Foreword

by KEMP R. NIVER

The pages of this book provide never before published insights into many phases of the movie-making industry in its exciting, formative years. The authors are uniquely equipped to write such a book. Their lives span the period from the very beginning of motion picture making in the United States on into the 1950s, and their remarkable experiences are presented in a forthright manner, without embellishment.

Fred Balshofer, a stereoscopic slide photographer, made the transition from still photography to motion pictures when he joined the Lubin Manufacturing Company in Philadelphia in 1905. After three colorful years of varied experiences with Lubin, Balshofer felt confident enough to launch a career as a producer, even though well aware that he faced being sued by "the trust," or Motion Picture Patents Company, for doing so. In 1908 Balshofer founded the Crescent Film Company in Brooklyn where he met and hired a local lad, Arthur Miller, then barely fourteen years old, to help him develop film he photographed during the day. Balshofer trained Miller to do laboratory work and to crank a moving picture camera. Finding Miller an eager pupil, Balshofer also taught him to expose film properly and introduced him to photographic composition. So well did Balshofer teach Miller and so great was Miller's interest in the new art that he became a master in the field. In the years that followed, Miller won three Oscars for motion picture photography, was nominated seven times for the Academy Award, and the results of his camera work received world-wide acclaim.

The financial returns from Crescent Film Company were such that Balshofer began to realize the potentialities of this new and fascinating type of entertainment. Fred Balshofer persuaded Adam Kessel, a former bookmaker, and Charles O. Bauman, once a streetcar conductor, to join him in founding what became one of the largest of the independent movie producers, the New York Motion Picture Company, with Bison and Keystone among its subsidiaries. Balshofer's picturesque description of Holly-

wood as he found it when he brought his Bison company west in 1909, and the trials and tribulations he endured while eluding the Patents Company detectives, make fascinating reading.

Arthur Miller, considered too young to accompany Balshofer west, remained in New York to work for another motion picture pioneer, Edwin S. Porter of *The Great Train Robbery* fame; he eventually reached Hollywood in 1922, and for the next thirty years worked with nearly every important producer, director, and actor in the business. Ill health forced his retirement in the 1950s. Nevertheless, Miller still gets calls from directors of the stature of John Ford, with whom he made *How Green Was My Valley*, with requests such as, "Artie, come on, let's make another picture."

The chapters of *One Reel a Week*, written alternately by Balshofer and Miller, contain much movie history, and interestingly enough, chronicle the development of movie-making machinery as well.