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EDITORIAL

In this Newsletter again an article about "Far and Away"; although a little late, but with such an explicit technical description of the filming that we think it will surely interest you.

We ourselves think that "Far and Away" should have had a better reception than it usually had. It has gotten more negative publicity than it deserved !

Despite the fact that the script has some flaws and the 70 mm images are not totally up to our expectations, we still think that the film is surely worth watching ! Good acting, attractive settings and a brilliant sound track composed by John Williams !

We really hope that this motion picture will not restrain other film makers from using the 65/70 mm techniques once again.

For the next issue of our Newsletter (the 25th !) we want to ask our members to write the secretary a short summary of what they think should be the future of the 70 mm film technique, except using it in theme parcs, etc.Eventually in relation with your experiences with "Far and Away".

(Please mail before the end of January 1993 !). We will publish all of these summaries in the next 70 MM Newsletter with your name (and address if you like that) and will send this Newsletter to different Film Magazines and to "Variety" with an open letter. We hope they publish something of it.

We wish all our members a good 1993 and a lot of nice 70 mm screenings !

Wouter de Voogd
Editor

Johan C.M.Wolthuis
Secretary/Publisher

70mm Today:

From our correspondent BOB DICKSON in Los Angeles:

Latest 70 mm "Blow-up" screening here: "HOFFA"

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

Membership:

NLG 30.-per year. Or: BEFR 600.- FRF 90.- DEM 30.- GBP £ 10.-

ESB 1800.- USD \$ 20.- . Payable only by International Money

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Speeding Up the Screams in *Alien³*

by Ron Magid

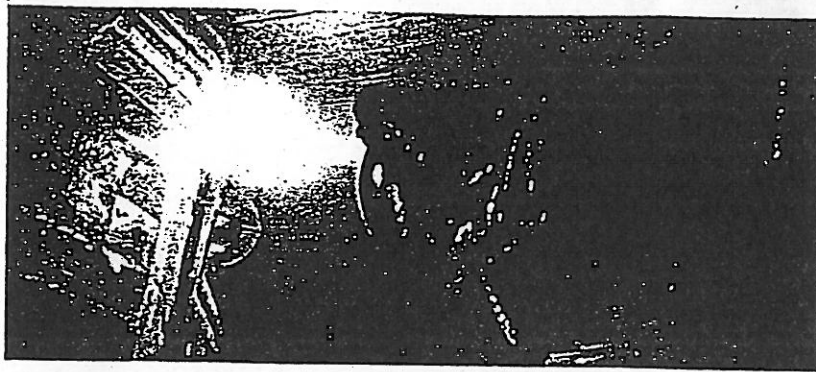
For years, special effects experts have prayed to work with directors who understand what they do. The craftsmen who toiled on *Alien³* found that such wishful thinking is occasionally rewarded, but still wound up lamenting the fact that some of their best work wound up on the cutting-room floor.

The film's director, David Fincher, created matte shots at ILM before becoming an award-winning rock video and commercial director, and he pushed his Boss Film visual effects crew, headed by Richard Edlund, ASC and Rick Fichter, to its limits for his

feature debut. Sadly, Fincher excised a good deal of their impressive work to try to keep the look of the alien a mystery — a curious strategy, since fans of the two preceding *Alien* outings were all too familiar with the creature's anatomy.

Richard Edlund's impressive credits include Oscar-winning contributions to the *Star Wars* trilogy and *Raiders of the Lost Ark* during his tenure at ILM. Edlund then founded Boss Film Studios in 1983, and he and his colleagues went on to create effects for scores of features, commercials and thrill ride films — including the blockbuster projects *Ghostbusters*, *Die Hard* and *Batman Returns*. Having worked with the *Alien*'s creator, Swiss surrealist H.R. Giger, on *Poltergeist II*, and with *Alien³* veteran production designer Norman Reynolds, on the *Star Wars* films and *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, Edlund fit in very well with his *Alien³* teammates.

