

COMPATIBLE COLOR APPROVED FOR TV

F.C.C. Reverses Itself—Signal Receivable on Present Sets in Black and White

By JACK GOULD

A system of color television that can be received in black and white on the 27,000,000 existing sets was approved last night by the Federal Communications Commission in Washington.

Within an hour after the announcement the Columbia Broadcasting System was on the air with a special variety show in color. Minutes later the National Broadcasting Company offered a presentation from its color studio.

Regular transmission of commercial programs in color, however, will not begin for approximately forty days. The F. C. C. approval becomes effective thirty days after its publication in the Federal Register, the Government bulletin. Publication is expected next week.

Officials of C. B. S. and N. B. C. said they planned to rotate "color premières" of their major night programs in the next few months.

Manufacturers immediately planned to tool up for the production of color receivers within perhaps six to nine months. Initial sets, with a fourteen-inch screen, will cost from \$700 to \$1,000.

The total volume of color sets to be expected during 1954 has been variously estimated from "a trickle" of units to perhaps a hundred thousand.

The F. C. C. action came as a severe blow to television retailers, whose trade organizations had asked the commission to hold off

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giving approval to color until after the Christmas shopping season. Set sales have been much slower this year and many potential customers have explained that they wanted to wait for color.

The commission's announcement of the adoption of new technical standards for color TV represented one of the few times that it had reversed itself publicly on a major engineering matter.

Two years ago the commission approved a color system, developed by C. B. S., that required the purchase of additional equipment if a present set owner was to see a color program in black and white.

An all-industry group, known as the National Television System Committee, set out to develop a method that would permit introduction of color without disruption of monochrome service. Such a method had been pioneered by the Radio Corporation of America.

The formal effect of yesterday's decision by the commission was to scrap the old C. B. S. standards and adopt the new N. T. S. C. signal specifications.

The commission stated that the new specifications produced "a reasonably satisfactory picture with a good over-all picture quality, and are sufficiently flexible to accommodate later improvements and refinements."

Dr. W. R. G. Baker, chairman of the N. T. S. C. and vice-president

of General Electric, hailed the decision but noted that "it may be years before quantity production of color sets can be reached.

"Meanwhile, the entertainment and cultural advantages which television offers now will continue to be available on large screen, high quality, black-and-white receivers at values never before offered."