

Section Meetings

Chicago

December 2, 1998

The December meeting, held at Swiderski Electronics, attracted 50 guests from SMPTE and SBE Chicago chapters. Steve Lyman of Dolby Laboratories discussed the ATSC audio system, Dolby AC-3, as defined by FCC document A52. The key points are that AC-3 provides six discrete channels of surround sound plus metadata and its bit stream is compressed. The compression scheme is optimized from human hearing characteristics. AC-3 is also capable of being downmixed at the receiver to Dolby Pro-Logic, stereo or mono reception. The metadata component included in AC-3 includes information about the type of audio being provided, its loudness level and dynamic range. Also, of note, bandwidth has been reserved for hearing impaired and emergency services.

Lyman then discussed some of the challenges that lay ahead. For example, since AC-3 is compressed, it is vulnerable to concatenation errors from multiple compress/decompress operations. The audio packet frame rate is not synchronous with the video frame rate; therefore, audio follow video vertical interval routing/switching systems create glitches in the audio stream. Dolby has proposed a solution: Dolby E encoders that produce data blocks that line up with associated video switching points alleviating the problem. These encoders should be implemented for contribution and distribution application; Dolby AC-3 encoders should be reserved for the final transmission stage of a broadcast. Lyman answered several questions after the formal presentation.—Steve Robinson, Secretary/Treasurer

Nashville

November 12, 1998

The Nashville section meeting was held in the form of a barbecue dinner at WDCN (PBS) studio in Nashville with 24 attendees. This meeting celebrated PBS Digital week in augmenting DTU programming. Glenn Conn from JVC used a DOA projector to show a pro-



New York Section meeting in November. Ed Schuller, Test Materials Advisor with his SMPTE RP 40 tee shirt, and Jerome Menell, presenter of "Flashback...The Way It was in Visual Communication."

gram on Dale Chihuly, a glassblower. Participants viewed two shows: "Chihuly over Venice" and "Gringley's Guide to DTV." Bill Spencer closed the meeting with an overview of DTV in the Nashville area and other Nashville chapter markets.—Phil Arnold, Secretary/Treasurer

Nashville

December 17, 1998

The Nashville section held its December meeting at United Methodist Communications with ten people in attendance. An overview of the past year was followed by an outlook for the next six months. Previous plans were restated along with several new ideas. The holiday was celebrated along with Dixie Parham's return from her operation.—Phil Arnold, Secretary/Treasurer

New York

November 18, 1998

The Fifth in a series of historical "Flashback" presentations headed up the November meeting at Eastman Kodak. Jerome Menell, formerly of Menell Associates, Inc., a pioneer company involved in the design and building of corporate AV facilities, presented "Flashback...The Way It was in Visual Communication." He plotted the progress of visual commu-

nication from the 17th century when book illustrations were proposed, through the development of strictly visual aids such as globes, charts, models, blackboards, photographs and, finally, silent motion pictures in the early 20th century. Audiovisual communications followed, along with the addition of sound in the form of phonograph cylinders and records, sound motion pictures, and in the 1940s and 50s, wire recorders and magnetic tape for both sound and picture. Menell also illustrated the design of multimedia projection systems and the space saving advantages of rear projection systems, which utilize mirrors.

Franz Wieser, Arriflex Corp., presented the new LOCPRO 35. This is a 35mm machine which provides a simple answer to presenting motion picture "dailies" on location as well as for studio and conference use. It is, first, a lightweight, mobile location projector which, at 14 ft. throw, provides a 7.5 ft. wide screen image with an average color temperature of 5400° K and a screen brightness of 16 fL. Second, a switchable mirror system allows either wall or video projection through a 1/3 in. high resolution CCD-color imager. Third, image and sound synchronization with DAT recorders, magnetic film players, or hard disc recorders is made possible by connecting an audio synch unit (ASU bi-phase signal) to



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the LOCPRO 35 or via time code (LTC) interface.

