

August 1992

Far from Perfect?

I would like to comment on the *Far and Away* article by Bob Fisher in your June issue. In a representative list of 65mm

films of the past, Mr. Fisher includes *Dr. Zhivago* and *The Sand Pebbles*. Both of these pictures were shot in 35mm anamorphic. He also perpetuates the myth that *Ryan's Daughter* was the last film to be shot in 65mm. This is not so, as *The Last Valley* (Todd-AO) was released three months after the David Lean film.

The article is highly informative and quite enjoyable. It was, however, a surprise to read that certain scenes were shot with VistaVision and 35mm anamorphic equipment. Technically, *Far and Away* is a hybrid, like *Tron* or *Brainstorm*.

Having seen *Far and Away* under optimum circumstances, I found the look and sound of the film to be deficient when compared with the great roadshows of the past. The original Todd-AO process ran at 30 frames per second and yielded much greater audio and visual fidelity. The more recent brainchild of Dick Vetter, Dimension 150, gave such a sharp picture that the audience could clearly see threads of woven cloth and pores in skin.

Far and Away comes in a distant second when comparing its soundtrack. Today's six-track Dolby sound is good, but it is two-dimensional when compared to the fully-directional and fully discrete six-tracks of thirty years ago. Today's six-track sound has its dialogue centralized. I have heard that no one has mixing tables to make six-track discrete stereo any longer. If this is so, it is one more example of cutting corners in the misguided belief that the viewer won't know the difference.

It would appear that while camera and lens technology has made great advances, printing and sound technology has not. I have had the pleasure of screening some of the older 65mm films recently. While comparing them to *Far and Away*, I wasn't at all confident that the 70mm print of the latter film had been made from 65mm materials.

— Ashley Ward
Fairfield, OH

Far and Away From Perfect?

I wanted to comment on Ashley Ward's letter regarding *Far and Away*. I had looked forward to seeing the first 65mm production in many years, and was sur-

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prised to note that it looked no better, and no worse, than any 35mm blow-up. There are two possible explanations:

1) It really is more of a hybrid, as Mr. Ward suggests, than the producers are willing to admit.

2) Modern tendencies are to desaturate color and soften the look of films today. I have read countless interviews with cinematographers in which they complain that lens and film resolution are too sharp. They will go to all sorts of lengths to compensate for this.

I suspect this is what happened. If true, it was a terrible mistake. This was the opportunity of a lifetime to show the public, and producers, that large format systems make a difference. A failure in this regard will doom the future of 65mm or its variants.

As for the sound, I found it of good quality, but unremarkable. It's the same overly processed, "stereo sound" we've been hearing since *Star Wars*. In fact, I would hardly call it stereo at all. The dialogue is recorded, and reproduced, in mono. The tracks for music and effects are recorded in so discrete a fashion as to render them practically "triple mono" rather than true stereo. It has to be said, to counterbalance Mr. Ward's arguments in favor of older stereo practices, that directional dialogue can be a distraction.

I was disappointed, but not surprised, that *American Cinematographer* ran what was essentially a puff piece on *Far and Away* in the June issue. To call it a "65mm Stunner" was predictable, but irresponsible. An honest discussion of the above issues, which evidently have been raised not only by myself, would have been better.

— Alexander Goldstein
Brooklyn, NY

Internegativity

Regarding Ashley Ward's letter in the August issue, if Mr. Ward saw *Far and Away* in Ohio, he most definitely saw a print from a 65mm internegative. In the Fifties and Sixties, all release prints from 65mm negatives and 70mm prints (except for *Sleeping Beauty*) from films shot in Technorama were made from the original negatives. (To be completely accurate, until the mid-Seventies, all 70mm prints from 35mm negatives were also made off the originals.) The relatively small number of 70mm prints required made this acceptable. With upwards of 200 70mm prints being

struck on *Far and Away*, this would have been both extremely time-consuming and potentially damaging. When I worked in Universal's postproduction department in the mid-to-late Seventies, they wouldn't even use original negative prints for studio screenings, much less for theatrical release, while other companies strike a small number of original negative 35mm prints for key first-run houses in Los Angeles.

