



WELCOME!

Winter and the end of 2008 are right around the corner (although, you'd never know it here in baking Southern California), and changes are in the air. The economy is in shambles, the industry is in disarray, and no one seems to know which way is up. We here at *Widescreen Review* are doing our part to keep our readers satisfied, with the reporting on the latest offerings and happenings in home theatre land, and of course, with our online giveaways. Last month's Reader's Survey was a hit (see results on page 11 of this Newsletter)—congratulations to Grand Prize winner Mark Jackson and Second Place winner Bill MacCracken. Mark won a Sony BDP-S350 Blu-ray Disc™ player and eight Blu-ray Discs, and Bill won a complete set of all eight Blu-ray Disc titles in the contest. Twenty-one lucky runners up won a Blu-ray Disc each, and a list of all the winners can also be seen on page 9 of the Newsletter.

We want to remind everyone that we are continuing our fall warehouse cleanout, and back issues will remain at their fantastic price of only \$1 each in the online store.

We hope you enjoy this month's newsletter.

Gary Reber
Editor-In-Chief, *Widescreen Review*

AVAILABLE ON NEWSSTANDS SOON

Issue 136, November 2008 of *Widescreen Review*:

- "2008 CEDIA EXPO Part I" By Tricia Spears
- "Pioneer Elite® KURO® PRO-111FD 50-Inch 1080p Flat Panel Plasma HDTV" By Doug Blackburn
- "Noise Control For Home Theatres: Smoke & Mirrors 101" By Harry Alter
- "The Three Dimensions of Color" By Tom Huffman
- Plus "Your Letters," "One Installer's Opinion," Blu-ray Disc and DVD picture and sound quality reviews, and more...

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In our attempt to bring you the very latest in home theatre news, *Widescreen Review* brings you *The Observer*, a recap of some of last month's happenings that you may have missed. When you see "widescreenreview.com/" below an article, it means more information can be found at that Web link.

Last Month's Industry News At A Glance

The Observer

Brought To You By:

Widescreen
The Essential Home Theatre Resource™
Review

Issue 29, October 2008

Volume 3, Number 10

Hitachi To Buy Plasma Panels From Panasonic

In early September, Hitachi, Ltd. announced that it would no longer manufacture plasma display panels, instead buying panels from Panasonic, in an effort to minimize losses in their plasma television business.

Following Pioneer's lead in a similar announcement earlier this year, Hitachi will procure glass panel components, which have until now been manufactured at Hitachi Plasma Display Limited, from Panasonic. In addition, in order to further develop the plasma TV business, the two companies say they will

accelerate cooperation on the development of high-end PDPs that are thinner, more energy-efficient, and feature distinctive characteristics.

Plans call for Matsushita to begin supplying glass panel components to Hitachi for models to be launched by Hitachi in the fiscal year beginning April 1, 2009.

Previously, Hitachi's plasma display panels have been manufactured by their subsidiary Hitachi Plasma Display Limited, which will continue to manufacture panel modules and associated electronics.

EE Times cited Mitsushige Akino, an analyst from Ichiyoshi Investment Management, as saying, "It looks like Hitachi wanted to withdraw from plasma TVs, if not from TVs altogether, but didn't have the gumption to do it in the end."

While that may be the case, look for a more in-depth analysis of the current plasma display market in an upcoming issue of *Widescreen Review*.

widescreenreview.com/136/plasma

Toshiba Looks To Cards For Movie Distribution

With HD DVD out of the picture, Toshiba is joining up with movie kiosk companies NCR Corporation and MOD Systems to create a new delivery method for movies based on SD flash memory card technology, according to Video Business.

VB says that Toshiba "is expected to roll out a line of set-top boxes early next year with SD card slots for playing back digital video downloads." They also report that "the cards will support whatever open standard comes out of the Digital Entertainment Content Ecosystem, a consortium of studios, retailers, and consumer electronics companies formed [early September] to ensure universal playback of digital downloads."

Video Business also printed that "MOD Systems and NCR wouldn't say whether they have any studio licensing deals but expect to offer 4,000 films from studios at launch, initially in standard-definition."

They also pointed to a deal NCR has with Blockbuster "to make as many as 10,000 Blockbuster-branded kiosks that will rent DVDs and likely offer downloads," although it isn't said whether or not those kiosks will support the SD card distribution method.

widescreenreview.com/136/toshiba

General Electric Launches Global HDTV Joint Venture

With sales on the rise, it looks like General Electric is getting back in the television business.

"Sales of LCD TVs have grown 30 percent year over year as flat screen TV prices have fallen," said Peter Weedfald, President of a new joint venture, General Displays & Technologies. "GDT is well poised to become a leader in today's rapidly developing digital marketplace."

GE has a 49 percent stake in the venture, with Tatung Company, the Taiwan-based manufacturer of displays, set-top boxes, and home appliances, owning 51 percent.

GDT's goal is to design, market, and service General Electric-branded

HDTVs "to deliver the best home high-definition video, audio, and Internet experience."

The Internet will be a big part of GE's focus with their TVs. "We are developing advanced Internet capabilities for content delivery to televisions, without the need for a PC. This includes Internet Protocol TV (IPTV) through cable, satellite, and advanced fiber optic television connectivity," said Marc McConnaughey, CEO of General Displays & Technologies. "The long-term strategy is to allow consumers to customize their viewing experience by downloading widgets and a variety of services directly to their HDTVs."

GE will also leverage their content business, NBC Universal, to develop an open platform capable of delivering digital high-definition content directly to their television, "and help design a cutting edge product that responds now to consumer desire for a seamless union of high-quality digital content and Internet engagement, with an ease that still appeals to TV viewers," said Darren Feher, Executive Vice President and Chief Technology Officer of NBC Universal.

