

THE  
INTERNATIONAL  
**CINERAMA**  
SOCIETY.

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In this, our third newsletter, we celebrate the achievements of the first eighteen months of The International Cinerama Society and list our failures.

Starting from a small group in Christchurch, New Zealand who were present at the demise of the last Cinerama theatre still possessing the three strip projection equipment and prints, the I.C.S. now circles the globe with members in New Zealand, Australia, Singapore, USA and Europe. Working relationships have been established with The Cinema Theatre Association, The Projected Picture Trust, The Widescreen Association and its branches, and The Cinerama Operators Guild.

But what have we achieved in 18 months?

In addition to the preserved prints in the Library of Congress in Washington, (remember that the LOC has no viewing facilities for 6 perf Cinerama), we can now confirm that preservationists have managed to save two complete installations, one in Australia and one in Dayton, Ohio. Also saved in private hands is at least one complete set of prints though fade of the Eastmancolor prints and shrinkage of the magnetic tracks is now becoming a problem. The original Technicolor prints appear to be in excellent condition.

*see note letter*

Deep in the depths of an American warehouse one of our UK members has discovered six complete sets of projection equipment together with line-up films, test strips spares and even instruction manuals..

Regretably in the UK we have failed to trace any of the hardware from a chain of 9 3-strip theatres that existed at one time plus a host of 70mm only set-ups (19). In the sixties 6 perf three strip machines were available from Century, Cinemechanica, Philips and Westrex... Where did they all go? Some were converted to 35/70mm but not all.

The main item so far preserved in the UK is a print of the prologue from "This is Cinerama" which has been donated to the Society by an ex-Cinerama projectionist.

Imagine our surprise then when, in the Autumn, we heard of an attempt to revive "This is Cinerama" in 3-strip on Broadway for Xmas. Apparently Cinerama Inc could produce the prints if the promoter could raise the money to reinstall the equipment. The latter was apparently not forthcoming and the idea was still-born.

Another major surprise was the existence of a 3-strip version of Mike Todd jnr's "A Scent of Mystery" in Smell-O-Vision, filmed in Technirama, 1959. Also known as "Holiday in Spain" in its de-smelled version, it was apparently split into a 3-strip print using Film-Effects of Hollywood's special 65mm to Cinerama printer. The smells, all 40 of them, were released into the theatre by a cue track on the film as dictated by the plot. One critic at the time said the film smelt worse than the process. "A Scent of Mystery" was shown on US television

just before Xmas with the smells on a scratch card and our USA representative informs us that the print used displayed Cinerama joining lines suggesting that it had been produced by recombining the old 3-strip version. The UK TV company which has the rights to this title have recently consulted the Society as they can only trace a 70mm print, useless for TV purposes.

The Renault Dauphin commercial shown in London with "How the West Was Won" still exists in 3-strip though Renault declined to give the ICS any help at all in tracing it.

British Aerospace have now confirmed that the short "Rotodyne", shown by Cinerama in Brussels at the 1958 exposition was shot standard academy on 35mm and shown in the centre of the Cinerama screen during the interval. "Shellarama" was produced for Shell Oil in 70mm Cinerama (1965) and has been preserved by them.

Also still in existence is test footage shot for the second CineMiracle production. This was to have been "The Miracle", Warner Brothers, 1958, but it was finally made in Technirama. Believed to still exist as well is test 3-strip footage for "The Greatest Story Ever Told" which was finally shot in Ultra-Panavision in 1965. I remember reading a press hand-out stating that Warner Brothers would shoot Camelot in 3-strip and that tests were made in the early 60's....I wonder??????

Information on the remains of Cinerama being unearthed is as rare as 'hens-teeth'. There is no up-to-date details on the two remaining Australian Cinerama screens which we reported last summer (UK summer that is) as due for removal. These were both of the later 90 degree curve, used towards the end of Cinerama's days to make projection of 35mm prints onto the curve simpler and less expensive. There is a chance that the original Honolulu screen is still in existence, Honolulu being one of the earliest installations.

The only officially surviving Cinerama theatre is now the 'Cinerama Dome Theatre' at 6360 Sunset Boulevard, Los Angeles. It opened in 1963 with 'It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World' in 70mm Cinerama and was never equipped for 3-strip. Nowadays it specialises in long runs of spectacular movies like 'Raiders of the Lost Ark' and has a reputation as the best place to see this type of film with loud, Dolby sound. The owners, Pacific Theatres also own Cinerama Inc but all correspondence with them has gone unanswered. One idea we have put to them was the possibility of printing the old travelogues onto Super8mm Scope prints for sale. In the US summer, a test edited highlights video was produced of "Seven Wonders of the World" using Cinerama Inc's 35mm Scope copy but it was decided not to proceed with the project.

In the I.C.S. clip collection now are short strips from many Cinerama releases and they collectively raise some interesting points. Virtually all the 3-strip sets come from Act I of "How the West was Won". Was this the only film that ever got damaged?

Of the 70mm clips we have, all exhibit heavy fading of the Eastmancolor print. Sequences from "This is Cinerama" (The 1973 70mm version), Custer of the West, Mad Mad World are all fading away. An article published recently in the UK suggests that both negatives and prints of many titles have faded beyond use. Lawrence of Arabia and El Cid are specifically mentioned and I can confirm from my other hobby of collecting old movies that master material for many titles is now unobtainable.