From the outset, the *Alien³* production was a troubled one. Directors came and went, and when Fincher was brought aboard, Boss' participation wasn't necessarily in the bag. "We had to woo David for awhile," Edlund says. "We flew over to England and spent three or four days looking at boards and bidding on the spot, then flew back here with our fin-



gers crossed! David's real effects-oriented, very visually talented and very demanding. He knew what we could do and he wanted it all, which to me, in the end, was very rewarding."

Fincher sought a conception of the *Alien* never seen on screen before, a demand which drove Edlund and visual effects co-supervisor Fichter to the limits of their imaginations. This time, the *Alien* was to be highly mobile, tearing around the film's outer space mining colony at high speeds and ripping up any prison inmates unlucky enough to cross its path. Fincher's approach required the effects team to construct a fast-moving puppet which could be composited into moving background plates with actors and setpieces. The trick this time was that the puppet wouldn't be standing in place with the movement of the camera creating the *Alien*'s forward motion. Instead, the creature

itself would be moving forward, meaning that the camera would have to track with it; the full-scale movements of the camera had to be matched in the background plate so the two images would sync up.

The Boss design team hurriedly developed the Mark III version of their real-time motion-control dolly, a Fisher dolly that's been "completely hotrodged," accord-

ing to Edlund, to repeat moves on set and recreate them on the effects stage. "The dolly had to travel at running speed along 140 feet of track, then slow up, stop and back up to the beginning. We came up with a

real-time, high-speed system which would enable us to repeat a move like that within a few thousandths of an inch. It ran quietly enough to shoot sound and had boom, pan and tilt. We based the concept on using standard square Fisher track and urethane wheels with a differential system to drive it, and then we added the new Panavision 65mm Silent Studio Reflex camera with a new set of lenses finished just in the nick of time. Mark West, our design engineer, put the mechanics together in-house. We wanted to be like a SWAT team on the set, so we could set up quickly, get the shot and get out of the way. It's a really sweet system."

While Fichter supervised the plate photography throughout the lengthy 13-week schedule at Pinewood Studios, Edlund headed home after a month to oversee the matte artistry of Michelle Moen (who created a series of impressively dreary landscapes to convey

Far and Away, the Big Picture

**A Producer, Director, and DP on Handling
the Epic Look of 65mm**

by LISA VINCENZI

From its mount inside a helicopter gliding over the Irish countryside, the camera glimpses the ruin of a stone schoolhouse before revealing a turn-of-the-century village. There is a historical illusion here to the work of David Lean. The schoolhouse was featured in *Ryan's Daughter*, the last movie to originate in the 65mm format, back in 1970. Imagine Films Entertainment's *Far and Away*, lensed 21 years later, is the first theatrical to originate in 65mm using a new generation of large-format cameras and faster film stock.



MOTION PICTURES

Director Ron Howard remembers seeing Ireland for the first time at age 17. His plane stopped at Shannon airport for refueling on its route to Austria, and the lush greens of the Emerald Isle were infused into his memory. Howard also remembers being on the set of *The Music Man* (1962), shot in the wide-screen Techniscope format. "I recall huge, overhead cameras that took five or six people to lug around, and all day to set up," he says, during a dubbing session at Sound 1, New York. And Howard calls visiting his great-grandmother in Kansas and being shown a yellowed newspaper clipping, with a blurry photo of Oklahoma Territory's Cherokee Strip land race—a late-19th-century lottery offering deeds to land—taken as a cannon was fired to start the race. "It was an incredible picture. All these horses and wagons," Howard recounts. Pointing to a blur in the lead, he says, "That was your great-grandpa on the horse, and your great-grandpa's emigrant," who happened to also be an Irish emigrant. Three of Howard's

great-grandfathers rode in the race. None got any land.

All these experiences separately influenced Howard's latest production, *Far and Away*, a Universal Pictures release. The story begins in Ireland in the 1890s, where the son of a tenant farmer (Tom Cruise) and a landowner's daughter (Nicole Kidman) set off together for America with hopes of prosperity—the Cherokee Strip land race is one of the movie's spectacular sequences.

