramen now are absolutely convinced that Super 8 is so much spaghetti. As a matter of fact, several years ago some CBC editors refused to cut 8mm and effectively scuttled serious plans of that corporation to produce some shows in that medium.

It is still little understood that a scene, easily shot on 35mm, is usually harder to get on 16mm, and needs the utmost care in exposure in 8mm. The general idea that anybody can get a corner store box brownie and shoot features frightens every union out of its pants. And such is their power that Super 8 is not being used in Canada to any extent. Again, it's the cameraman who seems to be afraid of using a new medium.

And so, back to the first paragraph of this article. It often seems that manufacturers of film equipment have the mistaken idea that their cameras, for example, should appeal to every cameraman in the industry. And so many new products are "loaded" with features, sometimes hopelessly complicated beyond belief, and practically unserviceable in the field. Specifically in the 16mm field having its hey-day in its TV application, the offenses to common sense are becoming gross. While one manufacturer is blissfully innocent of having any contact with cameramen in the field, others produce a conglomeration of cameramen's ideas that backfire the moment you have to carry the monstrosity on your shoulder.

Maybe it's time to name names. It is hoped that the manufacturers take kindly to the criticism and refrain from suing the writer. Maybe the many good points about their product that I will also mention will off-set their wrath. I

do not claim absolute accuracy in my observations, and it is obviously quite clear that other cameramen have different views. That's good, and I hope they will come forward and flail me. In print that is. Gentlemen (You too, Wally!), let's open the discussion:

AURICON

Well before even I was born, the AURICON came into being. It was solidly built to last for several lifetimes, and many did. The gate is indestructible, the movement about perfect. To destroy: take a sledgehammer to it. Messrs Berndt-Bach, whoever they are, made minimal improvements, as none were needed. In 1957 I believe they included magnetic heads, and the sixth day of creation was reached and the creators rested on their laurels, well content with what they had wrought. To this day their advertisements appear in the trade-journals with the immortal line: "Here they come". A well loved camera. Grandpa.

As in every generation, kids do not take kindly to old people. So, in many places where young cameramen had to wrestle with the effen things, modifications like face-lifts etc., were planned and executed. I remember in 1961, in Edmonton of all places, we made an attempt to make it portable with a laboriously handcrafted shoulder cradle, a powerpack consisting of a Frezzo battery and an inverter. It was close to 60 lbs., and if you shot in the rain you often get shocked out of your gourd. A very good start in conversions, and possibly very healthy as many cameramen quickly imitated the set up and also grew gorilla shoulders. In 1964 I believe, or thereabouts, both PENNEBAKER and our own JOHN FOSTER got tired of all that (deleted) and began independently taking a saw to the AURICON housing. PENNEBAKER took apart an early Bulova watch and used the tuning fork to make a frequency controlled powerpack. Well now, that was quite an innovation. Weight reduction was achieved further with Mitchell magazines and by 1967 HEINZ UNGERMAN was firmly established with his magic 110 volt power pack. But still, one carried about 25 lbs. around and so more and more cameramen started innovating, cutting a little bit here, a little bit there, endlessly looking for the ideal

conversion. So then there was YODER, and FREZZOLINI, and finally to this day the ultimate conversion: CINEMA PRODUCTS, with their CP 16. They went that last step further, reflexing successfully the basic AURICON movement. And they took out the 110 volt motor and replaced it with a crystal control low voltage motor. And got rid, finally, of the MITCHELL magazines, so goodbye to development flecks of magnesium. But it is still basically the AURICON movement and along the way they lost the redeeming quality of that movement and that is: simplicity and utter reliability. Again, the facts of life are thusly expressed in its simplest form: If something can go wrong, it will, and the more things that can go wrong, chances are they will. Ah, for the simple "Here they come"!

ARRIFLEX

Now here is a camera system that could be discussed till the cows come home. Developed, or let's say invented by ARNOLD and RICHTER in the 30's, it became an instant success. Up until that time cameras were not reflexed with the exception of some early French cameras (and they used prisms or two-way mirrors) and would you believe an early German camera that used the film as a groundglass, and therefore filming was rather a difficult thing as the object had to be observed through a viewfinder on the side of the camera with or without parallax compensation. And there these two gentlemen had done the great thing, a rotating mirror, alternately exposing film and diverting all light coming through the lens to the viewfinder. First in 35mm and after the war in 16mm this was the ultimate in cameras anybody could wish for. Except. Yes, except some drawbacks inherent in the design. Little ones, but important to the cameraman. It was relatively fragile. The cable connection, those two banana plugs in the back, silly bloody things really. Why can't the world, placing men on the moon, design a decent connector?

