

# THE INTERNATIONAL CINERAMA SOCIETY

15 Dystelegh Road • Disley, Cheshire SK12 2BQ • Tel: 0663 76 2672.

## Newsletter No 9.

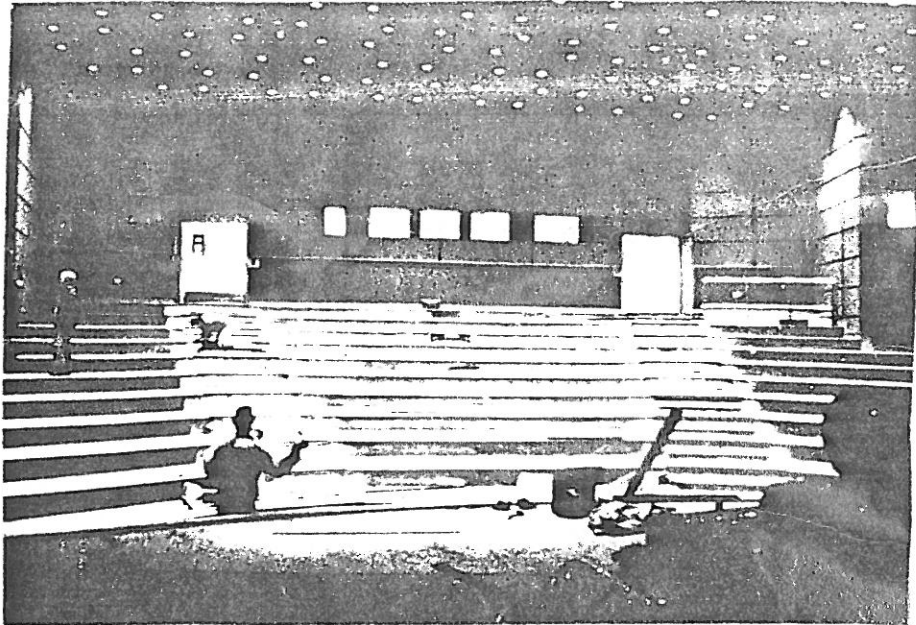
Here is the long awaited newsletter no 9. No, you have not missed any, it is just that we have been waiting some definite news from the Museum about the CINERAMA installation and the revival of *THIS IS CINERAMA*. We had hoped to confirm the opening date for the return of CINERAMA but, regrettably, difficulties at the Museum have again lead to a further delay.

At a meeting of the Museum authorities two weeks ago it was decided to delay the 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 6 th 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 colour 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.

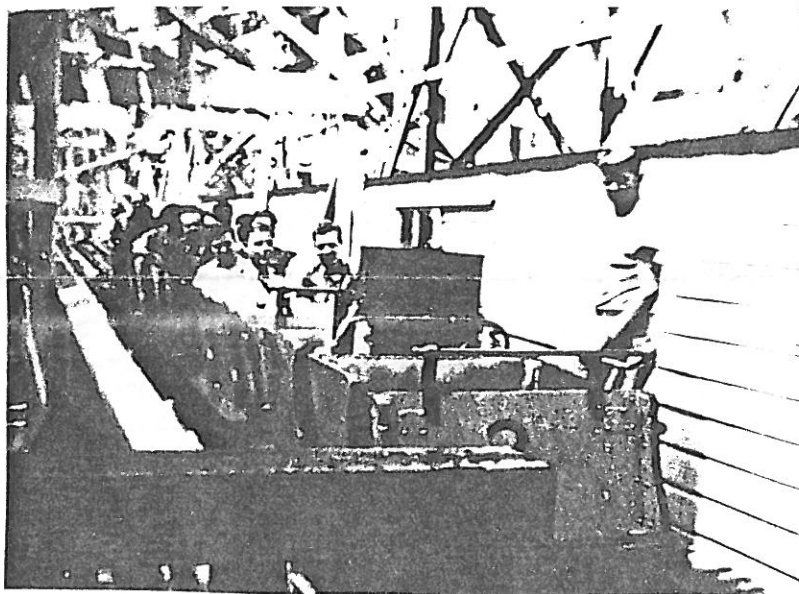
So the project is still alive though the rate of progress has again slowed. The Museum are still determined to have CINERAMA running there. The major hurdle is just the internal politics and financial restraints of the moment. To add to the difficulties of the moment, the new theatre has opened at the start of the longest, driest and hottest summer in the UK for over 20 years and this has 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.



*Pictureville Cinema during construction. Note B and C boxes. (c. ICS)*

**RESEARCH.** On a happier theme, David Coles, one of our members in Australia has been achieving such amazing and detailed research work into CINERAMA that he has been dubbed The International Cinerama Research Institute (INRI). From hours of research in the Australian archives he has unearthed reams of material on Playdates, World wide theatres and the history of the various Cinerama companies. What follows is just the tip of a very fascinating iceberg he is melting (How's that for mixed metaphors and cliches).

**THIS IS CINERAMA.** Lowell Thomas and a ten man crew left for Europe on 25-07-51 to commence filming in Vienna. It was originally was planned to include Stratford-on-Avon in the movie. Mike Todd joined the unit during the first week in August. In Spain *TIC* was cut by the censors! Deleted were a reference in the prologue to the "Fighting 69", a close up of a dancer during "Aida" and a bathing belle adjusting her costume in Cypress Gardens.