Howard worked on the story between projects with screenwriter Bob Dolman for nine years. "In my mind it began as an intimate story, knowing that we would do this one large sequence," Howard says. "Honestly, up until 10 months before we started shooting the movie, I still thought of it as a small film. It was a love story, a romantic adventure. It was a story that was going to be tonally a reminiscence," he says, likening it to the types of stories that families tell over a Thanksgiving turkey.

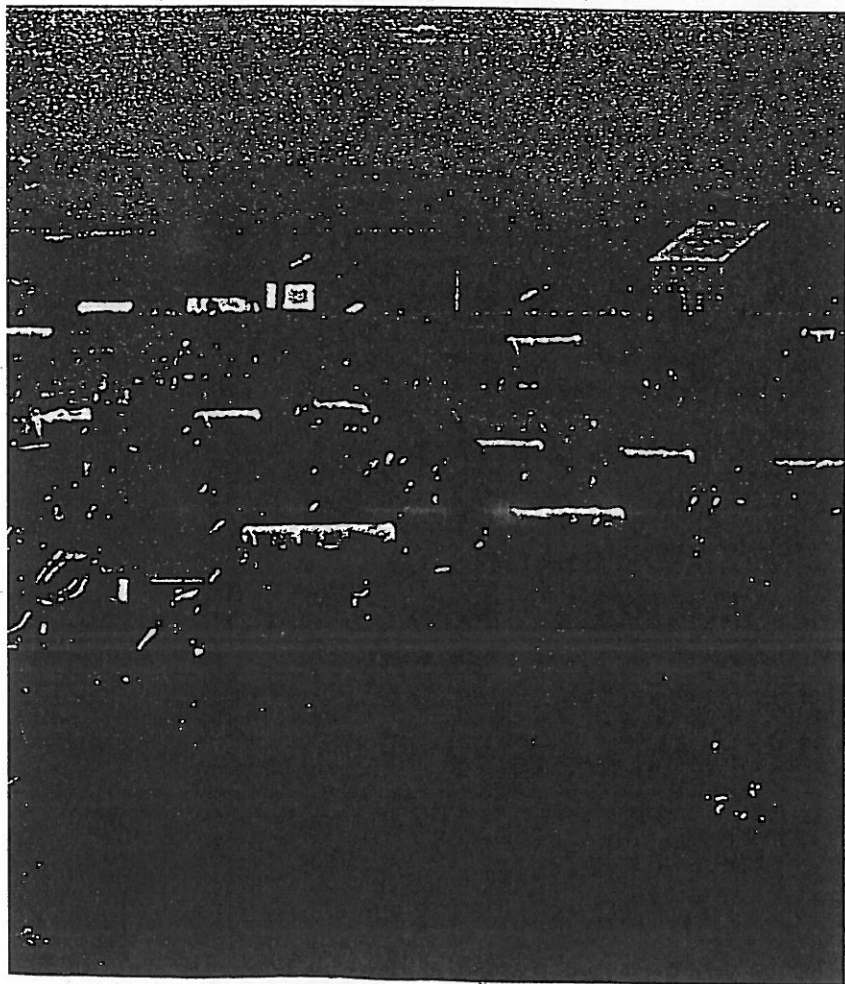
"The story grew, and because it was

so much about land, I wanted the landscapes to be powerful images," he adds. *Far and Away* has three distinct looks: pastoral Ireland, the congested Boston of the industrial revolution, and the wide-open American midwest. "When [cinematographer] Mikael Salomon mentioned the idea of shooting in 65mm, I became very excited about using it as a tool," Howard says. "Also, it signals to the audience that we are trying to present something special—something visually rewarding."

Large formats have come and gone through the years, going all the way back to the silent era. The last crop of wide-format movies appeared in the 1950s to 1970, and included David Lean's recently rereleased epic *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), *Oklahoma* (1955), and *My Fair Lady* (1964). Though never challenging 35mm as the industry standard, the various wide film formats enhanced event pictures. Since the 1970s, 70mm release prints (65mm is the camera negative size, prints are 70mm to accommodate sound) have actually been blowups from 35mm negative film.

