

Titanic-Themed Session Highlights SMPTE's Film Conference

Quality was the buzz word at the Second Annual SMPTE Film Conference held on June 12-14, 1998 at the Los Angeles Convention Center. The three-day event included an all-day seminar and a technical presentation featuring 17 papers divided into four half-day sessions. The highly anticipated "Post-Production" session featured several key members responsible for the blockbuster film *Titanic*.

Chaired by David Richards, Christie, Inc., the conference followed the theme "Tools, Practice, and the Experience."

"The amount of information in this conference was staggering," said Richards. "Although the events around town reduced our audience to some extent, the SMPTE Conference was absolutely top-notch. This event filled an information void that has existed in the film industry for some time."

Technical Presentations

Laboratory Session

After Friday morning's opening statement from SMPTE President David George, IMMAD ECVS, the

"Laboratory" session began with a film titled *Preserving Memories* presented by the Turner Entertainment Co.

Chaired by Richard May, Warner Bros., the session featured papers focusing on color timing, preservations, and other functions from several industry professionals. They included: "CFI Remote Computer Color Correction System used for *Titanic*," *Richard Smith* and *Dan Muscarella*, CFI; "Achieving Color Match Between Scanner, Monitor, and Film: A Color Management Implementation for Feature Animation," *Arjun Ramamurthy* and *Lem Davis*, Warner Bros., and *Franz Herbert*, Color Solutions Inc.; "Combining Separation Negatives: Directly to Video," *Ralph Sargent* and *Greg Hamlin*, Film Technology, Co., Inc.; "Digital Video to 35mm Film," *Richard Patterson*, Illusion Arts; and "Introducing RULE, A New Leader for Telecine Verification," *Patrick Gregston*, Electric Picture Solutions.

Exhibition Session

The "Exhibition" session, chaired

by Doug Greenfield, Dolby Laboratories, was held on Friday afternoon. Papers presented examined new release formats and the present status of the viewing experience. The session also covered electronic cinema, world view, and cinema sound. Paper titles and presenters were as follows: "Extending the Audience: Delivering Closed Captions and Descriptive Narration for First-Run Theatrical Films," *Judith Navoy* and *Brad Botkin*, WGBH Educational Foundation; "Image Content-Based Steadiness Correction of Motion Picture Film," *Thomas Leonard*, University of Dortmund; "Development of Christie Endless Loop Film Transport System," *Clark Crites*, and *David Richards*, Christie Inc.; "Field Experiences in Measurement of On-Screen Projection System Characteristics," *James Cashin* and *Roger Hibbard*, USL Inc.; "High Magenta, The Road to Cyan-Dye Tracks, A Progressive Report," *Ioan Allen*, Dolby Laboratories, Inc., *Frank Ricotta*, Technicolor, *Phil Vogel*, Eastman Kodak Co., and *Paul Goldberg*, Zoran.



John L. Mason, SMPTE Conference Vice-President



David Richards, Conference Chair.



Production session Co-Chair John Hora.



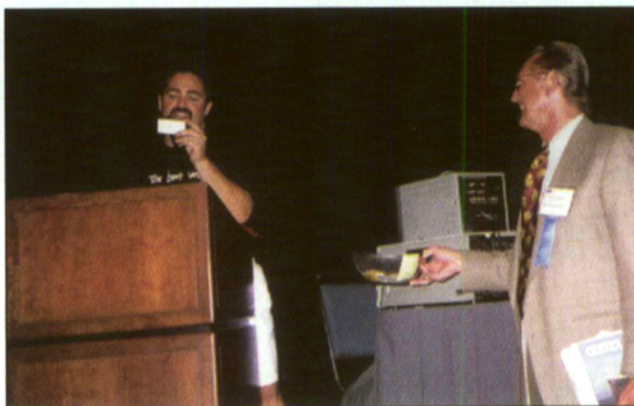
Film veteran Woody Omens speaks at the all-day seminar.



Price Pethel, Digital Domain, assisted Jon Landau during the Titanic Post-Production session.



Post-Production panelist Tom Belfford, Skywalker Sound



Jon Landau, Titanic producer (left), selects the winners of the special edition Cinefex magazine drawing from the bowl of entries held by John L. Mason.



A typical convention set was recreated for the all-day seminar.



John Hora, ASC, also chaired the all-day seminar.

Production Session

Saturday morning's "Production" session, chaired by Ed DiGiulio, Cinema Products and John Hora, ASC, began with the presentation of *License to Thrill*, a new ride film from Thrillco Entertainment. Photographed in 70mm, mainly with a handheld camera, the cameraman had to do several stunts on a motorcycle.

