

Film-Tech

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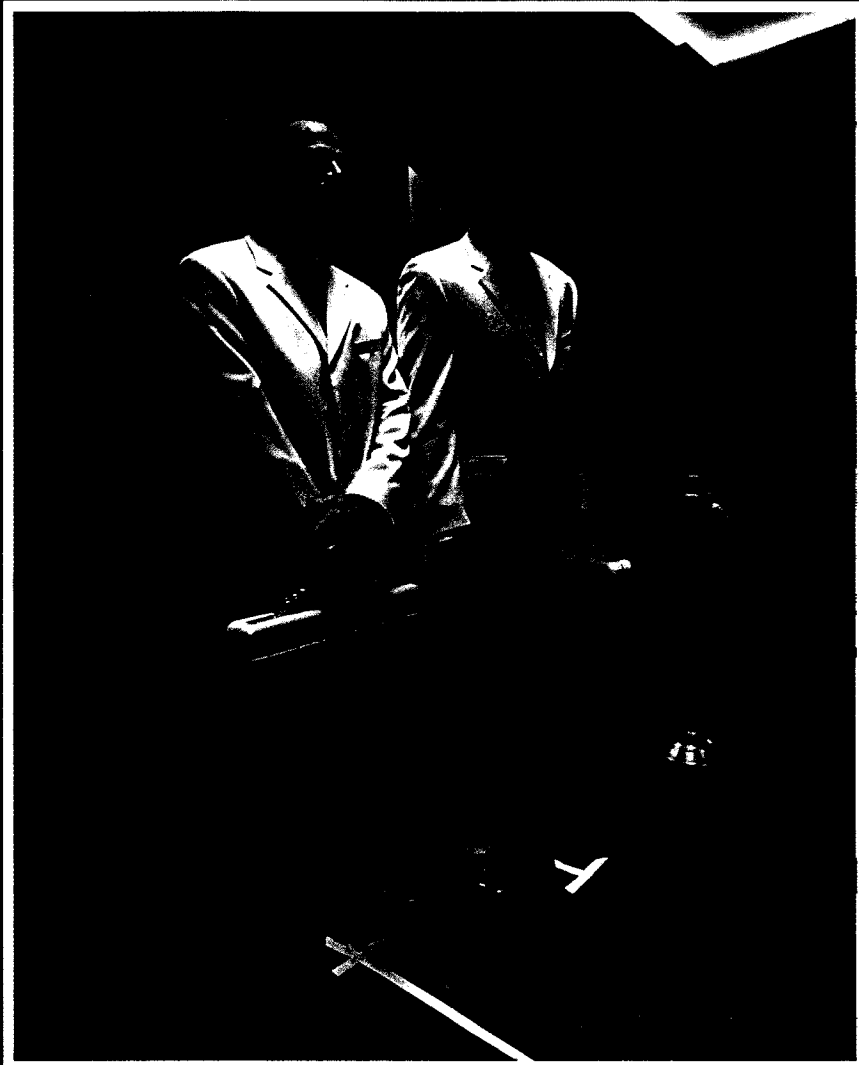
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FILMNOTES

FOR REEL PEOPLE



News and Information for the Theatrical Motion Picture Industry from Eastman Kodak Company



Columbia's Jeff Blake

Wes Craven

Projecting the Future

Paramount's Wayne
Lewellen

Kodak Premieres 'Men in White' Trailer

TIPS FOR PROPER FILM HANDLING

By Sean Lohan
Cinema Operations Manager
U.S., Canada and LAR
Professional Motion Imaging
Eastman Kodak Company

I began my career as a theatre manager 16 years ago and have witnessed much progress during subsequent years, including the advent of multiplexes and megaplexes and increasing reliance on booth automation. In some ways, the role of the projectionist has been simplified. However, in other ways, the job has become more demanding and more complex. Let's focus on just one issue in this column—film handling. In a modern multiplex, a few people are responsible for building up, tearing down and maintaining prints for many screens. They are, in effect, the last link in a chain of many people who are responsible for bringing stories captured on film to audiences.

Successful projectionists always have two attributes. They know how to treat film with respect, and they know how to use the projection equipment properly. The projection booth is generally a pressure-packed environment where everything moves at an accelerated pace. Following are tips I have learned over the years for film handling practices, which can eliminate human errors in the projection booth and help ensure great presentations.

When the film arrives at your theatre, don't take anything for granted. Check to see if the print is heads up or

tails up (some people prefer saying heads out or tails out). It is highly recommended not to trust the leader, which might easily have been spliced incorrectly by the lab or projection booth personnel in another theatre.

Transferring the film from the build-up table to the platter is where most errors will occur. Many projectionists build directly from the reel to the platter. We recommend inspecting the print at the workbench prior to loading on the platter. Either way, the major culprit is loading the film too fast. Load the film at 50 percent of the table's speed, with the film being guided gently between your thumb and your forefinger. This enables you to feel the lab splices or any torn sprockets. Always ensure that the film is not bumping or rubbing against the platter while being loaded. There have been many occasions where a print is accidentally scratched prior to being shown due to misalignment at the build-up table.

Marking reel changes. Amazingly, projectionists that use white shoe polish to mark the reel changes. Shoe polish is for shoes. Although it is true that the white shoe polish is easier to locate, it is also true that this can cause considerable film damage. There are many types of splicing tape on the market that show the reel change with little difficulty.

Storing of the heads and tails from the specific reels is always an interesting topic. Depending on the number of prints being built up or torn down, there can be many loose heads and tail sections in the booth if they are not properly labeled. The procedure is very simple, spool the head or tail leader, mark it appropriately, "H" for heads or "T" for tails, and store in the proper film can. Leaving these on the worktables or platters to store later is the main reason that mix-ups occur.