I don't know if this policy has changed, but at a June meeting of the Hollywood Chapter of the SMPTE at which a 70mm clip from *Far and Away* was shown, a Universal representative there could not verify if that print was from the original or an internegative.

Regarding six-track stereo sound, the mixing panel has nothing to do with it. The practice of placing everything but music and obvious effects in the center began in the early Seventies because some people, including sound editors and mixers, found voices moving back and forth across the screen distracting. In the last couple of years, I've had occasion to see not only some 70mm pictures but also some 35mm four-track stereo films from the Fifties and Sixties and personally feel that even in a small room, a truer use of stereo enhances rather than detracts from the overall effect.

There are two technical problems in doing a six-track dub, however. For the past decade, the second and fourth channels have essentially become subwoofers, providing low-end enhancement for explosions, etc. But considering the size of most theaters today, three discrete behind-the-screen channels can do the job adequately.

Moving a mono track from speaker to speaker leaves an obvious hole unless the other tracks are filled with proper ambience. This defect was noticeable to anyone who saw the 70mm reissue of *Spartacus*, and was possibly the actual source of dissatisfaction with discrete dialog in the past (although Fox, it should be noted, recorded productions stereophonically until about 1960). Correcting such flaws can perhaps be done more easily with today's digital technology if producers are willing to go along with the desires of innovative sound editors and designers.

— Rick Mitchell
Los Angeles

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65mm: A Big Letdown

I would like to thank Ashley Ward for his footnote to the *Far and Away* article (Letters 8/92). Having grown up with the roadshows of the Sixties and having more recently seen a screening of *Oklahoma!* in a fully equipped theater, I can plainly see and hear the difference between then and now. For all the hype over THX, Dolby, digital and the like, nothing has impressed me more than the directional and dimensional sound recording done in the late Fifties and early Sixties on discrete six-channel mixers for all those grand 70mm roadshows.

Those days are sadly past, as we have given way to the quick, cheap and easy, blaming skyrocketing costs and not the real reason: short-sighted thinking and short-term profit. God forbid a film does not make trillions of dollars in its first weekend of release.

However excited I was to hear of this most recent 65mm production, the end product was indeed a letdown. Mr. Ward's letter reminded me that a very special time in motion picture production and presentation is seldom remembered by today's young talent. Let us hope they keep trying, and maybe one day they'll get it right.

— Richard M. Krueger
Morristown, NJ

Ron Howard lends a Dickensian solemnity to these events that makes them irretrievably comical. Happy to put Eastman Kodak's new 65mm stock through its paces, he punctuates the rough-and-tumble pantomime of *Far and Away* with long shots of a vast and astonishing clarity. An early duel scene is magnificently framed, and there is a nicely judged moment as the cannon sounds to begin the race and the settlers seem frozen at the starting line, but otherwise the new format, reminiscent of Cinerama without the panels, offers a notable risk of overstatement, particularly when Howard spirals us into the air along the supposed trajectory of departing Donnelly souls. Unable to transcend the fairytale fakery that has the young lovers thrown into the snow and yet, after three days without food or shelter, maintain their Pre-Raphaelite serenity, this is unrepentant and vapid nonsense, celebrated with inappropriate splendour.
Philip Strick

aribau
cinema

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CLUB
PEDRO IV
2 SALAS

CINE
REX

Mañana, miércoles, tarde, ¡ESTRENO!! (En V.O. subtitulada)

FURIA Y PASION

UNA PELICULA DE RON HOWARD

Un HORIZONTE muy LEJANO

TOM CRUISE **NICOLE KIDMAN**

IMAGINE FILMS ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTA UNA PELICULA DE BRIAN GRAZER
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The Pictureville Cinema, NMPFT, Bradford

by John Gainsborough

Not content with running the only IMAX cinema in the country the National Museum of Photography, Film & Television in Bradford has just opened the only cinema in the UK showing all normal film formats which, ultimately, will also be capable of conversion to show Cinerama, the historic but obsolete three projector, 35mm, 146° widescreen system. The "Pictureville Cinema", as it called, opened for normal 35/70mm format business on 8 April 1992 and staff at the Museum are hoping to complete the Cinerama system for installation in the cinema in 1993. Rod Varley, Head of Film Development at the Museum, said recently that the original plan had been to make their first Cinerama presentation in September 1992, to mark the 40th anniversary of the first showing of Cinerama in New York, but the Museum had been unable to secure the remaining funding for the project this year. "If there are any generous benefactors out there we need some £80,000 to complete the operation" he added.

