

The Essential Home Theatre Resource™ WIDESCREEN REVIEW® NEWSLETTER

August 2006 • Volume 1, Issue 3 • The Official FREE Newsletter Of Widescreen Review Magazine
Click here or sign up to receive this newsletter for FREE at WidescreenReview.com

HOME Industry News DVD HD Equipment Community Advertisers WSR In Print



WELCOME!

Welcome to *Widescreen Review's* August newsletter. We hope you have enjoyed our first two issues and that you're finding the content interesting and informative. This month's issue is filled with a variety of things that, remember, don't appear anywhere in the print magazine. Be sure and forward this newsletter to all of your friends and acquaintances so they, too, don't miss out on *Widescreen Review's* exciting new addition. Also, congratulations to Wayne Mastel, Kym Friend, and Emilio Franchy, last month's Readers' Poll winners. Be sure and answer the questions in this month's poll, and you too could be the lucky winner of the next giveaway.

Gary Reber
Editor-In-Chief, *Widescreen Review*

COMING SOON TO NEWSSTANDS

Here's a sneak peek into what's coming in Issue 112, September 2006 of *Widescreen Review*:

- Greg Rogers' review of the Marantz VP-11S1 1080p DLP Projector
- A review of BG Corporation's Radia R-600 Loudspeakers by Gary Altunian
- Danny Richelieu's review of Samsung's first Blu-ray Disc Player, the BD-P1000
- Your Home Theatre—Imaging Processing Trends by David Vrhovnik
- Over 40 Blu-ray Disc, HD DVD, and DVD picture and sound quality reviews
- And more...



ATTRACTIONS

3 Readers' Poll

New Equipment

- 5 **Coming Soon To A Retailer Near You**
By Danny Richelieu

On Screen

- 2 **Andy Garcia—On His Directorial Debut, Childhood, and Fried Bananas**
By Jack Kelley
- 6 **Joe Kane—A Candid Conversation**
By Gary Reber & Danny Richelieu

Studio Scoop

- 4 **The Studio Scoop—Rumors, Reports & Ramblings**
By Jack Kelley



Andy Garcia

On His Directorial Debut, Childhood, And Fried Bananas

JACK KELLEY



Jack Kelley, *Widescreen Review*: I have read many times that this project was a “Labor Of Love.” This being true, when did this “love” begin and how did it finally come to be?

Andy Garcia, Director, *The Lost City*: Well, subconsciously, it began when I was born there [in Cuba], but it intensified when I had to leave at the age of five-and-a-half. I wasn’t, obviously, thinking about doing a movie, but my connection to my culture and my country really intensified because of that journey I had to take with my family. That grew and sort of stimulated in me a very fond nostalgia for the country I had left, and predominately its music.

As a very young boy I was always very—even when I was in Cuba, I was always very connected to the music, according to my family. As a kid I used to sing along with the radio and so forth and so on. Somehow that music was always stimulating, so that, obviously, as I got older, added to my continuous collection of music and study of its history. And listening to the stories that grandparents would tell, it was always a constant fascination for me. And as I got older and began to work in films, I realized I not only wanted to act in films, but make films as well. Very early on in my career, in the early 80s, I had a very particular dream about making a movie about that time period [1950s]. So it all manifested itself, from subconsciously at first to consciously, then I articulated the idea of making this sort of *Casablanca*-type film in Havana, and a friend of mine turned me on to the writings of Guillermo Cabrera Infante, which I hadn’t been aware of until then. And in his work I found the voice, and he really transported me to that time and place, and his sense of humor, his sense of parody, and his sense of the absurd, I thought was very Cuban in style, obviously, as he is a Cuban writer. He was able to capture that spirit, and the use of language was, to me, very Cuban, even though it was in English.

So, that’s where I found a voice for the piece, and I finally got an opportunity to meet Frank Mancuso Sr., who, at the time, was head of Paramount Studios, and I pitched this idea, and he gave me the support to develop the material. Then we got the first draft in May 1990, and it was an extraordinary document; a 350-page Bible and screenplay for him.

It was about 16 years in the making, trying to

get the movie financed and everything. The regime at Paramount changed, and they wanted to hire a new writer, which I didn’t want to do, so I got the project back, and from then on I never really got any support anywhere in the domestic distribution channels, which is the traditional manner of financing a film. So, I was like all other independent filmmakers—trying to raise money anyway you can. It was a difficult process, but 16 years later we showed the film.