*Filming the Roller Coaster at Rockaways Park for THIS IS CINERAMA.  
c. NMPFTv/Waller Collection.*

**WINDJAMMER.** By 1958 many of the Cinerama Theatres opened in the early days were closing due to lack of product to show. National Theatres and Cinerama Inc made a deal under which *WINDJAMMER* would play Cinerama Theatres against payment of a royalty for use of the Cinerama equipment. Under this agreement, it opened at the Ambassador; St. Louis on 13-08-58. The contract stated that it must be billed as *Filmed in CineMiracle...Presented in CINERAMA*. Note that this is two years earlier than previous press reports had indicated. The formal take over of CineMiracle by Cinerama Inc was not in fact completed until late 1961. Norwegian Television have recently featured the movie in a documentary which included scenes shot at the preserved installation in Australia. The producer of the documentary, Harald Tvsberg, being one of the original cast. CineMiracle's studios, the equivalent of Cinerama's Oyster Bay, were at the Mt. Eden Theatre in Mount Eden Road, Bronx, New York. The studio screen size was 80ft x 34ft.

**LAST TANGØ CINERAMA IN PARIS!** In 1971, the Empire Cinerama Theatre, Paris, revived 3-strip Cinerama with a season of the movies starting with *HOW THE WEST WAS WON* from the 21st of May, and finishing with a rerun of *THIS IS CINERAMA* until the second of July 1972. The theatre immediately closed and became a TV studio. This post dates any other known public exhibition and was advertised in the Parisian newspapers as "The Last Time in the World in 3-Strip".

**BANGKOK.** Even stranger is the fact that the INDRA CINERAMA installed 3-strip in 1972 to run *THIS IS CINERAMA* for just a four week season. Thus becoming the last and shortest lived installation at the same time (01-04-72 to 28-04-72).

**MYSTERY TEST FOOTAGE.** For some time we have had a short length of a test shot by Cinerama for possible use in *THIS IS CINERAMA* but subsequently discarded. This has finally been identified as MacArthur's Homecoming Parade, filmed in Chicago, on April 26th 1951, using Fred's original No:1 Camera.

**HELP CORNER.** The playdates for the Music Hall Cinerama in Detroit list *EL CID* as being presented from December 21st 1961 to May 24 th 1962, at a period when the theatre was not equipped for 70mm. Was this a specially prepared 3-strip version? Can anyone help with this mystery? The 70mm equipment at Detroit did not go in until March 1963 and even then they kept and used 3-strip occasionally until December 1965.



Filming *SOUTH SEAS ADVENTURE*.  
Rottmas, NZ. © John McLean ICS.



Still Going Strong. Santiago Cinerama.  
Chile. 1961. © Craig Ryland ICS.

HOW THE WEST WAS WON. We have received a lot of new information on this one. If you would like to see this or *THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF THE BROTHERS GRIMM* in their original Cinerama format, they are available on LaserDisc in the USA in letter-box form with digital soundtracks and complete with overtures, entractes and playouts.

Filming for *HTWWW* started on May 26th 1961 in Paducah and finished with the L.A. aerial scenes (Shot No: 1781, on 16 May 1962. This last ever 3-strip shot being taken by cameraman Robert Surtees with Camera No: 4 and Paul Mantz piloting the plane. *BROTHERS GRIM*, in fact, started after *HTWWW* but was completed first. The main locations for *HTWWW* were the Ohio River Valley; Montrose, Colorado [The Wagon Train]; Paducah, Kentucky; Custer State Park, Black Hills, South Dakota [The Buffalo]; Rocky Mountains, Colorado; The Rogue and McKenzie Rivers in Oregon; Northern California, and Monument Valley, Utah. The Canal Boat and the Train were specially built for the film.

The Buffalos were the biggest problem however. For the famous stampede, 1200 buffalo were rounded up and brought from sanctuaries all over the west to the location site where they were stabled and watered in the next valley. The local Indians were recruited to tend and herd them.

The set was built, railway track laid and everything prepared. Five of the seven Cinerama cameras in existence were used. Three were mounted in various dugouts and disguised with hides, one was up a tower, its shadow, which fell completely in shot, being masked by lashing a tree to the rostrum to hide the cameras' outline whilst the last camera was in a jeep running alongside.

Now the fun started. The stunt men and dummies were put in place and the Indians cued to stampede the buffalo through the set, all cameras were running.

PROBLEM! Indians are terrified of buffalo and lost control of the animals which, having a natural aversion to running into immoveable objects like film sets, swerved aside, thus avoiding the set completely and scattering in all directions. An emergency production meeting was called and wranglers were sent out from Hollywood to handle the animals. The buffalo however realised they were onto a good thing. Regular food and water just for being occasionally chased over the hill so they all made their own way back to the holding valley.

A couple of days later everything was ready for a second try and the wranglers were cued. The buffalo were herd thundering over the bluff, the unit dived for cover and that is what you see in the movie. This was repeated four times before everyone, including the buffalo were satisfied.

A few facts and figures. *HTWWW* cost \$15 million and took \$45 million at the box office. There were 13 stars, 10 co-stars and 12,617 extras and bit players. The film stock and Cinerama cameras were costed at \$980,000.

It is interesting to note that some of the elders of the five tribes of Indians used in the movie claimed to have been at the battles of the Little Big Horn and Wounded Knee.

**MURDER AT CINERAMA.** On the morning of October 30th 1955, William Woodward Jr., financier, racehorse owner and sportsman was shot dead by his wife who mistook him for a suspected intruder at their home in Oyster Bay, Long Island. The house, known locally as the Playhouse, was built in an L shape, the other arm of which was an indoor tennis court leased to Cinerama Inc. (Oyster Bay Studios). The police, alerted by a hysterical phone call from the house, arrived to find Cinerama's nightwatchman investigating the disturbance. (The New York Times).

Keith H. Swadkins. M.B.K.S. President.I.C.S.  
15 Dysteleggh Road.  
Disley. Cheshire. SK12 2BQ. England.  
Copyright;The International Cinerama Society. 1992.  
Ref:NL/9/July 92.Courier.