The National Museum itself was originally converted from an unused civic theatre, and occupies a commanding position in Bradford city centre. The auditorium of the theatre was gutted to provide the working centrepiece of the museum, a 342 seat 70mm IMAX cinema with a 64" x 52" screen. This cinema also has projection facilities for 35 and 70mm from a projection box sited beneath the IMAX projection room, but to give full presentation flexibility, and to provide for the reconstructed Cinerama system, another auditorium was needed. There was no room for a second cinema within the Museum building, but an opportunity did arise to take over and convert an under-used amateur dramatics theatre in the adjacent public library, and the Museum seized it's chance. The Architects Division of the City of Bradford Metropolitan Council were given the task of conversion and providing the structural shell for the new cinema and the Museum undertook the furnishing and equipping of the building.

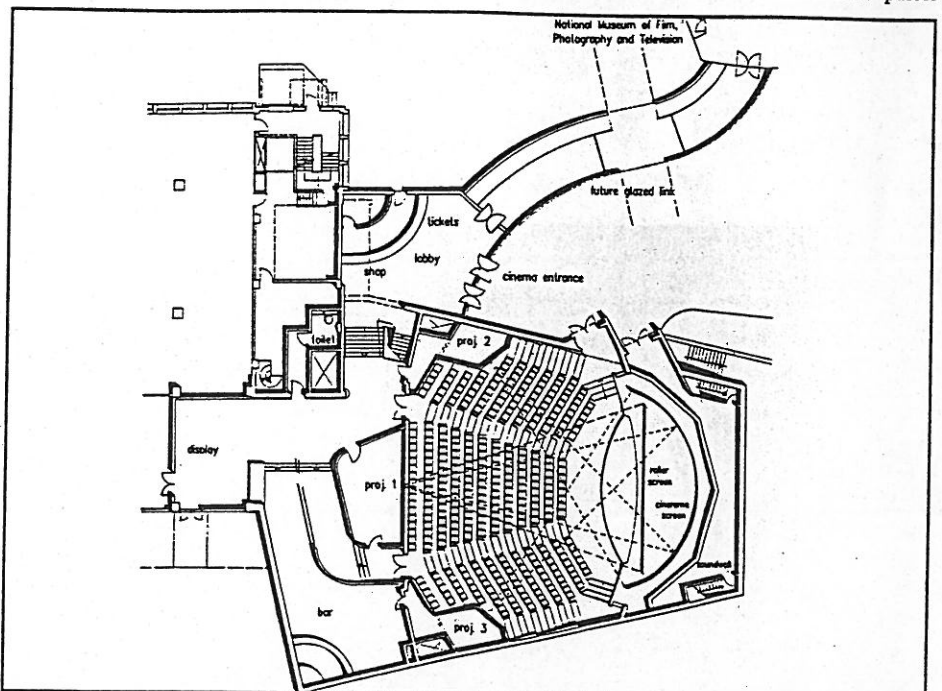
Bradford has acquired a splendid new cinema as a result, not huge (it seats 306) but comfortable, well equipped, and run by the Museum on a thoroughly business-like basis with a lively programme seven days a week. Because of the site it lacks a bold front entrance; it is approached through a small metal framed conservatory at the end of the public library, hidden from the road, and to the left of the main Museum building. But it is adjacent a series of public car parks and within a few minutes walk of the bus and rail stations (and the other city centre cinema). The relatively small entrance lobby includes a curved counter for ticketing, confectionary sales, books and cards, and this leads straight up to the cinema foyer, bar and exhibition space. As befits a museum (and this is, after all, part of the National Museum of Science & Industry) it has a discreetly welcoming interior; the carpet is red and black, the balustrades stainless steel, the walls warm pink and the woodwork is grey-stained ash. The whole area is indirectly lit from behind a ceiling cove. A well-preserved Gaumont Kalee GK21 projector provides a centrepiece to the foyer.