The first products from GDT will become available in Spring 2009.

widescreenreview.com/136/ge

Blockbuster Sticking To Stores

The *Los Angeles Times* recently printed that Blockbuster will keep an eye toward increasing Internet-based downloads, but plans to revamp many of its remaining outlets, expand its movie and game offerings in-store, and add more rental and download kiosks.

Blockbuster has a 40 percent share of the nearly \$10 billion movie rental business, and in-store rentals still account for more than half of their total revenue.

Still, Blockbuster estimates it will close 150 of its more than 8,000 nationwide stores in 2008.

widescreenreview.com/136/block

Panasonic Develops Blu 1080p 3-D System

At CEATEC JAPAN 2008 (Combined Exhibition of Advanced Technologies) show, Panasonic introduced what they are calling the first full 1080p 3-D plasma theatre system, a combination of a 103-inch plasma, a specially designed Blu-ray Disc player, and specially authored Blu-ray Discs.

Panasonic's system uses active LCD shutter glasses working in synchronization with the plasma

television, which alternately displays full 1080p images for the left and right eye, to create an illusion of three dimensionality in the picture.

Using optical disc technology cultivated by Panasonic, and authoring technology developed by Panasonic Hollywood Laboratory, they have created a method for recording 3-D images in 1080p on a single, standard Blu-ray Disc. The Panasonic-built Blu-ray player decodes and

plays back the left and right eye 1080p signals from the disc in real time.

Panasonic says they will work to promote the 3-D system and push the standardization of the 3-D format at the Blu-ray Disc Association, with the cooperation of Hollywood studios and BDA-member consumer electronic corporations.

widescreenreview.com/136/blu3d

Widescreen Review's **HD Holiday Contest.** **Enter to win** a Panasonic VIERA 46" 1080p plasma and Blu-ray™ home theatre system.



The Panasonic Viera 1080p TH-46PZ80 plasma boasts a 20,000:1 contrast ratio for deep black levels and high brightness, and its ability to accept the native 1080p24 signal from the SC-BT100's Blu-ray Disc™ player over any of its three HDMI inputs helps create a truly cinematic experience. In addition, the system is completely backwards-compatible with DVD.

As the first Blu-ray Disc home theater system to include wireless connections to the surround loudspeakers, the 5.1 channel SC-BT100 can be installed in any room, and the included iPod® dock and SD memory card for viewing HD video in the AVCHD format allows you to experience a broad range of entertainment options. Panasonic's Viera Link allows the entire system to be controlled using a single remote.

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A winner will be drawn at random
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**Widescreen
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A winner will be drawn at random on December 22, 2008. Entries must be received by December 19, 2008. Only one entry per physical address. Sorry, open only to U.S. Residents 18 years of age or older. Complete rules and details available at <http://WidescreenReview.com/Sweepstakes>.

Coming Soon... To A Retailer Near You

Tricia Spears



Revel IW80

Revel® has added the **IC6T2** 6-1/2-inch in-ceiling and **IW80** 8-inch two-way in-wall architectural loudspeakers to its Concerta™ line. Both feature a high-output, low-distortion woofer with a micro ceramic composite cone, pivoting tweeter with integral waveguide, high-order crossover network, boundary compensation switch, and three-position tweeter level control. The IC6T2, which is 9-1/4 inches in diameter

and weighs 3.5 pounds, is the first Concerta in-ceiling system designed for single-speaker stereo applications, has a bandwidth of 45 Hz to 22 kHz, a two-way crossover at 2.2 kHz, and has a sensitivity of 88dB. The IW80 measures 10-1/4 inches wide by 13-7/16 inches high and weighs 5.9 pounds. It has a bandwidth of 40Hz to 40kHz, a two-way crossover at 2.4kHz, and a sensitivity of 89dB.

Revel® 516 594 0300 www.revelspeakers.com

The first Blu-ray Disc™ player from **Integra®**, the **DBS-6.9**, delivers 1080p video at 24 frames per second, features an HDMI 1.3 output, and is fully compatible with the Deep Color™ standard for over 1 billion possible colors. The included front-panel SD card slot, necessary to take advantage of the Bonus View™ picture-in-picture capability, gives consumers access to the interactive content available on many Blu-ray Discs. Able to deliver bitstream output of both Dolby TrueHD and DTS-HD Master Audio™ codecs, the DBS-6.9 is available for \$600.



Integra DBS-6.9

Integra® 800 225 1946 www.integrahometheater.com



SpeakerCraft NEAT 3

SpeakerCraft®'s **NEAT 3** three-inch in-ceiling loudspeaker sounds like it could be a neat product. Designed to mimic the look of a miniature can light, the NEAT 3 is said to almost disappear into the ceiling, leaving no exterior bezel. The small loudspeaker features a three-inch full-range driver and uses a two-piece bracket that snaps together inside the wall, then secured with drywall screws through the wall's surface.

SpeakerCraft® 800 448 0976 www.speakercraft.com

Velodyne Acoustics, Inc. has introduced the Impact Series of subwoofers, a line of high-output, low-distortion subwoofers that include MDP amplifiers and two-inch copper-wound voice coils. The **Impact-Mini** uses a 6.5-inch forward-firing driver and 8-inch down-firing passive radiator and features a 300-watt dynamic power, 180-watt RMS power amplifier. The 10-inch x 10-inch x 12-inch Impact-Mini is available for \$550. The \$400 **Impact-10** and \$500 **Impact-12** each feature a down-firing port to maximize bass performance and output, and minimize distortion. The Impact-10 offers a 250-watt dynamic, 150-watt RMS amplifier and the Impact-12 includes a 275-watt dynamic, 165-watt RMS amplifier.

Velodyne Acoustics, Inc. 408 465 2800 www.velodyne.com



Velodyne Acoustics Impact-Mini

Vivitek Corporation has introduced the company's first projectors—the **D326MX** and **D326WX**.

