

THE INTERNATIONAL
CINERAMA
SOCIETY

1989

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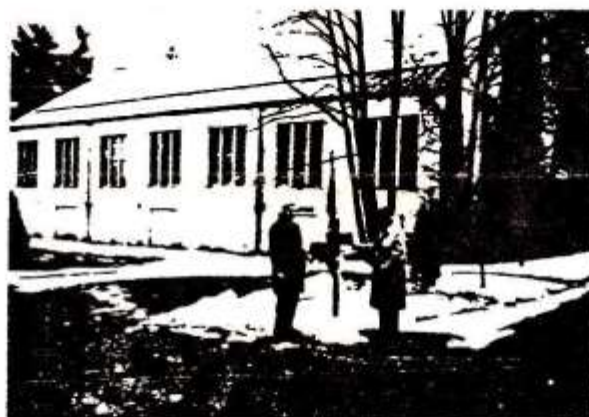
NEWSLETTER 6.

April 1989.

Though Fred Waller had conceived his CINERAMA process in the mid-thirties, it had a long gestation process. In 1940 it was demonstrated to Hazard Reeves of Reeves Sound Studios in the Rockefeller coach house on West 55th St, New York. Work was shelved for the duration of the war but resumed in 1946, and the spring of 1949 saw the process, now called CINERAMA (it had originally been called VITARAMA) move to a disused indoor tennis court on Long Island. Now backed by Laurance Rockefeller, Time Inc and Hazard Reeves, a series of demonstration shorts was produced and exhibited to the press and film industry. In July 1950, Hazard Reeves bought out his partners and the future pattern for the rise and fall of CINERAMA was set. The indoor tennis court remained CINERAMA's HQ and the name Oyster Bay became a magical sound to CINERAMA lovers everywhere. BUT.... Where was it and what did it look like? This legendary home of CINERAMA was the studio where all the travelogues were made, recorded and the equipment and prints shipped around the world from 1949 to 1959.

In December 1988, Willem Bouwmeester (Technical Consultant. I.C.S.), John Harvey (Cinerama Buff extraordinaire) and R.H. Wentworth Fling (Head of Research and Development for CINERAMA Inc during its heyday) returned to Oyster Bay. Indeed Mr Wentworth Fling had not returned since he left CINERAMA when the 3-Strip process was abandoned.

The Oyster Bay studio is still there, apparently little changed. The studio where the process was demonstrated and the sound tracks recorded is now an office furniture storeroom whilst another part of the building has become a church.



OYSTER BAY CINERAMA STUDIOS. 1988.

John Harvey and Mr Wentworth Fling (holding an original programme for T.I.C.).



INTERIOR OYSTER BAY STUDIOS. 1988.

The recording desk originally stood under the balcony.

Possibly the most interesting development to come from the above meeting was the information that, at the time of the abandonment of the 3-Strip process, CINERAMA had already developed a TRUE single strip process which exactly duplicated 3-Strip CINERAMA's field of view, perspective and realism. A special lens of 27mm focal length had been developed which achieved the CINERAMA image onto 35mm film running HORIZONTALLY in a deeply curved gate. The 35mm film was advanced 16 perforations per frame. The lens was built and still exists we understand whilst the camera only existed as a mock-up, long since destroyed. However a few test frames survive. By a strange coincidence, Fred Waller had worked on an experimental horizontal 35mm wide-screen system whilst with Paramount in the early thirties. This process was further developed into VistaVision during the early 50's and has been recently revived for process work on several recent major movies.

To come up to date, the I.C.S. 3-Strip equipment is currently being brought up to mint condition. At the time of writing there is no definite news on the suggested venue and, obviously, the I.C.S. would be interested to hear of any alternative practical suggestions for a restored installation. The only hurdle left to public exhibition of the original movies is the reprinting of the master negatives.

NO LONGER TRUE

The soundtrack masters are causing us some concern as a recent examination has revealed the first signs of 'Vinegar Syndrome'. A scheme to duplicate the reels at risk has been suggested. Additionally there appear to be some reels missing.

UNWET WAY

NEXT... TIT BITS or maybe we should call it CINERAMA PANELS.