Various factors affected the cinema colour

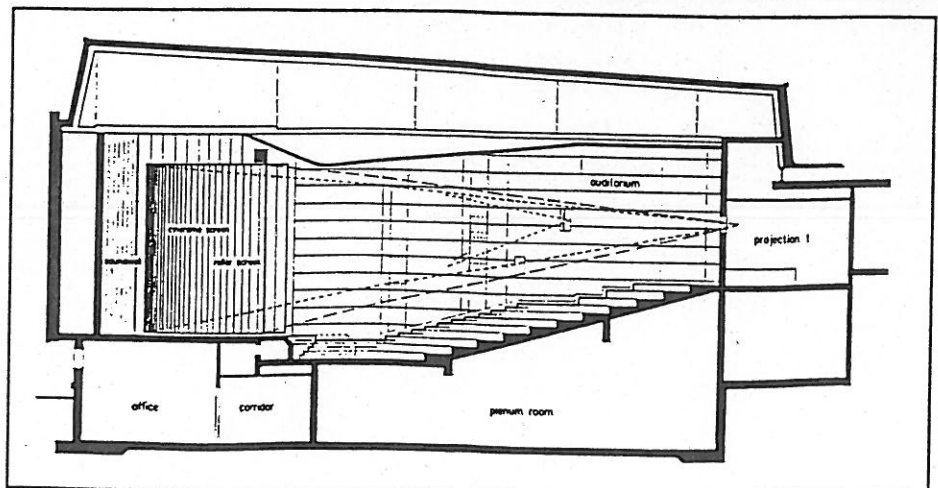
scheme. The existing building already had a "black and white" theme with Portland stone and slate detailing, and the Museum wanted the auditorium finished in a dark colour, and to reinforce the eventual Cinerama concept by installing "Cinerama Red" curtains to the auditorium. The colour scheme developed using black, shades of grey and red and the specially woven Axminster carpet (with an original Warner Brothers geometric design) was continued throughout the auditorium.

It has a very wide screen (10.2 metres) and the full width is used for Scope and 70mm films, with top masking used for the latter. This big screen will be rolled up and concealed in the roof space to

expose the semicircular Cinerama screen behind. The five speakers behind the normal screen can also be raised on cables and concealed in the roof space when the cinema is being prepared for Cinerama. The flat screen for normal cinema presentations was made by Harkness, but the Cinerama screen had been rescued much earlier from a Cinerama cinema in Brussels, and is presently being restored in Holland, although it will be installed by Harkness. To prevent cross reflection the Cinerama screen is made up of some 1,800 strips or louvres, each 2cm wide, angled to the audience and the relevant projector (the louvres are carefully angled such that light reflected from one side of the screen passes



Plan of the Pictureville Cinema, National Museum of Photography, Film & Television, Bradford.



Section; Pictureville Cinema, Bradford.

between the louvres on the other side without degrading the projected image). When Cinerama is shown at Bradford the field of view for the audience will be approximately 146° (horizontally) × 55° (vertically). Curiously the museum had acquired two 35mm projectors from Glasgow in 1983 without realising they had originally been used for Cinerama in that city, and they will now be used as the outer pair for the Cinerama system in the Pictureville. Both projectors are fitted with the toothed "combs" which oscillate vertically in the side of the projector gate to help hide the join by blurring the edge between the pictures on screen, and originally christened "jigolos" by technicians working on the system. (Cinerama is 6-perf, 3-strip 35mm system which runs at 26fps; for further technical details of the system see "Whatever Happened to Cinerama" by Keith Swadkins MBKS in "Cinema Technology" Vol. 3 No. 4, July 1990).

While the original theatre sightlines were excellent and worked well for a cinema the existing projection box did not meet the Museum's brief. At a very early stage it was decided to demolish it and form an enlarged projection room at a lower level, which also allowed the siting of two additional projection rooms at the correct level for the future Cinerama installation. In the projection room the Museum has installed a Cinemecannica Victoria 8 (35/70mm) projector on a B4000 base, and the projectionists have Isco and Schneider lenses available.