If all the mishaps and accidents of all electrical and electronic equipment in the last hundred years could be statistically surveyed I'd bet my bippy that in most cases it could be traced to a faulty connector. And the most out-of-your-mind-driving connector to a cameraman must be, win hands down, the banana plug on the back of the ARRI 16. I

remember, after losing a particularly impossibly one out of a million shot because of a cable failure at the plugs (that was in '64) I soldered the cable directly to the plugs, filled the hole with rubber cement and finally, could blissfully sleep, secure in the knowledge that it could not happen again. Wrong! Several months later the plugs at the other end went kaput. And later, the cable in between broke. But all this could be overcome in the field, because after all, there are only two wires and so splicing was easily accomplished. Right? Wrong! ARRIFLEX brought forth the early BL. Blimpless, sync shooting. Heaven! With, of course, the exception of a silly eight-wire cable and the most recalcitrant plug connector in the world. It was as if Messrs ARNOLD and RICHTER had it in for the poor in-the-field cameraman, on the one hand enticing him with a beautiful, solid built dream of a camera, on the other hand taking all that away again with a rotten plug design.

Now don't get me wrong. I have often said that if my BL had the necessary attributes I would take it to bed with me, but are all these protuberances, rills, clefts, handles, bulges, really needed? It's like the mad scientist creating life: if two breasts are good, four must be better. Extremely little attention is given to the cameraman during the design of the product, it often seems that the first criterion is:

"Will it impress the hell out of everyone coming close to it? No? Well, let's put another blinking light on it." And so on.

So last week, up to the unveiling of the ARRI SR. A camera, promised several years ago, still not available, and when it is, at a price guaranteed to shock the living daylights out of you. At first sight, a camera we've all been waiting for. Very flat, compact, a viewfinder with the picture right side up in all positions right and left viewing. Gorgeous. A very impressive technical representative from the factory with answers to every question, a very patient man clearly superior to us all in technical expertise. Step by step we were led through the technological jungle of this and that, this feature and that application and yes, we were all awed and truly deferential to such an excellent product. A good time was had by all, many pictures taken in the best PR tradition. And then, when driving home, all rosy and cuddly trying to juggle all the mortgage payments in my head to pay for it, if and when available, a slow and disquieting thought crept into my head. After all, what was I asked to buy? Would it take better pictures than the cameras I had just paid for? No. Would it be much lighter? Than my BL? Yes. Than other cameras? No. Could it do more than all my cameras combined? No. Would it be more dependable, more fool-proof? No. Why would I then buy it? Prestige? Economics? No!

So there it was. Again a camera that was designed to please the designers. As if to say, look how clever I am. You can do this and that, and this, and such, all combined in one incredibly complicated piece of gear. And it will do everything equally well, and nothing will go wrong. Ah yes!

By the way, the one thing that went wrong during the demonstration was (guess again) the connector between the handgrip and the camera.

It did not connect.

Next month, I would like to go further with this litany of gripes. Again don't get me wrong. Without the efforts of the manufacturers of such equipment where would we be? Back with the 60 lb. AURICON PORTABLE. And it is also a fallacy to think that cameramen know what they want, as I will try to explain in later issues. A beautiful example is the BOLEX PRO, an oeuvre of the combined efforts of seven or eight cameramen, resulting in a camera that will do everything but go to the john by itself, but alas weighs about 25 lbs. with powerpack.

35mm for theatrical use will not have the problem of technological advances for a good time to come. Maybe because compared to 16mm for TV use it is still in its children's shoes. By the way, I intend to use this column primarily for the documentary cameraman and soundman. In later issues I would like to discuss little gimmicks we could share with each other, anything that will make it easier for us to make that improbable shot. And please, if you have questions, I'll get you the answer somehow. They don't have to be directly related to technical problems. You would be surprised how few cameramen know how to prepare their own bonds to travel to the States with a minimum of hassle. Or know the best motel in Moosejaw. Or what plug (those damn connectors again) to use in Kashmir.

Since I told some people I intended to write a column such as this for *Cinema Canada* I received many letters. Some I won't answer as all these answers are easily obtained from the *Cinematographers' Handbook*. This column is meant for skillful cameramen who once in a while come up against a situation that's new. If I don't know, and that is often, I'll refer you to someone who does. And the most interesting ones I'll include in this column, like this one:

