

[GSTA 2004]

GSTA 2004 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE AND TRADE SHOW REPORT

GSTA's 2004 International Conference and Trade Show saw 583 attendees representing 26 countries gather in the magnificent city of Montréal for the association's 27th annual conference.



Hosted by the Montréal Science Center and supported by Famous Players, Inc., the GSTA International Conference featured film screenings, professional development sessions, technical presentations, a trade show, numerous networking opportunities and the annual Achievement Awards ceremony.

The GSTA 2004 International Conference was a homecoming of sorts—IMAX and the giant screen industry have roots in Montréal. Several multi-image, multi-screen films, including Graeme Ferguson's *Polar Life* and Roman Kroiter's *Labyrinth*, were hits at Expo 1967 in Montréal. The success of those films, combined with the technical challenges in making and screening them, inspired IMAX founders Ferguson, Kroiter and Robert Kerr to design a single projector that could fill a giant screen.

A PRODUCTION DRY SPELL

Perhaps most noticeable at this year's conference was the relatively low number of new films shown. Nine new films and one short were screened, the lowest number presented in 10 years. Two of those were IMAX DMR films (*Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* and *Spider-Man 2*). Eight minutes of *James Cameron's Aliens of the Deep* were screened, which Cameron personally introduced during the conference's opening reception. *Adventures in Animation 3D* (formerly titled *Virtual Actors and The Boxer*), *Forces of Nature*, *Mystic India*, *NASCAR 3D: The IMAX Experience*, *Sharks 3D*, *Vikings* and the short film *Hubble: Galaxies Across Space and Time* were screened in their entirety.

Fifteen films in production and 29 films in development were featured, some of which had been presented at previous conferences and two of which are sequels to previous giant screen films (*Bugs! 2* and *Return to Everest*). According to dates published by the distributors, the films slated to be released in 2005 are Buena Vista Pictures Distribution's *James Cameron's Aliens of the Deep*, nWave's *Brainpower* and *Wild Africa 3D: Search for the Big 5*, IMAX Corporation's *Magnificent Desolation*, MacGillivray Freeman's *Mystery of the Nile* and *John Lennon Imagine Project*, NFL Films' *Super Bowl to the Max*, World of Mysteries' *Erich von Daniken's World of Mysteries*, VDL Productions' *Living with Man Eaters* and Giant Screen Films' *We the People* and *Mystic India*. However, as has been the case in previous years, funding and production delays could affect release dates. As of *The Big Frame's* print deadline, IMAX had not yet announced any 2005 DMR releases.

Again this year, in an effort to improve communications between film buyers and film distributors, GSTA provided an audience response system via wireless keypads to gather important data for Films in Progress and Films in Development presenters. The confidential feedback is given to producers and distributors for the films they presented.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SESSIONS

Originally scheduled as two separate sessions, "Film Production in Canada" and "Navigating Quebec's Government Funding of Film" were combined to present the benefits of producing giant screen films in Montréal and Quebec province. The region provides many varied locations for shooting, and the government offers substantial tax credits for films produced there, which makes it one of the most

sought-after locations in North America. The session also served as a showcase for production services provided by members of Canada's Giant Screen Consortium, the majority of whom are located in Quebec.

Doug Keith, TNS Intersearch, and Mary Kaye Kennedy, WGBH Enterprises and co-chair of the GSTA research and marketing committee, presented two sessions, both of which were a result of a consumer research work team recommendation to use the results of the GSTA 2003 Worldwide Viewer and Nonviewer Research to further benefit the industry.

The overall research results were presented at last year's conference in Glasgow. This year's sessions, "Profiling At-Risk and Likely Viewers" and "Identifying Best Film Research Practices," provided delegates with a more in-depth analysis of the results.

The sessions "Profiling At-Risk and Likely Viewers" and "Identifying Best Film Research Practices" were a result of a consumer research work team recommendation to use the results of the GSTA 2003 Worldwide Viewer and Nonviewer Research to further benefit the industry.

