

pected of the presentation. Last year, an estimated 90 million people viewed the proceedings on television in the United States alone, and kinescopes and tapes sent all over the world brought the total to a quarter of a billion viewers and listeners.

In two respects, this year's show is easier to produce and present, Jerry explains. Instead of the four weeks allotted in 1958, he had 12 months to get ready this time. And in 1958 the TV network granted the Academy only an hour and 45 minutes, but this year it will have two full hours. Considering that it takes one hour for the handing out of the Oscars, this means 25 percent more time for entertainment, which, after all, televisioners want most.

After last year's success, the first question was, "What are you going to do to top it, Jerry?"

Obviously he can't get any more talent into the show. The 1958 cast read like a Hollywood Who's Who, and one newscaster remarked that a bomb dropped on the Pantages Theater would have wiped out the whole film industry.

The answer, Jerry says, is surprises. An idea of what he means was shown last year when he teamed 6-foot-4 Rock Hudson with 5-foot-2 Mae West for a duet that Jerry called "miscasting two people in the right way." Also, Kirk Douglas and Burt Lancaster sang "I'm Glad We Weren't Nominated," and Zsa Zsa Gabor appeared as a "station break."

In spite of Jerry's persuasiveness, some actors and actresses just can't be talked into his gimmicks. Thus Greta Garbo refused to be carried piggyback on stage by Cary Grant. "I had her convinced for one whole day," Wald says, "but for some reason she scared herself out of it."

THIS YEAR, Jerry insists, he'll top last year's stunts. Judging by some of the plans he told me about—in strict secrecy—he will.

The prime function of the show, Jerry feels, is to entertain. Those who remember the long presentations of past years, when Oscar after Oscar was handed out in high-school-graduation fashion, couldn't agree more.

The dreariest awards, even if the most deserved, are those for technical achievements. In 1958 Wald

eased the audience through them by having beauties like Cyd Charisse present the Oscars. This year the presentations will be made by comedians whose faces, in camera close-ups, will mirror the bewilderment the categories bring to the uninitiated viewer.

As much a headache as getting stars like Gary Cooper and Clark Gable to appear on TV is to choose from the many people who volunteer their services. "It's an embarrassing situation," Wald contends. "There are scores of people who deserve to be seen, but there just isn't time." His biggest regret last year was the elimination of a number with Jack Benny, Eva Marie Saint, and Jayne Mansfield. "It's even more embarrassing," he says, "when we have to make changes while the show is on."

The biggest repercussion in 1958 occurred when Bette Davis was cut off the air and her bit had to be postponed till after the televised segment because the show ran overtime.

"Most delays," Jerry explains, "are completely unforeseen." He recalls how annoyed he was at one winner who walked up to the podium so slowly that it added a minute to the time. Wald felt like kicking him up the stairs. Later he found out that the man had suffered a heart attack not long before and couldn't walk any faster. This year he is protecting himself against time lags by placing potential winners closer to the stage.

Another upset occurred last year when the teleprompter with Sophia Loren's speech skipped ahead to Bette Davis' words. Frightened, Sophia broke into giggles. Diplomat Wald beamed afterwards: "That's the best thing you could have done under the circumstances. It went over marvelously."

Consequently Sophia, who might have been scared out of a repeat performance, assured him she'd be available for future presentations.

This year Jerry will brighten the program by using devices he's learned in his long career as a film producer—things like process screens to make the action more alive than the static backgrounds used previously on the show.

He will also emphasize the international aspect of the film industry by inviting stars from all over the world to participate. Last year he talked Maurice

Chevalier into flying all the way from Paris for a delightful 10-minute stint.

How does Wald get his ideas? "I keep a book in my office and another one at home. Every time I think of a new gimmick, I jot it down. If I can use one out of a hundred, it's worth-while."

Next to the production of the show, the biggest problem for Jerry is a task which really isn't his responsibility—press relations.

In the old days, members of the press were herded into the theater basement like a bunch of goats, each struggling for information in his own fashion, often upsetting the program by popping up at inconvenient times. "For 364 days a year we are after the press to help us sell pictures," Wald says. "Then, on the day when they want our cooperation, we ignore them completely."

So last year he had a special press tent set up and arranged to have award winners brought directly there for photos and interviews. The difference in coverage was apparent, and it'll be even better this year, thanks to some of the lessons he's learned.

Trying to run the show impartially, Wald turned down all requests for special privileges—like that of one magazine editor who insisted on having a photographer backstage, to catch the winners as they walked off the podium.

"What about the 50 other photographers covering the event?" Wald asked him.

When the magazine's circulation and influence was flung at him, he again showed his diplomacy by leaving the choice to the other photographers—who unanimously turned down the request. Nevertheless, the magazine editor handed a camera to one of the performers who sneaked it backstage, but apparently he didn't have enough experience because none of his pictures ever got into print.

This year's precautions won't even let a miniature camera backstage. Says one Academy member: "The guy who puts anything over on Jerry hasn't been born yet and probably never will be."

While Jerry Wald insists he's only one of many people responsible for the success of the Academy Award show, there's no doubt that he deserves the major share of the credit.



Tony Curtis—"The Defiant Ones"
Burl Ives—"The Big Country"



Wendy Hiller—"Separate Tables"



Theodore Bikel
"The Defiant Ones"



Rosalind Russell—"Auntie Mame"
Arthur Kennedy—"Some Came Running"



Sidney Poitier—"The Defiant Ones"



Martha Hyer—"Some Came Running"

