

Optical Special Effects

CPSC 8150

Diagrams: *Special Effects: The History and
Technique* by Richard Rickitt

Figure 4 FILM GENERATIONS

When films are copied from negatives or positives, they are named according to their place in the production chain. Each copy is known as a generation, and each generation can be given a number of names.



1 *Original camera negative*. The film that is held in the camera during photography and subsequently developed into a negative. Also called the *master negative*.



2 *Master positive*. First-generation copy of original negative. Such copies are used in the production of special effects where a positive image of the highest quality is required – for rear projection, for example. Also called the *interpositive*.



3 *Internegative*. Made from copying the master negative on to reversal film to produce another negative, or by copying the master positive on to negative film. Many additional positives can be struck from this film – edited release prints, for example. Also called an *interdupe* or *colour reversal intermediate*.



4 *Release print*. Thousands of release prints may be made of a film to be sent to cinemas around the world.

film basics

Figure 5 CONTACT PRINTING

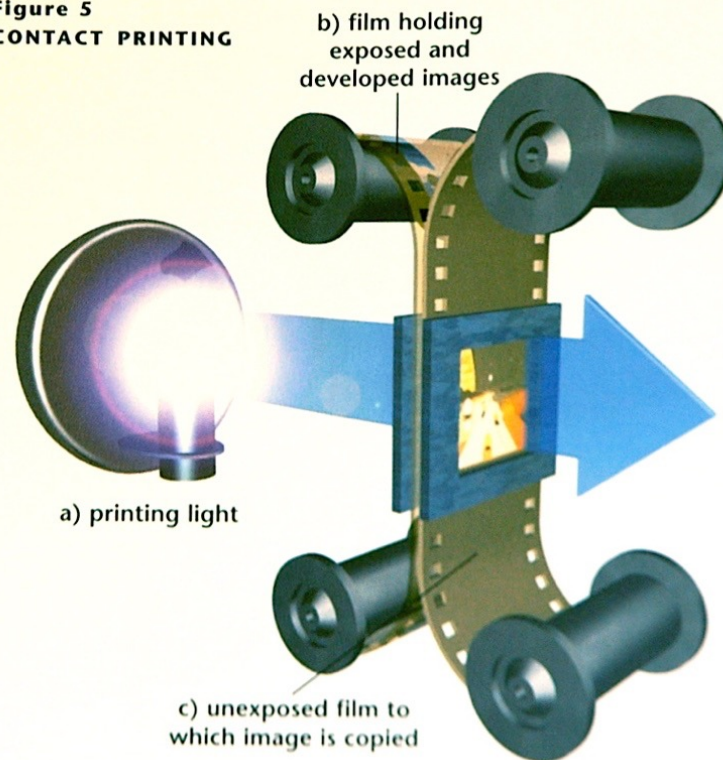


Figure 6 FILM FORMATS



Academy Ratio 1:33:1
(35mm unmasked)



Widescreen ratio 1:85:1
(35mm masked)



Anamorphic, 2.35:1, squeezed and unsqueezed



65mm negative

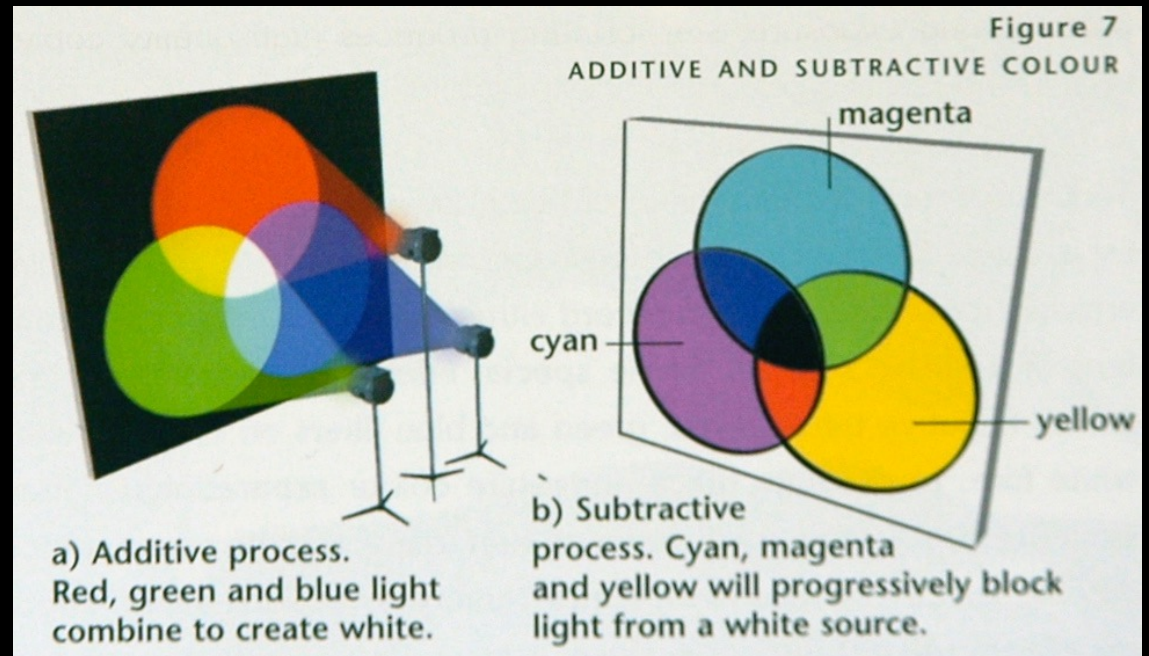


70mm print



VistaVision,
also known as '8' perf.

