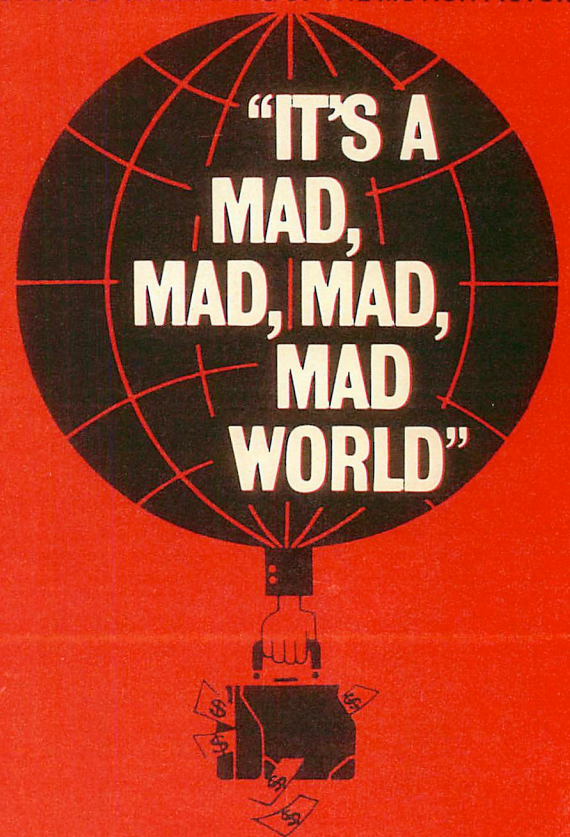


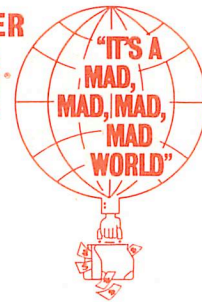
HOW THE "WORLD" WAS CREATED: THE STORY OF THE MAKING OF THE MOTION PICTURE





**HOW THE
"WORLD"
WAS CREATED:**
The story
of the making
of the
motion picture

STANLEY KRAMER
PRESENTS IN
CINERAMA



ITS CONCEPTION

The letter was just one of many to come to Stanley Kramer's desk that morning. In ten closely typed pages a screenwriter named William Rose had noodled an idea for a comedy and, as though to accent the humor involved, had sent it to the least likely of all producers, the man whose distinguished forte in motion picture making had always been serious films with something important to say.

The idea centered on a chase and it seemed to Kramer that here might be the basis for something he had long secretly envisioned—a movie "comedy to end all comedies," a pursuit fashioned of such monumental proportions that speed, excitement, suspense and laughter would be its hallmarks from start to finish. It would embrace a galaxy of comedic luminaries whose antics would storm up a veritable hurricane of unbridled fun and epic entertainment...

Rose, a transplanted native of Missouri who lived in Brighton, England, and who had written "Genevieve" and a number of other amusing British screen revels, was invited to a meeting with Kramer in Hollywood for a discussion of the letter. For a scant ten minutes the two batted around ideas for the development of the story, then the producer rose from his desk, extended his hand and said:

"You've got a deal."

"Now what do I do?" Rose asked the agent who accompanied him.

"You shake the man's hand," said the agent.

IT STARTS TO SPIN

Rose went back to Brighton and that summer met with Kramer in the South of France to complete work on his outline. Another year passed before the writer returned to Hollywood with a 375-page first-draft script on which his wife, Tania, had collaborated. It bore the title "Something a Little Less Serious," an obeisance to the imposing dramatic caliber of the films with which Kramer had always been associated. But it gave way soon to "One Damn Thing After Another" and then the writer came up with "It's A Mad World." Kramer bid two mads, Rose doubled him and the story got its final title, "It's A Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World." At one point somebody suggested a fifth mad but this was voted down as redundant.

Meanwhile, as Rose polished the final version of his script and hewed it down to 340 pages, Kramer set his staff to work on pre-production planning. The story covered a lot of real estate. Kicking off from an easternmost point

of the Colorado desert in Southern California it traversed 200 miles of the burning sink, jumped the San Bernardino mountain range, and traveled the long coastal plain from Ventura to San Diego.