Both models use the latest DLP® technology from Texas Instruments and are



Vivitek Corporation D326WX

designed with a small form-factor, weighing only 3.2 pounds. They include rapid start-up and instant shutdown features that enable instant ON/OFF for all presentations without warm-up or cool-down periods. With 2600 ANSI lumens and a contrast ratio of 2500:1, the 720p projectors include a 5-segment color wheel (R, G, B, W, Y), a high-efficiency light source lamp, and 1280 x 800 pixels resolution. With a dust- and filter-free design, the projectors also feature an Eco-Mode lamp setting, enabling up to 4,000 hours of lower-energy performance. The \$1,000 D326MX and the \$1,200 D326WX include a three-year limited warranty on parts and labor, a one-year lamp warranty, and a five-year DLP chip warranty.

Vivitek Corporation 877 603 3582 www.vivitecorp.com



Irwin Seating Company Sports HT

Oasis Home Theatre Seating, distributor of **Irwin Seating Company's** home theatre chairs, are excited about the new **Sports HT** and **Outdoor Signature** models. Impervious to weather, the seats and backs of the chairs are upholstered in a marine-grade material that is mold, mildew, and UV resistant. The \$300 Sports HT's seats and backs are manufactured out of one-piece, double-wall, blow-mold plastic in a choice of a solid

back or a slat design, and the legs of the chair are made out of iron. The \$600 Outdoor Signature model, also with cast iron legs, offers a two-inch thick contoured back foam and ergonomic foam seat cushion with a back height of 38 inches. Available in HT Faux Leather, the Outdoor Signature chair can be ordered with or without cupholder armrests.

Oasis Home Theatre Seating 905 567 6656 www.oasishometheatreseating.com



At Home In The Digital Environment

With wider broadband adoption, more digital products and easier setup, the networked home market is primed for double-digit growth. From routers to home theater, computing to whole-house remotes, the best in security, productivity and entertainment converge at the International CES®. If you connect with only one show in 2009, make it CES. It's the trade-only event that shapes the digital environment. Register now at CESweb.org.

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Media Décor Universal Firebox

Media Décor has solved the code requirements problem that many installers face when recessing a flat panel display, with their Firebox. Designed for any recess-mounted flat screen installation, the fire-retardant and fire-resistant enclosure not only supports the television but also includes built-in passive honeycomb vents in the top and bottom that seals shut above

350 degrees F. Available in two versions—the **Custom Firebox** and the **Universal Firebox**—the entire structural unit is fire rated on all sides. The Custom Firebox is ordered to a required size, and the Universal Firebox is a standard size that will accommodate any TV less than 54 inches wide and 33 inches high. Both models are available now and prices start at \$1,450 each.

Media Décor

954 524 1104

www.mediadecor.com



Jamo DMR 70

The **DMR 70** 5.1-channel DVD receiver from **Jamo**® upscales DVDs to either a 720p or 1080i HD resolution via its HDMI output. The two-inch tall, compact, high-gloss black DMR 70 employs five 65-watt channels for a total system power of 325 watts. Utilizing Dolby® Digital, DTS® 5.1, and Dolby Pro-Logic II, the receiver supports a wide range of video formats, including DivX Ultra, Xvid, WMA, SVCD, MP3, and JPEG. The Jamo DMR 70 is available for \$450.

Jamo®

877 456 JAMO

www.jamo.com

The **SubStation™ Pro**, the latest power-management device from **Richard Gray's Power Company**, utilizes a 240-volt AC line to provide stable and balanced AC power to connected components. Designed for mid-sized home electronic installations, the SubStation Pro has a capacity of 4,000 watts and is engineered to convert a true 240-volt line into an isolated 120-volt line with six commercial grade, 20-amp Hubbell AC outlets, which provide twice the amount of power over a standard 110-volt circuit. The SubStation Pro is available for \$4,000.



RGPC SubStation Pro

RGPC

504 247 0300

www.richardgraypowercompany.com

Screen Excellence has introduced the **TAM** (True Aspect Masking) fixed masking screen.

Masked to eliminate black or grey side bars when Cinemascope movies are viewed; black, acoustically transparent masks roll in from each side to mask down to the picture's true aspect ratio. The company claims that the frame is the narrowest on the market today, at 3.7 inches wide all the way around, and with a depth of only 5.3 inches. The acoustically transparent masking panels roll in from the sides like commercial movie theatre curtains, and the independent left and right motors are said to be quiet and offer precise alignment. Pricing for the 2.37 native aspect ratio projection screen with lateral masks starts at \$12,000 with a 70-inch-wide viewable area.



Screen Excellence TAM

Screen Excellence

805 647 3779

www.screenexcellence.com



Focal CMS 50 and CMS 65

The **CMS 50** and **CMS 65** (Compact Monitoring System) loudspeakers from **Focal Professional** are equipped with an aluminum/magnesium inverted dome tweeter that offers a homogeneous movement of the complete dome because of the optimum mechanical coupling between

the cone and voice coil. The CMS 50 integrates a 5-inch woofer, and the CMS 65 is composed of a 6.5-inch woofer. Both loudspeakers are housed in an acoustically treated die-cast aluminum box and are supplied with a decoupling rubber sole, four rubber spikes, two height-adjustable spikes to be installed in the front or at the rear of the base, and two removable grills. According to Focal Professional, the technology in their Polyglass cone woofer involves applying thin glass microballs on a cellulose pulp cone, resulting in a rigidity rating even exceeding that of a single-skin Kevlar and almost ten times superior to that of polypropylene. The CMS monitoring loudspeakers integrate two amplification units. The TDA 7293 unit, which is dedicated to the woofer, uses the MOS technology that combines total sound transparency and dynamics, and the LM 3886 power unit, dedicated to the tweeter, is able to convey the whole of micro-information to the treble transducer, while saving the energy unique to each sound detail.