Howard credits Salomon with the idea of originating in 65mm for *Far and Away*. "I wouldn't have thought of this one myself," the director says. "I hadn't seen the tests." And then he had the memory of those daunting cameras used for *The Music Man*. "I like to operate with a fair degree of momentum. I like all the shortcuts that camera packages have provided over the last 10 to 15 years, and I'd hate to give those things up."

Salomon had in fact worked with 65mm camera equipment before, for special effects on *The Abyss*: "Every time I saw those dailies on the screen, I'd say, 'Wow, wouldn't it be great to shoot a whole movie in that?'" The 65mm format has been used for both special-effects work (most notably by Richard Edlund's *Boss Film*) and for special-venue projects within the last two decades, using vintage cameras. In the meantime, both Panavision and



The spectacle of reenacting the 1893 Cherokee Strip land rush partly inspired the filmmakers to shoot *Far and Away* in 65mm.

Arriflex developed modern 65mm cameras in response to renewed interest in the format. Steven Spielberg considered shooting *Empire of the Sun* in 65mm, but ultimately decided the older cameras available at that time would hamper the production.

Even with the new technology, "it's hard to be the first because there are so many nay-sayers around. I really can't blame them because you are venturing into something that hasn't been explored for so many years. Is the equipment up to par? What about the labs and the stock? Can we get everything we need? And are you sure there aren't going to be problems in postproduction?" says Salomon, cataloging some of the questions that loomed over the project.

When producer Brian Grazer first heard of 65mm, "I didn't know what it was," he admits frankly. Sitting behind his desk at Imagine's Century City offices, Grazer comments: "Ron is always trying to push himself. I just thought it was a director thing, that it wasn't going to add anything [to the film]. I'm just an audience guy, so, when I hear 65mm, that sounds very artistic. Then I saw it, and I could see it was going to have an effect on the audience. That the regular Joe—or Brian—is going to get drawn in emotionally."

The next step was convincing the studio. Universal's chairman of the motion-picture group, Tom Pollock, was in favor of using 65mm as long as it wouldn't be excessively expensive. "Well, their production department came back and said it was going to [add] over \$3 million," Grazer says. "We were going to blow it off, but then we asked, 'How are you calculating this?' They said, in order to fill the larger frame, it's going to [cost more] because of extras and things like that. That's just totally incorrect. It's not about filling the frame," says Grazer, now one of the few experienced with 65mm.

Salomon went to work and the costs of 65mm origination were recalculated. "I personally had to set up a budget because none of our figures were reliable. Some of them were pretty incredible," the DP says. "I had to go to the lab, to Kodak, to Panavision, and to the postproduction people. We delved so far into the budget of 65mm that we even calculated costs for the extra weight of shipping dailies from Ireland to Los Angeles."

DeLuxe Labs, one of only three facilities that works with 65mm in the U.S., handled processing and the reduction to 35mm for dailies.

Finally, all agreed the cost would not be prohibitive. While both Imagine and Universal decline to quote *Far and Away's* total budget (industry insiders speculate it to be in the \$30-million to \$60-million range), Grazer did comment on the costs attributable to 65mm production. "It doesn't cost that much. We were shocked," he says, estimating an \$800,000 price tag covering 65mm costs for the large-scale, 110-day shoot. For a "regular movie," Grazer says, "maybe it would be \$500,000." And, despite the test-case scenario of *Far and Away*, the actual costs were in line with projected costs. "Truthfully, I thought we'd go in [with] a certain number and it would start to creep up," Grazer says. "It never did."

Among the first scenes shot after production began in Billings, Montana, on May 28, 1991, was the staged land rush. (The production shot within a 60-mile radius of Billings from early June to August of last year, then continued filming in Dublin, Ireland.)