When threading the film through rollers there is a key element that must be observed—rollers are meant to roll. If the roller does not roll, the interior will flatten out causing the film to rub over the surface creating scratches. Film should move freely through the roller with just the sprocket edges in contact with the roller surfaces. If the film is improperly threaded, it can wriggle free and the edge of the roller can damage the film. Chances are no one will notice the damage has been done until the film is projected for an audience, and there is an ugly scratch etched into the film.

This sounds obvious. But it is important to read the manuals that come with the projection equipment. These manuals explain things such as why and how tension should be checked on belts, how the gates and rollers should be frequently cleaned and wiped down, etc.

The final check prior to showing this film to your patrons is to prescreen the film. If time permits, this is the best way to ensure that your patrons are getting the stellar presentation they deserve.

Lastly, it is important for managers to take the time to train new personnel in proper procedures for film handling and projector maintenance. Typically, it will take a relatively inexperienced person approximately one hour to build a print. The more experienced personnel can do the same in half the time.

The goal is to present films to audiences without a hitch or complaint. With proper training and film handling techniques this is an achievable goal. If you would like additional information about Kodak's Projection Booth Training program please contact me at 310-204-7149 or e-mail at slohan@kodak.com.

BILL MILLER: PROJECTING INTO THE FUTURE

Theatre Service & Supply in Chatsworth, Calif., is involved in nearly every aspect of building theatres and screening rooms. The company, a product reseller, works hand-in-hand with owner-selected architects to provide contracting services—auditorium and projection booth design, equipment and furnishing—for major and smaller circuits including Century Theatres and The Movie Experience as well as film labs, including Technicolor. The company also builds private screening rooms for Hollywood players such as Jerry Zucker and Joel Silver.

We asked Bill Miller, who has been in the industry since 1980 and has been president of TS&S since 1993, to get out his crystal ball and draw on his experience to predict or at least speculate about the future of the cinema. “We are distributors for Strong International and Christie, two of the leading film projection companies,” he says. “Christie has acquired Electrohome, which gives them an entry into the digital projection arena. I have enough confidence in these companies to say that if they enter the digital projection field, I’d trust them and include their equipment as an option in booths we design. My issues with digital projection are all of the other concerns in and around how that system will play.”

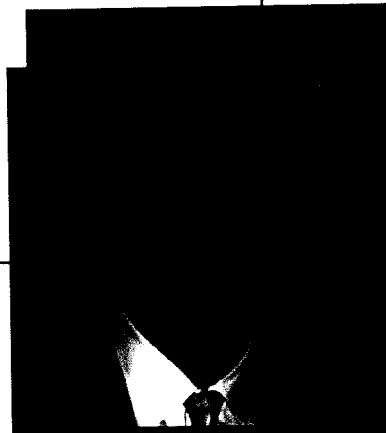
Miller, who has overseen the equipping of many hundreds of booths in the past year alone adds, “Just to remove and replace film projectors would be a very tricky and costly venture. If you have a 5-foot high by 6-foot deep by 30-inch wide projector system weighing 765 pounds, I’d like to see how fast you’re going to pull it out of a booth. And what do you do

with it once it’s removed, put it in storage? Another factor is that most digital projector manufacturers will probably want their systems installed closer to the screens. There might even be advantages to that in new buildings, but there are hidden costs if you are planning to replace film projectors that are currently in theatres.”

Miller believes electronic projection will not be embraced until there are agreements about who will pay and also about standards. He says that many exhibitors are still unhappy about incompatible brands of digital audio, and they are unlikely to embrace digital projection technologies before there is a guarantee there will be only one standard.

“Electronic cinema proponents,” he says, “are talking about replacing one of the few universal standards we have, namely 35 mm film at 24 fps. That won’t be an easy thing to do. At seminars we’ve gone to we’ve had about 20 questions for every one that’s answered.”

Many of these questions, Miller explains, have to do with maintenance of digital projection systems. “I don’t know how many people understand these systems may be harder to maintain than a 35 mm projector,” he says. “I’ve heard the electronic cinema companies say that these are maintenance free. We have found that not to be true. We have installed high-end digital projection systems alongside 35 mm projection systems in some private screening rooms, and we find there’s a lot of fine-tuning and refocusing that goes on before almost every screening. It’s a much more difficult job to remove and replace light sources in digital projectors. You really need an industry-approved technician to do



Bill Miller

this work, which isn’t a requirement for 35 mm projectors.”

Miller has also run into the rarely discussed phenomenon of the current generation of electronic projection systems—the “dead cell.” “They literally put dark holes, like small pinheads, in the projected image,” says Miller. “Admittedly, the holes are small, but they detract from the presentation and nobody on the electronic cinema side seems too concerned. We were taken aback when we worked on a producer’s projection room with one of these manufacturers. Their manual refers to an ‘allowable number of dead cells.’ They are just there and there’s nothing you can do about them. That’s like saying there’s a certain ‘allowable amount of film scratches’ from the lab.”

Having stated his concerns, Miller reiterates his belief that the problems will be solved, and some day digital projection will become a widespread reality.

For more information visit www.theatreservice.com.

When a villain seems dead, he never is. He will always be allowed one, and sometimes two resurrections.

COLUMBIA PICTURES' JEFF BLAKE "KEEP LOOKING FORWARD"

Jeff Blake, president of worldwide distribution for Columbia Pictures Entertainment, began his career in 1974 as an assistant booker at the Paramount Pictures office in Chicago within two weeks of his graduation from Northwestern University. He worked in various cities for that studio, always in distribution. Blake was eventually brought to Hollywood as general sales manager. He joined Columbia Pictures Entertainment in 1992. During his tenure at the studio, the industry has undergone a global expansion that has virtually re-defined the process of motion picture distribution.

"When we strategize how we're going to sell a film today, we are looking at the world and not just the United States," he says.

Q: How has that thinking changed the way films are distributed?

A: You have to approach a release with just as much skill in every country you play in. The smart stars and producers are plugged into the foreign release schedules. They want to know how their movie opened in Australia, Germany and other markets. Adam Sandler went on a promotional tour throughout Europe for *Big Daddy* and our international grosses for that film were substantially better than they were on *Waterboy*, in part because he worked so hard at it and also because those markets are growing.

Q: From your perspective what are the most important considerations for exhibitors when they open screens in new markets?

A: I believe it is important for people to have choices. You've got to have enough screens to play the full menu of pictures that are in release. The public wants all the films they

hear about accessible, so they can make their own decisions. When we give them that option more people go to see more films more regularly. People want to go to theatres that offer a comfortable and attractive environment. That is very important. Our promotional materials are effective because they target on a focused audience that has a predictable buy rate. Trailers are very important as are standees and one sheets.

Q: Are trailers a big influence in getting people into see particular movies?

A: Many people mention it as the number one

reason they came to a movie. Trailers are right up there with television spots, which are very expensive to place. Trailers are a great form of targeted marketing. Distributors are very competitive today about the quality of trailers they produce and their placement. Frankly, the treatment of our trailers is an important point of our negotiations with exhibitors. Smart exhibitors also understand that trailers are a very important marketing tool for them, too.

Q: Does a title have to be a hit in the United States in order to succeed in the rest of the world?

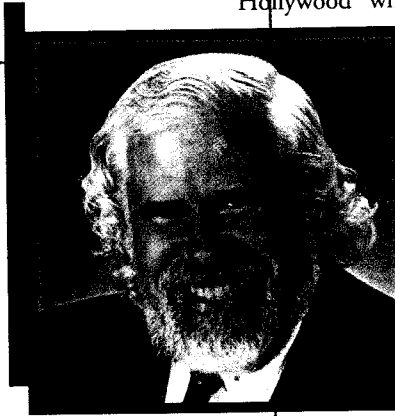
A: It's a strong indicator, but there are films that play better around the world than they do in the United States. *The Devil's Own* with Brad Pitt and Harrison Ford is a good example. It depends on the film. Chances are that a film about baseball will play better in the United States than it will in Europe. Occasionally a film is a phe-

nomenon in one country and nowhere else. I was in Germany recently where *Werner* was a huge hit. I believe it was the sixth sequel. It was getting as much press and word of mouth as *The Phantom Menace*, though I think the odds against that happening are getting longer.

Q: If you were "Czar of Hollywood" what would you change?

A: I think there needs to be more room for movies that aren't intended to gross \$100 million at the box office that play to niche audiences. Today, the trend is toward producing either low budget

Jeff Blake



specialized or movies that need to top \$100 million in order to be considered successful. If a movie isn't in the top five or six during the first weekend it tends to quickly become an endangered species. *Arlington Road* is a good example of what I am talking about. It is a good film that has intrigue, excitement and very good performances, but it didn't have the mass appeal to make \$100 million. I think you need good films like that on your release schedule if you are going to build bigger audiences over time.

Q: Are you a movie fan yourself?

A: Absolutely. In fact, the most successful people I know in this business are enthusiastic fans. They all found ways to play a role in this business because they love movies. I think it is important to love movies. I see so many films, but I never get tired of it. I'll be at a screening sometimes, and I'll temporarily forget that it's my job. I am just a regular moviegoer enjoying

the film and temporarily suspending reality like everyone else.

Q: Are you optimistic about the future of the film business?

A: I am. There are really great films being made. I've been very proud of so much of what this company has produced during recent years. For example, in a one year span, we released *Jerry Maguire*, *Men in Black*, *My Best Friend's Wedding*, *Air Force One* and we finished the year with *As Good as it Gets*. That was an incredible run of successful films that were also good. I think James Brooks will be recognized the way a Billy Wilder is—as one of the greats. One thing we rarely seem to do is appreciate the history being made. We are making and releasing films today that will be considered classics 20, 30 and 50 years from now. In general, we're doing a better job of preserving our assets and storing films properly. I believe 100 years from now people will enjoy



films like *As Good as it Gets* or *My Best Friend's Wedding* and they will still be assets for the studio.

Q: What is the most important lesson you have learned, so far?

A: These past 25 years have been a

Big Daddy great ride. They really have. The most important lesson I've learned during that time is to keep looking forward. The best years are still ahead of us. I am very excited about the future of this industry." ❧

FRED GOODALL JOINS CINEMA OPERATIONS

Fred Goodall has been named director of Kodak's Cinema Operations Group in Canada. Goodall is the former national sales and marketing manager for Kodak Professional Motion Imaging in Canada. He is based in Toronto.

"We have thriving cinema markets. Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver are comparable to similar-sized cities in the United States in terms of the numbers and quality of screens," he says. "After spending most of my career working with filmmakers, including cinematographers, producers and distributors, I am very enthusiastic about having this opportunity to work directly with exhibitors. We only have one purpose in Cinema Operations and that is to work with exhibitors to enhance presentation quality. I know how important that is to our customers

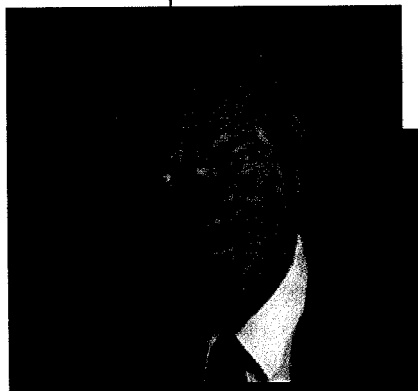
who create films. They are very supportive of this program."

