

20th Century-Fox seeks tv leadership

SALE OF POST-'50's TO NBC FINANCES MAJOR EXPANSION INTO MEDIUM

They are busy this week at 20th Century-Fox Television. A \$1 million pilot production program has a big staff hopping in a determined assault by a major motion picture studio for tv leadership. To help finance the effort, 20th Century-Fox has some \$6 million from its post-1950 movie sale to NBC (BROADCASTING, Feb. 20).

Across the country from the humming production scene, Peter G. Levathes, president of 20th Century-Fox Television, last week was in his New York office contemplating a workload that is at least doubled. Depending on the success of network negotiations of the next month or so, it could be even bigger.

Mr. Levathes views the ferment calmly, quietly explaining the mushrooming growth. About the NBC deal:

The first-year fee for NBC's pick of 30 from more than 150 recent motion pictures is something around \$6 million. This will go higher if NBC chooses to exercise its option in the two years following.

Full length U. S.-produced motion pictures in network prime time, an idea with a certain amount of shock value, is to Fox Tv a logical extension of the trend to longer programs. "Networks were asking us for 90-minute programs," Mr. Levathes says. "Now, this is a creative problem of the first

magnitude, and it led to the question, 'why not take features?'" The eventual acceptance of this idea was "a natural and inevitable development," as he sees it. Slotting feature films as prime program fare, as NBC will do in Saturday 9 p.m. time, can be valuable, he explains, both tactically and to build circulation. As Mr. Levathes understands it, the shows will be on an "open end" basis to allow for uncut screening.

And Then ■ The future sale of the post-1950 pictures can only be enhanced by network showing, Mr. Levathes is convinced. He refers to syndication successes of post-network tv series and explains that one national broadcast doesn't come anywhere near exhausting a show's potential.

Only a couple of sound stages on Fox's three lots remain in the service of theatrical features, the tv studio head reports. In the wake of a million-dollar production load in tv pilots, the company is planning studio changes for tv that will cost several millions. The building will get underway in the spring at the 60-acre main lot at "Fox Hills." (The three Fox locations are Hollywood's Beverly Hills, Western Avenue-Hollywood and Malibu Ranch, Calif.)

Much of the tv production will be done on location, which fits in with the company's basic tv philosophy, that

is to push back the frame and put the shown on a much broader canvas. This philosophy was signalled by *Adventures in Paradise*, which weathered a rocky introduction in the 1959-60 season on ABC, with some doctoring became a success and is on the books for next (its third) season in the same Monday 9:30-10:30 p.m. (EST) period. There are plans to take *Adventures in Paradise* out of its own west coast lagoon across the Pacific to Tahiti this summer.

On the Road ■ Next season's shows take 20th Century-Fox farther abroad and up and down the highways of this country. Film was rolling last week on these pilots:

Bus Stop, hour series based on the William Inge play, with Marilyn Maxwell, Joseph Cotten and Tuesday Weld in the cast, produced by Robert Bleas and directed by Don Siegel,

The Hunters, hour show to be shot in Africa, written and produced by Mr. Bleas, directed by Pete Lyon and featuring in the cast Brett Halsey, Skip Homeier, Guy Stockwell and others,

Margie, half-hour storyline taken from a 20th Century-Fox movie that starred Jeanne Crain, now with Cynthia Pepper in the title role, produced by Hal Goodman and Larry Klein and directed by Jack Sher,

House on the Rue Riviera, 60-minute program directed by Douglas Heyes and starring John Ericson, Richard Anderson, Jayne Mansfield and Diana Trask,

The Ginger Rogers Show, a half-hour with the star in twin roles and Charles Ruggles in a key part, and

The Jayhawkers, a post-civil war, hour western, with Dan Dailey, Ann Blyth and others in the cast.

The Circus, which had been discussed as an hour series of specials, has been postponed by Mr. Levathes.

Insurance ■ All are co-production deals with networks except one, *The Ginger Rogers Show*, and the heavy pilot activity is in addition to Fox's regular workload on *Adventures in Paradise*, *Hong Kong* and *Dobie Gillis*. The half-hour *Dobie* show is still uncommitted for CBS next season, but dopesters had it pencilled on their network forms early this month (BROADCASTING, Feb. 6).

The new production budget completes Fox's network spread. *House on the Rue Riviera* is with NBC, *The Jayhawkers* with CBS and the rest with ABC, which also was the interested



Marilyn Monroe is a standout in 'There's No Business Like Show Business,' one of the post-1950 package of

30 movies NBC has scheduled for Saturday night. The films were bought from 20th Century-Fox for \$6 million.