More than 800 extras, 400 horses, and 200 wagons were filmed on a quarter-mile-wide set. Ten cameras were set up to film the maneuvers, including the two new Panaflex 65 sync-sound cameras, two new Arriflex 765 cameras, three hand-held Panavision 65mm cameras, two Eyemos (35mm with anamorphic lens) on the ground, and a VistaVision camera for the heli-

copter. One Arriflex 765 was set on an 80-foot tower, and the high-speed (100 fps) footage was also shot using the Arriflex, since the sync-sound Panavision can only run up to 32 fps and the hand-helds to 72 fps. However, the primary cameras on *Far and Away* were the new Panavisions.

"I had problems deciding," says Salomon, about his camera choice. "Both were extremely good." But neither the Panavision nor the Arriflex had been used on a production yet. The decision came down to the fact that "we needed the backup of a facility that was close by. We needed to introduce changes to the cameras, and I knew Panavision was going to work very closely with us," Salomon says. "We actually made about 30 changes to the cameras before we even started shooting. The Arriflex facility is based in Munich, Germany, so [making changes] would be a much slower process." In addition, Salomon says, "if I had gone with Arriflex, I would still have had to have the hand-held Panavision cameras because Arriflex doesn't have a light, wild camera."

Only about 10 hand-held shots were required for *Far and Away*. Because the hand-helds—the reflex-mirror model weighs 45 pounds (with a 500-foot magazine) and the pellicles (with 500-foot mag) weighs 34 pounds—are not sync sound, says Salomon. "That was the only real trade-off about the whole 65mm process. Whenever we had a Steadicam shot, Ron had to live with the fact that he'd have to loop it."

Ron Howard was initially concerned about the weight of the cameras limiting the number of setups possible in a

ay's shooting. It turned out to be very manageable, and, in fact, the crew members completed the same number of setups as they would had they been using 35mm cameras. The new anaflex 65 system, configured with a standard lens and 1,000-foot magazine, weighs 90 pounds (about twice the weight of a 35mm Panaflex), while the same configuration with the vintage 5mm camera would tip the scales at 60 pounds, according to Panavision's Hil Radin.

Some early scenes for *Far and Away* were of bare-fisted boxing in an Irish social club, which required both hand-held shooting and hot heads. We were able to include a lot of movement and a much more contemporary cinematic style than has been used in 65mm in the past," says Howard. "Given the nature of the equipment [back then], the tendency was to set the camera, lock it off, and stage that way. We let the camera do a little bit more of the work, hopefully without being self-conscious."

Aside from initial concern over the camera-equipment weight and mobility factors, there was still the issue of lighting. "Of course, I claimed I didn't need more light. That was maybe a little bit of a white lie," Salomon confesses. "We needed just like half a stop more to get better definition on the interiors. I use a lot of light in the first place, so it really wasn't that much of a departure. The amazing thing is, when you look at 5296 [Kodak stock rated at an exposure index of 500], which is a grainy stock because it's so fast, in 65mm there are no grains. The image is so big you can't see the grain."

Eastman Kodak supplied *Far and Away* with 900,000 feet of five-perf 65mm EXR stock. The 5296 was used extensively on this film. According to Kodak's Jack Teahan, "The fact that there are faster films available for DPs to shoot is one of the things that really makes 65mm [production] more realistic right now. It's a big asset, especially for interiors."

There was one final production hurdle that had to be faced: "Depth of field is difficult to work with at times," Howard explains. "You have to stage things a bit differently." When Howard asked about all the cons of 65mm shooting, Salomon recalls saying, "Depth of field is much, much less because you're using longer lenses. Literally, the difference in depth of field between 35mm and 65mm is three stops."

In the final analysis, "I really don't think it hurt us, particularly when we used our 'Mikaelo-vision' lens," Howard says, referring to the nickname given to Salomon's solution. "We called it the 45R and the 35R," says Salomon.

"It's really an old idea. By tweaking the lens to the side, you tweak your focal point." For anyone who has had experience with view cameras, Salomon says, "it's the same principle. You have a backing that can swivel, and if you shoot a high rise, to [prevent it from tilting in the shot] you can put the backing parallel to the building and then tilt the lens up. That straightens out the lines."