Goodall says that his initial focus will be on certifying theatres for the *Kodak ScreenCheck* Experience as well as implementing training programs for projectionists.

"I look at this as a great opportunity to open lines of communications directly with exhibitors, so we can learn more about how they feel we can help them," Goodall says.

Goodall has been with Kodak since graduating in 1966 from Ryerson Polytechnic University. He notes that Ryerson was one of the first schools in Canada with a full-fledged film studies program.

"The box office in Canada is very strong," he says. "The number of screens is constantly expanding with a tremendous emphasis on themed ven-



Fred Goodall

ues and complexes that are designed to enhance the movie-going experience. The growth in the number of screens is phenomenal. Canadian audiences are drawn to state-of-the-art venues." ❧

Whenever anyone is chased to a staircase, she/he will run upstairs rather than down.

PYTLAK'S PRACTICAL PROJECTION POINTERS: CONQUERING CONTRAST KILLERS

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The lone spacecraft travels through the inky blackness of space. Pinpoints of starlight guide its way to the distant galaxies. A persistent red glow illuminates the lower right of the screen, following its prey through the dark void. Is it the light reflected from an enemy ship? Is it the thruster of a proton torpedo? Or is it the glow of a hideous alien creature? Worse...it is the theatre's unshielded exit sign.

Details are Lurking in the Shadows

The ambush is set. The line of troops crossing the sunlit meadow can't see into the shadows of the dark woods where the enemy quietly waits. Unfortunately, neither can the audience, as the light reflected from the white ceiling of the theatre washes out all the detail in the dark foreground. The effect is certainly not what the cinematographer or director intended.

Conquering Contrast Killers

Scenes like those above play out in far too many theatres. Stray light, unwanted reflections, lens flare and dirty port glass all conspire to kill contrast. Modern color print film stocks like *Kodak Vision* premier color print film have a density range of more than 4.0, giving filmmakers an unprecedented palette of more than 10,000:1 to tell their stories. Unfortunately, most theatres fall short of even the minimum 400:1 screen contrast ratio specified by SMPTE Standard 196M. Stray light and low screen contrast cause smoky blacks, desaturated colors, and lack of

shadow detail. These contrast killers need to be conquered.

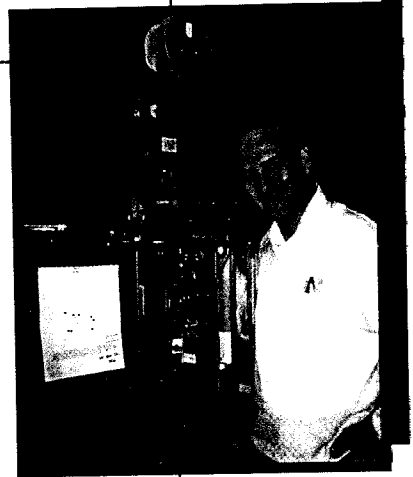
Contrast Killer 1: Auditorium Lighting

The first step in conquering contrast killers is to simply look at the "dark" screen. Exit signs, aisle lighting, ceiling lights, wall lighting, and booth lights should be set to normal show levels. The projector lamp should be on, but the dowsers closed. After taking about five minutes to let your eyes get used to the low light level in the auditorium, look at the screen. Is it truly "black"? If not, get on a stepladder or use a long pole to cast a shadow on the screen to identify the source of stray light.

Exit signs are a necessary source of light that must sometimes be located near the screen. Their brightness and color are strictly regulated by fire code. Their purpose is to guide patrons to the exits in case of emergency. But nothing says they need to shine ON the screen. Usually, only a simple shield is needed to keep their light from hitting the screen, without compromising their function of clearly identifying the exits. The newer light emitting diode (LED) exit signs offer the possibility of more directionality to the light, with less stray light on the screen.

Aisle and step lights need to be bright enough to safely guide theatre patrons to and from their seats in a darkened theatre. They DO NOT plane to a landing on a foggy runway. Adjust these guide lights to the minimum brightness that ensures safety, a distraction in the darkened theatre.

Many theatres use a low level of ceiling illumination during the show



for the safety and security of their patrons. Care should be taken to shield the screen from direct illumination from these overhead lights. Decorative lighting that doesn't contribute to safety should not be used during the show.

Don't forget other sources of stray light that may shine on the screen, including those that aren't constant. Does light from the lobby shine on the screen every time someone walks into the theatre during a show? If this design flaw was missed when the theatre was built, correct it now. Can work lights in the booth ever shine on the screen? Make sure they don't. Are kids with laser pointers a problem? Enforce a strict policy banning laser pointers, and reward patrons that report perpetrators.

Contrast Killer 2: Reflected Light

The second step in eliminating sources of stray light is to show a film on the screen and look for re-reflection from the ceiling, walls and furnishings of the auditorium. One good film to use for this test is a loop of the SMPTE 35-PA (RP 40) Projector Alignment film, since it has about equal areas of light and dark spread throughout the image. Or a loop made from a bright scene of an old trailer can be shown. To protect the pro-

jector lens from heat damage for this test, don't project light without film running through the projector.

With the image being projected on the screen, cast a large shadow on the screen using a lightweight panel of plywood or cardboard about the size of a "one-sheet" (27 X 40 inches, or 70 X 100 centimeters). Cast the shadow from a distance of about 10 feet (3 meters) away from the screen by having an assistant on a ladder hold the panel in the projected light beam. Or mount the shadow-producing panel on a pole than can hold it in the middle of the projected image.