WSR Kelley: It seems this movie has been well received by many Cuban Americans, often described as “amazing,” “touching,” and “an unforgettable experience.” What would you say to those not of Cuban descent to encourage them to see this movie?

Garcia: That is true, the Cubans have responded to it in a very particular way, but there are also other reviewers that would respond to it the very same way. I don’t want to marginalize the reaction to the movie to just the Cuban audience because it’s just not true. It’s playing just as well in places where there’s not one Cuban. I just don’t want to marginalize the film because that’s not the intention of the film. I mean, it’s specifically that place [Cuba], but it’s universal in its theme, which is of impossible love and having to leave the thing you most cherished, which is your country. It’s what we, as immigrants, all have done when we came to the United States, which is the entire history of this country. And you take your culture with you, and you preserve it wherever you go. The movie is an homage to the music and the culture of Cuba during an amazing time in history. The 1950s were so vibrant in its cultural and musical tapestries, and it continues to be, because the city itself was so alive and there was such an abundance of that energy. And the 50s, to me, have always been the last of the elegant eras, and I wanted to capture that, that lost way of life, that end of that era in Cuba. And the dramatic political ideological change that happened on the island changed forever.

The movie was inspired by a lot of movies I’ve watched over the years—*Casablanca*, *The Godfather*, *Doctor Zhivago*. It has that kind of epic factor, that family saga, that love story, set against a tumultuous time in a country where, in this case, a revolution or rebellion was going on, a drastic change in ideology.

WSR Kelley: You are credited with the music of this movie, and I read (again) you own 25 conga drums. Do you have a musical background? Or is this one of your passions? And why did you take on this additional responsibility?

Garcia: I started training as a percussionist as a young man in my early teens. And as I collected music, I also started to study the drums—bongos and congas—focusing more on the hand drums. And then later, when I got the screenplay in 1990, it noted that my character, Fico Fellove, played the piano. I had always been attracted to the piano and had a yearning to play it, but never had a piano in my house. My grandmother played the piano in Cuba, and my aunt was a classically trained pianist. I always watched them play and was attracted to the instrument, and I piddled around with it when I was in their homes, and it was like a treasured situation.

I saw that my character sort of had this private world where he found solace in his music and visually in his piano. I decided, when I was in Rome filming *The Godfather III*, to rent a piano, and I stuck it in my house. I was going to be there about 17 weeks, and I wanted to be ready to at least be able to fake it accurately when filming *The Lost City*. But *The Godfather III* took so long to get made, I eventually taught myself how to play the piano, and then I composed all the original score. I was a self-taught piano player. I haven’t studied with any pianist, but I picked up a point here and there when I would see someone playing.

WSR Kelley: Why did you choose to shoot this film in 1.85:1?

Garcia: Well, it’s an academy standard, obviously, but it’s the format that the *The Godfather* was shot in, so I figured if it was good enough for Gordy Willis, it was good enough for me. The thing about the anamorphic is that it’s so squeezed it opens up the scope of the picture, and since we’re dealing with a period film on an independent budget, you have to be careful how far you can see into some shots. You’re trying to re-create a world, in a way, that doesn’t exist. You’re shooting in practical locations, and sometimes that additional aperture can get in your way as opposed to help you out. Don’t want to see a McDonald’s sign.



The Fellove brothers (from left: Enrique Murciano, Andy Garcia, Nestor Carbonell) have a drink together before the uprising.

I figured that format was classical and more manageable.

WSR Kelley: As your directorial debut, what is the key thing you learned that you would do differently if you directed again?

Garcia: Have more days! We shot this movie in 35 days, and that's very fast for any movie, let alone a period piece. So, more days would be helpful.

Acting and directing takes a huge toll on you. Perhaps playing a supporting roll in the movie where you have limited involvement on camera. In this film, I was also the protagonist. There was a lot of going back and forth. It was very personal that way and it was very invigorating, but it was a physically daunting task to do both. Not to say I wouldn't do it again, but it would help to have more time.

WSR Kelley: Do you have any directing projects in the works?

Garcia: I don't have any lined up at this time, but there are some I am interested in doing, but nothing that is set up or ready to go. I have been completely consumed with this film and haven't concentrated on anything else.

WSR Kelley: So your fans will again see an Andy Garcia-directed film?