Veteran production manager Clem Beauchamp sent location manager William Mull to scour the Southland for proper shooting sites; art director Rudolph Sternad began to prepare 1,700 drawings, blueprints and models of the exterior and interior settings required; special effects expert Danny Lee started riddling out machinery and devices for his arcane activities; ace stuntman Carey Loftin began enrollment of a team of 33 film daredevils who would risk their necks for no reward but money; first assistant director Ivan Volkman began preparing the schedules that would detail when and where every foot of film would be shot; commitments were made with construction, transportation, electrical, makeup, wardrobe, property, grip and painting crews and a mobile commissary; and Ernest Laszlo, one of the great camera artists of the industry, was engaged as cinematographer. Helicopters and a variety of private planes, to photograph and be photographed, were acquired.

It was beginning to spin, all right.

THE STARS COME OUT

Kramer had envisioned a galaxy of stars for his world; he wound up with the firmament. There are 15 principal roles; 15 brilliant comedy virtuosos were signed to portray them. *Spencer Tracy*, the true-blue—but fading—chief of police detectives. *Milton Berle*, the pill nibbling president of an edible seaweed company. *Dorothy Provine*, his beauteous wife. *Ethel Merman*, her harridan, bellowing mother. *Dick Shawn*, the handsome, fast-acting, slow-thinking beach bum. *Sid Caesar*, the dentist who can't bear pain in his patients. *Edie Adams*, his curvaceous spouse. *Buddy Hackett* and *Mickey Rooney*, the daft gagwriters. *Phil Silvers*, the bespectacled, out-of-work piano player. *Terry-Thomas*, the English Yankee-phobe. *Jonathan Winters*, the massive-shouldered, peanut-brained truck driver. *Eddie "Rochester" Anderson* and *Peter Falk*, the bewildered, meter-padding taxicab drivers. And *Jimmy Durante*, the stickup artist who meets a violent demise. No "cameo" or vignette roles, these; every one a starring, picture-length characterization.

Casting was really no problem at all. Everybody wanted to get into the act. But there *was* one proviso. Since most of the stars were only free in the summer from TV, night club and theatrical commitments it would be necessary to shoot the picture during the mid-year months.

For secondary parts Kramer provided a glittering array of famous names and faces, many of whom, in their own time, had shone as brightly as the novas: Buster Keaton, ZaSu Pitts, Joe E. Brown, Leo Gorcey, Edward Everett Horton, William Demarest, Jim Backus, Paul Ford, Madlyn Rhue, Arnold Stang, The Three Stooges, Carl Reiner, Don Knotts, Jesse White, Ben Lessy, Sterling Holloway, Barbara Pepper, Sammee Tong, Marvin Kaplan, Norman Fell, Chick Chandler, Ben Blue, Alan Carney, Tom Kennedy and Barrie Chase.

Then Kramer cast another 65 speaking roles and that was that.

STANLEY'S INFERNO

In the mild dawn of a mid-April morning 64 pieces of motorized equipment bearing a cadre of stuntmen, 160 crew members, a corps of special effects artisans and five Ultra Panavision cameras snaked out of the company's Revue Studios headquarters and pointed toward the desert resort town of Palm Springs, 120 miles southeast of Hollywood. Six hours later, with Kramer now wearing his director's hat as well as his producer's, the cameras started to roll on a highway location in the Shadow Mountains on the perimeter of the spa. No stars had as yet been called; for four weeks it was just a mighty speeding carnage of automobiles, trucks and airplanes, operated by stuntmen and remote electronic controls, that was committed to film. Then the troupe returned to the studio.

Here, the stars began to emerge. For three weeks the script had Sid Caesar and Edie Adams trapped in the cellar of a hardware store using every means they found at hand—like sledge-hammers, blow torches, pickaxes, tractors, dynamite and fireworks—to blast their way to freedom. When they had escaped it was time for the entire sky-ful of stars to begin to glow. ("Glow" can be defined as an object's luminous emanation when subjected to great heat.)

"Lookit," said Buddy Hackett the first morning he went to work. "The arc lights are smoking and they ain't even turned on yet!"

Now the fifteen stars, and all the original personnel and equipment, were in Palm Springs. Air conditioning, swimming pools and tall iced rum potions which make summertime desert living tenable for those who like to live on the desert in the summertime were luxuries which could not be provided for the troupe on the burning sands. For five weeks—six days a week—they were to work in an official daytime temperature of 115 degrees in the shade; the company's own thermometers, set out on the location, rarely peaked out at less than 130. The stars all wanted to be in the picture—and this was the only time they could work together.

