

THE THEATRE

Pictorial Splendor.

Men Make Steel, a film made in Technicolor in the properties of subsidiary companies of the United States Steel Corp., produced by Roland Reed Productions, with RCA sound system, narrated by Edwin C. Hill, with music score by Robert Armbruster and musical consultation by Vittorio Gianini, shown at a private preview held by the steel corporation at the Waldorf-Astoria.

A brilliant achievement in documentary photography, *Men Make Steel* entirely disposes of any skepticism which may have existed regarding the use of Technicolor for such a purpose. One of the most impressive features of this first complete industrial film in sound and color is the bold authenticity of its views of work in progress inside the great mills.

To the greater interest of any kind of audience, photographic technique as developed by the Hollywood studios has been employed, so that the film has its pictorial splendor as well as its purely graphic interest. But this glimpse of the steel makers and modern steel-making machinery at work is not a picture post card version. Lithography has not equalled these effects. The cameramen stalk their subject in action at the closest possible range, train their lenses into the blazing volcanic mouths of Bessemer converters and soaking pits and "bring 'em back alive."

Persons familiar only with the studio tints achieved by color films in the case of garden scenes and debutantes' gowns are due for a surprise in this close-up of "Big Steel" on the job, in its clock-like but man-governed operations, extending from the open-pit ore mines at the head of the lakes to the rolling mill shipping platform. The film preserves the drab light of the mill's interior. It is the mill's twilight which falls on the faces of the men at work, on the grimy black of the furnaces and crane cabs or the hard flat gray of the columns of ingots when the great hoods of their molds have been lifted and they stand cooling. Even more surprising and reassuring, however, in regard to the impression of reality, are the most vivid and spectacular of the color "shots". Not only are color tones of the orange-reds and the yellow-whites faithfully reproduced but the preview audience in the darkened ballroom at the Waldorf-Astoria blinked and very nearly closed its eyes altogether at the blazing cascade of sparks across the screen and torrent of molten metal when the Bessemer converters came down.

The producers call their picture "a backstage tour of the world's largest industrial show". Dazzling as much of it is, the drama is

not all pure spectacle. The essential processes, from mine to mill, including the loading of the Great Lakes ore fleet, are demonstrated. Reinforced by a quota of the younger men, "old timers" in the mills enact their regular roles as the action unfolds and the glowing I-beams and ribbons of steel come over the rolls. For more technical purposes a black-and-white version also has been made but *Men Make Steel* contains the essentials of the technique.

In the main it is a picture of machines, chemistry, electricity, physics, in a word, technique; it is elemental power in combination with microscopic refinement of precision and instrument. But you are aware always that men are at the controls. The picture demonstrates a double truth in the title: *Men Make Steel*. This story of the machine, the back-stage view of the colossal and complicated industrial structure is also the story of genius and workmanship. The steel-makers have been a proud race and *Men Make Steel* is in the tradition. They have come a long, long way from the forge in the forest.

Workmanship of a high degree exists also in the cutting rooms of a modern motion picture company and the new film about steel is skilfully edited. It moves swiftly and dramatically. In addition to the detail of the mechanical phases, moreover, it gives in a few swift strokes a broad impression of the importance of steel in modern civilization. Edwin C. Hill's running commentary is clear, simplified and to the point. The new film is intended to take the place of a black-and-white film, *The Story of Steel*, made in 1926 before the advent of color and sound. It will be available for educational and industrial purposes and might possibly be released also for general circulation.

—STIRLING BOWEN

New March of Time

Feature of the latest edition of *March of Time*, which had a preview showing yesterday, is an account of Hitler's annexation of Austria entitled "Nazi Conquest—No. 1." Significance of the title, according to *March of Time* editors, is that the conquest is realization of the first of several objectives which the German dictator outlined in his 14-year-old plan set forth in "Mein Kampf." After following the world shaking events in Austria, from the standpoint of coverage of the happenings by radio press news services, the episode ends with the question of what is to come next. For, the film reminds us, both Russia and France were also listed as objectives in the Hitler book.

The other episode in the current edition concerns penal conditions in the United States, with a not-too-thorough resume of efforts being made toward prison reform.