Garcia: I certainly hope so, and I certainly hope it doesn't take 16 years.

WSR Kelley: Now having directed, is there anything you will do differently as an actor?

Garcia: By having the perspective of how I like to work as an actor—I tried to relate that to working with my fellow actors, and that is to give them a place where they feel completely uninhibited to work in, and they're free to explore the material without predesigning results. Let them explore the material in a spontaneous and sort of organic way. I like to give my actors freedom. I think the most important thing the director can do is casting. I think most of your work is done when you cast a film. If you cast great actors, they're going to come ready to roll. Directors need to create a place for them to feel safe. I like to shoot the rehearsals and gather raw material

in a lot of variety. When you have only 35 days, you can't have 20 takes. Sometimes we do one take and move on, but when you approach that one take in a very free manner, things really come alive.

I learned early on when I had the opportunity to work with some great directors that work that way. I just find that it creates for a most organic type of work from an actor that resonates with spontaneous human behavior.

WSR Kelley: When I viewed the film, and being of Italian/Irish descent, I picked up the incredibly strong sense of family portrayed in the film. How much of that sense of family in the film is from your personal experience?

Garcia: It's from both Mr. Infante's and mine. We are both from the same culture, and it is very similar to many of the other European cultures. But I think it's also part of an older generation tradition. We try to do that in our home on a daily basis—sitting down and eating as a family. Sometimes schedules conflict, but we try to maintain that idea that we all eat together around 6:30, and we try to do that because a lot of things are said at the dinner table without having to be asked; people just have a tenden-

cy to talk and share about their day. And I think that's important for a family.

WSR Kelley: Having fled Cuba with your family when you were five-and-a-half, what memories, if any, do you have of your native country?

Garcia: One of the memories that is very specific to me is in the movie—the departure at the airport. That is something I went through. Going through "Checkpoint Charlie," where they take you and strip you of any further belongings that you might be taking with you. Anything that they consider of value, they take from you. That made a tremendous impression on me.

WSR Kelley: And to me that was a very poignant part of the movie, and I must be very naïve, as I couldn't imagine how they were taking your personal possessions, yet he allowed your character to leave with a single memento.

Garcia: And it was a piece of plastic. It wasn't made of gold.

WSR Kelley: Was your family able to bring any mementos when they left Cuba?

Garcia: No. But there are people who did bring stuff out, such as a family album or a record. Something not of monetary value. They mainly took jewelry, watches, and money.

WSR Kelley: Okay, I read in *Bon Appétit* that you cook. Since I have never had fried bananas, what is the best way to prepare them?

Garcia: Well, here are two ways:

For the sweet ones, you take the ripe large plantains, and the riper the better. Almost, but not quite, to the point of being rotten. Peel it and cut it lengthwise at a cross angle. You fry them in canola oil, making sure to brown both sides. That's the sweet one.

The other one is the toston. This time you take a green plantain, peel it, and cut like a chip. Fry them in light oil until golden, take them out, and then squish them so they look like a large medallion, and then you re-fry them until crispy. And then eat them. ■

Read our review of Andy Garcia's The Lost City in Issue 112, September 2006.

READERS POLL

Submit your answers and you will be entered in a giveaway!!!

1) What is the most important thing for you when buying a DVD? (Story, extras, picture, sound, format, etc.)

2) Have you read WSR Publishing's other magazine, *Ultimate Home Design*?

Click here or visit http://www.widescreenreview.com/wsr_poll to submit your answers. Alternatively, you can email nate@widescreenreview.com to submit your answers and enter the contest. Contest rules are available on www.widescreenreview.com

The Studio Scoop

Rumors, Reports & Ramblings

Jack Kelley

Welcome to The Studio Scoop, formerly Inside DVD. But times are changing, and the DVD is no longer the sole pre-recorded optical disc format. Instead of just providing you with information concerning product release dates—which can be conveniently and easily found on our Web site (WidescreenReview.com)—this monthly blurrog (blurb + blog) is to give you behind-the-curtain information from an Insider's (or Not-So-Insider's, as the case may be) point of view.

Buena Vista

Well, the end of July saw about 20 percent of Disney's employees seeing pink as layoff notices fell from above, which is all the result of studio restructuring. Additionally, it was reported that Disney is cutting back film production under the Walt Disney Pictures and Touchstone Pictures labels to ten a year, while the Miramax and Pixar divisions will remain unchanged. Hey, has anyone seen Pooh?