Using a ladder near the screen, observe whether the shadow of the panel is truly black on the screen. Casting a "shadow within the shadow" will usually point to the light source or reflection that is producing the stray light. In many cases, a light-colored ceiling or wall treatment is the culprit. Or shiny surfaces like mirrors, metal trim, or glass-covered posters are reflecting the screen's light. Low-gain, deeply curved or dome screens can also be a source of stray light if they reflect the projected light back onto themselves.

Contrast Killer 3: Lens Flare

The projector lens itself can be a significant contrast killer. Modern projection lenses feature efficient multi-layer anti-reflection coatings on each glass element, and careful design to absorb internal reflections. They also eliminate old-fashioned cemented elements that separated, crazed or yellowed with age and the intense heat of the projector's light. "Hand-me-down" used lenses are false economy, as they severely compromise the quality of the projected image. Lenses over 15 years old are better used as paperweights or museum pieces, as they rarely match the resolution, field flatness, and contrast of modern lenses.

Even modern lenses can be con-

trast killers. Improper cleaning can scratch or damage the surfaces of the glass, or introduce moisture into the lens. Loose dust should be carefully brushed away with a soft camels-hair lens brush. Cleaning should never be done with a dry cloth or tissue that can scratch the lens surface. Liquid lens cleaner should be used with great care not to get moisture into the lens. Look down the barrel of the lens as it is projecting an image—it should be scratch-free, without any significant haze. The lens should be sent for cleaning and evaluation if there is significant internal haze, scratched elements, loose elements, or any other defect.

Contrast Killer 4:

Lamphouse Misalignment

An often-overlooked contrast killer is lamphouse misalignment. If the lamphouse is not perfectly aligned with the projector, or is set to the wrong distance from the film plane, the light may enter the lens at an angle, or overfill the entrance pupil of the lens. This misdirected light can "bounce around" within the lens, greatly reducing contrast. Misalignment of the lamphouse also greatly reduces the efficiency of getting light on the screen, compromising screen luminance. If in doubt, have the alignment checked by your service engineer using an alignment jig or laser beam.

Contrast Killer 5: Poor Ports

The projection port is just as important as the lens in delivering high-quality images. Plain window glass should not be used. Only optical quality glass with anti-reflection coatings should be used. Port glass should never be installed perpendicular to the projection beam, to avoid reflecting light back into the projector lens. Likewise, if two panes of port glass are needed for sound isolation, care should be taken to avoid internal re-reflection.

Soundproof, angled port glass frames are available from several vendors. Port glass should be absolutely clean and scratch-free. As with the projection lenses, loose dust should be gently brushed away with a camels-hair lens brush, and liquid lens cleaner and lens tissue used for cleaning any haze. Ideally, the projected image should be almost invisible on the port glass, with no detectable scratches or haze.

Contrast Killer 6:

Low Screen Luminance

Low screen luminance is a major contrast killer. Since theatre screen contrast is the ratio between the "whitest white" and "blackest black" that can be shown on the screen, low screen luminance significantly degrades the range of brightness that can be shown. SMPTE Standard 196M specifies an aim of 16 footlamberts screen luminance, with an allowed range of 12 to 22 footlamberts for theatres. In no case should any part of the screen (even at the edges) be less than 10 footlamberts. Unfortunately, many theatres do not meet this important standard. Movies in these sub-standard theatres have dull highlights, desaturated colors, and very poor shadow detail. Theatres with low screen luminance are cheating both filmmakers and audiences by failing to provide proper projection.

Conclusion

Hopefully, this article helped identify factors in your theatre that will improve screen contrast, to deliver the sharp, vibrant images that only film is capable of delivering today. By showing the full contrast range available on today's films, you can assure that the filmmakers' vision and artistry is put on your screen in its entire visual splendor. So, go conquer those contrast killers now.

As always, your questions and comments are welcome. ✉

WAYNE LEWELLEN: PARAMOUNT'S PRESIDENT OF DISTRIBUTION

Wayne Lewellen has been president of distribution for the Paramount Pictures Motion Picture Group since 1986. Previously, he had been executive vice president, general sales manager. Lewellen began his career in Dallas, booking cartoons for Warner Bros. while he was still a student studying engineering at the University of Texas. Several years later he went to work as a sales manager for Columbia Pictures. Lewellen joined Paramount in 1973 as the branch manager in the studio's Dallas-Oklahoma office.

"I've been a movie fan as far back as I can remember," he says. "When I realized this job allowed me to see as many great films as I wanted, I knew I had a dream career."

Q: Wayne, you said you became a movie fan when you were a child. Do you think the industry is doing a good job of appealing to young people today?

A: I remember going to Saturday matinees, where they would show us 10 cartoons and a G-rated film. That's when I became a lifelong fan. You can't compete with cartoons in cinemas today, because they are so available on Saturday morning television, but some chains do a very good job featuring morning matinees for kids. We need to appeal to audiences of all ages.

Titanic is a good example of a film that appealed to people of all ages. I think that is one of the good things about multiplexes and megaplexes.

Q: Can you expand on that thought?

A: One of the very good things they are doing is creating additional shelf space so good films can stay in the

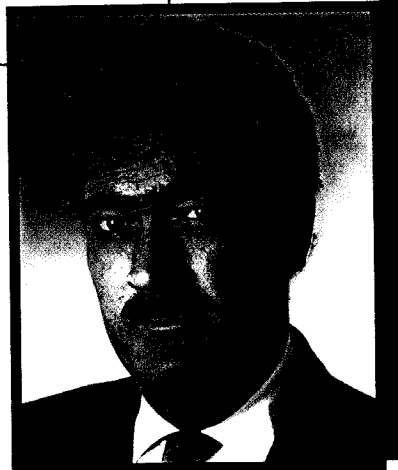
market until the audience finds them. What happens is that three or four good films will come out at the same time. Before multiplexes, by the time the audience saw the first two films, the third and fourth ones were gone. With the multiplexes, those films stay on the screen longer, so the audience sees them on the third or fourth weekend. That's one reason why trailers are so important. You have a captive audience of movie fans, and you can show them a trailer for a film they are interested in that is playing on another screen.