Wide Screen in the Fifties

- Cinerama: Two forms existed—the earlier requiring three cameras; three projectors, and a curved screen; the latter used a single 65mm film original with 70mm release prints. The projected aspect ratio: 2.06:1
- Cinemascope: a wide-screen format that used 35mm film and anamorphic lenses, with a projected aspect ratio of 2.35:1 for 35mm prints.
- VistaVision: 35mm film run vertically through the camera and utilizing double frame images, resulting in a larger negative image area, with a 1.85:1 projected aspect ratio for 35mm prints.
- Todd-AO: 65mm negative run vertically through the camera, with a 2.21:1 aspect ratio for 70mm release print.
- Technirama: anamorphically squeezed 35mm film run horizontally through the camera, and 35mm squeezed prints with an aspect ratio of 2.35:1. The Super Technirama 70 system used 70mm prints with an aspect ratio of 2.21:1
- Camera 65: Developed for MGM by Panavision, which also came out with Panavision 70, Ultra Panavision, and Super Panavision 70, all with screen aspect ratios of 2.2:1 or 2.21:1.

L.V.

Panavision provided this and other specialty lenses for the *Far and Away* production. In putting the 65mm system through a complete workout, Salomon provided Panavision with actual user feedback for the new system. Mikael Salomon "wanted us to work on some of the lenses because he felt there were questions as to whether or not they were appropriate for the field, whether they covered the field completely or they had slight vignetting," explains Radin. "That's something we need to explore on one or two lenses."

Describing this slant-focus lens, Panavision's Radin says, "You actually slide the front element, or lens housing, along a curved axis that'll give you the ability to get a much greater depth of field on a single plane, and the depth on the opposite side of the frame would fall off."

As far as 65mm production is concerned, Salomon says lenses are "my only concern. If this really picks up, they should design a set of Primo 65s. The lenses we had were pretty much a grab bag. A matching set of lenses would be brilliant."

Far and Away will be released with six-track Dolby sound on May 22. Current plans include sneaking the movie exclusively in 70mm, with DeLuxe providing an estimated 300 70mm prints and Toronto's Film House taking care of the 35mm bulk printing. While Salomon realized his longtime dream of shooting a 65mm film, he says, primarily because of the limited number of theaters equipped with 70mm, "you have to look at the realities of life—that most people are probably going to see this in 35. But even [if the film is projected] in 35mm, you're justified to shoot in 65mm because it's so much better—the definition, the grain, the clarity." So, Salomon's ready to do it again.

Asked if he would undertake another 65mm production, producer Brian Grazer offers an unequivocal "definitely," particularly on a movie "that you really want 'eventized,' or that's a visual experience."

And director Ron Howard is just as enthusiastic, although he offers advice to anyone contemplating the use of 65mm in the future: "A few niceties haven't yet found their way into the 65mm package. I would run down that checklist, just so you don't start planning sequences assuming that everything in the old bag of tricks is really available. Beyond that, if you feel your movie is going to be enhanced by 65mm, I wouldn't be afraid of it at all." □

the desolation of the prison mining colony) and other critical work on the production. Phil Crescenzo, Boss' supervising engineer, was busily assembling a revolutionary new videodisc compositing system that would enable the Alien puppeteers to see their work template. "Phil came up with a variable frame rate processing system which enabled us to manipulate and composite scenes shot at different camera speeds using a laserdisc system with a huge amount of information storage. We were then able to take an effects sequence filmed anywhere from 1fps to 48fps, process it back to 24 fps, then DX it onto the background scene we had on file. This was vital because of the fairly stringent schedule and the enormous amount of interaction between the Alien puppet and its surroundings—we had to keep moving and we couldn't wait until the next day for the optical department to put the shots together to see if they worked. It was a real slick shortcut system, and Phil came up with it on the fly because we needed it. That's the way this business is: often you don't know what you need until you're there."

70mm WETGATE PRINTER

Consolidated Film Industries (CFI), Hollywood, has completed testing and put into operation a new wetgate printer for the production of 65mm interpositive and 70mm release prints. Manufactured by BHP Corp. of Chicago, this printer completely immerses the film in a solution at the point of printing contact, which is claimed to produce an especially clean and sharp image on the screen. The printer is capable of handling all 70mm formats including 5, 8 and 15 perforations per frame.