Cinema Technology October 1992

There is a five deck platter, and the sound system is fitted with Dolby CP200 and SR decoders. A Fumeo 16mm projector has also been installed.

The cinema has good access for the disabled, and both a stair lift and a wheelchair lift have been installed. Other facilities include a wheelchair accessible toilet, readily accessible seating and an induction loop. The cost of converting the building structure, and furnishing and equipping the cinema was £850,000, which was part funded by the City of Bradford Metropolitan Council and the European Regional Development Fund.

David Puttnam said recently of the Pictureville Cinema that "Bradford is now able to boast the first truly luxury single-screen cinema to open outside London, perhaps, since the end of the 1940s." It was opened by the Duchess of Kent on 8 April 1992.

The Pictureville Cinema was put to the test when BKSTS Training ran a special presentation on Film Formats in June, with examples from early "talkies", through Cinemascope to the latest 65/70mm production, "Far and Away". This presentation was made in conjunction with Dolby Laboratories and sponsored by Harkness Screens. The development of both picture and sound was clearly demonstrated to a large audience, the sound system coping crisply with the enormous variation and progression in sound quality right up to Dolby SR, though stopping just short of digital sound, not yet installed in Bradford. Three hours seemed to go "in a few minutes" according to one member of the audience, a tribute to the

presentation but also to the quality of the auditorium and its projection and sound systems. Bradford residents are fortunate to have this cinema on their doorstep.

The Consultants and Contractors to the project are as follows:

City Architect's Division, Bradford Metro Council, Jacobs Well, Bradford, BD1 5RW

<i>City Architect:</i>	<i>David Miller</i>
<i>Project Architect:</i>	<i>Michael Leslie</i>
<i>Quantity Surveyor:</i>	<i>John Rhodes</i>
<i>Interior Designer:</i>	<i>Ruth Cowburn</i>
<i>Electrical Engineer:</i>	<i>Terry Bedford</i>
<i>Mechanical Engineer:</i>	<i>John Hamer</i>
<i>Clerk of Works:</i>	<i>Derrick Peacock</i>

*Bradford Metro Council City Engineer's Division
Structural Engineers: Roger Naylor,
Ghazwa Altwani*

CONTRACTORS

Main Contractor: W. G. Birch Construction Ltd., Harrogate; Electrical Sub-Contractor: W. D. Wilson and Son (Bradford) Ltd; Mechanical Sub-Contractor: Hensall Mechanical Services, Whiteley Bridge; Joinery: A. V. Styam Ltd., Boroughbridge; Dry Lining: Phillips Plasterers, Leeds; Decorations: Yorkshire Decorators Ltd., Allerton; Projection and Sound: Sound Associates, London; Screen Contractor: Harkness Screens, Boreham Wood; Seating Contractors: Entertainment Seating, Saltcoats; Carpet Contractors: Trafford Carpets, Manchester.

NEW BKSTS WALLCHART

New BKSTS Wallchart

highly informative BKSTS wallchart has just published, "Motion Picture Systems for Special and Theme Parks" which includes details of all for 65/70mm systems now in use, including Imax, Omni and Showscan, together with of some of the 35mm forerunners such as ra. It includes over 40 illustrations of actual in full colour, and explanatory diagrams. on stout paper with a plastic laminate finish er, size 24" x 34", is now available from the price £15.00 each (BKSTS members £13.00 including postage and packing (UK). The it has been compiled by Grant Lobban FBKS lication was supported by Fujifilm and several oratories.

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16-14 Victoria House, Vernon Place
London WC1B 4DF
Tel: 071-242 8400. Fax: 071-405 3560

A NEW, highly informative BKSTS wallchart has just been published, "Motion Picture Systems for Special Venues and Theme Parks" which includes details of all the major 65/70mm systems now in use together with details of some of the 35mm forerunners such as Cinerama. It includes over 40 illustrations of actual frames in full colour, and explanatory diagrams. Printed on stout paper with a plastic laminate finish the poster, size 24" X 34", is now available from the BKSTS price £15.00 each (BKSTS members £13.00 each) including postage and packing (UK), or overseas price £17.00 each (BKSTS members £15.00 each) including airmail postage.