Focal Professional

00 33 4 77 43 57 00 www.focalprofessional.com



Linn Majik 109

Linn's Majik 109 is a compact, three-way loudspeaker that includes the company's 2K driver array with two high-frequency drive units. The loudspeaker is offered in a real-wood veneer cabinet and can be displayed on Linn's new black or silver stand, which is designed to complement the loudspeaker, or it can be wall mounted. The Majik 109 is available for \$1,600.

Linn

+44 (0) 141 307 7777

www.linn.co.uk

Ho-Ho-Holiday DVD Contest

Over 20 Titles – Over 200 Winners!

Enter to win these fantastic DVDs by completing the contest form below and mailing or faxing it to us. We will draw names at random on December 30, 2008.



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CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP CODE _____ COUNTRY _____

DAYTIME PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

DVD PREFERENCES

1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____

Mail to: Widescreen Review, PO Box 2587, Temecula, CA 92593-2587.
 Fax to: 951-693-2960. Enter online at: www.WidescreenReview.com. All DVDs are NTSC Region 1.
 Entries must be received by December 30, 2008. Only one entry per physical address. Entrants must be 18 years of age or older. Complete rules and details available at <http://widescreenreview.com/contest>.



The Studio Scoop

Rumors, Reports, & Ramblings

Stacey Pendry

DVD Contests

The holidays are just around the corner. As a thank you to our loyal readers I have once again hit up my good friends, at the various movie studios for some really fantastic titles for our HUGE multi-title **Ho-Ho-Holiday DVD Contest 2008**. This year we have over 20 A-list titles and over 200 discs to give away, so be sure to fill out the form and submit your entry. See the full-page ad in this newsletter for titles and links to the entry form.

Star Wars: The Clone Wars, the animated feature movie from Lucasfilm Ltd. and Warner Bros. is up for grabs in another WSR single-title giveaway. The story of the Clone Wars is set between *Star Wars Episode II: Attack Of The Clones* and *Star Wars Episode III: Revenge Of The Sith*, and is a precursor to the animated TV series of the same name, which is aired on *Cartoon Network* each Friday at 9:00 p.m. You only have until November 25th to enter to win this truly unique take on George Lucas' *The Empire*.

You only have a short time left to enter to win *Dr. No* on Blu-ray™ and the *Journey To The Center Of The Earth* DVD. *Dr. No* entries must be received no later than October 22nd and *Journey To The Center Of The Earth* entries by October 29th. You may enter to win one or both of these titles by clicking on the corresponding box art featured in this newsletter. Good luck!

Warner Bros.

Warner Bros. has announced plans to begin pre-production on an *I Am Legend* prequel, with plans for Will Smith to reprise his starring role as Scientist Robert Neville, and Francis Lawrence returning to direct. James Lassiter, Smith's partner in Overbrook Entertainment, will produce, along with

Akiva Goldsman and his Weed Road production company.

WB has requested D.B. Weiss to write the script, based on a detailed outline that Smith, Goldsman, Lassiter, and Lawrence collaborated on. Weiss is currently scripting the adaptation of Neil Strauss' book *The Game* for Spyglass Entertainment.

Making a prequel seemed the only way to extract a few more hundred-million dollars from the franchise that bore the studios nearly \$600 million, and more importantly, keep Smith in the lead role—since his character met his demise at the end of the first film.

The prequel will chronicle the remaining days of humanity in New York before a virulent plague decimated the city, resulting in Smith's character being the lone surviving human left there.

A Los Angeles Superior Court judge has barred the estate of J.R.R. Tolkien from seeking punitive damages against the studio that brought the late author's trilogy, *The Lord Of The Rings*, to the big screen. The judge did determine the estate had established a legal basis for the fraud claim against New Line in a subsequent ruling.

Tolkien's heirs claim New Line Cinema has failed to pay any royalties from the film franchise that has grossed an estimated \$6 billion worldwide. The lawsuit is seeking \$150 million in compensatory damages.

The estate alleges that New Line sent millions of dollars to Time Warner Inc.'s AOL, improperly claiming the money was for advertising expenses. The lawsuit also claims that the studio built production offices and facilities in New Zealand, listing them as expenses for the trilogy, which was shot there. But the heirs allege the offices are now being used for other New Line projects.

Tolkien signed an agreement in 1969 with United Artists for the rights to the trilogy,



along with the companion book *The Hobbit*. After Tolkien's death, his heirs created the Tolkien Trust, which is a British charity.

The trust joined forces with Publisher HarperCollins to sue the studio in February, seeking not only damages and lost royalties but also to terminate New Line's rights to make two further films: a prequel based on *The Hobbit* and *The Hobbit* itself.

Guillermo del Toro has signed on to direct the prequel, as well as *The Hobbit*, with Peter Jackson, director of *The Lord Of The Rings* trilogy, producing the two films.

Walt Disney Pictures

Johnny Depp hit a triple play when Walt Disney Studio's Chairman Dick Cook touted the studio's upcoming slate that includes Depp reprising his role as Captain Jack Sparrow in a fourth installment of *The Pirates Of The Caribbean*. The chameleon actor has also signed to star in two more Disney projects; one as The Mad Hatter in Tim Burton's adaptation of *Alice In Wonderland* and the second as The Lone Ranger's sidekick Tonto, being produced by Jerry Bruckheimer,