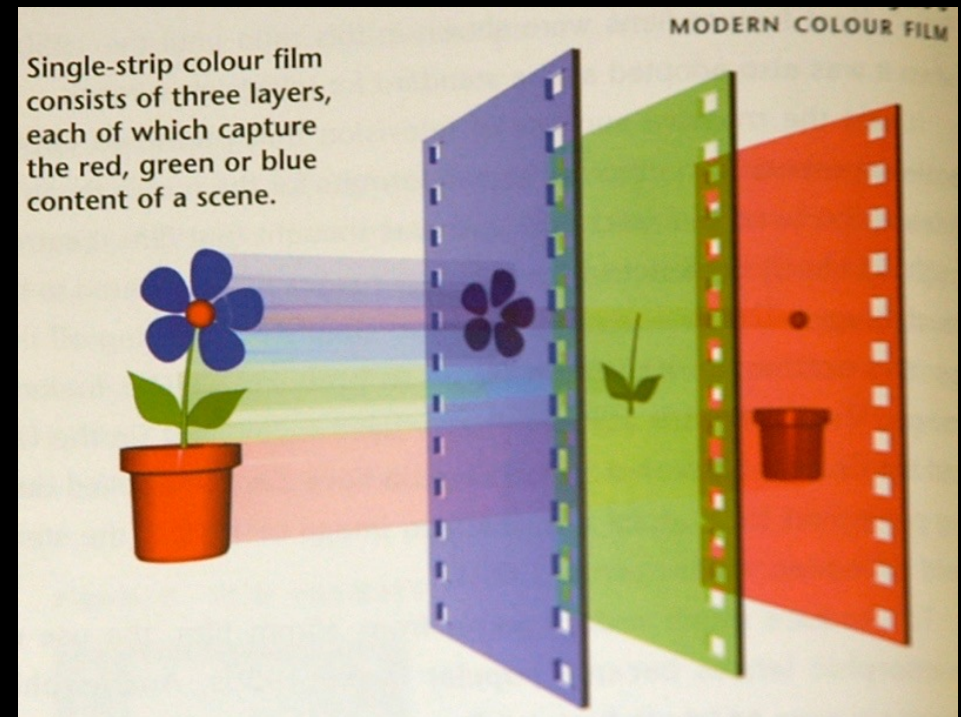
color and film



early effects work in B & W

technicolor used three strips

effects techniques needed
change with color



mattes

mattes and film

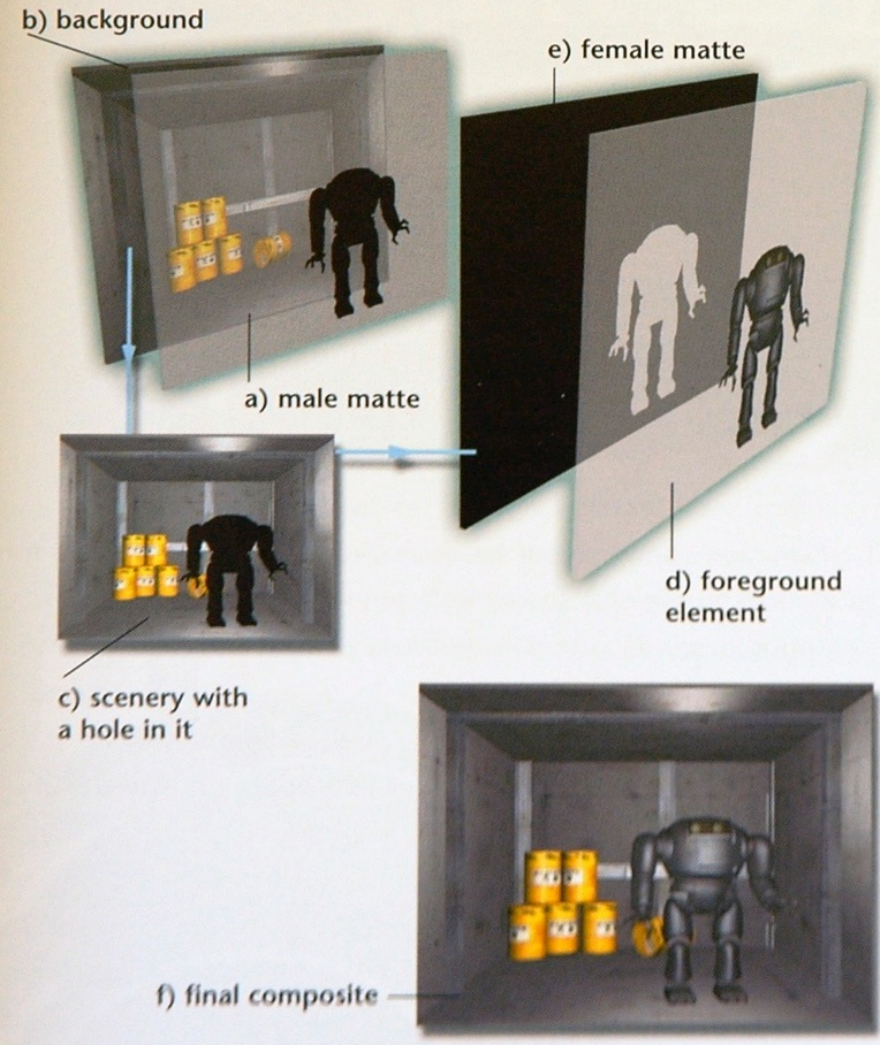
travelling mattes

Figure 9 THE NEED FOR TRAVELLING MATTES

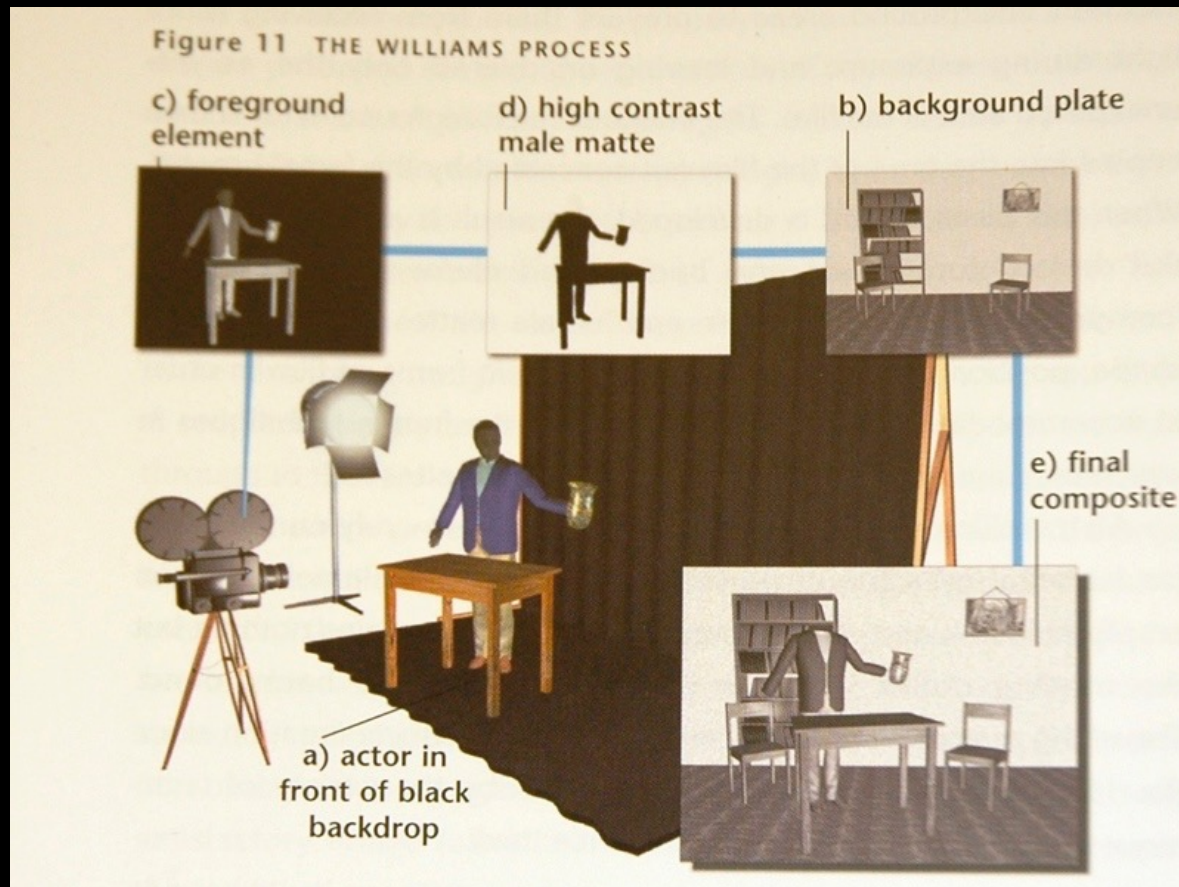


Without mattes the combination of two film elements leads to the ghosting of images.

Figure 10 THE PRINCIPLES OF TRAVELLING MATTES



The Williams Process
patented in 1918 by one-time
Keystone Kops cameraman
Frank Williams, also called the
black-backing travelling matte
process.

