

70 MM

NEWSLETTER

No. 30
JANUARY 1994

In this issue:

*Vittorio Storaro: The big screen promotor of 70mm photograpy

*70mm Promotion tour to L.A.

IMAX, Tristar team for "Courage"

In what will likely rank as one of the more unusual deals of 1994, big screen format IMAX corp. and Tristar Pictures have partnered on production and distribution of the \$20 million, 35-minute feature "Wings of Courage". Scheduled to start production on March 15 in Vancouver and Banff, the movie is slated to be directed by Jean-Jacques Annaud ("the bear") while "A River Runs Through It" star Craig Sheffer also has reached a preliminary agreement to star in the picture. The movie will be shot in 70mm format, but Sony Pictures Entertainment and IMAX execs are said to have considered tailoring the movie for distribution to more traditional formats in the post-production process. Sony Pix declined comment. "Wings of Courage" rates as one of the first examples of a major U.S. studio partnering on a big-screen, specialized format movie. Tristar will handle distribution of the film to 102 IMAX theaters worldwide.

Source: Variety 31 January 1994

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EDITORIAL

70mm PROMOTION is the theme of this Newsletter. As you can read here below, Thomas Hauerslev and Johan C.M.Wolthuis are going to Los Angeles, San Francisco, etc. in another effort to raise the interest for 65/70mm photography ! They hope to speak in the U.S. with some "big bosses" of the film industry.

We expect from every member of the 70mm Association at least a few lines, or more, about the theme "Why 70mm ?" All these letters will be published in the April "Special Edition" of the "70mm Newsletter" which goes with us to the States.

We think that the contribution of Vittorio Storaro will be of great value for us. Read what he writes about the Big screen in this issue. We are looking forward to hear from you all, also when you have other ideas or suggestions !!

(editor's note: Part 4: The level of violence will probably be removed from the final program.)

70 MM PROMOTION TOUR LOS ANGELES APRIL 1994

Date: 17 April - 2 May 1994

Organised by:

Johan C.M.Wolthuis, secretary of the "International 70 MM Association" from Arnhem, The Netherlands

Thomas Hauerslev, projectionist & publicist from
Copenhagen, Denmark.

in collaboration with

Robert G. Dickson, documentary filmmaker in Los Angeles
and

Albert Bert, chairman of directors of the Kinepolis Group
in Belgium.

OBJECTS:

1) We hope to make American filmproducers and directors as enthousiastic as their European counterparts for such original 70mm films as "Oklahoma", "Cleopatra", "Porgy and Bess", "2001, A Space Odyssey", etc. from former times and such 70mm films as "Far and Away", "Baraka", "Little Buddha", etc. from these days.

And we also hope to convince filmproducers and directors to use 65mm once again.

WHEREAS INCREASINGLY MORE EUROPEAN CINEMAS ARE ABLE TO SHOW 70MM FILMS, THERE ARE INCREASINGLY FEWER 70MM PRINTS AVAILABLE

2) Digital sound alone doesnot ensure success. The cinemas need the original 70mm film to survive in their struggle against HD TV and other forms of amusement. Many viewers prefer magnetic stereophonic sound to digital sound because of the exaggerated sharp sound effects of the latter.

WHY SHOULD THE SOUND QUALITY OF FILMS BE IMPROVED ALONE, BUT NOT THE IMAGE QUALITY !

*70mm Promotion tour to L.A.

3) Many famous American films from the fifties and the sixties are representatives of the cultural inheritance of the United States of America. These films should be revised and restored, just like it has been done with "LAWRENCE OF ARABIA". We should like to draw special attention to "Around the World in 80 Days", "Porgy and Bess", "South Pacific", "Ben Hur" and "Cleopatra".

4) The level of violence in films should be reduced, similarly violent films should be shown less frequently both in cinemas and on television.

It has been proven the last time that violence in films and on television has a negative effect on children and on young adults.

It is the responsibility of film makers and the makers of television programs to amuse, entertain and educate the viewers, not to invite them to violence!

We should all be alert to increasing violence on our cinema or television screen, otherwise the violence will turn against us all some time.

PRESS INFORMATION:

Starting in February 1994 we plan to devote attention to the "70mm promotion tour". We hope to arrange appointments with film producers, directors and studio managers in Los Angeles. Furthermore, we intend to keep the local press informed of our activities and ask them to publish something about the subject.

ACTIONS:

The following material will be distributed in late April to the above mentioned persons:

- * A list of operational 70mm cinemas in Europe.
- * Information concerning 70mm films by the "International 70MM Association".
- * A complete list of original 70mm films with production year.
- * Letters from managers of European cinemas requesting more 70mm prints.
- * Special Edition of the "70 MM NEWSLETTER" April 1994.