Contest Winners: Ricardo O. Ang • Sharon Aquilino • Richard Bannister • Jeff Beckett • Roy Bolen • Julie Bradley • Steve Dadolf • Edward Domagala • Cheryl Dutter • Don Dyer • Charles Earty • Bonnie Edwards • Malcolm Ellis • S Fielding • Gary Ford • Clint Freeman • Ron Gilenberg • Gary Green • Matt Green • Judith Greenberg • Mike Groesbeck • Matthew Guidry • Ramreet Janjuh • Gordon Jones • Ron Kaledas • Lanisa Larrabee • P Madsen • Alexandra Malabante • Patrina Martin • Rita Nicholson • Cassie Perez • Mathieu Perron • Susan Pertierra • Corey Peters • Robert Rabinowitz • Geraldine Rodriguez • Craig Schultz • Kathleen Shattuck • David Siegel • Lois Stock • Neville Thompson • Susan Varney • Thomas Vigen • Jeffrey Walters • Roy Weatherly • Steven Wenzel • Sharon Whitehurst • Mike Wilson • Timothy Winslow • Keith Wright • Stanley Zieziula • Betty Zimostrad • Jae Park • Randall Pereira • Gary Osborn • Brenda Stutts • Norm Porter • Kathy Smith • Lisa Ranf • Charles Kassing • **Reader Survey Winners:** GRAND PRIZE WINNER - Mark Jackson • SECOND PLACE WINNER - Bill MacCracken • RUNNERS UP - Jeremy Bureau • William Holden • Bill Tilghman • Jason Tucker • Paul Resch • John Tyson • Robert Deckman • Mike Jimenez • Ron Pajak • Carl Thomsen • Gregory Stewart • Beth Randolph • Jimmy Rugland • Tamara Merrit • Thomas Gibson • Erma Hurr • John Roy Clark • Teresa Iverson • Eugene Mortensen • Thais McNally • Pegi Emiliani

with Tim Burton rumored to direct.

Depp's casting deals closed on September 24th when Cook showcased the studio's future offerings at the Kodak Theater in Los Angeles to movie industry insiders. A few thousand audience members enjoyed extended clips of the upcoming releases, along with a parade of the films' stars that were on hand to hype the impending projects.

The first three installments of *The Pirates Of The Caribbean* earned the Mouse House a combined \$2.6 billion for the Bruckheimer-produced franchise: the fourth pic would serve as a cherry on the already heavily iced cake.

Tim Burton's version of *Alice In Wonderland* is to be shot using 3D and performance-capture technology similar to the process used in *Beowulf*. "Alice" is scheduled to hit the big screens in 2010.

Other big news announced during the splashy stage event was the release of the sequel to *Cars*, another Disney box office and merchandising cash cow, which will be moved up a year to 2011—in time to cross-promote a newly revamped ride "Cars Land" at Disney's California Adventure theme park, which is due to be unveiled during the same time period.

20th Century Fox

With the financial markets as volatile as Dick Cheney on a quail hunt, Wall Street is currently in the headlines as much as it was in the mid 1980s. Fox has decided to move forward and release a timely sequel to their hit ode to opulence film *Wall Street*.

Michael Douglas starred as Gordon Gekko, the stock market legend who coined such sage catchphrases as "Greed Is Good" and "Lunch Is For Wimps."

Although the star has not been formally attached to the project, it seems Douglas may be willing to pry himself away from his buxom Welsh wife, Catherine Zeta Jones, long enough to revisit the well of unbridled capitalism, one more time.

Charlie Sheen, who starred as Gekko's young protégé, Bud Fox, will not reprise his role in the sequel.

The modern-day story will again center on Gekko, who has been recently released from prison and reemerges into a tumultuous financial market, much like the one he lorded over, just before being jailed.

Allan Loeb (*21*) has been tapped to script the sequel, with Edward R. Pressman returning as producer.

The project has been fast-tracked by the studio in order to make the release resonate with not only fans of the original film but also to a new audience disgusted by the wheelings and dealings of the financial sector.

Fox has acquired the rights to Joe Haldeman's 1974 sci-fi novel *The Forever War* and has slated Ridley Scott to direct.

Scott hasn't directed a sci-fi film since his back-to-back releases of *Blade Runner* and *Alien*. He had originally intended to release *The Forever War* on their heels.

The plot revolves around a soldier who battles an enemy in deep space for a few months, only to return to unrecognizable earth 20 years in the future.

Richard Edlund originally purchased the rights to the book with \$400,000 of his own money, hoping to make the project his directorial debut. Edlund is the FX wizard who won two Oscars® for visual effects on *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*, but was never able to get *The Forever War* off the ground.

Two decades after his initial interest in the project, Scott was quoted by *Daily Variety* as saying, "I first pursued (*The*) *Forever War* 25 years ago, and the book has grown more timely and relevant since. It's a science-fiction epic, a bit of *The Odyssey* by way of *Blade Runner*, but in a brilliant, disorienting premise."

DreamWorks

It's official—DreamWorks has jumped ship and has left Paramount Pictures (sort of) after inking a seven-year distribution deal with Universal Studios.

Paramount will continue to distribute DreamWorks Animation pictures through 2012 and retains sequel and remake rights to DreamWorks films it has already distributed. Paramount will receive an 8 percent distribution fee for releasing the projects.

Universal committed \$150 million to DreamWorks and will also receive an 8 percent fee for distributing their films in a deal that will be in effect in 2009 and will include six releases per year. As part of the deal, Universal will advance DreamWorks the capital for marketing the films.

Universal currently releases an average of 28 films per year, and according to Universal Co-Chairman David Linde, those releases would not be cut back to make room for the half-dozen DreamWorks projects they are set to distribute. Instead, the studio intends to increase their number of films offered annually, in a time when most studios are cutting back on projects.

Reliance Big Entertainment, which will distribute the new DreamWorks films in India, injected the company with \$550 million, making the divorce from Paramount possible. DreamWorks' principal Steven Spielberg is hoping to land another \$700 million from JPMorgan, but has had to hold off on sealing the deal due to stock market volatility. Spielberg hopes to have financing finalized with JPMorgan by the end of 2008, economy permitting.

Some believed a bidding war for distribu-

tion rights would set off between the major studios when rumors circulated that DreamWorks was shopping for a new partnership, but in the end only Fox and Disney made courtesy calls to Spielberg, with no real commitment by either studio.