Q: There has been some talk about increasing advertising in theatres as a way of funding the installation of digital projectors. What do you think about that?

A: I am not a proponent of commercials. I know that some chains run them, and we have agreed to allow slides to be presented between shows. We understand the exhibitors' need for additional revenues. But, we believe that trailers can be a much more important source of revenue for the exhibitor and distributor, because they are a proven way of building audiences. I think a lot of people also resent paying \$6 or \$8 for a ticket, and having to sit through commercials promoting a local pizza parlor or used car lot. We are providing entertaining trailers that add value to the main presentation.

Q: What are your thoughts about competition from DVD, cable and satellite TV, which offer movies for much less money in the home?

A: I believe that as long as we do a good job of providing good films, most people will choose to see them in the cinema. Part of it is the experience. A lot of people don't want to wait to see a "hot" film. They want to see it and



Wayne Lewellen

talk about it. I believe that theatrical exhibition is the engine that pulls the train consisting of all the ancillary markets. They are generally driven by the success or failure of a film in the theatrical exhibition arena.

Q: What is your impression of the state of the art of the exhibition industry?

A: I think impressive advances have been made during recent years, and we see those trends continuing. There are many new multiplexes with digital sound, stadium seating, better projection and amenities replacing older cinemas. The exhibition business is highly competitive, so if you are an exhibitor, you have to do a good job from top to bottom, from the construction all the way through to operation of the theatres.

Q: Both the numbers of screens and box office revenues are growing. Do you see those trends continuing, or will they level off?

A: I think North America is a relatively mature industry, but there is nearly unlimited growth potential in the international marketplace. North America has approximately five percent of the world population, and it delivers nearly half of the revenue.

There is tremendous growth potential in the international marketplace.

Q: What do you mean by "relatively mature?"

A: The North American market will grow 12 to 14 percent in 1999, and that has been a consistent trend. I believe that type of growth can continue as long as we are providing good films that people want to see, and exhibitors provide a superior experience. That isn't as dramatic as the possibilities in other countries, but, in general, I think this is a very interesting and exciting time to be in this business.

Q: Do you think the Internet

will become a more important marketing tool?

A: The film everyone points to is the *Blair Witch Project*. But, I think that was a phenomenon. You aren't going to catch lightning in a bottle every year. The Internet is a tool for marketing, like a lot of other tools that we have. What it really comes down to is your ability to produce high quality films, with talented actors, telling entertaining stories and showing them in good environments.

Q: How important is the theatre environment to you?

A: It's an important factor in

deciding where we want to distribute movies. We have people who visit cinemas and check every aspect of their operations.

Q: What is your impression of the digital projection demonstrations?

A: I think this technology will evolve and eventually it will become a factor. Personally, I don't think what I have seen, so far, is good enough to replace film on first class screens. Some people believe that digital technology will provide an effective way to deal with piracy. If that proves to be true, it will become an important factor. ❧

THE MOVIE EXPERIENCE TO OFFER KODAK SCREENCHECK EXPERIENCE

The Movie Experience, a family owned circuit in southern and central California, has signed on for the *Kodak ScreenCheck* Experience program. All screens operated by the circuit will be certified by Kodak. Also known as SoCal Cinemas, and previously as Sanborn Theatres, the circuit has been in the Sanborn family for 81 years, since Bruce Sanborn's grandfather switched from production to exhibition and opened his first theatre in Los Angeles in 1918.

"I thought the *ScreenCheck* Experience was a great idea as soon as I heard about it," says current President Bruce Sanborn. "A lot of things that go into presentation are very subtle. What attracted us to the program was that we believe our

presentation is of a very high quality to begin with. This provides a fantastic way to market that high quality."

Sanborn explains that the name "Movie Experience" came about in the mid-1980s "to go along with our award-winning customer service ideas. We also wanted to convey the idea that you the movie-goer will not just observe the movie but rather you will feel like you're *in* the movie. The construction and design of our all our the-

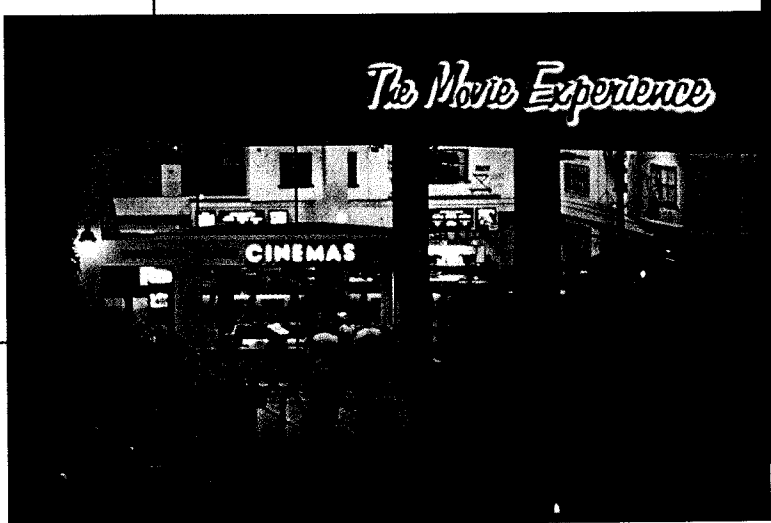
atre screens, seat comfort and sightlines, to proper masking, projector maintenance, and overall atmosphere. Now with the *ScreenCheck* Experience we have another way of conveying that to the movie audience."

