

TODAY

TALKIES RIVAL TOM-TOMS

IS there a Clark Gable on the Gold Coast, a Korda in Kenya, or another Jean Simmons in Sierra Leone?

Ten British film technicians of the Colonial Film Unit who have just arrived in Africa may find the answers.

For the next three years these film men (ages between 22 and 35) will conduct a stranger talent hunt than even Hollywood has ever known. They will bring films to villages in the wildest bush country, where the beating of the drums is the only entertainment; they will search for natural talent—acting, producing, and technical—among natives who have never seen a camera before.

And they are convinced that at the end of three years they will have discovered talent enough to lay the foundations of a flourishing new industry.

Born film fans

INVESTIGATIONS already made have shown that Africans are born film fans. The mere appearance of a mobile film unit is enough to silence the drums and put native dancers right out of business. Average "house" for an open-air show is 2,000, but more than 15,000 Africans have on occasion trekked miles to see a single performance.

The scheme, however, is not centred on glamour, and the film-makers are not too concerned with jungle box-office appeal. They want to make East and West Africa film-conscious, because in territories with poor communications, few radios, and low-circulation newspapers the film can be of enormous educational value.

Already films have been used to show Africans how to fight the diseases that afflict them, and they have proved infinitely more successful than spoken or written propaganda.

Over 300 now

LEADER of the Colonial Film Unit team is William Sellers, who has already made more than 300 native-acted films. He took the first mobile cine-van into the jungle to study native reaction; reported back that they showed no fear and were acute in their observation of detail.

Sellers' team will give the natives film shows and then teach them the rudiments of film-making. They have been briefed with the educational, technical, medical, and social topics which the Governments concerned wish to convey to their peoples, and they will plan with the Africans how best these topics can be "put over."

But it is hoped that ultimately the Africans will make the films for themselves.

Graham Stanford