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# THE INTERNATIONAL CINERAMA SOCIETY

Newsletter No 8.

More than 18 months have passed since the last newsletter and again it is the pressure of I.C.S. work that has caused the delay. Both Willem and myself have been fully occupied with the project to restore exhibition of the original 3-strip Cinerama process at The National Museum of Photography, Film and Television in Bradford, England. Currently the building work necessary to adapt the theatre to a multi-format cinema, capable of presenting any 70mm or 35mm motion picture in its correct format, is under way. The Museum authorities hope to complete phase 1, 35/70mm flat screen multi-format presentation, by early 1992.

The more difficult phase, CINERAMA, is provisionally envisaged for mid to late 1992. The Museum is not immune from the current recession nor its financial implications and the escalating cost of restoring the installation, projectors, print and soundtrack is a major controlling factor. Realistically the reprinting of any more of the Cinerama movies is going to depend on sponsorship or a fairy-godperson. Our experience so far with *THIS IS CINERAMA* has shown the current state of the negatives and soundtracks to be critical. Time is very limited if the movies are to be saved.

All current attention is focused on restoring *THIS IS CINERAMA*. Our friends at Cinerama Inc have had an answer print made from the CRI negatives and these have been found to be at the limit of printing tolerances due to the fading of the dyes over the years. The cost of reprinting from the separation negatives, though restoring the original quality, would be prohibitive.

Jack Dimmers at Teccon Enterprises in San Dimas, California, has now totally rebuilt the original Oyster Bay sound dubbers and made new magnetic heads for them in order to restore the soundtracks. The soundtracks are now proving to be the biggest problem. After years in storage they have suffered massive deterioration. To-date, Act 1 is incomplete, with the Aida and Long Island Choir sequences missing. However these can be restored from a second master mix discovered in the archive. Act 2 is complete but the orchestral, sound only, demonstration that starts the second half has become partially demagnetised. However it is hoped that modern sound enhancement techniques can overcome this. CineramaSound was renowned for its quality and we hope the new soundtrack will do it justice.

The projection equipment has now been rebuilt and is currently stored at the Museum awaiting the great day. We would suggest that you contact the Museum in the late spring for information as to a projected opening date.

The Museum address is;

The National Museum of Photography, Film and Television, Princes View, Bradford, West Yorkshire, England. Tel No: 0274 727488.

Alternatively contact your local I.C.S. representative; These are;

Australia; Brian Beatty, 6 Henwood Street, Forest Hill, Victoria, 3131.

Europe; Keith H Swadkins, 15 Dysteleg Road, Disley, Cheshire, England, SK12 2BQ.

Far East; Alain Dorrance, Grenville Condominium, Block 71A, Mount Sinai Lane, Singapore, 1027.

New Zealand; Stephen Rice, Flat 3.22 Kipling Street, Spreydon, Christchurch.

United States; Bob Gaskin, PO Box 154, Corte Madera, California, 94976.

Both Willem and myself have been involved in a great deal of travelling recently as, like Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson, we relentlessly sought out Cinerama pioneers and staff worldwide.

Willem and John Harvey have covered the USA and traced most of the surviving Oyster Bay staff.

Everybody contacted has enthusiastically given every assistance to the restoration of Cinerama. Their list of contacts is endless but amongst those giving their support to the I.C.S. are;

Mrs Doris Caron Waller (Fred's widow), John P Caron (Fred's Stepson), Wentworth D Fling (Vice President Research and Development, Oyster Bay), Richard Babish (Designed the first camera-lens system and the CineMiracle camera), Erik H Rondum (Cinerama camera engineer).

Mona Pietschmann, Widow of Oyster Bay sound recordist Richard Pietschmann. Richard, together with Jack and Richard Vorisek, was responsible for all the soundtracks at Oyster Bay. Jack has also been of great help. Regrettably Richard Vorisek died in 1989. William McAllister, who together with the late Harold Perry and Frank Richmond was responsible for the theatre installations. William MacAllister has very kindly donated his collection of photographs of early Cinerama installations to the I.C.S. and we have been able to trace Frank Richmond's daughter, Robert Bendick (Co-producer *THIS IS CINERAMA* and director *CINERAMA HOLIDAY*). Gayne Rescher and Jack Priestley, Cameramen on the Cinerama movies and Oyster Bay veterans Dan Finnerly and Jim Morrison. We have also been in contact with the families of Lowell Thomas and Hazard Reeves. These and so many more have given the I.C.S. information, stills and memorabilia of the great days of Cinerama.

