

¶The cost of producing pictures.

WHAT PRICE HOLLYWOOD GLAMOUR?

MANY a business executive, plagued by problems of labor, production, sales and personnel, has cast a longing eye towards Hollywood, where you can golf all the year round and where making pictures sounds like more fun than making motor-cars or mouse-traps.

Yes, it is fun to make pictures. But it is also one of the roughest, toughest, most bitterly competitive occupations known to man. It requires the most careful kind of business planning from start to finish, and still remains a terrific gamble.

There is a great difference between making cars and making pictures. When your first car model comes off the assembly line, you can turn out thousands exactly like it for months to come. In pictures, every film is a brand new problem.

I spent several weeks in Hollywood studying some of the problems which might come up if a wealthy business man went out to Hollywood to make films. A representative class "A" film was selected as a case study, and the figures quoted are the exact production costs

for the film, *You Can't Take It With You*, released in September by Columbia Pictures.

Let's assume that we produce it, starting from scratch. Here is an original play which had a two-year run on Broadway. It is a great potential money-maker as a film so the motion picture rights to it come high: \$200,000. This is a substantial outlay, but it is only a start.

A good writer must be engaged to put the script into shape for making the film.

The dialogue is revised, and new characters introduced to add certain entertainment values. Sometimes a pair of writers, or several pairs of writers, work on a script before it is ready. We are more fortunate in having a grade A scenarist do the job alone, over a period of four months. The cost: \$100,000.

Work begins in the studio from four to six months before the actual shooting. The scenario writer confers with the director, the director with the costume designer, the art director with the set construction superintendent, and all meet together. Many conferences occur at night because most of these people

will be busy with other pictures already in production. The project begins to take form, and a 16-page detailed budget is drawn up. The total cost of the film is tentatively set at ₱3,000,000. For one picture, mind you, and if it is a flop we lose most of the ₱3,000,000.

For an "A" picture our budget is by no means super-colossal; other "A" pictures have cost much more. Wherever we can we are buying "proved merchandise" in talent and equipment, because we have an excellent play to work with. We are gambling no more than necessary.

We have a top-rank director, Frank Capra, who has turned out *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*, *It Happened One Night*, *Lost Horizon*, and other box office successes. He has never had a failure. His time and that of his assistants will cost ₱150,000. Mr. Capra's work precedes the shooting of scenes by several months. The actual shooting time is about fifty days.

Our picture calls for a large number of principal players. After careful selection, Mr. Capra and his associates select Jimmy Stewart and Jean Arthur for the juvenile and ingenue roles; Lionel Barrymore is to be the grandfather; Edward Arnold, a business executive;

Spring Byington, a Broadway actress of long experience, is the would-be novelist and mother of the ingenue; Mischa Auer is to be a Russian ballet instructor. Small part players must also be selected, and extras engaged at ₱1 to ₱20 a day for a few crowd scenes. The total talent bill is ₱800,000—our largest item in the budget.

All the principal players must have doubles or understudies, who are useful in arranging the proper lighting and focal distances for the cameras. A "double" earns ₱100 a day.

After several conferences, fifty-two sets are decided upon. These will cost ₱400,000. The main ones are:

A New York street, a Victorian house, a middle class living-room, a basement work-room replete with small gadgets, a Park Avenue flat interior an elaborate business office, a plain office, a police court, a jail interior and a bank building front and entrance hall.

The principal item of expense is a New York street, including a section of the Elevated Railway. Columbia Studios did not have a New York Street, so it was necessary to build one, including trees and street lamps. It took 125 men about two months to do the job. Two million feet of lumber were used for the building

"fronts"; the railway required 50 tons of structural steel; 300 bags of cement went into pavements; and 400 tons of asphalt were used in the street paving. One whole house was built, complete with plumbing and electric light.

Because the set was built on Columbia Studio's ranch outside Hollywood, it was found necessary to put in a 700-foot sewer to make sure the place would not be knee-deep in water in case of rain—something no one had counted on. The street cost ₱200,000, but only ₱40,000 was charged as rental against *You Can't Take It With You*, because the set can be used again.

About two thousand separate property items were required. Most of the items (pictures, bric-a-brac, rugs, and furniture) are carried in stock in the studio, but many still have to be purchased or made, such as fireworks, a harmonica, carved animals, an unfinished oil portrait, a xylophone, and the like. Because of possible breakage or spoilage it is often necessary to have such props in duplicate. The cost of manufacturing props, renting them, and the labor in making and taking care of them is ₱80,000.