TNS identified a subset of the giant screen viewer audience as "at-risk" and a segment of the nonviewer audience who are most "likely" to become giant screen viewers. During the session "Profiling At-Risk and Likely Viewers," Keith said the research results indicate that viewers who have seen three to nine giant screen films enjoy the films less and less, which is leading them to become nonviewers. Nearly 62 percent of lapsed viewers stopped coming after seeing two or three films. The research has provided data on how to identify those at-risk viewers, what is deterring them from visiting, what will attract them and how to satisfy them. It also has provided data that, hopefully, theaters can use to retain and satisfy current viewers and recruit and convert likely viewers. (Please see the fall 2004 issue of *The Big Frame* for an in-depth analysis of at-risk viewers, or e-mail bigframe@smm.org for a PDF of the article.)

Keith pointed out that while the overall findings are relevant to the industry in general, theaters have local issues that need to be researched and addressed as well. Gretchen Jaspering, then vice president of marketing and communications at the St. Louis Science Center (SLSC), shared how SLSC has used the research results to make significant programming and operational changes. Jaspering said the research results have helped SLSC get broad support from its board members. SLSC recently made sweeping facility changes, spending \$3 million on lobby and theater renovations in 2003. Programming changes were implemented, including showing IMAX DMR films for the first time with *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. SLSC is experimenting with different kinds of films and programming, targeting content to when niche audiences are likely to attend. SLSC marketing is now segmented by audience, and advertising emphasizes both film content and the experience, with different tag lines being used for different audiences.

SLSC, which took part in both the GSTA worldwide study and the local market add-on study, conducted further surveys after programming and operational changes had been implemented to determine their impact. Jaspering said that as a result of the changes, SLSC has seen substantial gains in sales in the science center, and a new audience has been attracted to the theater.

GSTA's goals in holding the session "Identifying Best Film Research Practices," the second session based on the GSTA research results, were to ensure the industry is conducting research with valid results, increase the understanding of the research process, create some uniformity in the industry and encourage the use of research to increase the chances for success. A number of theaters, producers and distributors are already doing basic level market research, including title, topic and film testing, but there is disparity in the type of research done across the industry.

The session focused on the research resources available to ensure film producers choose the best topics, produce the best films possible and choose the best titles for the films produced.

Keith outlined a methodology for designing a research program, including how to determine the research objectives and the information that should be obtained; how to choose the sample design and size; and how to collect, tabulate and then analyze data to make decisions and design marketing plans.

The session "Educational Materials: Measuring Effectiveness in Education" was moderated by Wayne LaBar of Liberty Science Center and Tracey Guiry, who was with the IMAX Theatre At-Bristol at the time of the conference and is now at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich. Barbara Flagg of Multimedia Research, who has been involved in evaluating the educational effectiveness of 13 giant screen films,

presented the three methodologies for conducting research at the different stages of a film's production. Front-end research is conducted in the early stages of a production to help shape the film; formative research shapes the details as the film is in production; and summative research evaluates the finished film's effectiveness and whether it met its goals. (The spring 2005 issue of *The Big Frame* will include an article by Flagg focusing on summative methodology and a meta-analysis of a number of evaluations done on U.S. National Science Foundation-funded giant screen films.)

GSTA will be holding an educational symposium similar to the 1999 Giant Screen Films and Lifelong Learning Symposium at the 2006 conference in Galveston, Texas. Significant work has been done within the industry on what people are learning and the educational impact of giant screen films, but the information is dispersed and in some cases confidential. GSTA's goals for the symposium are to understand and define educational effectiveness, collect information and review what the industry knows already, set goals for the future, and then develop and implement initiatives.

GSTA will be holding an educational symposium similar to the 1999 Giant Screen Films and Lifelong Learning Symposium at the 2006 conference in Galveston, Texas.

TECHNICAL SESSIONS

"Digital Evolution of 15/70," presented by industry consultant Charles Poynton, served as a primer on the basics of digital film—from image capture to digital postproduction and projection—and related how it has and will continue to influence the giant screen industry.