DreamWorks

Mark your calendars—especially if you have kids or grandkids, nieces or nephews, or you are just a big ol' kid yourself—as *Over The Hedge* hits the turf on October 17, 2006. Starring the voices of Bruce Willis (RJ the raccoon), Steve Carell (Hammy the squirrel), and Garry Shandling (Verne the turtle), among a list of others, this animated feature is sure to put smiles on the faces of kids and adults alike.

Lionsgate

Spell "Akeelah." "A-K-E-E-L-A-H. Akeelah." Good job! And now look for *Akeelah And The Bee* to buzz its way to your nearest retail store on August 29, 2006. Given "Two thumbs way up!" by that thumb-giving duo, I am doing my best to secure our very own copy for Issue 113. Keep your wings crossed.

New Line

On August 29, 2006, kick up your heels and *Take The Lead* with that suave Spaniard Antonio Banderas as he dances his way through a New York public high school. (Sounds dangerous.) And don't forget to read

our review in Issue 113 (October 2006), which is just around the corner.

And on the same date, for you hobbit lovers out there, Peter Jackson presents *Lord Of The Rings* Special Edition, and this special edition includes all three movies, so I guess you could call it a trilogy...again. Just checked Video Universe, and you can buy this at the bargain price of \$60.86!

A Prairie Home Companion, which boasts an all-star cast—including Woody Harrelson, Tommy Lee Jones, Kevin Kline, Virginia Madsen, John C. Riley, Meryl Streep, Lily Tomlin, and, if she's not late, Lindsay Lohan—sings on the streets October 10, 2006.

Paramount

If you are a fan of Steve-O, Johnny Knoxville, and the rest of the gang—and who isn't?—you are going to be very happy come September 5, 2006, when *Jackass The Movie: Unrated* hits the asphalt. But, wait, I know what you're thinking: When's *Jackass 2* streeting? I am so glad you asked, because I literally just got an email from my friends at Paramount and, according to said email, it hits December 26, 2006. And how perfect is that? It will probably be on sale, knowing how the day after Christmas is the biggest shopping day of the year.

Sony Pictures

For those of you missing Angie Harmon since she departed *Law & Order*, I have good news for you. She hits DVD (meat cleaver in hand) with *Glass House* on October 3, 2006, where she where she plays an adoptive mother who makes Mommie Dearest look like an angel. I told you, no wire hangers!

20th Century Fox

The third—but is it the last?—installment of the cult-like comic book following of X-Men, *X-Men: The Last Stand* makes a stand on October 3, 2006. And you will have a choice of three versions: the basic edition for an SRP of \$29.98, the Exclusive Collector's Edition for \$39.98 (SRP), and The Complete Experience (yep, all three movies—*X-Men*, *X2: X-Men United*, and *X-Men: The Last Stand*) for \$44.98 (SRP). Prices, of course, are higher in Canada.

Is it getting cold in here? Nope, that's just *Ice Age 2: The Meltdown* making its way to a November 21, 2006 street date. But it is smoky in here, because *Thank You For Smoking* lights its way to DVD on October 3, 2006. But be careful, according to *Maxim*, "This film might make you laugh your head off!" I'll take my chances.

Universal Studios

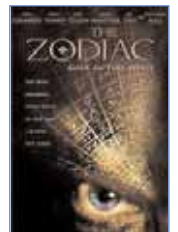
Since the theatrical release of *Miami Vice*, starring Colin Farrell and Jamie Foxx, a *WSR*'s employee insider at Gap® has noted an increase in the sale of everything pastel.

Warner Home Video

If you love TV, and you especially love "complete" series, look no further than Warner Home Video as they have an, um, complete slate: *Veronica Mars: The Complete Second Season* streets on August 22, 2006; *Smallville: The Complete Fifth Season*, lands in a six-disc set on September 12, 2006; *The OC: The Complete Third Season* puts its toes to the nose on October 24, 2006; and the *West Wing: The Complete Seventh Season*, in a six-disc set, makes an appearance on November 7, 2006.

Independents

THINKFilm will release *The Zodiac* on DVD on August 29, 2006. You know, the years' old story about the real-life Black Dahlia killings that sent Los Angeles into a little paranoid state. Good times.