Sanborn believes that it is more important than ever before for a theatre to distinguish itself. "In the old days,"

he says, "the nearest theatre playing the same film was 20 miles away. People pretty much had to go to the closest theatre if they wanted to see a particular movie. Today, there are more screens closer to their homes."

The Movie Experience's overall philosophy can be

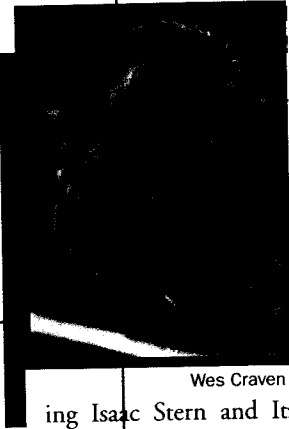
summed up in Sanborn's words, "It is our responsibility to present the film the way the filmmaker intended." ❧



The Movie Experience theatre in San Luis Obispo

A VISIT WITH WES CRAVEN

Wes Craven was directing the climactic scene for *Music of the Heart* at Carnegie Hall. It was a night to remember.



Wes Craven

Meryl Streep was portraying Roberta Guaspari, and some of the world's greatest living violinists, including Isaac Stern and Itzhak Perlman, gave virtuoso performances. Some 2,000 extras filled every seat in the 108-year-old concert hall, and more than half of the 150 actors were Guaspari's former students.

"It was a 20-hour day. We shot until 3 a.m.," Craven recalls. "Everyone was tired, but the place was silent and all of us fell under the spell of the beautiful music. There was something about the place itself. We could feel its spirit every moment we were there. At one point, I saw Isaac nudge Itzhak and point to Meryl while she was playing the violin. They were astonished. She learned to play the violin for this film."

Music of the Heart is a faithful recreation of reality based on the life of Guaspari, a music teacher who has taught hundreds of students at an East Harlem school to create beautiful music. When the funding for her class was eliminated after 10 years, Guaspari rallied support to save the program.

The movie was inspired by a 1996 documentary called *Small Wonders*. Miramax Films' Harvey Weinstein met Guaspari at a luncheon where the documentary was nominated for an Oscar. He told her he wanted to produce a

movie about her life. Guaspari was initially skeptical, especially when Weinstein told her that Craven, who dreamed up the nightmarish Freddie Krueger character for *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, was his choice for director.

Craven and Weinstein quickly earned her confidence with their passion and their commitment to telling her story on film the way it actually happened.

Music of the Heart was produced and distributed by Miramax Films in association with Craven/Maddelena Films. Marianne Maddelena was the producer.

It's a milestone film for Craven whose previous credits consisted solely of fright films, including such classics as *The People Under the Stairs* and *Scream*.

Craven earned a master's degree from Johns Hopkins University with a dual major in writing and philosophy. He was a college dropout, a music teacher until he was almost 30.

"My department chairman was very angry with me because I was spending too much time with students in a film club," Craven recalls. "He told me to stop playing around and to concentrate on earning a Ph.D. or I'd never advance in my career."

It was a turning point for Craven who decided to become a filmmaker. In 1972, he wrote, edited and directed *Last House on the Left* on a modest \$87,000 budget. His breakthrough film was *Nightmare on Elm Street*, which he wrote and directed in 1984.

Most of *Music of the Heart* was produced at practical locations, including four weeks in one classroom at a school in East Harlem.

One day, Craven was directing a

scene on a street in Harlem when a passerby unexpectedly dropped some coins into an open violin case and wished Streep luck. Some directors would have shouted cut. Craven made an intuitive decision that the shot made a great statement about the community's support for Guaspari.

"One of the things which makes this story so appealing is that it gives people hope that things can get better," Maddelena says. "It is amazing to see how the kids in Roberta's class have flourished, and how the community came to her aid when she needed help. I believe people will go home feeling good after seeing this film."

Craven adds, "I believe it will help people understand why it is important for music to be in our schools."

We asked Craven if he's optimistic



Music of the Heart

about the future of the cinema.

"Half of what kids do on the Internet is look up and exchange information about movies," he says. "I think the cinema has a great future. We'll also see films on computer screens, on DVDs and other new media, but there is still something special about the experience of watching a film on a big screen with a group of people. The cinema has proven to be enormously resilient for more than 100 years. I think film is one of our principal forms of artistic expression." ❧

HARKNESS HALL DISCUSSES SCREEN GAIN, REFLECTANCE ISSUES

It's a little surprising that under today's pressures of putting together the right (and profitable) mix of concession, comfort and capability some theatre builders fail to focus adequately on the all important element—the screen, says Joe Ward, Harkness Hall's Vice President, sales. "After all, relative to other fixtures, fittings and equipment, the screen can be considered a low ticket item, but in reality ranks as one of a theatre's most valuable assets."

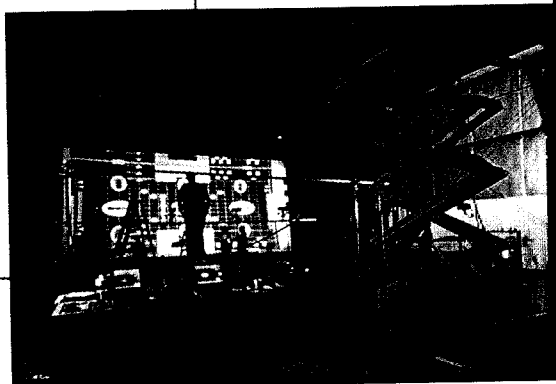
Since 1929, Harkness (Screens) has pioneered picture perfection because, as Ward adds, "People go to the PICTURES and pictures are all about screens." The company's earliest screens, developed by founder Tom Harkness, were cloth surfaces stretched onto wooden frames, and in their day quite revolutionary. Later using new substrate materials, such as polyvinyl chloride and a unique coating method, the development of industry standard products: Matt White Plus, Perlux® and Spectral 2000® became not only possible, but a reality. Now some 70 years later, Harkness Hall (the Hall Stage live theatrical equipment company was acquired 20 years ago) offers a range of screen surfaces, frames and masking systems for every type of projection method, format and auditorium.