{Everything will be printed on large format A3 size paper}

PARTICIPATION:

Sponsors and advertising in the "70 MM Newsletter" April 1994
Providing letters of European Cinemas.
Prices on request.

begin to prove to myself that I could use 65mm film with the same lighting and photographic structure that I adopted for 35mm.

However, I did succeed in convincing Warren to take the necessary steps to make *Dick Tracy* the first film to benefit from the technological advantages of DIGITAL SOUND, at least as far as the 70mm prints were concerned.

I personally did everything possible to persuade, to convince, Bernardo Bertolucci and Jeremy Thomas to enter the world of 65mm right from the beginning of *Little Buddha*.

But Jeremy and Bernardo decided to remain in the world of Cinemascope, the former for financial reasons and the latter for creative ones.

The entire structure of the film, which was divided into various parts (one of which featured a Tibetan Lama telling the story of Buddha to a group of children) allowed me, in a moment of calm when everyone had put aside that nervousness that usually precedes the start of a Film, to once again propose shooting at least the part in which the story of Buddha's life is related in 65mm.

For some time Bertolucci, the production designer James Acheson, and I had been discussing the possibility of using figurative elements inspired by certain 18th century miniatures to depict the world of Siddhartha. A spontaneous remark during the rushes resulted in our re-discussing the problem and, this time, both Bernardo and Jeremy immediately seemed disposed to realizing this specific part of the Film with a new technology which would enable us to portray, in accordance with the story, that particular episode as a perfectly illustrated world; a book of images which would have a tremendous impact on the audience as they watched and listened to this very special part of the story.

I immediately began making phonecalls and sending faxes, in order to regain the support that a number of Companies had promised me, in their seeking to promote, above all in Europe, Cinema on the big screen filmed in 65mm.

ARRI, KODAK and TECHNICOLOR were prepared, via

their respective representatives Horst Bergman, Joerg Agin and Ron Jarvis, to work with us on promoting the system, as long as it gave them another chance to open up the market for Cinema conceived for the big screen and filmed with a big negative that was, without a doubt, more suitable for obtaining "high definition" images.

After ARRI, KODAK and TECHNICOLOR had confirmed, the most urgent problem to be solved was how to get the necessary equipment (Film and Movie Cameras) to Kathmandu for the day shooting was scheduled to begin, that morning we would begin to create the image of a small White elephant which, by planting his seed in Queen Maya, caused the legend of Buddha to be born.

The only change that the production had to accommodate, apart from the substitution of the PEEWEE dolly with its big brother HYBRID, was in fact that of replacing the camera, and loading it with the appropriate film that would run through its body.

We were actually challenging the preconceived idea that 65mm Cinema inevitably meant a big increase not only in cost but also in the time it takes to realize a Film. For a long time I had been affirming, especially after the tests I had carried out on the set of *Dick Tracy*, that if one used the new ARRI cameras (765), the new Kodak film (5293, 5296) and the new Technicolor treatments (E.N.R.), there was not a big difference between Cinemascope and 65mm when it came to the technical equipment, the financing and the time necessary to realize a Film for the big screen. For us, however, it was like jumping on a moving train — this time at least — as we were now using equipment that was far more sophisticated and more complex, but which in the event proved easier to operate once we had become familiar with it.

The system undoubtedly allowed us to achieve a higher quality in the recording of an image, which is fundamental as the Cinema has always been considered a language of images.

Everything finally arrived on time. We could all hardly wait to

"baptize" the camera, even though the 1st assistants, 2nd assistants and cameramen of both units had only had a few hours the evening before to be introduced to the equipment by Manfred, whom ARRI had sent specially for this purpose, so that they would at least have a basic working knowledge of the camera. It was on a Monday morning in November that we began to film the first scene of the story of Buddha, while the entire crew looked on with interest.

As always, Fabio slid up the master on the electronic desk that controls the lighting, Alfredo prepared to raise the boom of the dolly, Mauro was poised to set the wheels in motion, Enrico and Fabio framed the slates, Robert and Riccardo brought them into focus, Paolo and Alfredino were ready to catch the first lines and, as everyone seemed visibly more tense while I watched impatiently, Bernardo broke the ice with those magical words "ROLL 'EM", the Red pilot lights on the cameras glowed, and the word "ACTION" transported us: frame after frame, take after take, scene after scene, into another world, where we became familiar with the story, the legend, the myth and the life of Buddha. We experienced this, as did the young protagonists, as if we were looking at a big illustrated book. Like children fascinated by the flickering flames of a fire, we gazed at the images we had created as if we had been watching a 65mm fairy-tale in colour!