The world's largest distributor of Super8mm prints said recently at a convention that the master material of many films available to them was in the form of a 35mm print and in some cases ie 'The Robe', 'Seven Brides' and 'River Kwai' they just could not obtain a complete 'scope' master anywhere.

This is not surprising when you see frames from the 1973 70mm prints of 'This is Cinerama' where the only colours left are blue and orange.

On the subject of 70mm Cinerama prints, we have come up against that old chestnut of a problem, were they corrected for the geometrical distortion induced by projection onto Cinerama's deep curve?

A recent article in the UK suggests that the prints for Cinerama exhibition were progressively squeezed towards the sides to counter-act the opposite effect of the Cinerama Screen. However the Head of Cinerama (Europe) in the 60's told me that the only print ever so treated was 'Mad Mad World' in London and that all other prints were flat ie standard 70mm ones. This is born out by various clips in our possession from old Cinerama copies of which only 'Mad Mad World' is rectified. The National Film Theatre in London recently ran 'Battle of the Bulge' in 70mm however and used a rectified print (on a flat screen). They also ran an original 70mm squeeze print of 'Mutiny on the Bounty' without the I.25 x anamorphic lens. Maybe you know something???????

Referring back to the 70mm version of "This is Cinerama", the Head of Cinerama (Europe) told me that the poor colour matching between panels in the 70mm prints was due to the technicolor matrixes being worn beyond repair. So in some sequences photographically produced Eastmancolor panels had been intermixed of necessity with technicolor originals. Incidentally all the clips from this version in ICS possession are FLAT.

In 1963 Cinerama introduced the so called Ultra-Cinerama or Single-strip process. The then advertisements stated "Now Cinerama is achieved on one film", I have recently had the loan of a copy of the "American Cinematographer" Cameraman's Manual for 1962 with full details for the Director of Photography of both 3-strip and Single strip Cinerama. The 3-strip camera always sees 148 degrees horizontally just the same as the human eye. The single strip process used initially Ultra-Panavision, an anamorphic version of 70mm with a slight squeeze in the lens (x1.25). The widest angle lens horizontally available was 92 deg.... So much for Cinerama's claims that heralded the death of 3-strip. Comparative figures for other processes were; CinemaScope 64 deg; Panavision (35mm) 115 deg; Super Panavision 115 deg; Todd-AO 87 deg; Technirama 59 deg; Vistavision 67 deg and Techniscope 61 deg.

The ICS 's biggest successes must be in our recorded and written word archives. We have been buried under a mountain of paper here ranging from pre-launch publicity on how it all started, to articles on 'Marketing Cinerama'. Do you remember the adverts for 'This is Cinerama' which showed a man sitting in a theatre chair being propelled through the Everglades air by a speedboat. Well we even have traced his name... it was..... No we'll keep you guessing. The current written archive covers over 600 pages and over 60 topics from Vistarama to the filming of "How the West was Won".

The sound archives include every known published recording of Cinerama plus many rare items such as Lowell Thomas delivering a string of anecdotes about the process to cover for a breakdown in the theatres, an assistant to Fred Waller describing installation of the process in 1958 and a rare demonstration of soundtracks in stereo from Perspecta to Sensurround. Did you know that "Kralatoa, East of Java" was reissued by Cinerama dubbed into a pseudo-Sensurround version under the credit Feelarama and retitled 'Volcano'.

Where do we go next with the I.C.S.?

We are no nearer obtaining any hardware or projection equipment than when we started nor have we traced any 3-strip prints. One current project is a catalogue of Cinerama Theatres. Whilst that for the UK is virtually complete, we still need information from the rest of the world. Our main information outside of Australia, New Zealand and the UK comes from a 1962 list issued by Cinerama. If you know of any Cinerama theatres outside the above continents together with any remembered details of them ie when did they open and with what film, similar details of closure and ultimate fate please let us know.

If you want to reinstal Cinerama please contact us as we know where everything can be obtained including a new screen (Harkness's still have Cinerama louveres in stock).

If you wish to help us preserve something of the finest visual process ever invented then please send us information!.. We do not want your money which must be unique in preservationism.....We all work for the love of Cinerama and the hope that one day we can again experience the greatest thrill know to the motion picture goer. Sorry I-Max but you are a pale ghost of the magnificence that was Cinerama. Just think what Cinerama could have become if the principle had been extended into today's modern optics,70mm and the unbelievable sound quality that Cineramasound would now have with Dolby processing of it's fantastic bandwidth and dynamic range.

Fred Waller died in 1954 when "This is Cinerama" was playing to capacity houses world wide. Lowell Thomas who produced most of the travelogues for Cinerama died in 1981. Thier ghosts must turn in thier graves at the current fate of Cinerama.

And who was the man in the 'This is Cinerama' poster.....  
His name was Peter Schaeffer and he was the Account Executive employed to launch the process in 1952.  
And not a lot of people know that.....

Finally thank you to the many enthusiasts who have produced the information used to compile this newsletter.

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