While the company headquartered and spent the nights at the posh Riviera and Biltmore Hotels in the heart of Palm Springs—where they *did* have air-conditioning, swimming pools and tall iced things—it ranged over thousands of square miles in the Coachella and adjacent desert valleys for its shooting sites. Near Cathedral City, Jimmy Durante "died" in a meteorlike crash when his car leaped off a mountainside into a hole lined with volcanic effluvia. In Palm Desert, Jonathan Winters, Arnold Stang and Marvin Kaplan destroyed a gas station in a free-for-all fight of Olympian proportions. In 29 Palms, Caesar, Miss Adams and Ben Blue soared off, from a dustpile airport, in a 1916 model bi-plane. In Yucca Valley, Berle, Miss Merman, Miss Provine and Terry-Thomas engaged in day-long foot and auto chases. And in an area so isolated and sun-blotched that it had no name, Phil Silvers was trapped in an abandoned mine. Never did so few people use so many gallons of sunburn unguents, balms and lotions. But curiously, and most fortunately, despite the rigors of the work and clime, only two injuries occurred. Silvers stabbed his instep on a cactus spine and was rendered hors-de-combat for a day when the foot swelled to double normal size; Stang broke his arm, not in the service station shambles, but when he slipped on the wet coping of a swimming pool after the day's work was done.

"One thing," Kramer was wont to say during the ovenly days, "there's always fine light for photography."

For thirty-four days that was true. Dawned—if that is the word—the thirty-fifth, and get-away day for a restless, tired bunch of people who wanted to go home, and it wasn't true any more. Solid black clouds hugged the land. The troupe went to its location site and hoped. Somebody dotted a pair of cube sugars and listlessly started a penny-ante crap game. It went on all day. Silvers was the big winner: \$1.15.

Next day, the old Palm Springs sunshine was back and the final desert scenes were shot.

"You know," said Ethel Merman, "Mr. Kramer is so different from those Western pioneers who got trapped on this desert. Stanley did it on purpose."

COOLSVILLE

For the next ten weeks, Kramer spun his "World" through a series of day locations in nearby beach and San Fernando Valley areas, interspersed with occasional short sessions on the studio sound stages. Switching from outdoors to indoors was a schedule juggling necessitated by the need to complete work with certain of the stars so they could report for Fall commitments—Sid Caesar to the Broadway show "Little Me" (which was to prove a smash); Edie Adams to London for Bob Hope's "Call Me Bwana"; Ethel Merman for her Las Vegas nightclub debut (another smash); Milton Berle, Buddy Hackett, Mickey Rooney, Dick Shawn, for Vegas engagements; Terry-Thomas to London for a film.

The company's cavalcade of personnel, equipment and personalities shot their way through Long Beach, Oxnard, Santa Monica, Malibu, San Pedro, Palos Verdes, Thousand Oaks, Camarillo, Santa Rosa, Tustin and Santa Ana. In most of the cities the main streets were the sites of filming, in some the airports. In Palos Verdes, however, a most remarkable set was constructed, a 2-acre park which looked as if it had been there forever. Before Kramer's crafty construction specialists arrived it had been a dreary, shale-covered promontory overlooking the Pacific. When the cameras rolled it was a grassy dell of flowers, shrubbery and 70 towering, full-grown sago and fan palms. The transformation cost \$40,000; the view of Catalina Island, 20 miles across the water, came free. Two weeks were spent here, then the company returned to the studio for the final setting in which all the stars would work together, the orthopoedic ward of a police hospital.

There was one other distant location in which only Phil Silvers performed—the town of Kernville, 200 miles away and deep in a canyon of the High Sierra. Here Silvers drove his car across what he thought would be a ford in the rushing Kern River. It wasn't. The car and the actor went straight down. It was a very funny scene. Nobody knew, until after standby frogmen had pulled him to shore, that Silvers is probably the only male adult resident of Beverly Hills who can't swim.

"Kramer Park"—a backlot square block at Revue Studios and a surrounding complex of streets and buildings—saw the last ten days of production. It was a meticulously planned chaos involving, each day, 2,000 extras, 200 bit players, a phalanx of stuntmen, snorting special effects machinery, fire engines, police cars, cranes, derricks, pile-drivers and tornado-producing wind-machines which blew hundreds of thousands of pieces of funny-money over the monumental scramble. Men fell from buildings and fire ladders onto power lines, into palm tree tops, through pedestrian bridges into lily ponds, onto picnic tables and into the arms of statues.

