

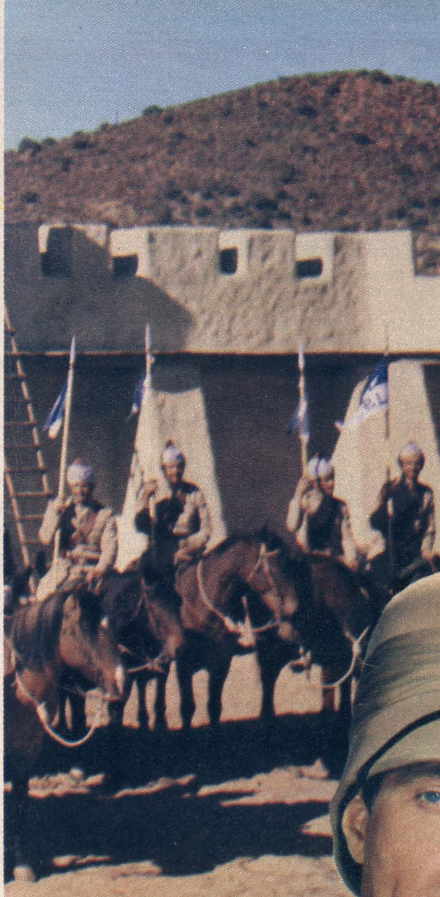
India

**NEVER HAD IT
SO GOOD**

The Fort (The Outside Only, Sahib)
And Incidentals Add Up To \$182,000

When it came time for Screen Gems, the Columbia Pictures TV subsidiary, to go into production with its *Tales of the 77th Bengal Lancers* film series for NBC, there immediately arose the problem of what to do about a fort. The Lancers had to have a place to defend against the warlike *afriidi*. (See page 26 for the meaning of this and other words used on *Lancers*.)

The action of the series takes place in 1884 on the northwest frontier of India near the Khyber Pass. To shoot on location would have been too costly. No fort there anyway. So—a



British forts which existed in India 60 years ago, and covering three-and-a-half acres, the Hollywood structure cost the producers exactly \$117,843.17, a bill that paid only for the exterior. The interior (which included the arsenal, a village, the bachelor officers' quarters), plus a palace, tacked on another \$50,000.

The uniforms for the Bengal Lancers themselves resulted in a tab for \$22,000. No more than 18 Lancers are used in any one show, however. Camera angles and other sly methods of visual cheating make them look like 40 or better.

To equip the Lancers with necessary props, such as guns and the lances they carry, cost another \$18,000. Set dressing (i.e., draperies, urns, furniture, etc.) added \$25,000 to the bill.

Adding it *continued*

Left: Co-star Phil Carey. Below: Carey with Warren Stevens (left) and Pat Whyte, Lancers' colonel.

Fort Oghora, above, in California wasteland. Its complement: 18 men, of whom 16 appear in photo.

Screen Gems *malik* called a *jirgah*. Out of it came the solution to the problem: Build a fort in California.

Two months after this imperial command was issued, Fort Oghora rose from the desert wastes of Vasquez Rocks on the northwest frontier of a *peshawar* called Hollywood. Representing a composite of the many



all up, the producers found they had invested a grand total of \$232,843.17 in the fort, uniforms and props before a single foot of film was shot. And this figure didn't include money spent on research, scripts, music, pre-production salaries and the like.

The building of Fort Oghora was not without its international complications. A publicity story referring to it as "an authentic replica" brought a stern protest from the British Consulate in San Francisco, resulting in the description being modified to "composite." And an on-the-air reference to "the northwest frontier of India" drew the anguished fire of the Pakistan Embassy in Washington, which asked that the area be given its proper name of Pakistan. The Screen Gems diplomatic corps, hastily recruited from the ranks of its senior publicists, tactfully pointed out that there was no Pakistan in 1884—as indeed there

wasn't. (It was constituted under the 1947 Indian Independence Act.)

Chief architect, general counsel and technical advisor on the series is Maj. Morris Patrick Fitzgerald O'Neill Hudman "Chalky" Whyte, who also doubles in brass as the show's Col. Standish, commanding officer of the 77th Bengal Lancers. A former British Army major, Whyte served two tours of duty with the Indian Army's Jaipur Lancers, later commanded the Second 16th Punjab Regiment and, during the early days of World War 2, organized the famed Burma Rifles.

Licked, finally, by "an assortment of diseases, malaria, dysentery, strained heart and several dandy bullet wounds," Whyte repaired to Hollywood and quickly became the industry's leading expert on India.

"Anyone," a Hollywood director once commented, "who makes an Indian picture without Pat Whyte is a darned fool and asking for trouble."

"The British Consulate and the Pakistan Embassy to the contrary notwithstanding," adds Whyte, wryly.

LANCERS' LINGO

AFRUDI (uf/REE/dee)	.....	Frontier people
ALLAH Uh/LA)	.....	God
CHAPLIS (chuh/PLEE)	.....	Shoes
CHATTI (chuh/TEE)	.....	Water jug
FERINGHI (puh/RING/gee)	.....	White man
JIRGAH (JER/gah)	.....	Conference
MALIK (MAH/lick)	.....	A chief
MELMUSTIA (male/MUST/cha)	.....	A frontier custom
MEMSAHIB (MEM/sob)	.....	White woman
MISSAHIB (miss/SOB)	.....	Unmarried woman
MOHAMMED (mo/HAH/med)	.....	A prophet
MULVI (mool/VEE)	.....	A priest
PATHAN (pah/TAHN)	.....	General name for all frontier tribes
PESHAWAR (pa/SHAR)	.....	A town
PUSHTO (posh/TOO)	.....	A frontier language
SAHIB (sob)	.....	Mister
SARAI (suh/RYE)	.....	A corral