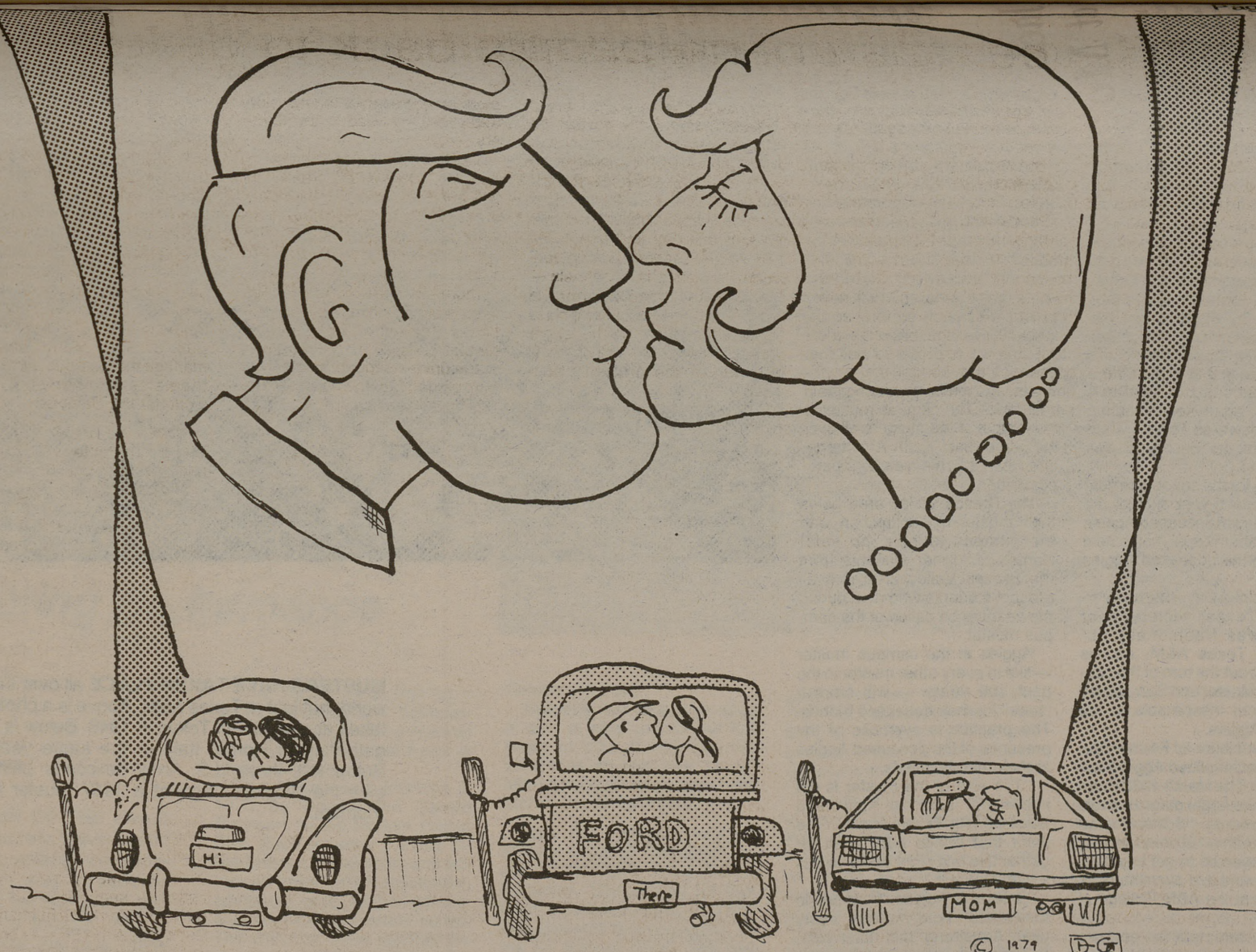


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ies sooner and ran larger advertisements.

The Schulmans schedule the top films at the Manor East 3 first, then the Campus (for the benefit of students without cars), and at the Skyway last. The Skyway shows a lot of movies made for drive-in crowds, such as "The Pom-Pom Girls," and, during the summer, family movies like "The Wilderness Family."

Morris says the many days of bad weather this year has cut the Skyway's business.

But low drive-in attendance also gets back to the attitudes of the public. And the public's attitude has been that drive-ins show bad films and have poor sound and picture quality. But recent technological advances that solve these problems could stimulate a drive-in renaissance.