What is known is that Spielberg and DreamWorks Co-Topper Stacey Snider, a former Universal Chairman, will have to scratch the nearly 200 projects that the company has developed over the years, including those projects that are in active development. *Tintin*, Sacha Baron Cohen's comedy *Dinner With The Schmucks*, and Peter Jackson's *Lovely Bones* are among the nearly fully developed projects that will be binned in the move to Universal.

Then there is the question of the fate of some 150 DreamWorks employees, many with contracts, who may or may not be going along for the ride to Universal. Although it has been confirmed that DreamWorks Co-Founder David Geffen helped broker the deal with Universal, but it appears that only Spielberg and Snider will make the leap. Universal's Linde was keen to keep the well-oiled team together, to allow them to continue developing innovative new projects.

Spielberg and Snider both have long ties to Universal. *Daily Variety* quoted Spielberg as saying, "Universal has always been my home base, so this agreement starts a new chapter in what has been a long and successful association. While it feels great to come home again, it feels like I never left."

Paramount

With a six-movie-per-year hole to fill, Paramount is proud to have Marvel extend their distribution pact with the studio.

Marvel handed Paramount their biggest-grossing film of this year, *Iron Man*, and was given a 10 percent fee for distributing the blockbuster.

In a deal that brings Marvel's distribution fee to 8 percent, in line with what DreamWorks pays the studio for handling their animated films and what Lucasfilm pays Paramount for distributing its *Indiana Jones* franchise, Paramount will have distribution rights for the next five Marvel releases.

Included on the slate of projects due to be distributed by Paramount is the sequel *Iron Man 2*, which will see Robert Downey Jr. and Gwyneth Paltrow revise their starring roles for the July 2010 release. In addition, Paramount expects to distribute Marvel 2011 releases of *The First Avenger: Captain America* and *The Avengers*.

In addition to the distribution deal, Paramount is expected to oversee marketing of upcoming Marvel titles in a pact that covers all areas of handling the films, including home video releases. **WSR**

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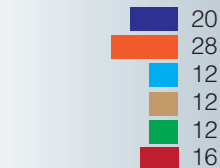
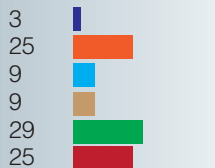
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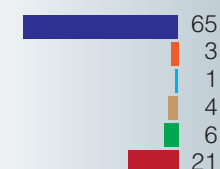
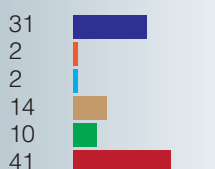
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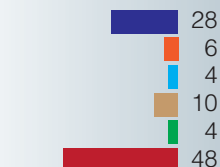
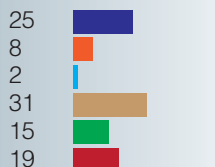
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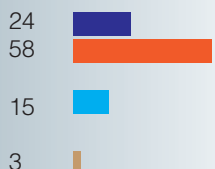
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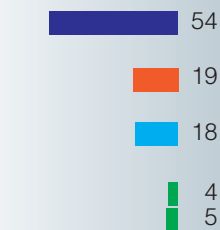
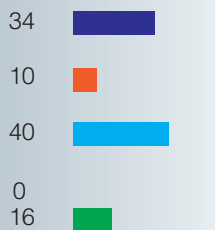
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A Cinerama® Revival

DAVID RICHARDS

Have you heard of the eccentric in Ohio that created a Cinerama® installation in his home? In case you haven't, his name is John Harvey, residing in a suburb of Dayton. Mr. Harvey was the head projectionist in the Dabel Cinerama Theatre in town, as well as working at several other theatres before and since. You might say his fascination with the Cinerama process bordered on a religious experience. After the Cinerama company failed in the early 1970s, he salvaged as much of the equipment as he could.

The catalyzing event in John's life seems to have been the acquisition of a trailer for *How the West Was Won*, representing six minutes worth of Cinerama film materials. That was all it took to make John decide to assemble his own Cinerama system in the basement of his house. Not having Cinerama projectors, he modified Century projectors according to the original Cinerama blueprints. The few parts he didn't have and couldn't locate, he had custom made at a machine shop. For a ribbon screen, he used hundreds of strips of 16mm film painted white. All this to show six minutes of film. Additional equipment was necessary to allow one person to run the show. The setup worked! Thus, in 1991 this became one of two locations in the world where three-strip Cinerama films could be shown, and the **only** place in North America (the other was in Australia).

Mr. Harvey was so pleased with his setup, he moved it upstairs to the



John Harvey With 7-Track Magnetic Audio Reproducer

living room. Of course it required eliminating two bedrooms, and raising the ceiling a few feet. Word got around that this guy had a Cinerama setup in his home in Dayton, Ohio, and film enthusiasts from far and wide began making the pilgrimage to experience it.

As word spread, an amazing thing happened: people started sending

him film materials that had been sitting in theatres, labs, warehouses, or wherever it happened to be when the Cinerama company closed its doors. You see, it was extremely expensive to ship the huge amount of film materials for a Cinerama show, and with the financial difficulties the company was going through, the prints stayed right where they were, all over the world. John has now acquired 5 complete prints, and the material keeps coming. Some of the prints are Technicolor IB, and still have excellent color. Other material is on conventional color stock, and has faded.

Since Mr. Harvey put his system together, there has been another Cinerama installation at a Museum in Bradford, England. Mr. Harvey was asked to lend his experience to that effort. That installation was completed in 1993 and has been very successful, drawing film fans from all over the world.

It seems that this Cinerama lunacy is infectious. Enter Larry Smith, manager of a small art theatre in Dayton called "The New Neon Movies." Larry and John are old friends, and John has been instrumental in providing equipment for some special showings at the New Neon—a two-projector 3D setup for *Bawana Devil* and *Dial M For Murder*, for example.