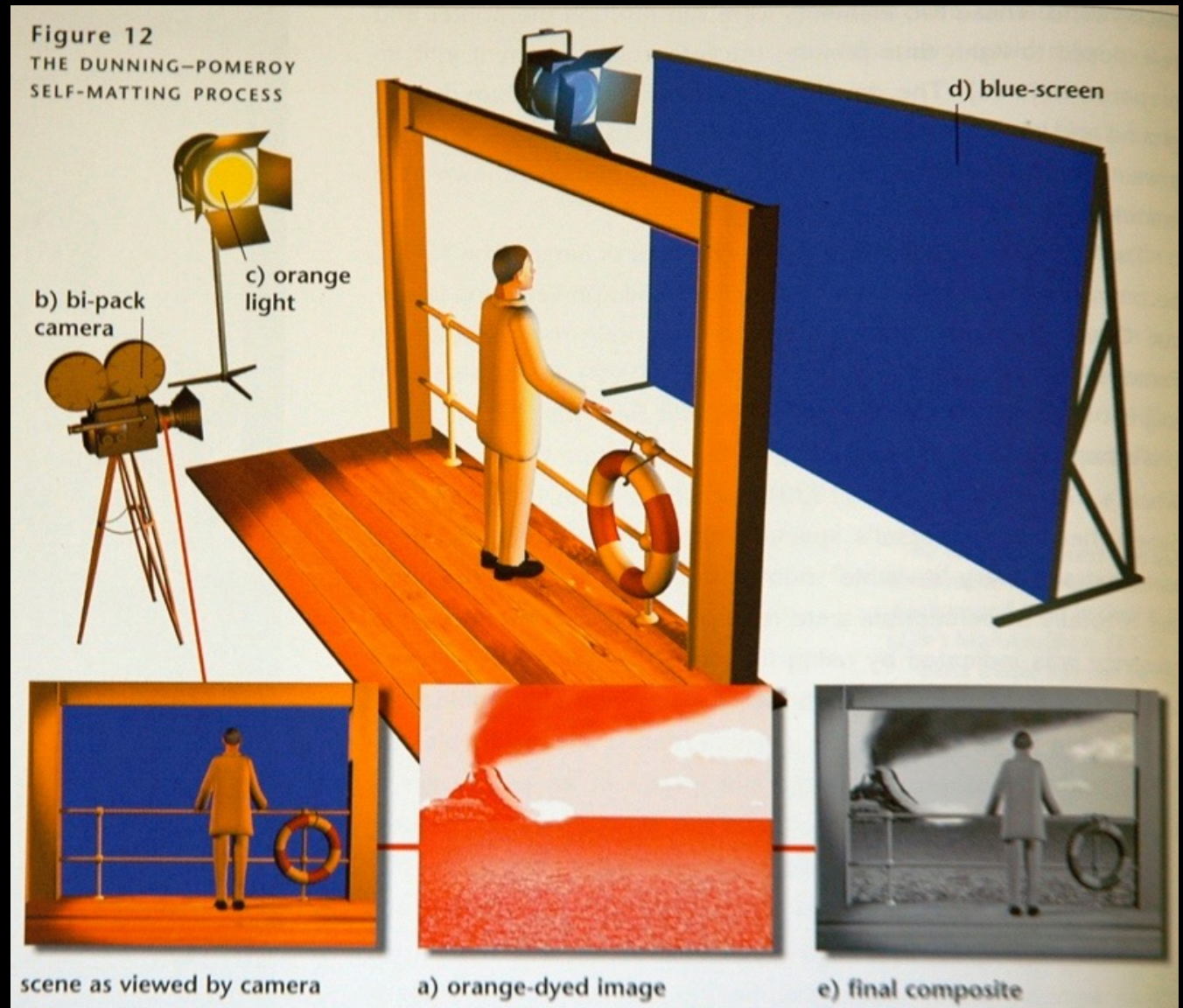


John P. Fulton's *The Invisible Man*
(1933) with Claude Rains.



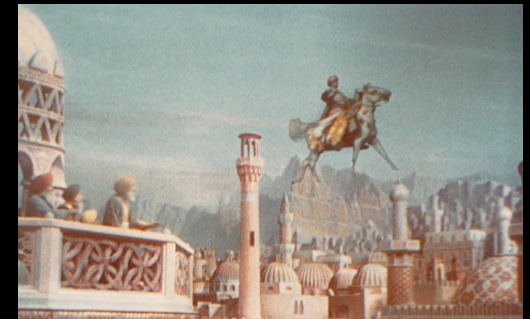
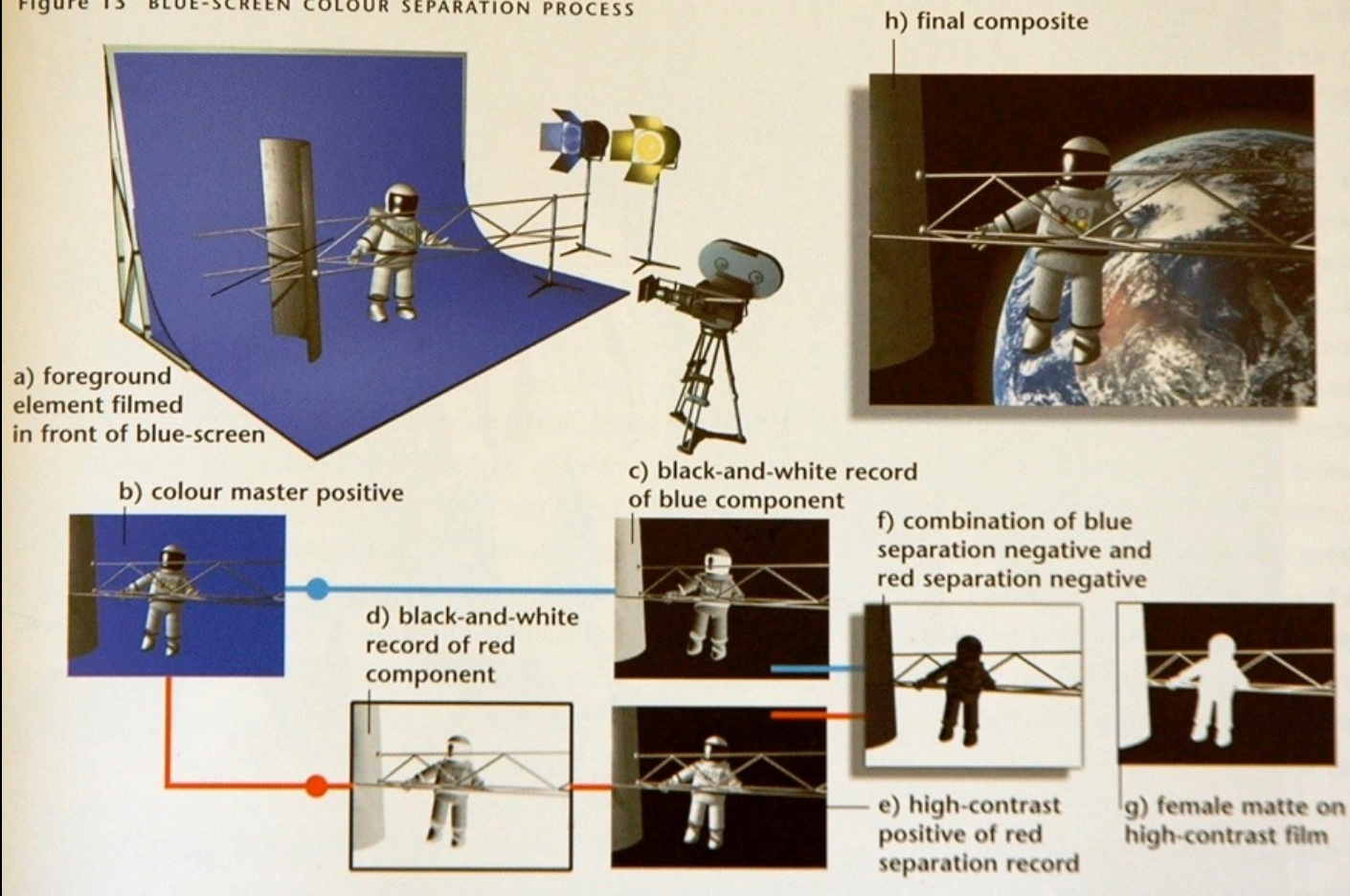
Cecil B. DeMille's
Manslaughter (1922).