Its many additional features were demonstrated, including: variable frame rates from single frame to 200 frames/sec in either forward or reverse mode; a film advance time of 0.01 sec, regardless of film speed, made possible by a patented intermittent drive system which results in a bright, flicker-free image; computer-controlled drive system for the film transport; high-speed shuttle mode to facilitate location of specific film frames; "auto-stop" mode; and simple removal of the film at any time, even in the middle of a roll. All functions and conditions can be viewed on a built-in display screen. The presentation was followed by a discussion on how this revolutionary piece of equipment will influence how movies are made.—Ed Schuller, Test Material Advisor

New York

December 16, 1998

Over 70 members and guests attended the section meeting on Multichannel Audio for DTV. Shannon Skemp, Comark Digital Services, opened the presentation by discussing the purpose of the ATSC Implementation Subcommittee Top Down review of the ATSC DTV standards, specifically as it relates to the audio portion. As a participant in the committee, she showed how implementing standards could be more difficult than defining standards. Among the topics to be dealt with are audio metadata and lip-sync/timing problems. The presentation of the Top-Down findings coincided with the publication of the entire Process and Results report of the Top Down

Committee, which appeared in the December *SMPTE Journal*.

Tim Carroll, Dolby Labs, also lectured on the new Dolby-E coding process, which addresses the handling of multichannel audio in production and post-production environments. One of the salient features of the yet-to-be released E system is that multiple AES streams can be compressed to a single AES stream. This coding process should withstand on the order of ten encode/decode/encode processes before audible degradation occurs. Carroll also reviewed the basic concepts of 5.1 audio, AC-3 coding, and the use of metadata.

Both lectures were extremely informative, and left an open door for visiting future topics in this area.—Bill Topazio, Secretary/Treasurer

Nordic

November 26, 1998

Radically changing conditions in the cinema theater situation in Helsinki was the theme of the section's meeting. Two brand new projects situated in the

center of the city were visited on-site. The 10-theater complex, "Kinopalatsi," which opened just one week prior, was presented by Sandrew-Metronome Finland Manager, Jukka Vilhunen. The Finnkinno, located in the "Tennispalatsi," a building originally intended for use during the 1940 Olympics, will have 14 theaters and is expected to open in early 1999. This project, which has the biggest screen in the Nordic countries, was presented by cine consultant Ari Saarinen. Twenty-four theaters of varying size are thought to be able to give enough versatility in programming choice. All theaters are THX-equipped.

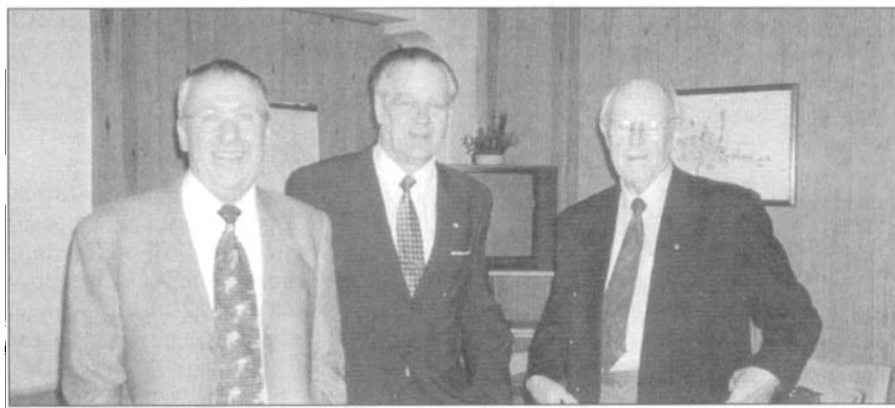
Together the two projects provide more than 4000 new seats. Their impact on the roughly 8 million people in the capital region is nevertheless estimated to result in an increase in attendance no higher than 15%. This is due to the fact that the two new complexes offer other leisure time activities as well.

Upcoming activities of the Nordic Section were discussed at a courtesy lunch on the premises of the national radio and TV company YLE. It was agreed that closer co-operation between the European sections was needed; a joint-venture seminar planned for May in Stockholm could be a practical target. The opening of a new student chapter was seen as an attractive new issue.—Stig-Goran Bergholm, Section Chair

Pasadena City College

November 10, 1998

Twenty-six members and guests at Pasadena City College gathered to listen to Rick Frost, Parker Media. Frost,



Nordic Section meeting in November. From left to right: Morten Jacobson, Denmark, Stig-Goran Bergholm, Section Chair, and Harry Enequist, Sweden.

who has experience in construction as well as production and technical knowledge, helped build the studio at Parker Media which houses a sound stage, lighting grid, and editing facilities. Frost holds a key position with the company and is involved with lighting, audio, and camera operations during production.

His lecture began with a few points about Avid technology and the nonlinear approach to editing now available through some companies. Frost discussed two systems, one with an output signal quality equivalent to Digi Beta, and another with quality equivalent to Beta SP.

