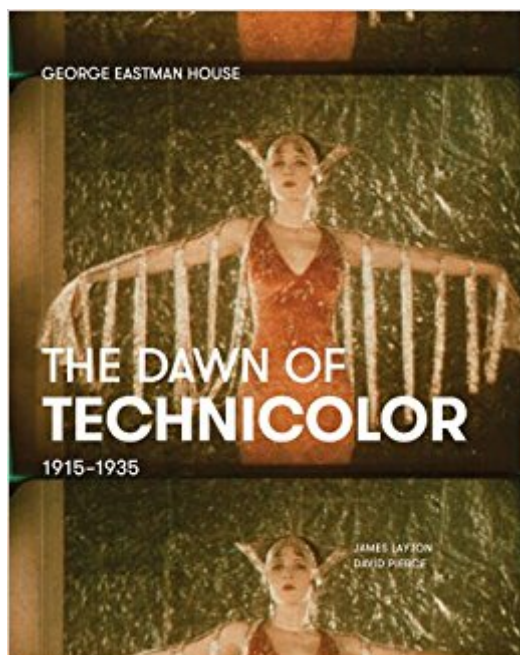


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# The Dawn Of Technicolor: 1915-1935



## Synopsis

Published to coincide with Technicolor's centennial in 2015, *The Dawn of Technicolor* recounts the beginnings of one of the most widely recognized names in the American film industry, reconstructing the company's early years from a wealth of previously unavailable internal documentation, studio production files, contemporary accounts and unpublished interviews. Following its incorporation in 1915, Technicolor developed a series of two-color processes as necessary steps toward full-color photography and printing. Despite success in the laboratory and in small-scale production, the company was plagued by repeated disappointments. With the support of patient investors and the visionary leadership of Herbert T. Kalmus, Technicolor eventually prevailed against daunting odds to create the only commercially viable color process for motion pictures. *The Dawn of Technicolor* investigates these vital make-or-break years, as the firm grew from a small team of exceptional engineers into a multimillion-dollar corporation. The authors chart the making of pivotal films in the process, from the troubled productions of *Ben-Hur* (1925) and *The Mysterious Island* (1926-29), to the early short films in Technicolor's groundbreaking three-color process: Walt Disney's animated *Flowers and Trees* (1932) and the live-action *La Cucaracha* (1934). The book spotlights the talented engineers and filmmakers associated with Technicolor and the remarkable technical innovations that finally made color films practical, changing the film industry forever. Lavishly illustrated with more than 400 reproductions, it includes a comprehensive annotated filmography of all two-color Technicolor titles produced between 1917 and 1937.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"The book is carefully laced with a variety of photographs, film strips, diagrams, and images of archival texts and diaries, giving a beautifully textured visual history ...<sup>1</sup> It takes you through the complex and multifaceted aspects of the company's development, giving a great sense of the personal and professional aspirations, challenges, set-backs, and triumphs."<sup>2</sup> (Rosie Taylor,<sup>3</sup> *Silent London*)  
The Dawn of Technicolor "is one of the most thorough and informative books on the cinematic process that can be had ...<sup>4</sup> Authors James Layton and David Pierce carefully investigate and examine the process of Technicolor, from its primitive beginnings in the silent era to its growth into the early days of talking pictures. The challenges in filming and processing, the impact, and the evolution of the technology as film itself continued to grow, are all covered with complete and fascinating information." (James L. Neibaur, Examiner.com)  
"The Dawn of Technicolor is, in fact, essentially a business history, with modern-day echoes in the story of Pixar's decades-long effort to bring computer technology to old-school animation. The end result is a reference book with immense value for historians of both business and film--a thorough account of the technology that made Tinseltown glow." (Farran Smith Nehme, *The Wall Street Journal*)  
"There are illustrations to delight a cinephile, including reproductions of actual frames of nitrate film. Chapters begin with full-page photos, rare and often stunning. The final section is a complete filmography of all 371 films made using the two-color Technicolor process. Each entry includes extensive production data and, sadly, "survival status." Most of these early color films are lost or exist only in a fragment. In some cases, the frames pictured in the book constitute nearly all of what is left of the film." (Farran Smith Nehme, *The Wall Street Journal*)  
There have been previous publications on the subject, ... but this is an achievement on another scale. ... Pierce and Layton have set the bar very high. (Sonia Genaitay, *Sight & Sound*)  
One of the book's highlights is an extensively annotated filmography of every film produced in two-color Technicolor from 1917 to 1937, compiled by Crystal Kui and James Layton (with the collaboration of Almudena Escobar Lopez, Daisuke Kawahara, and Catherine A. Surowiec). Many entries are accompanied by frame enlargements from surviving prints or fragments of prints<sup>5</sup> from an image of Gloria Swanson in *Stage Struck* to a title card for Clara Bow's *Red Hair*. For many film buffs, this section alone will make *The Dawn of Technicolor* a must. (Leonard Maltin *Indiewire*)