The Dunning-Pomeroy Process: Pioneered by C. Dodge Dunning and later refined by Roy J. Pomeroy. Combined simultaneously using orange-dyed print of background in a bi-pack camera. It was used somewhat through the late 20s and early 30s in such films as *Trader Horn* (1931) and *Tarzan and the Ape Man* (1932).

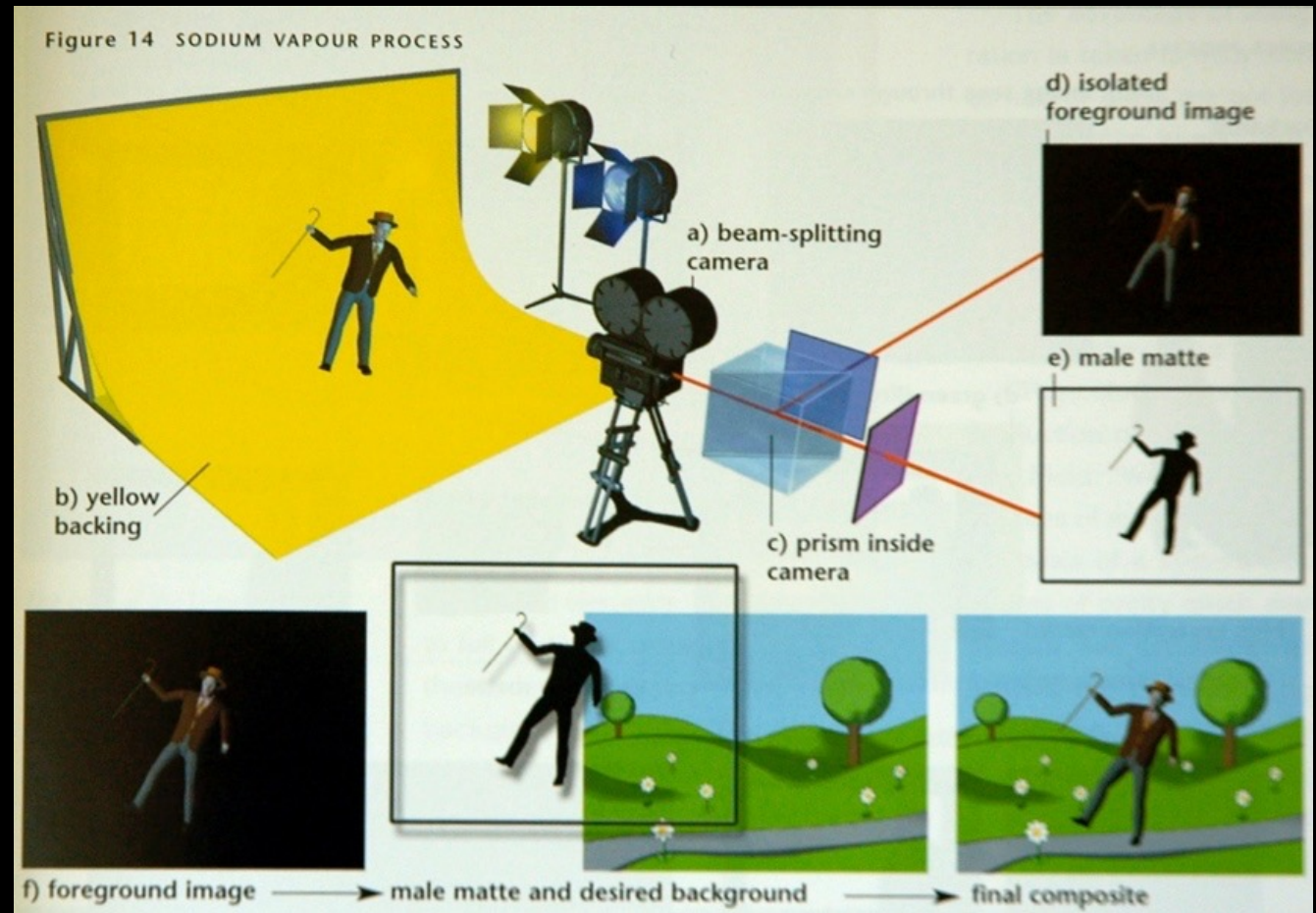


Blue-Screen Color Separation Process

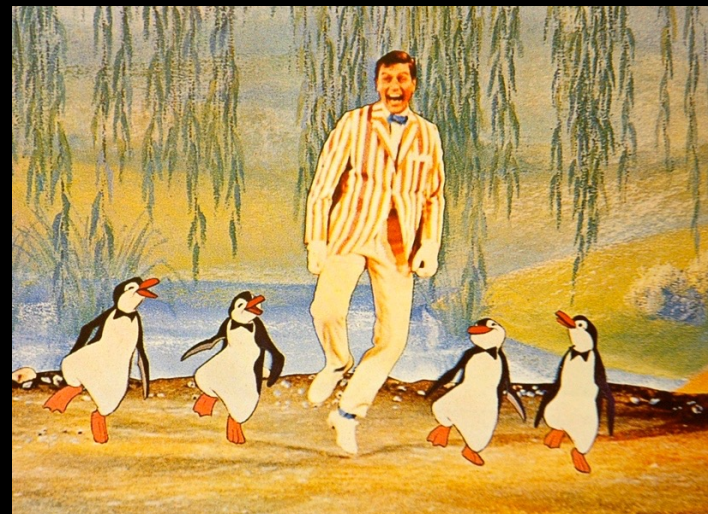
Figure 13 BLUE-SCREEN COLOUR SEPARATION PROCESS



Devised in France in the mid-1950s, developed practically by the Arthur J. Rank Organisation in England. Adopted and further developed by Ub Iwerks and others at the Walt Disney Studio. Used in many other films such as *The Birds* (1963) by Hitchcock.



Sodium-Vapour Process



Blue-Screen Color Difference Process: Developed and patented by Petro Vlahos of the Motion Picture Research Council. Widely used from the mid-1960s until digital alternatives in the late 1980s.