After we had recovered from our wonderment, we were amazed to discover that there was in fact very little to wonder at: we continued to do precisely what we had been doing for months, using the same amount and quality of light (Filippo, Stefano and the team of electricians didn't modify the lighting plan in any way and didn't even seem to notice the change in cameras) and working out and realizing the same camera moves (the two Vinten heads we normally used were adapted to fit the bodies of the 765s, thus endowing the entire system with that same freedom of movement to which we had been accustomed for some time). Tonino and his grips also

continued to use the tracks and the dolly as usual, the only difference being that the dolly was now heavier. The entire crew did what it had always done on every film, which was living each frame as it was filmed, each sound as it was recorded, and modifying, with each joint breath, the complete emotional structure of the film. I have always believed, in fact, that the particular sensibility of film is able to record the emotions of all those who participate in the creation of a cinematographic image, so you can imagine in 65mm!

Only the still photographers, who were then arriving from practically all over the world, seemed to go a little more wild than usual when Bernardo sat astride the dolly and trundled off to research his images as always, to select the one that was right for that particular moment; when I myself, holding an exposure meter that was still warm from the last time I measured the light, approached the object that was unrelentingly devouring the images that tomorrow, after their having been multiplied by various film processes, it would restore to a vast number of screens before the audience's very eyes.

However, things didn't go all that smoothly at the beginning. The first report on the negative that we received from the laboratory in Los Angeles — while Technicolor in London was preparing to develop the 65mm negative — gave some cause for alarm; it was not clear who or what might have caused certain physical defects in some of the images that we were all waiting impatiently to screen.

Finally, Mike Lamandola called me and set my mind at rest with the news that certain marks on the images only appeared at the beginning of a scene, and certain imperfections at the end of the same scene, and that a number of tiny scratches visible during screening would be eliminated with the wetgate process. We had also begun to sense, however, that something was preventing the negative from winding smoothly after it had been exposed.

The ever-watchful Manfred noticed that some of our Nepalese assistants were carrying the magazines upside down, so that the weight of the film fell on the wrong part of the chassis inside, thus preventing the film from running through the camera in the normal way.

This and various other discoveries led us to slightly modify our handling of the camera daily which, in turn, resulted in our encountering a series of small but important things that must certainly be improved. The ARRI 765 was in fact writing its history along with us. Every day, my crew and I pursued our research and made discoveries at the same time, using a camera which, as it utilized new technologies, had arrived on the market without having been able to test itself to the full, that is, without having been used to shoot an entire film.

Nevertheless, ARRI-KODAK-TECHNICOLOR's continual assistance made our journey more and more trouble-free, transporting us during each screening into a dream-world that, given its extraordinary clarity, constituted a more and more faithful reproduction of an imaginary reality invented by our creative fantasy.

Even looking into the Eye Piece, one had the impression of experiencing a new world, a breadth of vision without the use of any additional lenses that widened it anamorphically, of perceiving a clear, limpid, sharp image that truly led us to believe we could maintain the qualities visible during filming when the image was projected onto a big screen.

After only three days, everything seemed more normal than usual. The cameras were lifted on and off dollies and cranes with the same rhythm we had adopted during the Cinemascope era, and the lighting became more intense or dim as it chased the modern simulacra of ancient dreams. When we were filming the legend of the nobleman Siddhartha, however, it was the scenes in front of us that appeared to be most harmonious, as their magnitude was in correct proportion to the system with which we were filming them: using one; two or three movie cameras according to the requirements of the story, and no longer experiencing that strange sensation of looking at a great *mise en scène* that was then diminished by a small film structure.

I only had to see, to touch that wide perforated strip every time I watched a magazine being changed to feel more reassured than usual, simply because it made me even more certain that all the various degrees of Light, Shadow and Colour that I was harmonizing

for each scene, in an attempt to WRITE IN LIGHT the story of this film, would be recorded in the right space.

Day after day, we were able to respect the shooting schedule that had been worked out months, previously for a normal 35mm film. Although we used the same amount of light, the same number of personnel, we were able to achieve greater quality, that is BIG quality, in the filming. In effect, I believe it is thanks to modern technical equipment that only the cost of the Camera, the Film and the printing and developing of the rushes increases when shooting in 65mm, while all the other requirements for creating big cinema entertainment remain the same.

Sitting in our screening room, as we usually did when there was new material to view, we calmly followed the unfolding of the historical events, but were now far more involved in the story, in the cinematographic fairy-tale, than we had been previously. We no longer experienced an anxious feeling when watching certain takes — maybe filmed with a wide stop — that possessed a somewhat grainy quality which appeared to hover, like an anguished ghost, in front of the screen.

I had in fact been convinced of something from the very first screening — even though we were actually watching rushes that had been compressed on a squeezed positive and projected in 35mm through another anamorphic lens (all this to permit postproduction in the standard 35mm format) — which was that for a spectacular, epic film, for a great novel told in images, Cinemascope, in my eyes, was no longer feasible, it's time had come to an end because we had actually overcome the technical, creative and industrial problems that prevented the average production from shooting with the right negative film for the right screen size.

