

Scented Movies Use Hundreds of Chemicals In An Effort to Lure Fans Back by Nose

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CHICAGO—In a small, cluttered basement room of the Cinestage movie theater here, bespectacled, Swiss-born Hans Laube carefully measures and blends some 200 chemical mixtures with such names as allilysottiozionat and methyltranilisauremethylester.

Mr. Laube's endeavors are part of the latest in a long string of efforts by the motion picture industry to win back audiences that have been lured away by television. From Mr. Laube's subterranean "laboratory" will emanate 43 separate odors, from the scent of roses (*heckenrose iglantinis*) to the smell of horses (*acetate de paracresyle*).

Such wide-ranging odors make up the Smell-O-Vision process, ballyhooed by its backers as the third major phase in motion picture evolution: "First, they moved, then they talked, now they smell." The public's first sniff of Smell-O-Vision will come today, when *Scent of Mystery*, a 2¼-hour, mystery-comedy has its world premiere at the Cinestage here.

"Something extra-special is needed nowadays to drag people out of their homes and away from their television sets and we feel Smell-O-Vision is that sort of thing," says *Scent of Mystery's* 30-year-old producer, Michael Todd, Jr., the son of the late, well-known showman.

Leaner Years

There's no question the movies have come upon leaner years. In 1948, during television's infancy, world-wide box office receipts of U.S. films totaled \$2,445,000,000. A decade later, the total was only \$1,880,000,000. In 1959, according to an official of the Motion Pictures Producers Association, receipts climbed "a few percentage points" over 1958's total, but remained well below the gross of earlier years.

Bigger screens and better films, contend motion picture officials, have helped halt the downward trend in receipts. Such innovations as Smell-O-Vision, claims young Mr. Todd, represent an additional attempt to win back moviegoers. "Our process is certainly no panacea

for all movies' ills," however, says the dark-haired producer.

Mr. Todd's hopes for Smell-O-Vision haven't been dampened by the slow start of Aroma-Rama, a recently-launched attempt by Walter Reade, Jr., a film distributor, to regain movie fans in New York. A multi-scented tour of China, the Aroma Rama production has been "a bit disappointing," according to Mr. Reade, possibly because its documentary format doesn't appeal to the "widest possible audience." Undeterred, Mr. Reade has scheduled additional openings for Aroma Rama in the next month or so in Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., and Toronto. "We're also negotiating in Philadelphia, Miami, Boston, New Orleans and Houston," says Mr. Reade.

A Mile of Pipes

To try to insure the success of Smell-O-Vision, Mr. Todd has poured over \$2 million into *Scent of Mystery*. He has installed over a mile of plastic pipe in the Cinestage, which he owns. The pipe, which runs through each row of seats in the theater, contains a tiny perforation by each seat. Odors from Mr. Laube's laboratory are pumped up through the pipe and out into the theater through the tiny holes. The appropriate smell is triggered automatically by signals on the film's soundtrack. In the AromaRama process, by contrast, the odors are injected through the theater's ventilating system.

Because each individual whiff is so small, claims Mr. Todd, the Cinestage's normal ventilation system will be sufficient to "clear" the house before it's time for the next odor. Installing the equipment necessary to circulate the smells at the Cinestage, Mr. Todd reports, has cost \$50,000. Subsequent installations at additional theaters, however, will cost slightly less "because we'll have had some experience," says the producer.

Mr. Todd claims customers with allergies to certain smells won't have to worry. "All our odors have been checked out with toxicologists," says the producer. "If folks start sneezing at our flower smells, for example, it will be purely psychosomatic."