One scene called for a flock of moths to be released when Lionel Barrymore fished an old

silk hat out of a trunk. No one in Hollywood had any moths on hand, so at night the players turned on the porch lights at their homes, and brought in all the moths they could catch in jars, boxes and milk bottles. Everyone was pleased. The moths hadn't cost a penny. But after the scene was over, the moths kept flying in front of the cameras until an exterminator had to be engaged to drive them out.

When shooting begins, a large number of persons are kept on the job in case anything goes wrong. There is a carpenter to mend a set, a stand-by painter to touch up marred surfaces, two property men, two people from the wardrobe department to take a few stitches if needed, not to mention the dozen electricians who are always on hand, the six or seven "grips" who move furniture, the script girl, the "still" photographer who takes publicity pictures, a watchman, "special effects" man, a publicity man, and a few miscellaneous "experts" at something or other.

Work on the costumes is started long before production begins. The designer keeps within his budget, ₱40,000. Actual tests are made with the cameras to make sure that the various costumes do not clash with each other, with the back-

grounds, or, worse yet, blend into the backgrounds. Most of the players in our film can wear ordinary clothes, but the wife of the financier has to have two ermine capes, two hats, two evening dresses, and jewelry.

The principal players usually have duplicates for their costumes because they may get soiled, burnt or stained. A picture might be held up for a day or two, at about ₱60,000 a day, while a costume was being duplicated. Very little of the value of these costumes can be salvaged for class B pictures.

In the budget we will put down ₱30,000 for the camera staff. Seven men will be on hand at all times directly responsible for the recording of sound, at a total budget figure of ₱30,000. This does not include the thirty men in the studio's permanent Sound Department. ₱20,000 covers the cost of a dance orchestra, a music arranger, a copyist, and two other supernumeraries.

Because this is a contemporary picture, the make-up expense is not high: ₱25,000. There is a department head who is responsible for all make-up in the picture, one make-up man and two hair dressers on the set at all times. A few artificial wigs and beards must be put on

every day and some of nature's blemishes covered up.

Cutting and editing of the negative costs ₱15,000, although this does not include the maintenance of a permanent laboratory with a staff of fifty employees. Ordinarily Capra shoots 5,000 to 7,000 feet of film a day, with the grand total running to 275,000 to 300,000 feet of film a picture. This is cut, edited, and pieced until the film as exhibited will not run more than 12,000 feet.

Hollywood glamour is for the fan magazines. Actually, film production is an exacting business, carried on under pressure.

You will find out whether your completed picture is good or bad at the previews which the studios put on in and around Los Angeles.

If the audience just sits there, with hardly a ripple of interest or laughter, you gradually sink lower and lower in your seat. And all around Hollywood next day you hear that you have turned out a flop, that you are on the down grade as a producer, a bit "corny" in your ideas, definitely on the way out.

But if you produce a box office success, there are praises all round. Congratulatory tele-

grams, Cables. Personal calls. You are on the way up. You are a genius . . . in Hollywood, anyway . . . and you will get

your money back and maybe another million besides. —*J. Hubbard Chamberlin, condensed from Nation's Business, New York.*



Women Analysed

"WOMEN are more cruel than men in civil wars and outbreaks of mob violence," says Professor J. C. Flugel of London University. "Many instances of fiendish cruelty by women have been reported during the Spanish war," he adds. "But women behave like this only at times of great popular excitement. The reason—their make-up is more emotional than that of the male.

"On the other hand, women are more often capable of extreme devotion, tenderness, and self-sacrifice."

Feminists who insist that men are the inferior sex, and elderly clubmen who belittle the capacities of women, are equally absurd, according to Dr. Flugel.

"Women feel pain with slightly more acuteness than men, but as a rule make less fuss about it.

"The greater tactfulness of women in social life is due to their sensitivity. But sensitivity also has its disadvantages. For one thing, it gives them a more marked tendency to become hysterical.

"In general intelligence tests the differences between men and woman are infinitesimal. But the woman has a greater mental slickness. This is easy to notice in the less-educated sections.

"Go into the house of a lonely bush family. The husband has only a few monosyllables to utter, but his wife will usually have a fluent line of conversation.

"In an emergency the male worker comes off best. Women lack the stamina to stand the strain of high-pressure work.

"Geniuses—people who make history—are predominantly male. But idiots, who stand at the other extreme of humanity, are usually male also."—*Smith's Weekly.*