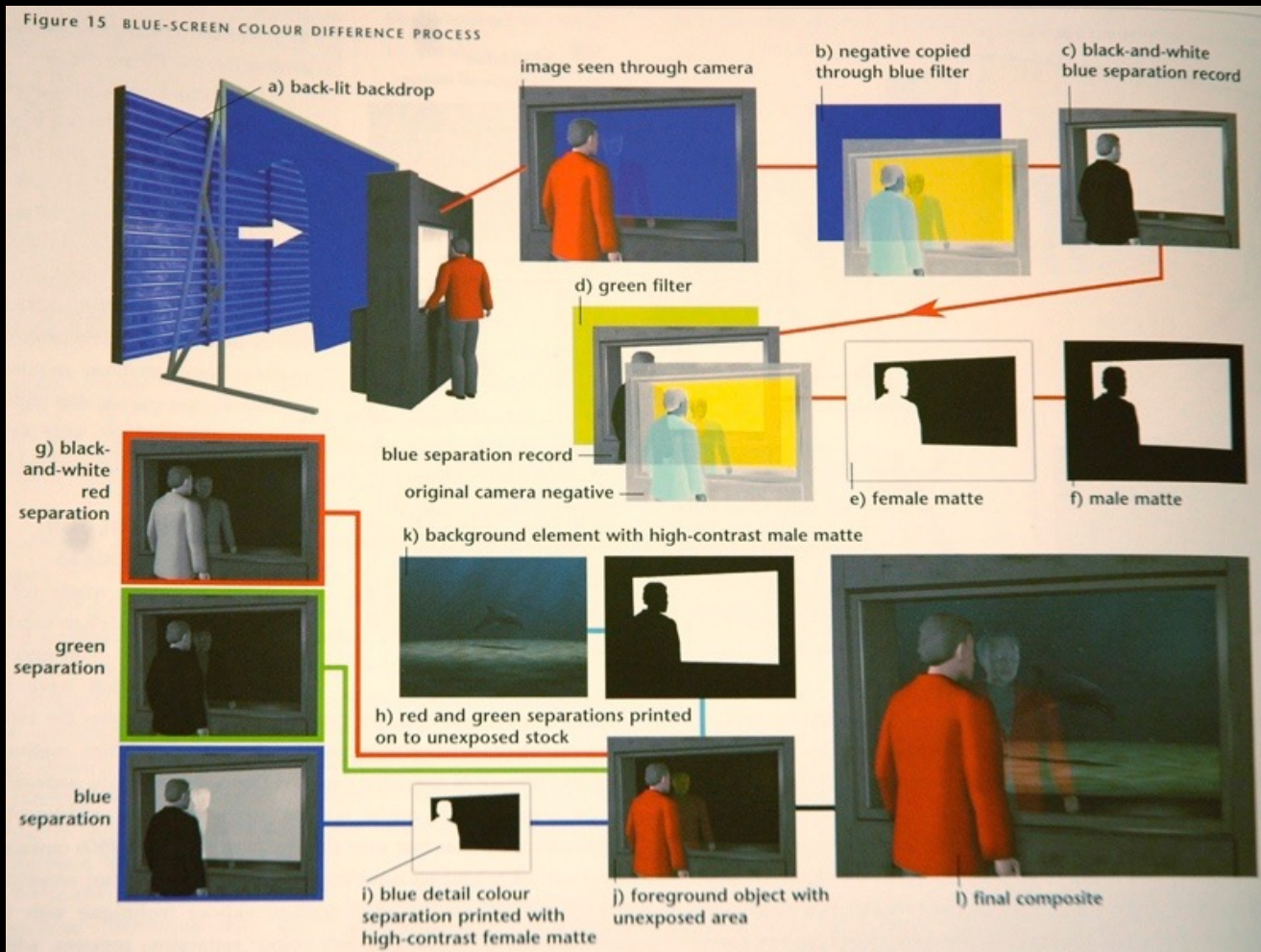
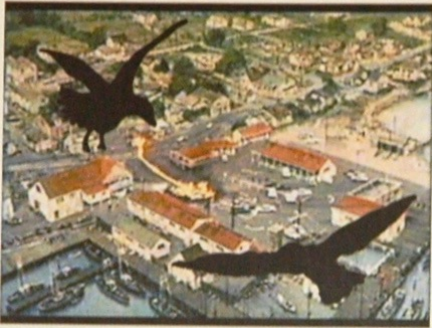


Figure 19 HAND-DRAWN MATTES
IN THE BIRDS



a) hand-drawn mattes



b) mattes and backdrop combined



c) final composite

Figure 16 THE ROTOSCOPE

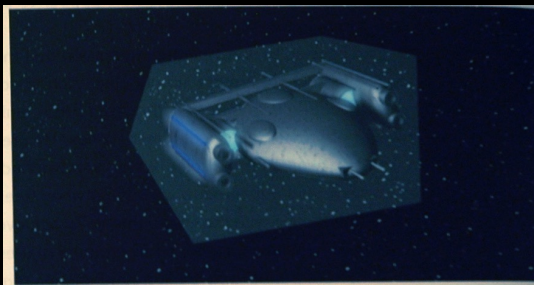
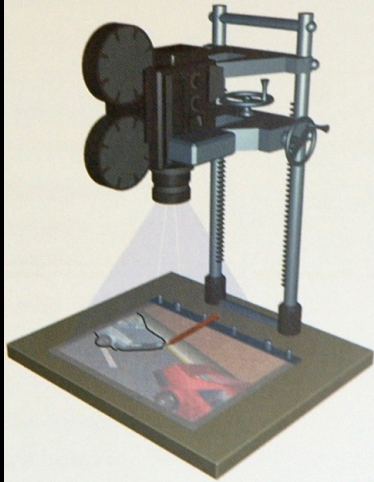
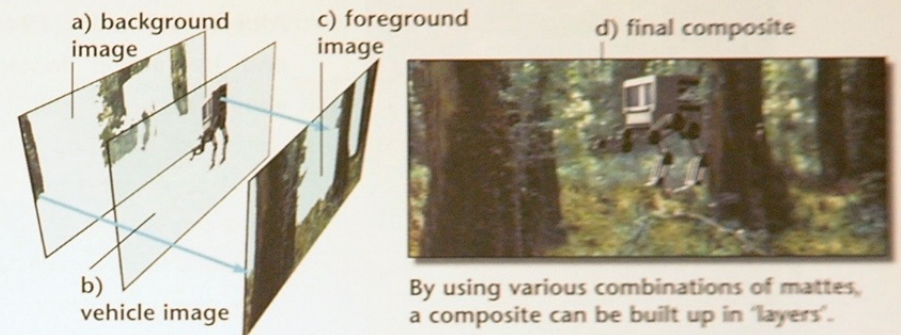


Figure 20 GARBAGE MATTES

These often show up as low-contrast boxes around flying objects when shown on television.

Hand-Drawn Mattes and Rotoscoping

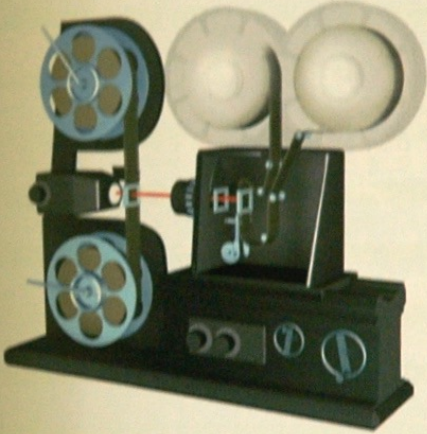
Figure 18 ROTOSCOPING



By using various combinations of mattes, a composite can be built up in 'layers'.



Figure 21
A SINGLE-HEADED OPTICAL PRINTER, as shown below, would be used for basic copying of film and adding simple fades or wipes.