In the same way that the figurative-photographic concept of *Little Buddha* was based on the Equilibrium of the Elements, we also found ourselves trying to achieve equilibrium at a technological level by filming the modern part of the story in Cinemascope and the special effects in Vistavision, and recording the ancient part on the magical 65mm strip. It was a combination of different formats that were used according to the requirements of the story and the

mm, that will be united in two different Internegatives, one in 35mm (reducing the parts filmed in Vistavision and in 65mm) for normal Cinemascope prints, and the other in 65mm (enlarging the parts filmed in 35mm and in Vistavision) for the 70mm release prints.

I personally hope that I will be able to photograph every other film for the big screen that I am asked to collaborate on in 65mm; indeed, I must realize them in 65mm.

When Bertolucci called me one Sunday afternoon to discuss the possibilities of the system, he

commented in a low voice: "In a world of whirling images created with television in view, the 65mm system is perhaps the right one to prolong the life of the word 'CINEMA'."

I hope, and indeed I believe, he is right. I want him to be right. I only hope that I can measure up to the 65mm system myself.

VITTORIO STORARO

Los Angeles 20-1-1994

The INTERNATIONAL 70mm Association
Attention Mr. Johan C.M. Wolthuis

Dear Mr. Wolthuis

Thank you for the kindly letter and excuse me for the delay of my answer, I was all around Europa for 35 and 70mm Answer prints of " LITTLE BUDDHA " and the shooting of two episodes of the multimedia project "ROMA IMAGO URBIS", now I'm in Los Angeles to take care at the Digital Master on NTSC and PAL of "Little buddha".

It is true that "Little Buddha" is very particular Film in relation at the three different Format used for the shooting: ANAMORPHIC 35mm (For the modern part of the story), VISTAVISION 35mm (For the special effects part of the Enlightenment sequence), ARRI 65mm for the ancient story of Buddha).

I'm completely in agreement with your philosophy that 70mm Film is one of the most important device for Cinema in the future. Particularly for epic story, main event, big romance; Film well made (Story-Direction-Cinematography-Acting-Production and Costume Designer-Digital Sound etc...) are pushing audience into FilmTheaters. Good movies, particular if showed in good theater, in 70mm Print and with Digital Sound are making the experience of CINEMA.

I really believe that if 16mm Negative Film is in good relation with image projected in SMALL screen, 35mm is for NORMAL size of screen, 65mm is the right Negative size to fill a BIG screen.

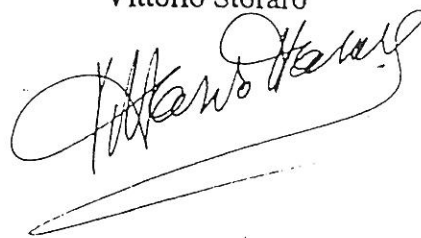
Anamorphic Picture is like pretend to be, give a false impression to audience of what a LARGE SCREEN experience is.

" LITTLE BUDDHA " already opened in Europe with success and we are looking forward to the United States opening in April or May, hoping that American audience will love the story and the visual experience of it.

Your secretary that saw the Film in Bruxelles seems to appreciate it. I done several interview about the filming in 65mm for "Little Buddha", particularly with Bob Fisher that will be published soon in Hollywood Report and ASC magazine; I'll speak about this subject on January 29th at the Film Format Seminar that will be held at the Academy of Motion Picture Art and Sciences in Los Angeles. I'm sorry that on March I'll be back in Italy and I'll miss the opportunity to participate at your campaign "70mm PROMOTION". In case you haven't read my article issued on the AIC's Annuary I'll send a copy of it. If you need copies of The Annuary of Italian Cinematographers Association, you can ask at: AIC - Rome, Italy, fax n° 0039-6-7222155.

Please let me know any news about The INTERNATIONAL 70mm ASSOCIATION. Sincerely

Vittorio Storaro

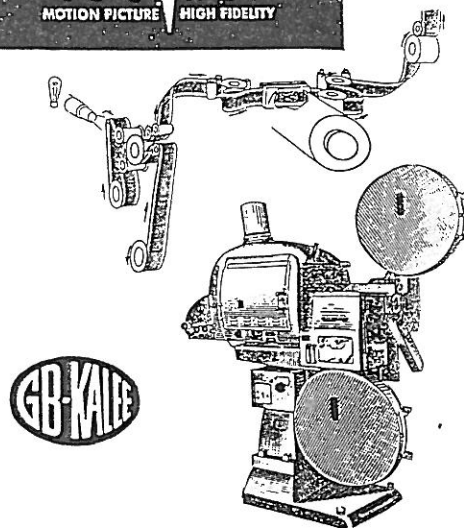


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