Compiled by Grant Lobban, FBKS, this latest addition to the series of Motion Picture Film Technology wallcharts features processes intended for speciality theatres, including those found at Expositions, Museums, Science Centres, Theme and Amusement Parks and other public attractions around the world.

Included are the well established systems developed by the Disney, Imax and Showscan organisations, together with those now available from Omni Films, Iwerks, Super 70, VistaScope, Torus and the many others who also provide the special equipment and

production services for this expanding market. Their customised systems use either 35mm or 70mm film in various configurations to provide images for flat, curved, or dome shaped screens. Also represented are 360° full-circle presentations and 3-D processes.

As on the other BKSTS wallcharts, the picture and sound systems of the individual processes are described and illustrated with actual frames. Many also include a schematic of the projection arrangement and diagrams are provided to help explain other aspects of the systems. Also on the chart are details of the various moving seating options available and the other physical effects, including lasers, smoke, wind and scents, which can be employed to enhance the overall experience.

This latest wallchart is an invaluable reference for all those interested in this specialised field of motion picture production and presentation. It will be particularly useful to designers, architects and others involved in creating special venue theatres and ride-type film shows.

In keeping with its "big screen" subject matter, this particular chart in the series is larger, measuring 24" X 34". Not only is it informative, but the film frames and other material have been carefully chosen to make the chart visually attractive and ideally suited for permanent display.

Publication of this new wallchart has been supported by Fujifilm and a group of film laboratories.

THE INTERNATIONAL
CINERAMA
SOCIETY

newsletter no. 9 july 92

At a meeting of the Museum authorities two weeks ago it was decided to delay opening of THIS IS CINERAMA until next year, hopefully to coincide with the Museum's 10th anniversary. This situation has largely been produced by the current recession in the UK. For our overseas members I must explain that, currently, things are very difficult for everyone in the UK. There have been massive lay-offs and bankruptcies with no organisation exempt from cutback, not even the partially government financed Museums. There was a meeting with a representative of the Museum at my home yesterday at which the situation and the way forward were discussed.

The new, specially built, Pictureville Cinema which will house the CINERAMA installation was completed on time, opening on April 6th this year with a charity premiere of Hook. The museum have made a beautiful job of the theatre which seats 320. It is a fully tiered amphitheatre with luxurious seating. The color scheme is a rich, grey decor with red curtains. Projection equipment is fitted for any 16/35/70mm process with the latest state of the art projection and sound. Normally it utilises a FLAT screen but this can be wound up into the ceiling to reveal eventually, we hope, the CINERAMA 146 degree louvred screen behind. A deeply curved sound wall has been built on stage for Cinerama but the screen frame and louvres have yet to be purchased. The A and C boxes are complete and wired, awaiting the fitting of the projectors which are currently restored and on site. Towers will have to be purchased for these booths to enable unmanned operation of these machines. B box already is fully equipped to control the theatre and the main projection equipment as well as containing the CineramaSound reproducer. Only the fitting of the B machine is needed to complete the Cinerama installation.

Cinerama Inc have reprinted THIS IS CINERAMA for the Museum and the Soundtrack is now restored after horrendous difficulties had been overcome.

So the project is still alive though the rate of progress has again slowed. The Museum are still determined to have CINERAMA running there. The major hurdle is just the internal politics and financial restraints of the moment. To add to the difficulties of the moment, the new theatre has opened at the start of the longest, hottest and driest summer in the UK for over 20 years and this decimated cinema attendances including those of the Pictureville. I know many of you were planning trips to the UK and Bradford specially for the envisaged September opening or to assist in the installation work. I can only apologise for the inconvenience and disappointment on behalf of the Museum and ourselves.

Keith H. Swadkins. M.B.K.S. President Int. Cin. Soc.
15 Dysteleg Road.
Disley. Cheshire. SK12 2BQ. England
Copyright: The International Cinerama Society 1992.

We are very pleased to have supplied equipment to the Pictureville Cinema in Bradford as it gave us the opportunity to provide something out of the ordinary in both equipment and experience:

The "monster" 5-deck 70mm Cinemeccanica platter system, for instance, is quite a specialist item. Another is the Victoria 8 projector which has been modified to run at any speed between 16 and 30 frames per second.