The Hollywood laboratory offers a full range of 65mm and 70mm services including negative developing, printing, positive developing, colour timing and positive assembly and inspection.

BARAKA (DOCU-70m)

A Magidson Films production. Produced by Mark Magidson. Directed by Ron Fricke. Concept-scenario, Fricke, Magidson, Bob Green. Camera (Todd-AO color, 70m), Fricke; editor, Fricke, Magidson, David E. Aubrey; music, Michael Stearns. Reviewed at Montreal World Film Festival, Aug. 30, 1992. Running time: 96 MIN.

Words can't do justice to the visual masterpiece "Baraka," a smashingly edited, superbly scored, wild world tour that speaks volumes about the planet without uttering a word. Impossible concept will be a marketing nightmare, however.

Pic will need a distrib as focused as lense-helmer Ron Fricke and as ruthless as its discerning editors to capitalize on inevitable word of mouth. A smash hit at its world preem in Montreal, the opus generated a buzz big enough for an additional screening.

Journey through urban jungles and civilized savagery in 24 countries is a "breath of life," or *baraka*, an ancient Middle Eastern Sufi word that translates as a blessing or as the breath/essence of life.

Nonfiction pic is a 96-minute Lear jet flight that takes timely breathers as filmmakers observe a passionate and destructive love/hate affair between woman and earth. If the name "Postcards From the Edge" hadn't already been used, this would be the film that lived up to the title.

Real-life snippets filmed in far-flung places such as Tanzania, Kuwait, Iran and Nepal are seamlessly woven, from intriguing "monkey chant" ceremonies in Bali to confining "sleep capsules" in Tokyo. Most are images never seen before. Pic stuns viewer with planet's vast diversity. Time-

lapse subway sequence (edited to music score) is an ideal example of filmmakers' imaginative manipulation, as is a camera that occasionally lingers on curious or hard-boiled faces.

World beat soundtrack is an obvious marketing tool. Sound-track artists include Dead Can Dance, Somei Satoh, the Harmonic Choir, Anugama & Sebastian, Kohachiro Miyata, L. Subramaniam, Monks of the Dip Tse Ling Monastery, Ciro Hurtado and Brother.

Crackerjack editing also slips in tough images without moralizing. Stunning images speak for themselves. "Baraka" is an educational trip.

— Suzan Ayscough

Imax 'Rainforest' begins 6-month Gotham stint

NEW YORK The Omnimax/Imax documentary "Tropical Rainforest," a 38-minute film about the evolution of the world's rain forests, began a six-month Gotham run Nov. 1 at the American Museum of Natural History's Naturemax Theater.

The \$2.1-million effort debuted in February at the Science Museum of Minnesota, which underwrote the project along with the MacArthur Foundation and the National Science Foundation.

Director Ben Shedd and cinematographer Tim C. Housel previewed the picture for the New York press, detailing their filming methods on locations in Costa Rica, Australia, Malaysia and French Guiana. Shedd is currently working on a book, "Exploding the Frame," which compares big-screen formats such as Imax and 70m with traditional 35m, 16m and video.

"Tropical Rainforest" has also played in Las Vegas and Paris, with current engagements opening in Philadelphia, San Diego, Los Angeles and Seattle.

— Lawrence Cohn

Showscan, MCA link for simulator

HOLLYWOOD Showscan Corp. and MCA Development announced that a Showscan Dynamic Motion Simulator will be part of Universal CityWalk. The system will be operated by Showscan under a "profit sharing lease arrangement," according to the companies. This is the first of a planned chain of ShowMotion simulators in the U.S..

Imagine extension

HOLLYWOOD Ron Howard and Brian Grazer last week extended their proposal to acquire Imagine Films Entertainment to 5 p.m. Dec. 21. In an SEC filing, the two said the extension was on request from a special committee of the company, but cited no reasons for the request.