Last year at this time, things were not looking good financially for the New Neon Movies. Even though the auditorium is quite small, it was decided to "twin" the theatre for greater flexibility of show times, thereby keeping the theatre alive a little longer. Well, John and Larry must have gotten a little giddy on film cleaner fumes one night, because they came up with the idea of converting the New Neon Movies into a Cinerama theatre! I suppose their reasoning was that since substantial remodeling would be needed as part of the auditorium split, this was a logical time to try the Cinerama setup as a temporary attraction. Plus, it would delay the dreaded split if successful.

A hole was knocked in the wall at the back for the center projector (the existing booth was too high), and two additional booths were constructed in the back corners of the auditorium. Through word of mouth, John found additional Cinerama projectors and related equipment. One projector came from Indianapolis, and the other two from Europe. With the projectors, and a little cannibalizing of his setup at home, the New Neon theatre was transformed during a few weeks in August of 1996.

The landlord wasn't completely sold on this idea, so before this metamorphosis was allowed to begin, a massive letter-writing campaign was launched to solicit public support. By the cutoff date, letters promising attendance had been received from over a thousand people in 37 states in the U.S., and several other countries. The landlord was satisfied, so since last September there has been a public Cinerama theatre in the United States for the first time in 30 years! The run was originally scheduled for showings on eight weekends in September and October, but was quickly extended through December due to the tremendous demand. In addition, showings were added on Wednesdays. The showings were subsequently extended through March, and again through September 1, 1997. If this keeps up, Dayton may become a permanent Cinerama museum!

During the letter writing campaign, the Cinerama insanity spread to the Internet, and thus to me. Although I was alive when Cinerama existed originally, I was only a kid. I was never taken to see it, and didn't even know what it was until I was an adult. By that time, it was gone. So it was something I had always wanted to see. Even so, I had my doubts about traveling to Dayton to see it. The airfare from California to Dayton is several hundred dollars. Then there's the hotel. You also have to reserve tickets in advance for the "sweet spot" seats. I'm such a procrastinator, I probably wouldn't have gone. The deciding factor was a friend with a spare ticket, Dan Sherlock. He had made



John Entertaining The Audience After The Show (Ribbon Screen Visible In Background).

a reservation for a family member that couldn't be there. That made up my mind for me. Plane tickets were bought, reservations were made, and I was off to Dayton.

The films that are being shown are *This Is Cinerama* on Saturday afternoons and *How The West Was Won* on Sundays and Wednesdays. The versions that are now running are Technicolor IB prints, put together from the best remaining segments of the existing materials. These "hybrid" prints look very good, although there are some color differences between the three panels at times. For 30-year-old and 40-year-old prints, they look fantastic!

Two highlights of the trip were a peek behind the louvered screen and a Q&A period with John Harvey. I'm not a movie critic, and I won't address the content of the films other than to say they were entertaining. But I didn't go to see the films, I went to see the process! Was it worth it? Yes! With the airfare, hotel and rental car, this was the most expensive show I've ever gone to, but I was not disappointed. I'm very glad I went. I feel I have experienced an important development in motion picture history—one that changed screen shapes forever.

I'd like to discuss the Dayton installation a little more...after the projectors and sound reproducer, probably the most important piece of equipment is the huge curved iron frame that supports the screen. This was rescued from the defunct Dabel Theatre, and has spent the last 30-plus years in a barn (it's much too large to fit in John's living room!). Even though the New Neon Theatre is fairly small, the screen frame from a "real" Cinerama theatre was able to be used. It required a few rows of seats to be removed at the front, however. The resulting screen is approximately 48-feet wide. That isn't huge for a Cinerama screen, but it is sufficient, given that the furthest seat away is no more than about 25 feet from it. It provides an image with a substantially larger horizontal visual angle than any conventional theatre. The image is bright and clear.

The screen is made up of 980 strips 4-inch wide, that overlap about 0.1-inch. It took 200 man-hours to assemble. Each strip is stapled to a wood frame at the top, and attached to an elastic band at the bottom to keep it under tension. With the construction of the two corner booths, "Abel" and "Charlie" (the center projector is "Baker"), the theatre conversion cost was about \$4,000 for plywood and carpeting. The side booths are not just tacked together, they look professional, and do a good job of damping the noise from the projectors.

Four thousand dollars sounds pretty cheap for a Cinerama installation, but bear in mind that John is loaning his projectors, sound reproducer and the supporting equipment. This equipment has been estimated to be worth a half million dollars if it had to be built from scratch.

There have been reams of information printed about the Cinerama format, so I won't spend a lot of space talking about it. But for those that don't know what Cinerama was all about, I'll describe it briefly. The most important aspect of Cinerama is that it launched the widescreen revolution in the 1950s. Basically, it consisted of three cameras photographing a scene on three strips of 35mm film. This was then shown in a theatre with a large curved screen, with three projectors. The inventor was Fred Waller, with a lot

of help from Hazard Reeves, and the financial support of Lowell Thomas. The first Cinerama theatres were conversions of existing theatres. Later, theatres were built specifically for the process.

There were three things that contributed to the huge success of Cinerama. Surprisingly, all three elements had existed separately before. The solution of multiple projectors to cover a large screen was used decades earlier by Abel Gance for his *Napoleon*. Three cameras and three projectors were used, just as with Cinerama. But the three images were used predominantly for a multi-screen effect called "trptych." The three images only occasionally united to form a single image. All indications are that this was on a flat screen, which leads us to the second item.