The conference again included a technical session that allowed GSTA members to present advances in giant screen production technology. Corey Mandel, post audio supervisor at Technicolor Toronto, has mixed 22 giant screen features and presented a segment asking how much sound a giant screen film requires. The most successful films, he said, are the ones that engage the audience emotionally, and sound plays a vital part in achieving that goal. Mandel played a clip from the 1996 film *The Hidden Dimension* three times—first with a temporary soundtrack, then with the complete sound design, and again with the complete soundtrack plus orchestration—to illustrate how layers of sound immerse audiences in the scene and involve them emotionally. He then showed footage from *NASCAR 3D: The IMAX Experience*,

first with all the sound design except the car engines, which allowed the audience to realize all of the elements that had been added to the soundtrack. The second time Mandel played the scene the chest-pounding roar of the car engines was added.

Daniel White presented footage shot with a new 3D camera Big Films is developing with Gord Harris and Nox Leavitt. The first phase prototype was successful, and the final rig is nearing completion. Giant Screen Consortium is providing financial support, and Big Films is seeking additional funding to finalize the project.

Phil Streather of Principal Large Format discussed the 3D camera system developed to shoot the upcoming *Man-Eating Sharks*. He explained the three basic systems that can be used for filming 3D, which requires the two camera lenses to be 2.5 inches apart: a single camera system, mirror rigs with two cameras, or two small cameras used side by side. Bob Talbot, director of photography on the film, chose a film-based side-by-side system designed by Sean Phillips.

David Keighley, DKP 70MM, Inc., discussed ultra high-resolution film scanning and recording, showing images from *Mystery of the Nile*, *Sacred Planet*, *NASCAR 3D*, the Mars Spirit Rover, a *Matrix* dome shrink test and the Hubble Space Telescope.

Rick Gordon, RPG Productions, showed a clip from the Academy award-nominated 1986 Expo film *Rainbow War* that had undergone digital intermediate postproduction. He also showed a flat screen trailer of *Roar: Lions of the Kalahari*, which was shot in different film formats, scanned at 4K resolution, given a uniform look in the computer and recorded on 15/70 negative. He pointed out that working in the digital realm allowed the three effects companies to work simultaneously on different segments of the film, but the final look is seamless. Gordon also showed footage from a dome-customized version of *Roar*. RPG, with the help of Sean Phillips, mapped out a custom dome curvature for each frame so it would fill the screen and adjusted color for cross-reflectance. Gordon said National Geographic and Destination Cinema went to extraordinary lengths and expense to create an entirely separate dome version, which represents their commitment to the entire industry.

Greg MacGillivray's presentation addressed the philosophical side of filmmaking, saying that creating a plan and schedule and building a team can be far more important for producing a good film than new equipment. He used *Mystery of the Nile*, which MacGillivray Freeman Films (MFF) is producing with Orbita Max, as an example. MacGillivray said shooting a difficult action film in three third-world countries in remote regions on a limited budget of \$5 million at first seemed impossible. MacGillivray's solution was to start with a full script, break the film

This marks the first year GSTA has presented an award for Best Educational Program, which recognizes the program that best represents the development and presentation of a complete educational experience.

down into segments, pick the teams to handle each segment, and then have the crews working on the segments simultaneously. The film was shot on time and on budget.

MacGillivray also dispelled the myth that it's impossible to shoot sync sound in giant screen films because the cameras are too noisy. He said MFF shoots sync sound most of the time with its W4 camera, which was remachined to make it quieter. MacGillivray says it's the quietest camera in the industry and is capable of shooting sync lines with characters only three feet away. Digital noise reduction techniques in postproduction are also useful when shooting sync sound, he pointed out.

GSTA ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Films, lifelong learning and marketing were honored at the eighth annual GSTA Achievement Awards, held at the International Conference in Montréal.

Celebrating creative talent and excellence in giant screen filmmaking, GSTA Film Awards were presented in four categories. *Pulse: a STOMP Odyssey* was awarded Best Film, *Coral Reef Adventure* was recognized for Best Cinematography, *NASCAR 3D: The IMAX Experience* received the award for Best Sound, and Stephen Low was honored with a Special Achievement Award for his work on *Volcanoes of the Deep Sea*. GSTA member organizations vote for the Best Film, Best Cinematography and Best Sound winners, while the GSTA production and technical subcommittee selects the recipient of the Special Achievement Award.