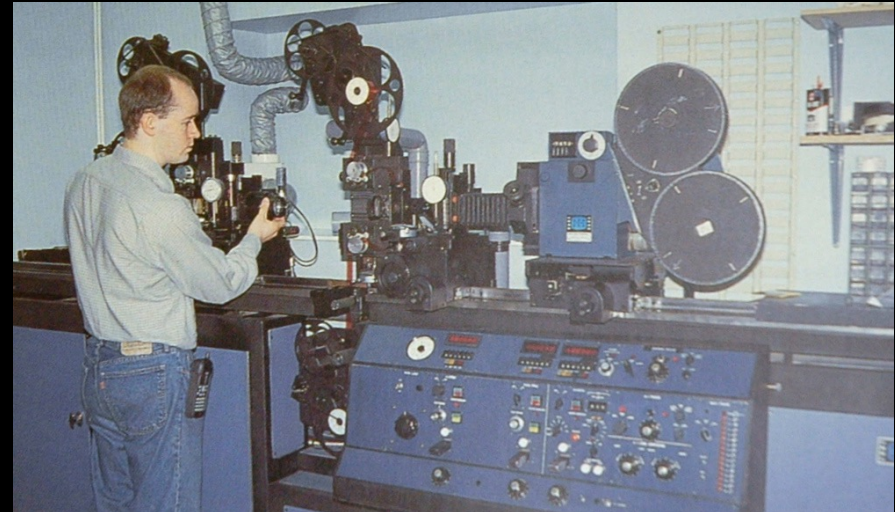


Optical Printing

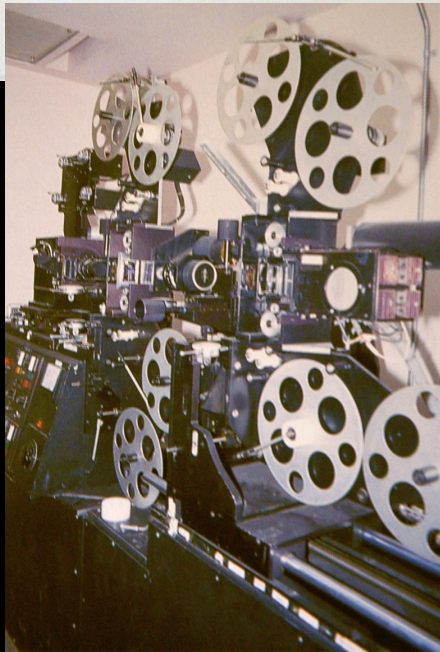


Linwood G. Dunn (1904–1998) began his working life in the movie business as an assistant cameraman for Pathé in 1925. After moving from New York to Hollywood, Dunn worked at a number of different studios until, in 1929, he was asked to do two days' work in the photographic effects department of

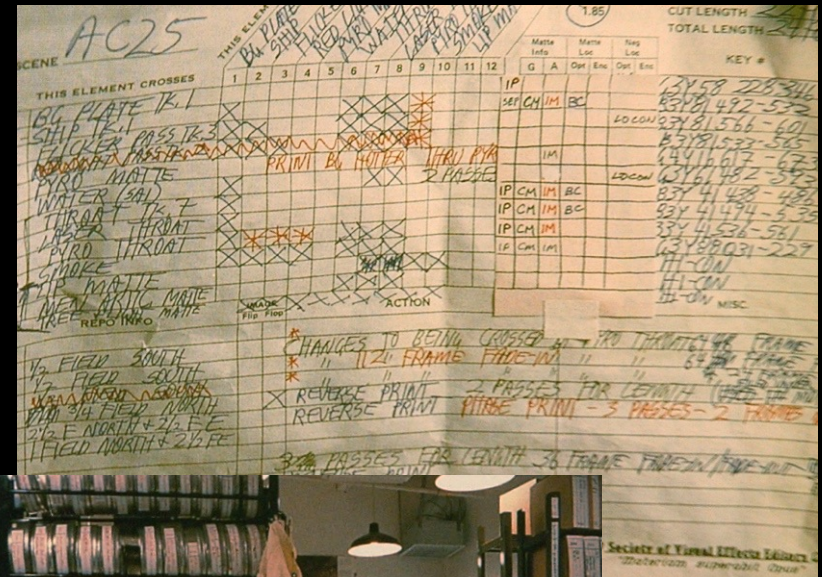
the newly established RKO Radio Pictures in Hollywood.



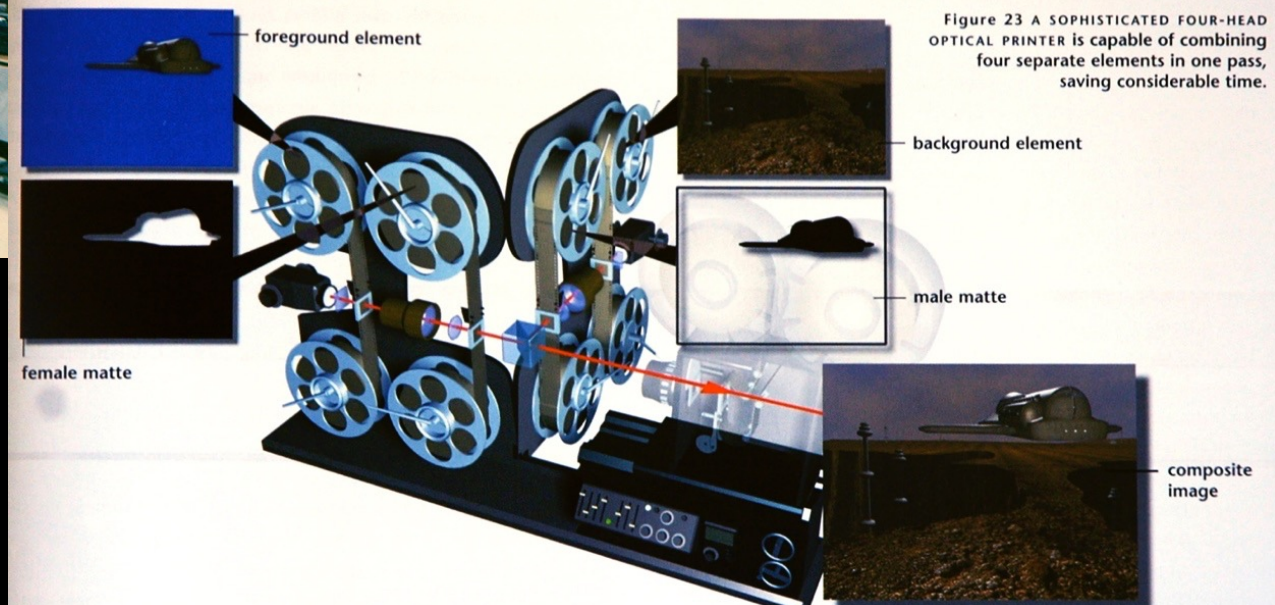
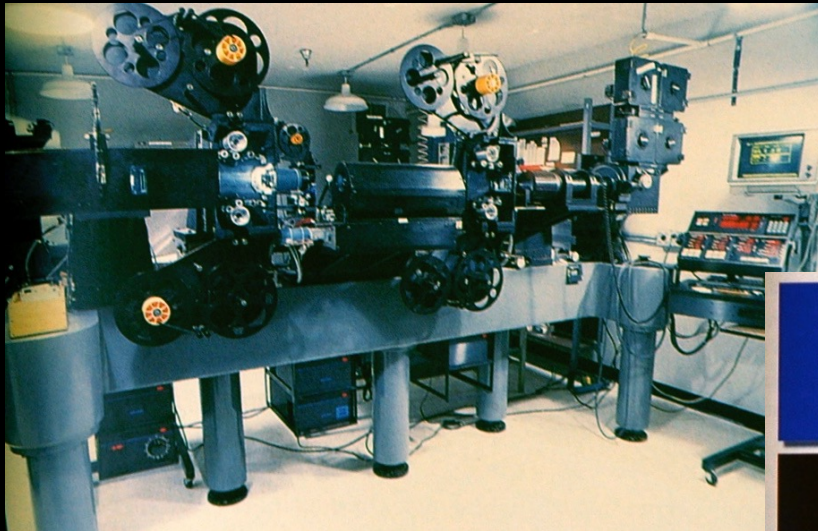
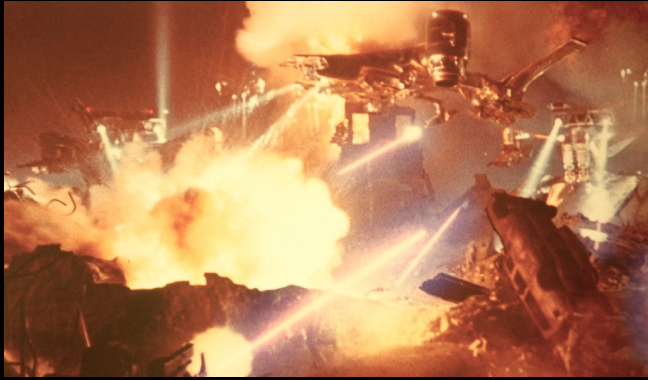
This can combine two images in each pass, making it ideal for creating titles. In the example shown, the black-and-white title card acts as its own matte.