At 3:30 p.m., December 6, Spencer Tracy was hurled through the door of a pet shop in the square and as he lay battered on the floor a half-dozen dogs, startled and curious, licked his face. It was the final scene.

The "World" had been created.

It had required 166 shooting days, during a period of seven-and-a-half months, and 636,000 feet of exposed Technicolor film. It had also required millions of dollars.

THE WIZARDS OF AHS

All the stars, all the money and all the creative talent couldn't have put Kramer's "World" into orbit without the help of two extraordinary groups of people—the industry's special effects experts and the stuntmen. No motion picture can purvey actionful thrills, excitement, or the breathtakingly improbable without them. And no motion picture was ever designed to make fuller use of their ah-inspiring abilities than "It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World." The title alone would be proof.

"You explain special effects this way," says Danny Lee who headed the company's crew of 20 practitioners of controlled magic and creators of non-injurious disasters. "Script writers have no limits on their imaginations. What we do is to make photographable anything they come up with. All it takes is mechanical ability, a knowledge of hydraulics, pneumatics, electronics, engineering, construction, ballistics, explosives and no acquaintance with the word 'impossible.'"

There is no major sequence in the "World" in which Lee's cunning is not employed. Some things he and his men could do with their hands behind their backs. Most had to be achieved from scratch by putting Bill Rose's impossible ideas on a drawing board and then building the gimmicks, gizmos and machinery to execute them. Items:

Explode 6,000 pieces of percussion and moving fireworks around Caesar and Miss Adams in the hardware store cellar; construct a working service station that would come apart, piece by piece, as Winters battled with Kaplan and Stang; devise a fire escape on the side of an 80-foot building that would gradually break away from its moorings while all the stars were clambering on it; run the automobile, presumably containing Durante, one mile down a mountain highway and crash it over a 500-foot cliff; design and build a fire-engine ladder that would flip actors one-by-one from the top of its 100-foot length.

In all there were 217 such items on the film's special effects lists.

The tools of Lee's trade are a conglomeration of unworldly devices such as pemberthy siphons, gun powders, squibs and squib hooks, dynamite caps, pulleys, cranes, compressors, popping matches, air rams, hydraulic rams, smoke pots, smoke blowers, cables and wires and opaque paint. The pemberthy siphon he used when Kramer wanted a speeding automobile, driven by Mickey Rooney, to kick up an outrageous cloud of dust. Buckets of Fuller's earth were placed out of sight on the framework of the car and the siphon, energized by air, creating a monumental sandstorm. Squibs are minute but powerful explosive charges formulated of diazo powder and fulminate of mercury which are fired electrically to release a squib hook. Just right for blowing limbs off trees while actors are hanging on them. A popping match is a sort of fuse which emits a spray of sparks at regular intervals as it burns. Just the thing for the slow blasting apart of an airport tower's radio panels. Opaque paint is one of the most precious of assets; people and things which the camera catches floating through the air have to be on wires and cables. The illusion would be destroyed if the appurtenances could be seen. But coated with the special paint they are invisible.

"There were times," Lee recalls, "when maybe things got a little fouled up, that we considered daubing ourselves with it."

Of all the challenges to their ingenuity Lee and his crew are proudest of the Rube Goldberg they contrived to run Durante's car off the cliff. It was a radio-controlled automatic pilot put together with bits and pieces of electronic equipment they acquired from the laboratories of the California Institute of Technology and nearby aerospace plants. When the time came for shooting the sequence Lee stood on a hillside a mile away from the car, started it, steered it, slowed it for curves, then sped it at 80 miles an hour off the highway.

However, Lee feels that the dust cloud created for Rooney probably enhanced his reputation with the Kramer company more than all the really difficult effects achieved. For after the scenes had been completed Kramer told him:

"Danny, if I ever make a Dust Bowl picture, you're my man."

Around the Hollywood headquarters of The Stuntmen's Association of Motion Pictures, Kramer's film was known as "It's a Wonderful, Wonderful, Wonderful, Wonderful Bonanza." In seven-and-a-half months 34 of the organization's 89 members split, by varying percentages, a total of \$252,000 for their hair-raising heart-stopping work in its production.