The proposed Cinerama system has delighted our engineers, who can't wait to see this magnificent format in operation after so many years absence. Once again, Cinemeccanica can provide the precision equipment needed to create a cinema experience that is absolutely unique.

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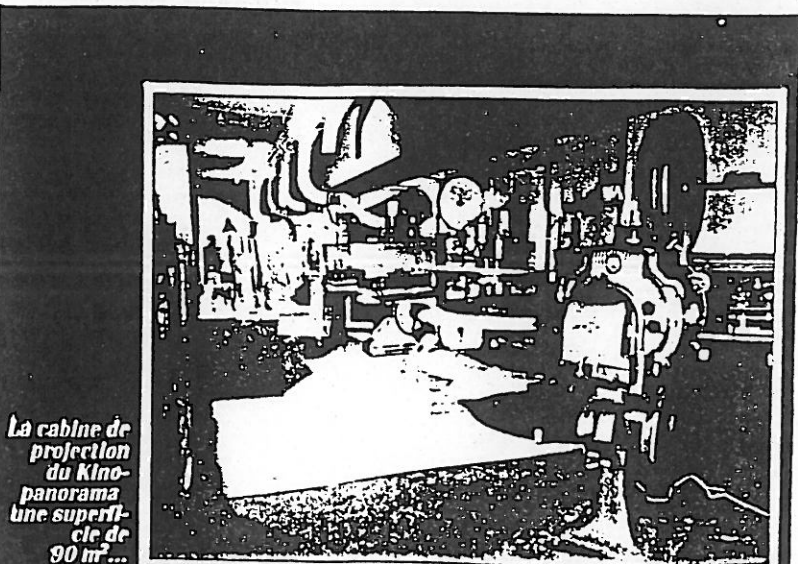
ence. CEZANNE 1;
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Paris, PATHE MONT'PARNASSE 1;
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Paris, PATHE WEPLER 2;
Paris, PERGOLA 1;
Paris, ST-LAZARE PASQUIER 1;
Paris, UGC BIARRITZ 1;
Paris, UGC CHAMPS;
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St-Dizier, RIO 1;
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Vinc. CHAPLIN.

* Cette liste fournie par la C.S.T.,
relativement complète, n'est pas
exhaustive. La CST invite donc les
salles qui n'y sont pas mentionnées
à se faire connaître....



La cabine de
projection
du Kino-
panorama
une superficie
de 90 m²...

70mm Today:

From our correspondent BOB DICKSON in Los Angeles:
Latest 70 mm "blow-ups" screening in Los Angeles are :
"1492, CONQUEST OF PARADISE" and "THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS"

From our Belgian correspondent: 2nd KINEPOLIS multiplex in Northern France ! The family Bert, owners of the famous KINEPOLIS complex in Brussels, will built their second cinema multiplex in the northern of France near the town LILLE. The opening will take place before the end of 1993 and the complex contains at least 25 auditoriums! It will be built around a castle called "Le chateau de Lomme" which has to be restored and will be part of the complex. It will also be used for cultural festivals, congresses, etc. and is situated along the new TGV train connection between Paris and Brussels. They hope to attract one million visitors a year. In the meantime Messrs. Bert are also involved in a large multiplex in the Belgian city of Antwerp which will be called METROPOLIS. and will also contain at least twenty cinemas! And they are also looking for a good building site near the city of Rotterdam in Holland !!

Tuesday 18th August '92

Dear Johan,

Thank you for the latest "70mm" issue. Always full of interest. Hope you received the summer issue of "International Widescreen"? The National Film Theatre in London is currently running a season of widescreen films, mostly blowups.

They telephoned me last week to invite me to see something extra over the weekend. They had managed to obtain an original print, in almost perfect condition, of "Oklahoma". This is the one in 70mm running at 30 frames per second. I didn't even know that they still had the equipment to run 70mm at 30 frames, but they have. I went along on Saturday afternoon to see it. For a 30 year old film, it's doing well!!!

Tony Shapps
"Kenwood"
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NORTHWOOD Middx
HA6 2JG England

The "70 MM NEWSLETTER" is published six times a year and sent to the members of "The International 70 MM Association".

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