James Layton is Manager of the Museum of Modern Art's Celeste Bartos Film Preservation Center. Prior to this he worked at George Eastman House in Rochester, NY, where he curated two gallery exhibitions and the website *Technicolor 100*. Layton has also acted as Cataloguer and

Workflow Coordinator at the East Anglian Film Archive in Norwich, UK, and is co-author of the Image Permanence Institute's informational poster *Knowing and Protecting Motion Picture Film* (2009). David Pierce is an independent film historian and archivist. He was formerly the Head of Preservation and Curator of the National Film and Television Archive at the British Film Institute. His articles have appeared in numerous journals, and his report on the survival of American silent feature films was published by the Library of Congress in 2013. In 2011 he founded the Media History Digital Library, providing free online access to millions of pages of motion picture magazines and books.

I just received this in the mail today, so I haven't had a chance to read it yet, but I wanted to leave a review in case anyone else was thinking this was a photo book. The book is mostly text, with some small pictures sprinkled throughout. There are a handful (just flipping through I'd guess maybe 15-20?) of full page photos, but most are about 1/4 or 1/5 page. Since the description boasts that the book is "lavishly illustrated" with more than 400 pictures and it's about 13" x 10" I was expecting this to be more of a coffee table book, not a textbook. I'm sure the book will be really interesting and I'm looking forward to reading it. I'm also very happy with the filmography of two-color technicolor films in the back of the book. It just isn't what I had in mind when I bought it.

This book describes the many steps in Technicolor's development through its early history as a continuously evolving two color process, ending as the refined three-color Technicolor process is used to film "Becky Sharp". One hopes a second volume is forthcoming! It includes hundreds of color images (ranging from full page to double-size reproductions of actual film clips), many of which have never been published before, and a filmography of details on every Technicolor movie of the era, many titles exceedingly obscure, many lost forever. It's remarkable how beautiful the limited color range (no yellow, no pure blue, no pure green or red) could be in skillful hands. Biographical details on many of the original Technicolor team are a real plus; there were many men (and a few women) involved in addition to the famous names like Kalmus. Completely new to me were the details here of the business side of Technicolor; the relentless promotion needed to keep the expensive and quite imperfect two-color process alive in the face of competing technology, studio indifference and some outright hostility to the idea of color movies. What's missing here is the kind of granular technical detail to be found in Roderick T. Ryan's "The History of Motion Picture Color Technology," published in 1977. Ryan goes into specifics of camera mechanics, filter bandwidths, film spectral sensitivity and color dye sets that's missing here. Alas, Ryan's own book on Technicolor was never

completed. Bill Taylor ASC

Here is a book that belongs in every true cinema fan's library. It's not the usual story about studios and films that have been told countless times before. This is the history of Technicolor and very well written. Also of value is the chronology of films that had any Technicolor parts including what, if any, of the films and color components remain today. Fascinating reading.

Painstakingly researched book detailing the origins and development of the 2-color Technicolor process from 1915 through 1935. It is therefore puzzling why the making of "Becky Sharp", the first 3-color feature, is given such short-shrift, with only 2 photographs, no reviews on its first release, etc. Perhaps another book just on its making is in order.

The fascinating story of a long (20 year) and difficult development, this heavy book is not your usual coffee-table tomb. It is a history of a complex technical development program, one which took turns and twists, ran up blind alleys, and had its share of management and business problems along with the huge technical difficulties. You won't find lots of interesting movie stills - the very many images are designed to illustrate the various technologies tested, rather than what movie directors used it for. Eastman Kodak plays a (sometimes uncooperative) supporting role, but the Technicolor Corporation was the star.

A book that is destined to be the all-time reference on early Technicolor. The films produced are not the main 'focus' - it is the chronicle of the ups and downs of the struggle to introduce, keep and refine color in the movies. It is very well researched and laid out. A bit big and heavy to hold while reading - but reading it is all worthwhile. This is a book that should stand the test of time and be valuable to anyone who ever will want to really learn about what is important in film. Buy one before it goes out of print!

Beautifully written book. The pictures are amazing. This is a great look at cinema from a better time. I would highly recommend the book to anyone interested in cinema, photography, film, chemistry....

If you love books on film technology and history, this book's for you. It is jam packed with tons of minutiae about the evolution of color cinematography over the past hundred years. It's hard to imagine how daunting color photography was decades ago, given the ease with which we shoot in

the digital world. This historical volume will give you a new appreciation for color cinema the next time you watch a vintage film shot in the original Technicolor process.

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