Lifelong Learning Awards were presented in two categories this year. *Bugs!* received the Best Film for Learning award, which is selected by GSTA theater members. The Henry Ford IMAX Theater was awarded the Best Educational Program Award for its American Trailblazers MAX-imum Education Program. This marks the first year the GSTA has presented an award for the Best Educational Program, which recognizes the program that best represents the development and presentation of a complete educational experience utilizing giant screen film, exhibits, educational materials and other media or materials. The winner is selected by the GSTA

Learning and Education committee.

The Marketing Awards (formerly the MAC Awards) recognize exceptional marketing campaigns and are judged by a panel of industry peers. Best Marketing Campaign by a Distributor was awarded to IMAX Corporation for *NASCAR 3D: The IMAX Experience*. The Ontario Science Center won Best Film Launch by a Theater for its launch of *Coral Reef Adventure*. (See page 56 for photos of the award winners and page 58 for summaries of the award-winning campaigns.)

ASSOCIATION MEMBER MEETINGS

Rob Lister and Greg Foster of IMAX Corporation delivered a presentation to theater members, first reviewing the company's activities over the past 12 months, including a report on the capital structure and financial situation. The IMAX theater network now includes 240 theaters in 35 countries. China and India are the fastest growing markets, and IMAX says it will urge the new theaters to become members of GSTA.

Lister acknowledged that some in the industry are concerned that DMR films have diminished the IMAX brand; however, IMAX is adamant that the opposite is true. The brand, Lister said, continues to attract loyal and new audiences, and consumers are still willing to drive farther and pay more for the IMAX experience. Institutions' reputations are still intact, and they have the potential to increase membership by showing DMR films, he said.

DMR films enhance the IMAX brand and in some cases contribute to the brand power and allure of institutions.

Lister pointed to *The Polar Express* as the perfect crossover film that has good entertainment value with a literacy message and said the issues facing the industry can be overcome if the two sides (institutional and commercial theaters) work together. He said a greater acceptance of the commercial aspect of the industry could help solve some of the funding and promotional challenges that the institutional side of the industry is facing. Lister used Disney, Tom Hanks and Warner Bros. as examples of Hollywood heavy hitters who entered the giant screen industry with converted 35mm releases, bringing tens of millions of dollars in promotion for the industry, and have gone on to produce more traditional, documentary-style films for the format. Companies and individuals who enter the industry should be embraced and encouraged to promote the industry, Lister said. Using their media outlets to promote the industry will result in promotional campaigns and outlets for all giant screen films.

Greg Foster stressed IMAX's commitment to all theaters and the industry as a whole, stating the company is working diligently to produce a wide range of product. Foster also acknowledged the difficulty theaters have in

Ad space

[GSTA2004]



A) Derek Threinen, New England Aquarium; and Francois Mantello, 3D Entertainment. B) Truett Latimer, Truett Latimer Productions; and Charlotte Brohi, Houston Museum of Natural Science. C) Kazuyo Takehara, Denstu Tec; Yoshikazu Matushita and Kozue Mukai, Suntory Museum. D) James Hyder, Cinergetics (LF Examiner); and Sky High Entertainment Viking. E) Susan and Paul Novros, Graphic Films Corp. F) James Cameron, Lightstorm Entertainment; John Lowry, Lowry Digital Images; and Graeme Ferguson, IMAX Corporation. G) Independent film distributors party hosts Robert Kresser, Patricia Brandino, Goulam Amarsy, Charlotte Brohi, Mark Katz, Don Kempf, Greg MacGillivray, Toby Mensforth, Jonathan Barker and Stephen Low. H) Munro Ferguson and Paul Morstad, National Film Board of Canada. I) Mark Katz, John Wickstrom and Antonietta Pennella, nWave Pictures. J) Catherine McGrath, National Museum of Photography; Alex Page,

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE AND TRADE SHOW REPORT



Science Museum, London; Simon Jones, IMAX Theatre At-Bristol; Doug Keith, TNS Intersearch; Mary Kaye Kennedy, WGBH Enterprises; and Jason Bainbridge, BFI London IMAX. K) Jessica Christensen, Swedish Museum of Natural History; Bing Broderick, WGBH Enterprises; Gregory Roy, TFX Animation; Michael Boeckmann, Science Museum of Minnesota; Jim O'Leary, Maryland Science Center; Toby Mensforth, Smithsonian Theaters; Mary Kaye Kennedy, WGBH Enterprises; Philippe Bergeron and Robert Landry, TFX Animation. L) Berend Reijnhoudt, Omniversum; and Tracey Guiry, National Maritime Museum.