TLA Releasing presents, on August 8, 2006, *Adam & Steve*, a story about two guys who had an awful one-night stand 15 years ago and meet again for another date, not realizing their original disastrous first date...that is, until their friends intervene. Jeez, dating can be so complicated. ■

Contrary to popular opinion, Research/Production Editor Jack Kelley is not responsible for any release date changes, price changes, or any other perceived errors contained within. He can be reached at jack@widescreenreview.com.

NEWSLETTER EDITION

Coming Soon... To A Retailer Near You

Danny Richelieu

Welcome to the special Newsletter Edition of *Coming Soon...*, where we introduce some of the newest home theatre products announced. Don't worry, this isn't just a rehash of what will be in the print magazine of *Widescreen Review*...think of this as an extension of what you will see in Issue 112, which will be arriving later this month. In this edition of *Coming Soon...* we are gearing up for the 2006 CEDIA EXPO, providing you with each company's booth number at the show. And, like I said earlier, think of this as an extension of what you will see in Issue 112, where we preview more of the exciting new product introductions that will be at the trade show in September.



Marantz VP-11S1

Recently announced—and reviewed in Issue 112, September 2006 by Greg Rogers—from **Marantz** is the **VP-11S1** (\$20,000) single-chip 1080p front projector. The VP-11S1 uses Texas Instruments' first true 1080p DLP® chip and their new parallel dual driver DDP3021 DMD

controller to provide more precise control over the mirrors and allows for 12-bit gamma processing. In addition, Marantz has employed a Gennum VXP™ (Visual Excellence Processing) chip for deinterlacing, scaling, and color correction. **CEDIA Booth #129**
Marantz 630 741 0300 www.marantz.com

Niles Audio Corporation has announced the release of their nine CAT-5 **Baluns** connectivity solutions, which allow for the installation of extended cable runs over longer distances, and enable system expansion in homes that are already wired with CAT-5. The devices are passive, which mean they do not require any AC power to run, and can transmit stereo analog audio (\$60), digital audio (\$40), S-video (\$60), VGA (\$100), as well as combinations of S-video and analog stereo audio (\$85) and component video and digital audio (\$100). **CEDIA Booth #151**



Niles Stereo Audio Baluns

Niles Audio Corporation 800 289 4434 www.nilesaudio.com



Bettercables.com Display Magic

Bettercables.com has introduced the **Display Magic**® 5-to-1 HDMI™ switcher, which supports all current HDTV resolutions including 1080p, as well as PC resolutions to 1900 x 1200 at 60 Hz. The Display Magic includes five inputs and one output, with switching done by pressing the

front panel button or by using the supplied remote control. The switcher is "fully HDCP-compliant" and includes an equalizing "booster" output that will drive the HDMI signal longer distances.
Bettercables.com 877 433 7039 www.bettercables.com



ATC's New 'Entry Series'

ATC Loudspeaker Technology has introduced their new "entry series" of two- and three-way passive monitors, which consist of the new bookshelf models **SCM7** (\$1,150 per pair), **SCM11** (\$1,900 per pair), **SCM19** (\$3,300 per pair), and the floor-standing **SCM40** (\$4,400 per pair). Each loudspeaker in the range incorporates a stepped graphite-gray double front baffle, monocoque cabinet construction, curved edges to reduce diffraction, as well as a new 25-millimeter soft-dome tweeter with a custom, solid aluminum waveguide faceplate for smoother high-frequency dispersion.

ATC Loudspeaker Technology 203 888 3759 www.flatearthaudio.com



Canton Vento Reference 1 DC

Canton has introduced its largest, most accurate loudspeaker to date, the **Vento Reference 1 DC**. The 56-inch tall loudspeaker is a 3.5-way design using five drivers, while incorporating 28-millimeter thick walls (the loudspeaker weighs a hefty 194 pounds), which are constructed from seven layers of acoustically inert fiberboard, pressure laminated one at a time. Deep bass in these full-range loudspeakers is handled by a pair of 12-inch aluminum cone woofers, and the Vento Reference 1 DC also incorporates two seven-inch midrange drivers flanking a single ADT-25 aluminum-manganese tweeter. The Vento Reference 1 DC is

available now for \$30,000 per pair. **CEDIA Booth #569**
Canton 612 706 9250 www.cantonusa.com