"This was an ambitious ride film project with a James Bond theme," said Richards. "It represented one of the more difficult challenges in the production environment."

Six papers covering various topics such as electronic acquisition for film release; data acquisition formatting logging for use in post-production operations; motion tech-

niques; and advances in negative stock followed. Papers and presenters included: "A System for Consistent Film and DTV/DVD Program Production," Christopher C. Woolard, University of Greenwich; "New Fujicolor Negative Films," S. Yamaryo, S. Kamei, S. Yokota, T. Kusayanagi, and Y. Mimaki, Fuji Photo Film Co., Ltd.;



From left to right: Price Pethel, Jon Landau, and Tom Bellford

"Cinematographer's Computer Workstation "Yorick," Yuri Neyman, Gamma & Density Co.; "Illusion and Perception in Visual Effects," Bill Taylor, Illusion Arts, Inc.; "Special Effects, Special Film: An Introduction to Kodak SFX 200T Color Negative Film," John C. Brewer and Michael P. Culligan, Eastman Kodak Co.; and "Creating a Light Meter Specifically Designed for Use in Professional Cinematography," Richard B. Glickman, GDB Enterprises, Inc.

Post-Production Session

Saturday afternoon's Digital Domain/*Titanic* "Post-Production" session highlighted this year's program. Jon Landau, session chair and producer of *Titanic*, provided attendees with a comprehensive overview of the creative and technical execution of the multi-Oscar Award winning film. Landau placed special emphasis on the overlapping nature of conceptualization and the execution of effects during all phases of production, from pre-visualization to production to digital post-production. Many clips were shown on video documenting the construction of the studios in Baja, CA. The construction of the massive ship set and the creation of "digital people" were also shown.

Landau discussed unique challenges such as digital character animation, the use of digital water, and digital *Titanic* paraphernalia.

Landau and Price Pethel, Digital Domain, also discussed the use of 2-D and 3-D effects work, the heavy use of model photography and the

use of miniatures, the role and techniques of creating synthetic characters, and the challenging tasks and special requirements of the many compositing sequences.

"The panelists made extensive use of clips from the movie and talked generally about how the effects requirements in the picture influenced creative and actual principal photography decisions," said SMPTE Conference-Vice President John L. Mason.

All-Day Seminar

The all-day seminar, titled "Creative Choices in Cinematography," was well attended by conference participants. Presented jointly by ASC and SMPTE on Sunday June 14, the seminar included seasoned film veterans Woody Omens, John Alonzo, and Haskell Wexler, A.S.C., and Russ Carpenter, director of photography for *Titanic*. Topics explored included: "The Impact of Lens Selections on Composition;" "Camera Platforms: Dollies, Cranes, and Humans;" and "Famous Camera-men, Famous Camera Shots."

"The seminar was a cavalcade of great cinematographers," said Richards. "They shared tips and demonstrated the various camera platforms available for photography."

A typical convention set was recreated for this session at the convention center, complete with camera equipment, lights, actors, and crew. Video taps on the Panavision cameras were fed to a large video screen so the audience could see the images composed in realtime.

Omens began the presentations discussing lens focal length and its effect on perspective. He challenged conventional thinking which says that the length of the lens affects perspective. Omens also demonstrated that perspective is determined by the camera to subject distance, and the lens only determines field of view or the size of the image captured.

Alonzo continued the presentations demonstrating hand-held camera work. A scene was acted out on the set followed by a demonstration of how the same story could be told in a different sequence by moving the camera in various ways.

Wexler, director of photography and three-time Academy Award winner, demonstrated the use of Steadicam photography on the set with the assistance of operator John Holloway. The tremendous speed with which a shot could be set up and adapted to changing elements within a scene was shown.

Carpenter, the 1998 Academy Award-winning director of photography for *Titanic*, concluded the program with a talk on the challenges of the *Titanic* shoot. He also related his experiences working with James Cameron, director of the film. Carpenter showed some clips from the film and provided many inside glimpses into how various shots were executed.

"Many of the scenes on the deck of the ship were actually done on a soundstage," said Richards, "including the famous king of the world sequence on the bow."

ShowBiz Expo West

This year's conference was held in conjunction with Variety's Showbiz Expo West. The exposition featured over 500 exhibits. Attendees were able to view several products and services from the industry's top companies.

Acknowledgments

The Society would like to thank Eastman Kodak Co. for the reception; Paramount, Panavision, Cinema Products, Kenworthy, and USC for the loan of the equipment and assistance; and all the volunteers.

—Jermaine Hall