Photos B, D, E, F, K by James Hyder. © 2004 by Cinergetics, LLC. Photos A, C, H, I, J, L by Kelly Germain. Photo G courtesy nWave Pictures.



GSTA's 2005 International Conference and Trade Show will be held in Osaka, Japan, September 26–30, hosted by Suntory. Visit www.giantscreentheater.com for conference updates.

making programming decisions as quickly as the relatively short notice of DMR film releases to date requires and said IMAX is working hard to get things turned around quickly on what is an expedited schedule by Hollywood standards. Clearance issues resulting when a 35mm cinema has exclusivity rights to a film have also been problematic. Lister said it's a new way of doing business and that IMAX is working to see that all parties' needs are met. Foster also said he expects studios to participate more in GSTA and the conference in the coming year.

Also reported at the association member meetings, GSTA has amended its bylaws to expand the board from 17 to 21 voting members. The move stems from efforts to make the board more reflective of the association's global membership and to give associate members a bigger voice in the decisions. (See page 14 for a full listing of GSTA's board members.)

The Global Affairs and Member Services Committee reported that GSTA membership currently stands at 279 members, including 115 theater members, 36 developing and 128 associate members.

The Learning and Education Committee reported it is discussing ways to gather research that has already been conducted regarding education and giant screen films and provide the information on-line. The committee is also tweaking criteria for the learning-related GSTA Achievement Awards.

The Development Committee is taking inventory of past and current film funding resources, as well as sponsorship initiatives, with an eye toward developing a fund sufficient to provide gap financing for film

development and production.

The Conference and Meetings Committee is working on content for the Midwinter Committee Meeting being held in Virginia Beach, Virginia, on February 3–5, 2005, hosted by the Virginia Aquarium and Marine Science Center.

Dave Duszynski, chair of the Research and Marketing Committee, presented the GSTA theater attendance reporting project, which allows theater members to input attendance data confidentially on a secured area of GSTA's Web site on a monthly basis. Theaters are then able to access a number of reports that contain data averages for participating theaters as a whole. This ongoing statistical analysis allows participating theaters to access and review reliable trends for theater attendance in a secure environment for the purposes of benchmarking and internal reporting. The program was in a pilot phase and is now expanded to include associate members.

GSTA's 2005 International Conference and Trade Show will be held in Osaka, Japan, September 26–30, 2005, hosted by Suntory. The Hyatt Regency Osaka is the conference hotel, and GSTA was still in the process of negotiating hotel room rates at press time. Visit www.giantscreentheater.com for conference updates. The 2005 International Conference in Osaka will be another homecoming of sorts. The first IMAX projector made its debut 35 years ago at the 1970 Expo in Osaka. [n](#)

Kelly Germain is editor of The Big Frame and can be reached at bigframe@smm.org.

Big Films, Inc.	45
Big Frame, The.....	64
Consolidated Film Industries.....	19
Dentsu Tec, Inc.	11
Destination Cinema, Inc.	8, 9
DKP 70mm, Inc.	Inside back cover
Eastman Kodak Company	13
Euromax	66
Giant Screen Films	4, 5, 23, 43
Giant Screen Theater Association	52
Graphic Films Corporation	2, 6
IMAX Corporation	Back cover
Innerspace Cases	65
K2 Communications	27
MacGillivray Freeman Films	Inside front cover, 1
Maryland Science Center	34
MegaSystems/Ballantyne.....	51
Museum of Science and Industry	33
National Wildlife Federation	21
nWave Pictures Distribution.....	35
Perfect Projections.....	66
Science Museum of Minnesota.....	26, 49
SK Films, Inc.	15, 36, 37
Sony Pictures Classics, Large Format	12
Summerhays Films.....	17
Superior Quartz Products	3
The Stephen Low Company	25
Ushio America	16
WGBH Enterprises.....	53
White Oak Associates, Inc.	65