

SUPER VISTA CORP. EYES LARGE FORMAT MARKET

At a time when digital cinema development is bringing significant attention to film projection, Super Vista Corp., a fledgling West Los Angeles-based company, has developed the Super Dimension-70 (SDS-70) large-format production and exhibition system. Based on 48fps 70mm film, it has been likened to ventures such as Showscan. (Showscan was developed by Douglas Trumbull, the subject of this month's cover story, p. 27).

Super Vista president and CEO Robert C. Weisgerber, who conceived and developed the new system, emphasized that he sees this system co-existing with 35mm, and said films produced for SDS-70 are backward compatible for 35mm release.

The quality of the 70mm images impressed ICG president George Spiro Dible, ASC, who saw the demonstration, and called it "breathtaking."

For production, cinematographers can use standard 65mm film and expose it at 48 fps using a Panavision or Arriflex film camera. The system gives cinematographers the benefits of working with film, such as being able to shoot variable frame rates for effect.

Obviously postproduction raises many questions, including working with 70 mm and dealing with multiple frame rates. Weisgerber claims that this is a fairly simple transition, but acknowledged that that postproduction costs would be higher than for a 35mm film. "Conventional films are photographed at 24fps. Our 48 fps is a multiple of two, so the process of converting is easily achieved because of the simple multiple. Processes such as 30 fps always have problems cross converting because there is no linear frame multiple."

He suggested that most Hollywood film finishing facilities have 65mm capabilities, such as printers, scanners or film recorders.

For his demo reel, a film transfer was completed at HTV, Burbank, on a Rank. An Avid edit was completed by Randy Ilowite at New York-based editorial shop earth2mars, although Weisgerber pointed out that the process offers film-

makers the choice of editing with either a film work print or on an Avid. Ken Hahn of New York's Sync Sound did a 5.1 mix.

Editor Jim Sheridan cut the film using Ilowite's EDL on a Prime Cut 65mm negative cutter. The Title House and Pac Title handled opticals and effects. The 65mm negative was digitized on an Oxberry scanner and recored to 35mm on an ArriLaser film recorder, Weisgerber reported.



Super Vista Corp president Robert C. Weisgerber, and VP Barrie O'Brien on location at The Grand Canyon with the SDS-70 camera mounted on a helicopter.

Release prints are 70mm 5 perf, and run at a frame rate of 48 fps. Weisgerber finds that when projecting each frame twice, it results in an impression of 96 fps, which he claims eliminates flicker at any brightness level. Projection delivers 35-foot lamberts of reflective light; 50-80 foot screens are recommended.

Weisgerber designed his 70mm Impact projector to fit into any normal-sized projection booth, avoiding the need for custom construction. The system can handle up to two and a half hours of film without interruption. A longer film would require an intermission.

The Business Plan

Weisgerber has a proposed business model: Super Vista

plans to license SDS-70 to the producer and distributor to produce and exhibit the film. The 70mm version would be offered along with 35mm projection. Weisgerber believes that audiences would be willing to pay more for the heightened experience, so the theater would charge a premium for the 70mm screening, perhaps \$2-3 extra per seat. That amount would be split between Super Vista, the distributor and exhibitor. The agreement between the exhibitor and distributor for the base amount would go unchanged.

Weisgerber suggested that SD and HD transfers could also be created from the SDS-70 master for home theater releases.

However, the distribution costs would obviously increase. Weisgerber estimated that a 70mm release print would run \$12,000-\$13,000 for a film under 90 minutes, significantly more than a 35mm release print, though Weisgerber calculated SDS-70 costs less than an IMAX print.

By Carolyn Giardina