Whilst Willem was in the USA, I was visiting Cinerama enthusiasts in Australia and New Zealand. The climax of the visit being a performance under the stars of WINDJAMMER at John Mitchell's private 3-strip installation in Australia. Again the enthusiasm over the possible return of Cinerama was boundless. Watching 3-strip again after a gap of 26 years, in my case, proved that the old magic still worked and that Cinerama is still as impressive despite the passage of time not treating the prints too kindly.

#### NEWSTIME.

##### THE EIGHTH DAY.

This was to have been the next 3-strip movie in the travelogue series but filming was abandoned with only three sequences shot. The producer was Grant Leenhouts, the man peering through the screen in the old programmes. The Leenhouts family still have the script for the film.

The sequences shot were;

Atomic Explosion. Yucca Flats, Nevada. 4-40am. 5-6-57.

Launch of the nuclear submarine Sea Wolf.

Military action in Northern Nevada.

The footage was still in existence at the Forum, Cinerama's HQ in Los Angeles when it closed and is believed to have been destroyed at that time.

##### CINERAMASOUND.

The main development work on the superb Cinerama stereophonic sound system was carried out by Walter Hicks working for Hazard Reeves.

##### THIS IS CINERAMA.

Max Steiner, wrote much of the score (uncredited) for this movie. He was a long time friend of Merian C Cooper, the co-producer who gave Max Steiner his first commission, the score for King Kong in 1933. Louis Forbes, the musical director worked with Max Steiner on many movies including GONE WITH THE WIND.

##### WINDJAMMER

Sven Libeck and Harald Tvsberg, both of whom appeared in the film, have recently visited Australia and attended a performance at John Mitchell's privately preserved installation. Harald Tvsberg is chairman of "The Friends of Christian Radich Society" which helps to preserve the elderly windjammer in working order. From them we have discovered that one of the ship's interiors was a set built in a disused Bronx theatre. The theatre was also the production centre and sound recording studio, in effect the "Oyster Bay" of CineMiracle. Surprisingly when, in 1960, Cinerama produced a 3-strip version of the Smell-O-Vision movie *A SCENT OF MYSTERY* by optically splitting the original 65mm Todd-AO negative, they chose to use CineMiracle type vignettes to join the panels, instead of the original Cinerama's jigos. The 3-strip version was retitled *HOLIDAY IN SPAIN* and was odourless! New York photographer Weegee produced a montage of distorted images of New York for the movie, a style for which he was famous. David Coles, an Australian enthusiast, has noticed that Weegee also appears, being seen leaving a shop where two of the sailors had purchased a radio.

##### KINOPANORAMA'S AMERICAN ADVENTURE.

*CINERAMA'S RUSSIAN ADVENTURE* was intended to be part of a reciprocal arrangement with the USSR who would, in return, receive a 3-strip movie culled from Cinerama's footage with the above title. It was never made.

#### WHO NAMED CINERAMA.

The name CINERAMA was invented by an advertising executive working for Vitarama Inc called Waldo Maclaury. He was still well when last heard from in 1989, then aged 74. Mike Todd's book suggests that the original idea came from a boy's entry in a competition.

#### LONDON CASINO CINERAMA.

We have been approached by the old Casino Cinerama for material to form a collage of the Cinerama days to hang in the bar. Nobody currently with the theatre has any knowledge of the great days of Cinerama there. In return we have received playdate information from them, which, when combined with research by David Coles in Sydney, has resulted in our now having a comprehensive listing of the playdates for all the London Theatres.

#### TELCAN.

In the early sixties, Cinerama became involved in trying to market the world's first home video, the Telcan. A British invention, it used 1/4 inch tape running at 120 inches per second. Unfortunately the initial demonstration was a disaster and the device sank without trace. Cinerama also tried to market a widescreen still camera about this time with similar results.