Richard Gray's Power Company has introduced the 300-pound, seven-rack-space chassis **PowerHouse 3X**, which can provide up to 6,200-watts of power to up to 21 different components, and is designed exclusively for triple-phase AC power. The PowerHouse 3X includes a 50-amp analog amp meter and "convenience" outlet on the front panel, as well as 20 Hubbell outlets on the back. It incorporates a five-kilowatt transformer and a patented, parallel dual choke. The PowerHouse 3X is available now for \$9,400. **CEDIA Booth #125**



Richard Gray's Power Company PowerHouse 3X

Richard Grays Power Company 800 888 3474 www.richardgrayspowercompany.com



Artison Masterpiece

Artison has introduced their flagship **Masterpiece LCR** loudspeaker designed for use with flat panel displays. The Masterpiece LCR incorporates Artison's proprietary G-LCR grilles and new UMB (universal mounting bracket) to help it attach to virtually any flat panel display, matching its height precisely. The Masterpiece LCR loudspeakers were built with the patented DualMono™ Center Channel technology, eliminating the need for a center channel. It also uses a side-firing Stage Tweeter to widen the soundstage, as well as two front-firing Vifa XT Super Audio Tweeters, two 5.25-inch Kevlar long throw midrange woofers, and one 25-millimeter Stage tweeter. **CEDIA Booth #748**

Artison 775 833 4344 www.artisonusa.com

Joe Kane

A Candid Conversation

GARY REBER & DANNY RICHELIEU

Contributing Editor Joe Kane phoned Managing Editor Danny Richelieu and Editor-In-Chief and Publisher Gary Reber in late July to share some insights based on his to-date experience with both the HD DVD and Blu-ray Disc format.

[Editor's Note: The following interview consists of Joe Kane's opinions and facts/rumors that Joe has either heard from other sources or determined with his own testing. Also, it should be noted that Joe is a consultant for Microsoft with their Windows Media Video codec, which is what VC-1 is based on, but he is not paid by Microsoft to promote the codec. And while the Blu-ray Disc Association was not given an opportunity to disprove or comment on anything that was said in this interview, it will not be the last time this discussion will be brought up in *Widescreen Review*.]

Joe Kane, Joe Kane Productions: Gary, you are probably aware I've been doing a number of HD DVD versus Blu-ray Disc demonstrations.

Gary Reber, *Widescreen Review*: What player have you had access to for Blu-ray Disc?

Kane: The Samsung BD-P1000.

WSR Reber: We have discovered problems with the Samsung player.

Kane: Yes, I'm aware of such claims in the industry. Samsung has acknowledged some of the information being put out about their player, but at the moment it is the only Blu-ray Disc player available.

WSR Reber: Our Video Technical Editor, Greg Rogers, determined the problems. He was sent a modified Samsung player to compare. The new one had a modified Genesis chip, and he said that helped picture quality a bit, but not entirely.

Danny Richelieu, *Widescreen Review*: That's also what he told Samsung.

WSR Reber: It doesn't clean it all up, in other words.

Kane: Yes, the "fixed" player has been made available to several magazines.

WSR Reber: We were provided with a modified player because we were calling engineering and marketing people at Sony, the developers of the format, saying, "What the heck's going on? The picture looks terrible. Is it a player problem? Is it a format problem? Is it an

MPEG-2 problem? What are the problems causing such poor performance?" The fix in the modified player still doesn't solve all of the problems, and we still don't know if it's MPEG-2 related or what the heck's going on.

Kane: It is my contention the image quality problem is MPEG-2 related.

WSR Reber: It is?

Kane: Yes. We've gone a step further. It turns out another Blu-ray Disc mastering facility in Los Angeles has the Sony MPEG encoder and our test materials. They have done the VC-1 versus MPEG-2 encodes, and there's no comparison in picture quality. It appears to be the Sony MPEG-2 encoders that are at least part of the image quality problem with the Blu-ray Disc format.

WSR Richelieu: Well, I noticed that the most consistent pictures seem to be the Lionsgate titles, and those were the ones that didn't use PCM sound. Do you think they just re-allocated the bits for the video?

Kane: Lionsgate's features certainly look better than Sony's. We understand that Disney is going to be releasing Blu-ray Discs with VC-1-encoding.

WSR Richelieu: Oh, really?

Kane: Yes.

WSR Richelieu: Great.

Kane: We've also been told that the original Blu-ray Disc authoring capability had to be modified to accept VC-1-encoded files. It was also not capable of dealing with H.264 files. Making such an effort to update the authoring system for VC-1 suggests a quality commitment on the part of Disney.