Tom Harkness' legacy, now in the capable hands of Managing Director Andrew Robinson, continues to expand. Two plants, one near London, England and the other in Virginia, employ 150 people dedicated to the production and global supply of screen surfaces (over 2.5 mil-

lion square feet this year alone), frames and masking systems, as well as stage equipment for live theatre.

"That's our pedigree," remarks Ward. "It's quite simply a question of comparisons—how can we help exhibitors sharpen their competitive image?"

"The screen," says Ward, "is part of the optical train. Installing the proper type of screen makes a serious difference in the projected image." A major factor in screen selection is 'gain', which is a measure of the light reflected back from the surface. Harkness Hall's surface line Matt White Plus has a gain of 1, Perlux® 1.8 and Spectral 2000® 2.4. Perlux is considered a high-gain screen and arguably the world's most popular gain screen. Spectral 2000® is an



extremely high gain screen, predominantly for 3D applications.

"A surprising number of people think more gain is automatically better," says Ward. However, that is not always the case because higher gain screens have narrow viewing angles. (This is the angle off the projector axis where the audience has the best picture. Outside the optimum angle picture quality drops.) Matt White has excellent viewing angle, while Perlux® is narrower. The projection system designer must decide which surface is best given the seating layout, screen width, projection distance, available

lenses and, of course, budget.

The very high-gained Spectral 2000® (2.4 gain) is "silvered" to help polarize the two simultaneous images used for the 3D effect. A "silvered screen" refers to its color, which today occurs because of the aluminum used in the coating material.

For years, screens have incorporated many small (0.047" diameter) perforations, which make up around five percent of the screen's surface. "The current pattern," says Ward, "was developed in the 1950's to improve audio quality." At that time, audio and screen technology suggested a level of acoustic transparency that today's technology does not. Today audio can be shaped to fill the room quite easily through speaker selection and equalization, and screens are lighter and more flexible.

"When Harkness Hall began exploring electronic projection," Ward said, "we found the perforation pattern caused pixel interference in some systems. Also our customers needed a perforation pattern more suited to locations where the audience is closer than 15 feet." The result is the MP range, which has both smaller perforations and more surface area.

"People frequently ask about the 'life' of a screen," said Ward. Harkness Hall's rule of thumb is replacement after seven years, sooner in dirty or smoggy environments. "People are quite amazed how much better the picture appears after changing out the old screen," said Ward. Relative to other costs to improve the picture, screen replacement is minimal compared to the result.

You can reach Joe Ward at jward@harknesshall.com and see more information at www.harknesshall.com. ❧

KODAK PREMIERES 'MEN IN WHITE' TRAILER

Internet users can get an early look at the latest *Kodak ScreenCheck Experience* trailer *Men in White* at www.kodak.com/go/screencheck.

The trailer features a humorous *Men in White* theme. It is designed to inform moviegoers that screens in specific auditoriums have been certified by Kodak for an optimized picture and audio experience.

"We are shipping this trailer to theatres that have been certified for the *ScreenCheck Experience*," says Kodak's Bob Mayson, general manager, Cinema Operations, Professional Motion Imaging.

Kodak expects to certify some 500 screens in the U.S. and parts of Europe this year. He explains that the *ScreenCheck Experience* is a joint venture with participating exhibitors. The multi-faceted program is designed to evaluate presentation quality in individual auditoriums, diagnose and resolve any problems, educate the public and inform them where they can see films on certified screens.

Sean Lohan, Cinema Operations manager, explains that the screen certification process consists of numerous criteria, including a clear line of view, screen size relative to the number of seats in the auditorium, the brightness of projected images (using standards

established by the SMPTE), audio quality and various other factors.

"Very often we find that small and relatively inexpensive adjustments or enhancements, and better training of



projectionists, can result in dramatic improvements in the movie-going experience for audiences," he says. "We believe the trailers and other promotional materials are important because the public recognizes and associates the Kodak logo with image quality."

The *Men in White* trailer spoofs a motif from the blockbuster hit, *Men in Black*. It opens in a theatre lobby, where an employee is happily dancing with a carpet sweeper. From inside the theatre, he can hear the sounds of booing and yelling from the crowd, who is clearly unhappy. Suddenly, two men stride through the doorway into the lobby. They are clad in identical, dapper white

suits and fashionable sunglasses. The two men burst into the auditorium as though they're on a mission. The shouts of anger from the crowd are transformed into cheers of joy. The *Men in White* emerge from the auditorium in a burst of bright lights. Their work is completed. They depart as mysteriously as they arrived.

The trailer was photographed by Allen Daviau, ASC (*E.T.: The Extraterrestrial*, *The Color Purple*, *Empire of the Sun*, *Avalon*, etc.), one of Hollywood's most acclaimed cinematographers. Lohan notes that Daviau's artfully interpretive cinematography is part of the message.

"I took a personal interest in shooting this trailer, because this issue is so important to me and every other filmmaker," says Daviau. "I hope the audience recognizes the message behind the trailer and comes to appreciate why presentation quality is an important part of the movie-going experience."

For more information on the *Kodak ScreenCheck Experience*, call 310-204-7143 or visit the website at www.kodak.com/go/screencheck.

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