The Washington UPTOWN theatre still has its louvred screen intact. We believe that it may be the last one still in use, though no CINERAMA logo is displayed on the theatre.

There is no trace of a master 3-Strip negative for 'Holiday in Spain' (a.k.a. A Scent of Mystery). Does this mean that the few prints struck in 3-Strip were produced individually from the 65mm negative direct. The surviving print is of excellent quality so this may be the case. We also have first hand information the 'Raintree County' was also 'split'. Certainly 3-Strip sequences extracted from the 65mm originals of 'Raintree County' and 'The Alamo' are included in 'How the West Was Won'. There is still no trace of any surviving footage from the abandoned 3-Strip version of 'The Golden Head' though it survives in 70mm form (via Technirama original).

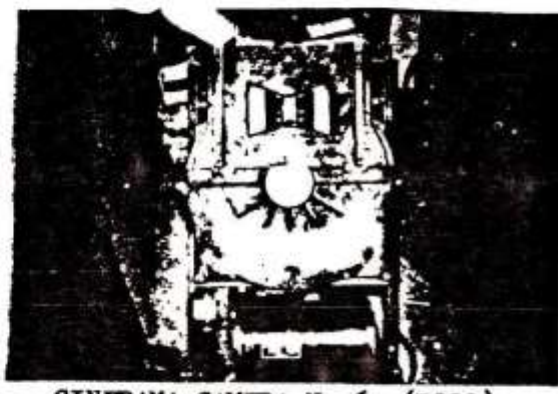
'The Eighth Day' (the next but abandoned CINERAMA travelogue) was started in July 1957 with the filming of an atomic blast....NOBODY HAS EVER SEEN THIS FOOTAGE. A second sequence of launching the nuclear submarine SEA WOLF was also shot by producer Hazard Reeves. This footage we understand was destroyed when Hazard Reeves sold his control of CINERAMA INC in July 1960, at which time the project was abandoned.

CineramaSound was developed by Walter Hicks working under Hazard Reeves in a similar relationship to W.K.L.Dickson and Edison).

The music for 'This is Cinerama' was written by Max Steiner (uncredited).

Of the 7 cameras built for CINERAMA, 5 survive though in poor condition. They are stored in the state they returned from the two MGM features. Camera No 1 is missing. This was the original Fred Waller camera and is easily identified by being the only one with parallel magazines. All the others have radial magazines. Camera No 5 was lost in the Indus River during 'Search for Paradise' on July 20,1955.

FOUND
LA 90.
FEB.



CINERAMA CAMERA No 6. (1988).

In CINERAMA's archive are several reels of CineramaSound marked 'La Grande Rencontre' which have caused some head scratching and various theories have been put forward about this dust covered cans but we now believe that this was the title for the French and Portuguese versions of 'Windjammer'.

The I.C.S. archive has received a copy of the shooting script for the Renault commercial.

Pacific Theatres had major problems with the 25th anniversary programme due to the unavailability of 70mm prints of even recent movies. 'Its a Mad Mad Mad Mad World' had to be shown using a 35mm Widescreen print of the abridged version 'This is Cinerama' was presented from the 70mm version.

Recently our notice has been brought to instances of the 70mm version of 'This is Cinerama' being publicly performed. Whilst it is not part of the I.C.S. activities to police Cinerama's titles, it is in both the I.C.S. and Cinerama's interests that only approved showings occur and we would appreciate your advising us should you become aware of any advertised public performance. Please note that Cinerama Inc do permit occasional exhibition of the 70mm print (as at the Cinerama Dome recently) and we would point out that 'This is Cinerama' is still copyright.

Finally with this newsletter is a souvenir of CINERAMA. This is an original 1963 Cinerama Inc hand-out explaining the 3-Strip process and we are indebted to one of our members for making a limited number of these available to us. Maybe it will stir memories of the greatest motion picture process ever exhibited and spur us on to its restoration.

New Contacts ; Mr Richard Vorisek and Mr Jack Vorisek who recorded the sound effects for the Cinerama movies at Oyster Bay. Both Jack Vorisek and Mr Wentworth Fling have related to the I.C.S. enthralling tales of the early years which I hope to condense into a future newsletter.

Keith H.Swadkins.
European Rep; The I.C.S.

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