



# The Rocky Mountain Section **By Jim Schoedler**

The Rocky Mountain Section has been working hard to serve members in the region with information and education about the rapidly changing industry, especially as the February 17, 2009, analog shutoff date approaches. The Section held its annual all-day educational seminar on November 18, focused on the DTV transition and what engineers and their employers still need to accomplish in the few remaining months, as well as technologies to start thinking about when the transition is complete. The seminar featured presentations on low-power TV and translator conversions, digital audio for DTV, public education efforts, and mobile/handheld DTV.

In partnership with the Denver Society of Broadcast Engineers (SBE) chapter, the Section has organized over a half-dozen of these “boot camps” on topics covering HDTV, applications of IT in broadcasting, developments in audio technology, and, most recently internet protocol television (IPTV). The boot camp began in the late 1990s with an all-day seminar held at the Comcast Media Center that highlighted the region’s synergies among cable, satellite, and terrestrial broadcasters. They have all been technology focused and have attracted presenters with national reputations as well as local engineering experts, speaking to audiences of 75 or more, who come from all along Colorado’s Front Range—Fort Collins to Pueblo, plus the neighboring states of New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming. These sessions have earned the Section the respect of the local motion imaging community, resulting in increased membership and a high degree of industry support.

Distance and geography play a major role in the Rocky Mountain region, because the members live on both sides of the continental divide. The Denver area, location of

most of the Section’s activities, is a media technology hub, housing headquarters or operational facilities for national cable, satellite and motion picture producers, program originators and distributors. The area has several teleports and multiple fiber providers and is a competitive local television market—18th largest in the country. Members and Section managers reflect this diversity, working in or serving all industry segments, with some living as far away as Salt Lake City and Albuquerque. In trying to bring together its members the Section aims for a combination of social and educational events spread throughout the year, with something of interest to those in each of the represented industries.

One of the most popular events of the Rocky Mountain Section is the annual Lookout Mountain picnic, held on the prominent foothills summit that, in addition to being home to most of Denver’s TV transmission facilities, is also the final resting place of western icon Buffalo Bill. The picnic, held within a stone’s throw of the Buffalo Bill Grave and Museum, usually features a western barbecue lunch, door prizes, and good conversation for the nearly 100 who attend. First held more than a decade ago, it has become a Denver



tradition. In 2008, the newest TV tower facility on the mountain, owned by the Lake Cedar Group comprised of TV stations KCNC, KMGH, and KUSA, opened its doors and hosted a tour of its impressive new transmission plant following the picnic, leading to the highest attendance ever.

In October 2008, the Section hosted a screening of Cinerama Adventure, the excellent feature-length documentary about the late 1950s and early 1960s widescreen technology that was first screened in 2002 for the SMPTE Hollywood Section. Filmmaker David Strohmaier and producer Randy Gitsch were invited to give a presentation after the film and they responded by editing and showing an extra short feature on Denver's local Cinerama venue, the Cooper Super Cinerama Theater on South Colorado Blvd. The event, held at the Starz Film Center on the Auraria campus in downtown Denver, also included a tribute to the 98-year-old lead projectionist from the Cooper, who was present, and a chance to examine the original projectors and a piece of the original screen.

The Section managers responsible for organizing these events are motivated by good turnouts and the opportunity to give back to the industry and its members. Most have significant career experience and busy jobs but find the time to attend twice-yearly manager's meetings as well as many of the monthly events. Some years ago the Section decided to hold most meetings jointly with SBE Chapter 48. While this move has brought the challenge of meeting an even more diverse set of educational and information needs, it also has brought

together leaders from the motion imaging and broadcast communities to collaborate on local initiatives. The Section has reached out to other organizations such as the Audio Engineering Society (AES) and the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) to co-sponsor meetings on topics of mutual interest. One of the best attended monthly meetings in recent years was the first local demonstration of HD radio, conducted by public FM station KUVU, hosted by the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) television station KRMA, and co-sponsored with SMPTE, SBE, and AES.

The Section operates a website ([www.smp-te-sbe48.org](http://www.smp-te-sbe48.org)) that has recently undergone a transformation under the guidance of webmaster Tom Goldberg. It features an announcements section on the home page for local industry happenings and postings of all meetings with online registration capability. The website also features a monthly newsletter as well as job posting, frequency coordination, and sustaining member areas.

The current Section Chair, Jim Schoedler, worked as the overall frequency coordinator for the Democratic National Convention, which was held in Denver for only the second time in 100 years. To mark this historic event, Section members volunteered in a variety of capacities related to RF enforcement, starting with planning meetings in January and culminating in a 16-hour day at Invesco Field for Barack Obama's acceptance speech. Over 30 local volunteers from SMPTE and SBE came forward as a result of organizing efforts at SMPTE meetings and through the e-mail newsletter.

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