The problem with a picture on a flat screen is that no matter how large it is, you only have to turn your head a little and you see the edge of it. Waller's solution was to curve the screen, so it actually surrounded the viewer somewhat. He appears to have gotten this idea from his work for Kodak at the 1939 World's Fair, projecting film on the inside of the 180-foot diameter "Perisphere." But again, this had been done before. In the late 1700s a system using curved paintings that surrounded the audience was used by Robert Barker. You can extend this thinking to its logical conclusion, which is the 360-degree Circarama (later Circlevision) process used by Disney years after Cinerama was launched. Of course 360 degrees is more than anyone can see at one time. The official Cinerama screen covered a 146-degree arc, on a radius located about in the center of the audience.

The third part of the puzzle was multi-track sound. Again, this was not



John Cleaning Center ("Baker") Projector (In Lobby!)

new, having been used a decade earlier for "Fantasound." However, it was innovative in that it was recorded on magnetic tape rather than optically, with the result that it had much higher fidelity. Also there were 7 channels, whereas most stereophonic systems up to that time had used two or three. (For the current Dayton run, brand new sound tapes have been made from the originals and they sound great!)

There is actually a fourth piece of the pie that was lost part way through the life of Cinerama. That was the concept of using wide-angle lenses that simulated the human field of view. In combination with the curved screen, this provided the most natural and realistic image for the human eye. Later, when the single-strip 70mm "Ultra-Panavision®" and "Super Panavision®" processes were used on the same screen, the images did not represent this wide angle view, so the natural effect of the process was lost, whether the large screen was filled or not. Even on a curved screen, the image looked flat. This is evident in several segments of *How The West Was Won*, where Ultra Panavision (65mm film with a 1.25x anamorphic squeeze) was used. There were improvements being developed that could have kept the benefits of three-strip Cinerama and



Author In Front Of The New Neon Movies Cinerama Sign

reduced or eliminated the problems, but they came too late. The demise of Cinerama was sealed when the 3-strip process was abandoned, and the name began being applied to 70mm and even regular 35mm films.

In the last paragraph I mentioned the noticeable difference with the 65mm material that was used in *How The West Was Won*. Not only is it flatter looking, it is also quite grainy. This is partly due to the greater negative area of three 35mm strips compared to one 65mm strip (about 60 percent more), and also partly due to the optical printing step required to split the 65mm original images into three slices.

People talk about aspect ratios for Cinerama, but you have to be very careful with your definitions, because it's easy to get into trouble with a curved screen. So you're likely to see many different numbers listed as the "official" aspect ratio. The actual viewing angle represented or "subtended" by the picture varies depending on where the viewer sits. For a person sitting at the screen radius, the screen would appear as 146 degrees horizontally by 55 degrees vertically, which corresponds to an aspect ratio of 2.65:1. For people sitting closer than that, or off to one side, the screen edges no longer appear parallel, and an aspect ratio is meaningless. For people on the centerline but further away than the radius, the screen no longer envelops them and starts to appear like a flat screen having a width equal to the chord width. This reduces the apparent aspect ratio. If viewed from the center projector, the aspect ratio measures only about 2.0:1.

For detailed specifications on the film image or dimensions, I refer readers to the *American*

Cinematographer Manual, Fourth Edition or before, which is the most reliable source I know. I don't know if the Dayton installation has the correct radius and angle (I suspect it does not), but John Harvey assured us that the image is sized correctly for the screen, and all the image is there.

In its heyday, there were 167 Cinerama theatres around the world. In 1990, there was only one, a private installation in Australia. By 1993 the number had risen to three with the addition of the Bradford Museum and Mr. Harvey's home. (According to Mr. Harvey, the film materials in Australia have deteriorated considerably, and are now almost unusable).

When I started writing this article, it ended here with speculation about how long the Dayton run would last, and proposed that our country could benefit from a permanent Cinerama installation like the one in England, so that future generations could see firsthand how widescreen processes evolved. In the meantime, there has been an interesting development in this area. In November of 1996, The Entertec Development Corporation announced plans for a new theme park devoted to motion pictures, called Cinematec. The park will be located in Orlando, Florida, and will include a 3-strip Cinerama theatre, built to the original specifications. The park is scheduled to open in June in the year 2000. Plans are underway to preserve and duplicate the existing Cinerama film materials for exhibition.

Does this indicate a trend? Will Cinerama theatres spring up across the country once again? Will there be new productions in three-strip Cinerama? I don't think so. The installation in Dayton has always been considered temporary. The end date has been extended a couple of times, and is currently September 1, 1997. If the park in Florida opens as planned, that would probably become the one permanent home of the process in the U.S. There's simply not a demand for more theatres. Although Cinerama was revolutionary when it debuted in 1952, its impressiveness is diminished by the quality delivered by modern technology. But I think that two very useful things will result from this special engagement: First, it looks very much like there will be a permanent home for Cinerama in the U.S.—if not in Dayton, perhaps in Florida.

The other benefit is the reminder it provides to filmmakers and exhibitors that there is a demand for extremely high quality film images (not a large demand, but a demand nonetheless). This may



Larry Smith, Manager Of The New Neon Movies Outside The Theatre. The Original Restored Cinerama Sign Is Visible On The Roof.

help revitalize interest in large-format photography and encourage the future production of more 65/70mm projects.

If you have a serious interest in film but have never seen Cinerama, by all means make the trip to Dayton. For information on Cinerama showings, contact The New Neon Movies at 513 222 8452, or by email at art-filmfan@aol.com. For further information about the rise and fall of Cinerama, I highly recommend the book *Widescreen Cinema* by John Belton. Also, there's a very thorough chapter on Cinerama in Lowell Thomas' biography, *So Long Until Tomorrow*. ■■■

P.S. The Entertec Cinematec Cinerama Dome project has been scrapped.—*Editor*

David Richards is an engineer and film technologist. He is a member of the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers (SMPTE), serving as chairman of the Hollywood section for the 97-98 term. He is the author of several papers on advancements in motion picture and television technology. Mr. Richards recently chaired the first SMPTE conference devoted exclusively to the film industry.

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