The latest way to get sound to the audience is to transmit it by low-powered radio to their AM car radios on a frequency no local station is using. This is called field radio, something Morris Schulman may try to get for the Skyway this summer. (Using your car radio even the duration of several movies will not run your battery down appreciably.)

Cinema Radio Corp. of New York has been in the field radio business about five years and is doing very well, according to Fred Schwartz, the company's president. He says that declining numbers of drive-ins is only a sectional thing and isn't hurting business.

"In the West and Southwest, the 'Sunbelt,' it's not declining at all," he says. A company that turns single screen drive-ins into multiple screen theaters also reports that most of its business is in the Sunbelt.

Cinema Radio's concept is to bury a herring bone antenna cable 8-12 inches deep under the drive-

in. An installation kit costs around \$12,000.

Cinema Radio's method, since it eliminates the need for speaker posts, allows a theater owner to make more money by fitting in more cars. Schwartz says that four cars will fit in where three would fit before. It also eliminates speaker theft. The Skyway loses 20 a week, the Schulmans say.

A different approach to field radio is used by Cine-Fi of California. That company, using the existing speaker posts, attaches a wire to the car's antenna with an alligator clip, or with a suction cup on antennas set into the windshield.

One of the joint developers of Cine-Fi was Pacific Theaters, a California movie theater chain. With 150 drive-ins, Pacific is the largest outdoor theater owner in the world. But the company's main efforts have been concentrated on improving picture quality.

Ambient light washing out the picture is only one problem affecting drive-in screens. In the summer when twilight is longer, movies have to be scheduled later, reducing the number of showings possible. Morris Schulman says he may not start showing his last feature at the Skyway until 1 a.m. in the summer.

Sometimes the screen needs to be hidden from the view of people not in the theater. Fences are costly, and only hide the screen from people outside the theater. Multi-screen drive-ins that show adult films can't show anything for families since their children might see the other screen. Thus, theater owners can't try to attract a whole segment of the movie-going population.

Pacific wanted to solve all these problems. Just recently, they did.

What the company came up with is a "containment screen"

developed jointly by Marlowe A. Pichel, formerly a scientist/technician and chief of the Xerox electro-forming division (the people who lighted the moon so that Neil Armstrong's moonwalk could be photographed), and Petro Vlahos, chief scientist for the Motion Picture Association of America and for the Association of Motion Picture and Television Producers.

According to Bob Selig, executive assistant to the president of Pacific Theaters, the containment screen directs the light so that the screen appears black to everyone outside the audience area, even those at the concessions stand, and is brighter than conventional screens by eight times.

The screen is composed of four-by-eight-foot modules covered with "lenticules" 1-16th inch in diameter and made of pure nickel coated with chromium. These shiny lenses can be tuned to reflect the light wherever it is wanted.

The containment screen is expensive — \$7 a square foot — since it uses two precious metals. A superstructure to attach the modules to could raise the price as high as \$60,000, Selig says.

But the containment screen allows drive-in owners more scheduling flexibility while eliminating fences, washed-out pictures, and late starting times. Pacific has already had several inquiries from companies in Australia, Canada and other countries where it is illegal for any part of the picture to be showing from outside a drive-in, Selig says.

The first containment screen will begin operation after Labor Day at the Los Altos, a three-screen theater in Los Angeles.

"For the prototype, we wanted to pick the worst (screen) we had," Selig says. Screen 2 of the Los

Altos is exposed to the world's largest Ford dealership, two major highways, and an apartment complex — quite a challenge for a screen in terms of ambient light and hiding the picture.

Selig is optimistic, not only about the containment screen, but about drive-ins in general. Though fewer drive-ins are operating than in the past, he says there are more drive-in screens. Adding two or more screens and dividing up the audience space has proven just as profitable to drive-ins as to indoor theaters.

Not only do multiple screens widen the appeal, but they allow a popular movie to carry financially one that proves unpopular. Most Pacific theaters, both drive-ins and indoor, are adding screens, Selig says.

He believes that drive-ins should compete with indoor theaters for top quality first run movies. Pacific's drive-ins open with top movies the same day as indoor theaters.

Selig also denies that drive-ins are "passion pits" anymore. Sixty-two percent of Pacific's drive-in movie-goers are young married couples with children, he says.

Perhaps drive-ins have come full circle, and are heading for another "golden age." This has already happened in the sunbelt. If drive-ins in the rest of the country adapt and innovate, they might regain their popularity with the general public. But if the sound and picture stay bad, people who don't intend to watch the movie anyway will still go to drive-ins.

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