Advances in Optical Printing

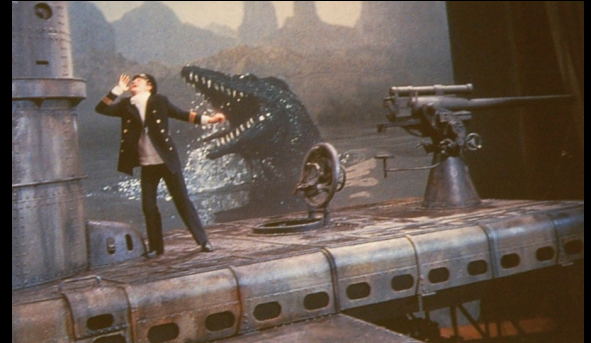
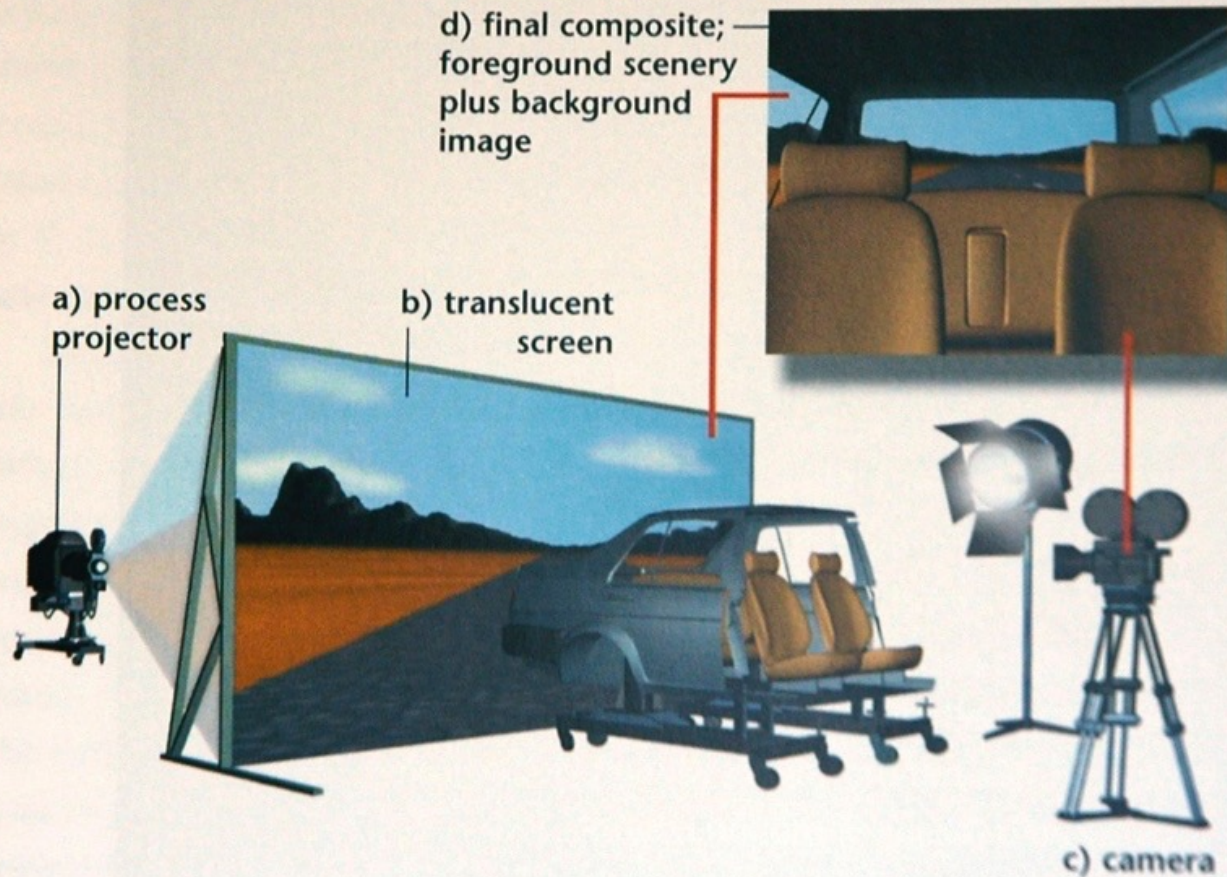


Widely used until the late 1980s.
Still in use today, though.