The topic of online and offline editing facilities was the focal point. He discussed the multimedia process, including digitizing of this format onto hard drives. In the digital realm, Frost explained the flexible capabilities of nonlinear edit suites. He pointed out that offline nonbroadcast quality systems can offer powerful editing tools. For instance, to defer the cost of using telecine to achieve desired tape format, offline editing can save time and money until the final product is cut. Time is left for edit decision lists, color correction, real time cuts, dissolves, wipes, effects, and audio sweetening. This leaves exporting to the desired medium the last element.

A look at Frost's work gave insight on how one must think as an editor. He acknowledged that edits take a certain creative timing. Like rhythm in music, the visual aspect must flow. He used a typical music video to illustrate how action denotes lots of cuts. Music is the catalyst for the visual information and joins with the video even if they are not alike. Therefore if the piece is melodramatic, the timing would have more dissolves with maybe soft music in the background. Some projects are dialogue driven and some build on reactions. This is another example of how the director and the editor are responsible for timing.

The question of creative vision versus technical expertise was asked, and Frost implied that strength in both areas would be beneficial. They key is to draw the audience into the work, and if the editing is virtually undetected then it is not out of place. He also showed how editing molds all the pieces together by cutting unnecessary elements without losing the attention of the audience. Frost exhibited tapes

showing examples of his work at the end of the meeting. Additionally, he gave lots of advice on a variety of potential jobs for people searching in the entertainment industry.—Brian Klepek, Student Chairman

Pasadena City College

December 8, 1998

With 21 members and guests in attendance, Pasadena City College welcomed Tim G. Wiley, BPS Broadcast Production Services, the final guest speaker for the fall semester. BPS, which exclusively uses Sony equipment such as Beta SP, is established in equipment rentals and also hires crews. The company features an in-house sound stage where "the Sci-Fi Network News" is shot. Wiley provided insight into productions he participated in such as TBS' "Dinner and a Movie." His current responsibility at BPS is quality control of equipment. With a wide range of clients he has many production and technical skills. He works as assistant cameraman, does grip work, lighting, audio assisting, and ENG-style shoots.

Wiley discussed the requirements for finding a job in the industry. He emphasized the importance of networking and getting exposure to companies in order to get one's work recognized. He stressed the importance of setting goals and getting as much experience as possible. He mentioned internships as good tools for reference and the possibility of leading to permanent positions. He also mentioned that knowledge of old and new technologies is important in grasping the basic structure of a particular job, and knowing if training in one format or standard is compatible with another. He added that the pressure of long hours is a common reality for most.

According to Wiley, knowing the schedule of a shoot is pertinent to all involved, in addition to being on time. He pointed out that a production assistant position is a vital responsibility, and coordinating productions involves sharp organizational skills as well as the ability to handle time constraints that arise from sensitive schedules.

Wiley said that no task should be taken for granted. He emphasized the importance of setting up cables properly and leaving equipment in tact for the next person. The question of what to do if something is damaged was

Calendar

SMPTE Activities

ORLANDO, FL—33rd SMPTE Advanced Motion Imaging Conference, Omni Rosen Hotel, February 25-27, 1999.

LAS VEGAS, NV—SMPTE All-Day Seminar and Booth at NAB, April 17-22, 1999.

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA—SMPTE '99, July 13-16, 1999.

NEW YORK, NY—141ST SMPTE Technical Conference and Exhibition, November 19-22, 1999.

For more information on these and other SMPTE activities contact SMPTE Headquarters: 914-761-1100; fax: 914-761-3115.

APRIL

NAB99, Las Vegas Convention Center, Las Vegas, NV. See SMPTE at Booth No. 17013. Info: 1-800-342-2460; or register online at www.nab.org/conventions. April 17-22, 1999.

JUNE

1999 Montreux Television Symposium and Technical Exhibition, Montreux, Switzerland. Info: P.O. Box 1451, Rue du Theatre 5, CH-1820 Montreux, tel: +41 21 963 32 20; fax: +41 21 963 88 51; e-mail: message@symposia.ch; Internet: <http://www.montreux.ch/symposia>. June 10-15, 1999.

SEPTEMBER

IBC99, Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Info: Gina Christison, IBC Office, Savoy Place, London WC2R OBL, U.K. tel: +44 (0)171 240 3839; fax: +44 (0)171 240 3724; e-mail: show@ibc.org.uk; web site: <http://www.ibc.org.uk/ibc>. September 10-14, 1999.

addressed, and Wiley confirmed that the idea of not reporting something that is broken could have consequences. He encouraged the importance of being prepared.—Brian Klepek, Student Chairman