#### 70mm CINERAMA.

Can anyone help with the release date for the 70mm version of *How the West was Won*? Was *The Wonderful World of the Brothers Grimm* ever released as a 70mm print?

#### SOUTH SEAS ADVENTURE.

Margaret Roberts who played Betty Kosheck in the film is still hale and hearty and lives close to the privately preserved installation in Australia, as does John Mclean, clapper/loader on SSA, who is now a top Australian Director of Photography. John has donated colour stills he took on location for SSA to the I.C.S. For the School of the Air sequence sets were built in the now demolished Pagewood Studios in Sydney.

#### THE CINERAMA CAMERAS.

All the original 3-strip cameras have now been accounted for. They are in a sorry state and have deteriorated badly over the years of disuse. Cameras 6 and 7 are in the best condition and No 6 has been restored mechanically to working order though there are several parts still missing such as the Blimp, Viewfinder and Speed control. Until these are replaced the camera cannot be used again and this has caused the abandonment of the Renault initiative to shoot a new commercial in 3-strip complementing the restored 1959 3-strip commercial. The biggest find of all was the discovery in Cinerama's archives of Camera No 1, Fred Waller's original camera with film still in the magazines. We were told previously that it was last used on *Cinerama Holiday*.

#### LOWELL THOMAS ARCHIVES.

We have been very fortunate to gain access to these archives and we have discovered a treasure house of letters, scripts and photographs from the Cinerama days. Items of special note include Dimitri Tiomkin's original score for *Search for Paradise*. There are notes from the shooting of *Seven Wonders of the World* which show that this film was never scripted but shot "on the wing" as the unit toured the world. Included in this newsletter will be a copy of another item of interest, the script for the 1948/50 demonstration short made to introduce the infant Cinerama to the sceptical major studios, the heads of which trooped to Oyster Bay during this period but came away unimpressed by the revolutionary process. It was not until a major boost was necessary to counter the in-roads made by Television that the Hollywood majors looked again at Cinerama. One panel of this film has been preserved together with a few shots in and around Fred Waller's house in Huntington, Long Island.

#### MYSTERY 3-STRIP MOVIE.

Thomas Hauerslev, a Danish projectionist, informs us that, starting May 5 1963, a 3-strip film titled (in Swedish) *Rysland - Landet Vi Inte Kenner* had 14 performances at the Royal, Malmo. Anyone know anything about this movie?

**EPILOGUE.**

The I.C.S has an evergrowing archive of photographs, production stills etc, many of which the donors have given the I.C.S. permission to copy for private use only. Willem is compiling a list of these. An enthusiast in the Belgium will produce high quality copies at cost price plus the postage if required.

If you are interested contact:

Willem Bouwmeester, Admiraal de Ruyterweg 46d., 3031 AD Rotterdam., The Netherlands.

There is also a new Cinerama Theatres list covering all 256 Cinerama installations as known to us, together with those for CineMiracle, Kinopanorama and D-150. Again a SAE or IRC and an A4 envelope please. As the list now runs to 10 sides of A4 and is computer produced, a small donation towards the cost would be appreciated. Regretfully the sheer cost of postage and copying makes it impossible to continue to bear this ourselves.

Finally, in the USA, the enthusiast with the 3-strip Cinerama installation in his home, John Harvey, has been interviewed by Fox Television for national transmission on the plight of Cinerama. It is John's preserved installation, the only one in the USA, that is being used for testing the reprint of *This is Cinerama*.

It is amazing when you consider that a small group of dedicated enthusiasts around the world, together with the N.M.P.F.Tv., is on the brink of restoring Cinerama exhibition, 25 years after its demise. We must thank all members of the I C S worldwide for the enthusiasm and information they have supplied towards the I C S ambition of restoring Fred Waller's Wonder...CINERAMA.

Several members have asked if we can help them obtain copies of the original theatre programmes and soundtrack discs. If you have unwanted ones or know the whereabouts of any, please let me know and I will pass the information on.

Finally enclosed is a letter received recently purporting to come from a Soviet enthusiast!!!! Good Luck Boris in your claim. We have ways of getting at the truth!

Keith H. Swadkins. M.B.K.S.

15 Dysteleg Road. Disley. Cheshire. England. SK12.2BQ.

Note New Phone Number: 0663 76 2672.

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