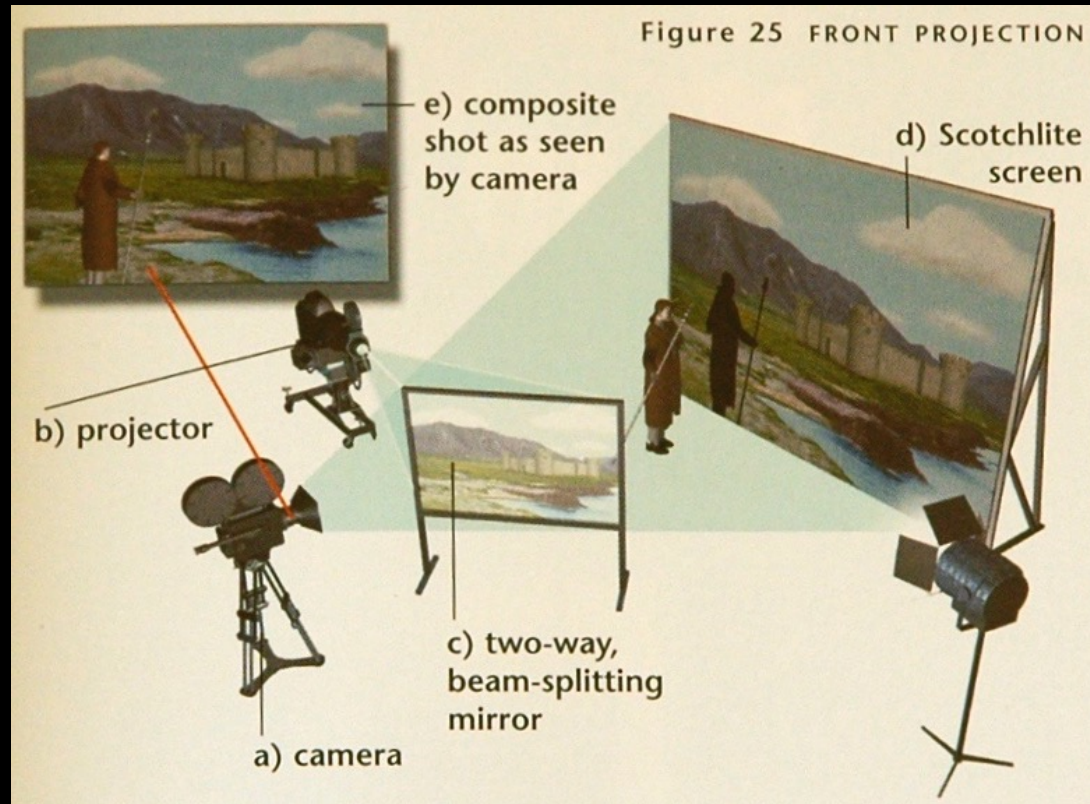


Rear Projection

Figure 24 BASIC REAR-PROJECTION SET-UP



Front Projection

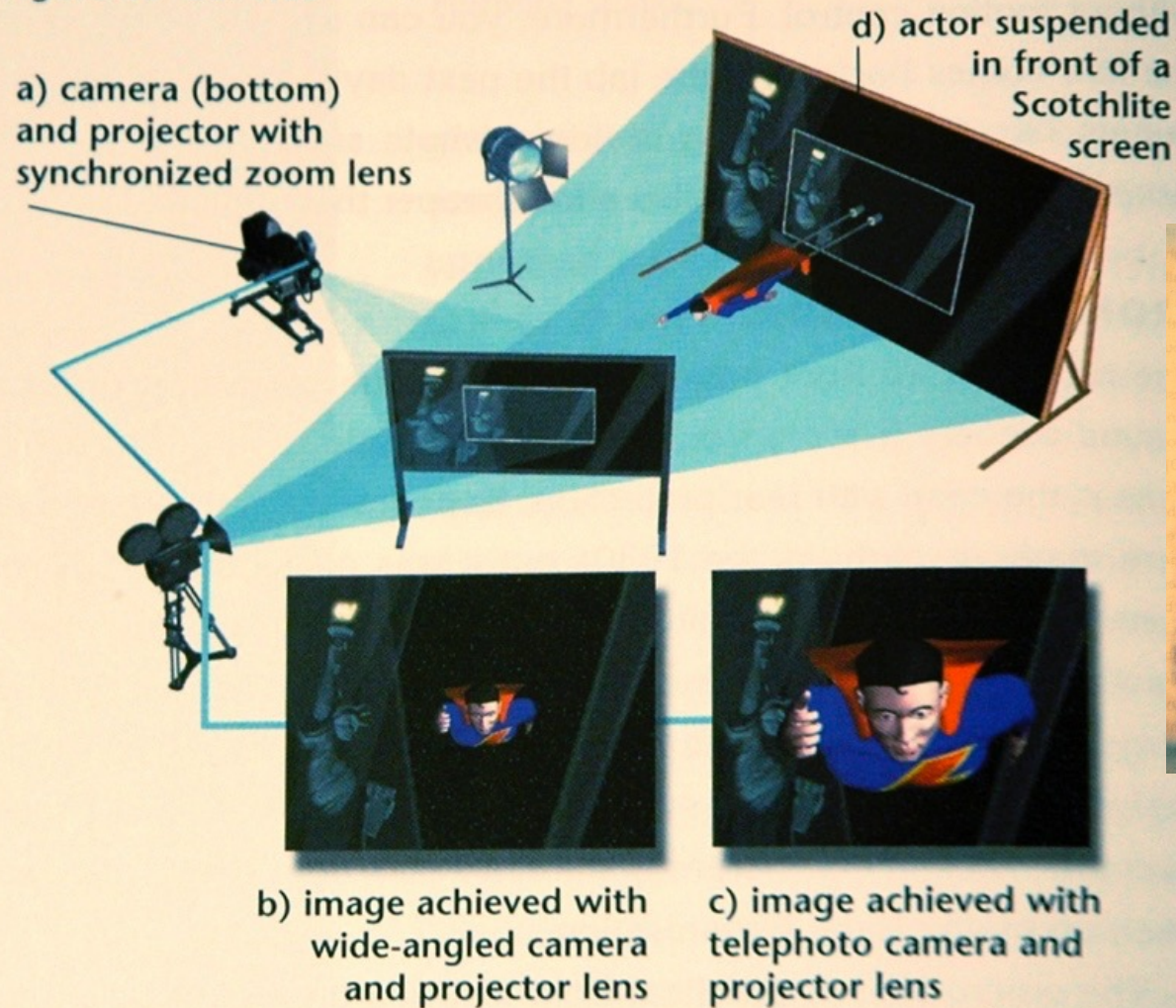


First used in a feature for Kubrick's
2001: A Space Odyssey (1968).



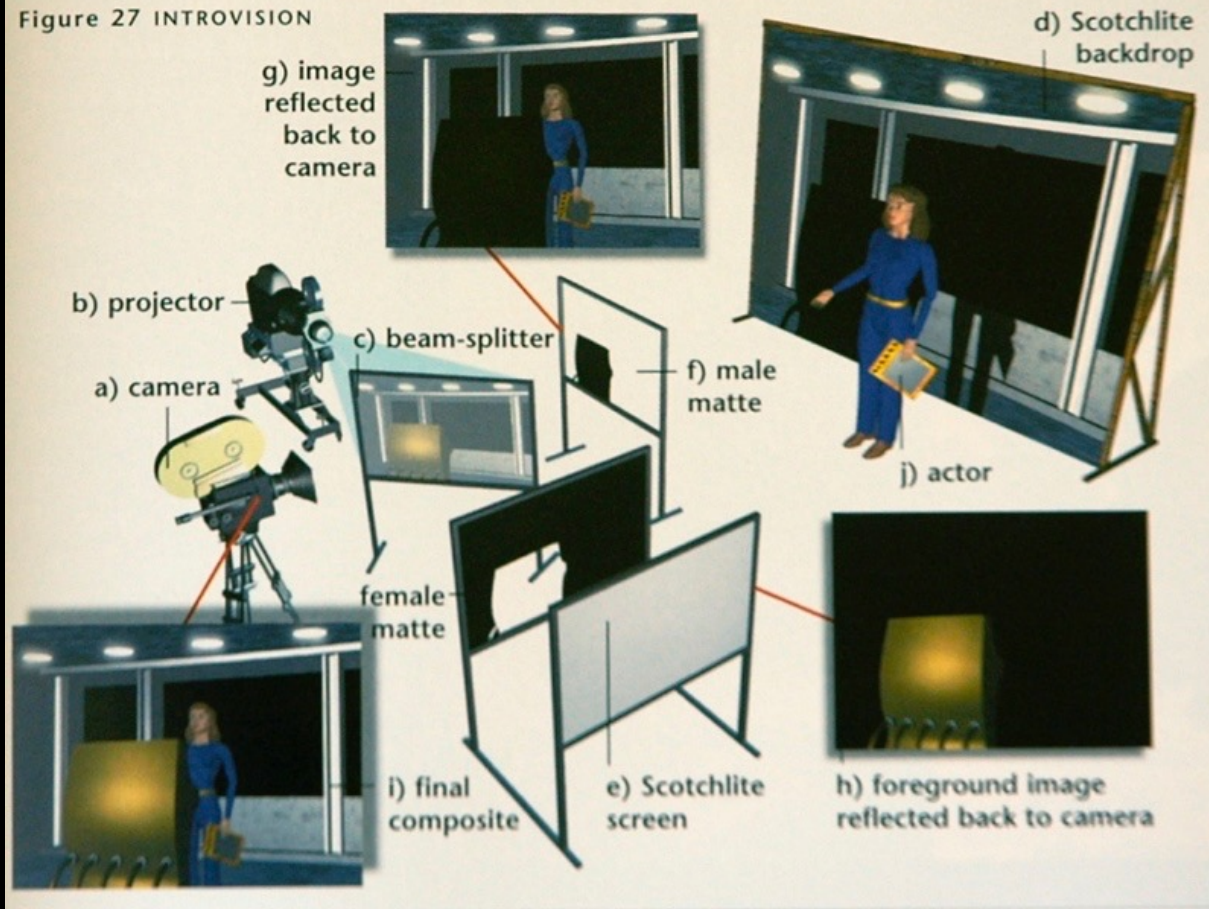
Zoptics

Figure 26 ZOPTICS



Introvision

Figure 27 INTROVISION



An odd era of analog video mixed in with early digital development.