Stuntmen are as requisite to violent-action, movie-making as cameras. It is not because stars and featured players lack courage; many are fine athletes and quite willing to undertake dangerous assignments. But the underwriters who insure motion picture production against disaster will not countenance it. A movie might be half finished, they hold, and the star breaks his neck. This, they point out, would not be good. Too costly, for one thing.

In the case of "It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World" it conceivably could have happened to all the stars.

"You name a stunt—we did it," says Carey Loftin, chief of the production's daredevil crew. "In airplanes, automobiles, tractors, trucks, fire engines; high dives, low dives, dives through plate glass windows; fisticuffs, fireworks; falls from fire escapes, ladders, palm trees and building tops."

There was but one injury during shooting: a cracked rib caused by an inexplicable mechanical failure. Cuts, bruises, scratches and abrasions there were aplenty, but stuntmen consider these to be merely occupational merit badges. Protective measures of padding, concealed under their costumes, have been refined to a high degree and no difficult or particularly dangerous stunt is undertaken without minutely careful preparation and testing. And there are no accident-prone members in the Association.

Stuntmen, Loftin says, have a simple rule of thumb for accepting an assignment:

"If we figure we can walk away from it, and do an immediate repeat, we'll take the job."

ATLAS

To Stanley Kramer, the man who carried the "World" on his shoulders as producer, director and bankroller, the project was as adventurous and uncharted as a leap into space. There had been comedies and there had been big pictures but their mating constituted a first in the history of motion pictures. He sought to brew an unheard-of mix of on-screen chicanery, calamity, disaster and suspense, requiring more performing talent and behind-the-camera artistry and cunning than any entertainment recipe ever before devised, and to come up with an explosive celluloid confection of belly-laughs. He aimed to fashion a giant blend of slapstick and whimsy to the end that audiences of all ages, lands and mores would find delirious divertisement.

"Bill Rose's script," Kramer says, "was the funniest ever written. If the motion picture isn't the funniest ever made the fault will lie with the man I see in the mirror."

THE "WORLD'S" ALMANAC

Cost: Plenty.

(In Rose's original memo the locale for his story was the British Isles, the fens and moors of England, the Brighton seacoast and the hills of Scotland. Kramer switched the setting at their first meeting for two reasons: 1) he felt the American desert and mountains more challenging to the action involved and obviously they offered far greater physical scope; 2) he wished to keep his company in Hollywood so that the workers in the American film capital would get the thousands of jobs it would provide.

For the first time: Cinerama Single Lens Projection

With "It's A Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World", a revolutionary new Cinerama process will be presented.

Since eleven years ago, when Cinerama was first shown, the Cinerama effect has been obtainable only with the use of three projectors; now, with the development of the Cinerama single-lens projection system, the giant Cinerama picture has been blended miraculously and indivisibly into one!

This heralds a breakthrough on which Cinerama optical engineers have long labored. The Cinerama screen will be as large as ever, it will still surround and envelop you, but your eyes and senses will be further pleased and astonished by the unity and clarity of the Cinerama single-lens projection, which "It's A Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World" will first present.

Time from conception to release: 3½ years.

Shooting days: 166.

Film exposed: 636,000 feet (approximately 125 miles).

Release length: 20,000 feet for a theater running time of 220 minutes, including intermission. (The day after Spencer Tracy took his licks a scissors brigade of eight film editors began to apply their cutting techniques to the almost endless rolls of celluloid. They would continue to snip and paste for seven months.)

Release date: November, 1963.

Theaters: Cinerama.

(Sometimes when a man thinks extra big, big things spontaneously happen. In order to reach the largest number of theaters throughout the globe, in the photographic process which would best capture the size and scope of his project, Kramer selected Ultra Panavision cameras using 70mm Technicolor film. Shooting had reached the halfway mark when Hollywood's optical scientists scored a long-sought break-through—a means of converting single-film photography to exhibition on the giant, three-panel screens of Cinerama. Would Mr. Kramer care to be the first to utilize the new system? Mr. Kramer would. There will be more than 100 Cinerama theaters by the time "It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World" is ready for release. And, by virtue of its original Ultra Panavision negative, the picture will still be adapted to every other modern motion picture theater.)

Distributor: United Artists.