WSR Reber: Are they going to be able to release on a dual-layer 50-GB disc?

Kane: I don't think you'll see any studio releasing dual-layer Blu-ray Discs in the near future.

WSR Reber: Or are they going to be restricted to 25 GBs?

Kane: With VC-1, that's not an issue.

WSR Reber: I understand that.

Kane: Yes, they are going to be restricted to single-layer.

WSR Reber: What about Fox using VC-1?

Kane: I don't have any information on the timing or direction they will be taking.

WSR Richelieu: What else are you working

on now, Joe? Are you going to be helping Samsung again with a 1080p projector?

Kane: I certainly hope so, but my part of that effort has yet to start. My work with Samsung since January 2005 has been limited to show support. The German division of Samsung hired me to do the High End® show in Munich, and then I did INFOCOMM in Orlando. I used HD DVD as a video source in both of those shows. At INFOCOMM people went away absolutely certain that I was showing a 1080p projector and just wasn't saying so. The reason they thought I was using a 1080p projector is that they had never seen such good pictures.

WSR Reber: There's no question that you know how to make good pictures. With respect to Blu-ray Disc and HD DVD, you're saying that the MPEG encoding is not up to the level...

Kane: Of VC-1.

WSR Reber: Of VC-1.

Kane: Or H.264. It's not specific to VC-1; it's specific to MPEG-2. The mistake they made was MPEG-2.

WSR Reber: What do you mean, the mistake they made?

Kane: The mistake they made was encoding in MPEG-2.

WSR Reber: Which is now past its time.

Kane: Yes, it's past its time, and that's what we are seeing. Any of the MPEG-2 encoding we've seen doesn't measure up to what can be done in VC-1 at a smaller bit rate.

WSR Reber: But isn't there a political reason for Sony not using VC-1?

Kane: I don't know what may or may not be going on between Sony and Microsoft®, but they could have used H.264.

WSR Reber: I suppose, but they didn't.

Kane: Yes, in fact, you may know that Apple tried to get VC-1 thrown out of the Blu-ray Disc specification, and Panasonic was so certain that Apple would be successful, Panasonic's first-generation Blu-ray Disc players did not include a VC-1-decode capability.

WSR Reber: But Panasonic hasn't released a player yet.

Kane: A reason they haven't released it is because it didn't include VC-1. All Blu-ray Disc players must support VC-1 decoding.

WSR Reber: And that originated because Apple wanted H.264?

Kane: That's how we understand some of the politics behind the Blu-ray Disc format.

WSR Reber: So Panasonic actually manufactured a bunch of Blu-ray Disc players?

Kane: That is as we understand the circumstances.

WSR Reber: And they're not releasing them, obviously.

Kane: They can't release Blu-ray Disc players that don't support VC-1 decoding.

WSR Reber: When are they going to release a player?

Kane: That I don't know.

WSR Reber: What about Sony's position? Aren't they kind of locked into MPEG-2?

Kane: Sony has made a public commitment to encoding their HD content in MPEG-2. With the limitation of a single-layer disc, the quality of what they will be able to release in MPEG-2 is going to be mediocre at best.

WSR Reber: But won't the market pressure cave in on them eventually?

Kane: We believe it will be Disney that will make that happen, because Disney is using VC-1 encoding in their releases.

WSR Reber: Why didn't Warner Brothers then support VC-1 on their Blu-ray Disc material?

Kane: I don't know anything about that.

WSR Reber: Now what about the sound? Blu-ray Disc players don't provide for any of the updated codecs.

Kane: That's another significant issue in Blu-ray Disc versus HD DVD. You may not be surprised by this, but a large number of editorial people declared to us that Samsung, Sun Audio, and Joe Kane Productions had the best sound at the High End show in Germany, which is basically an audio show. And, of course, part of the reason we had better audio is that we were using HD DVD for our source material. The track I was running was Dolby® Digital Plus. It was being played back on a Harman Specialty Group audio system. A lot of the editorial press who came into our demonstration said they were giving us the best audio of the show.

WSR Reber: All right, but it doesn't address what's going on with Blu-ray Disc right now. They're not supporting Dolby Digital Plus or DTS-HD™ or TrueHD or DTS HD Master Audio.

Kane: Therefore, between MPEG-2 and not supporting the better audio codec, their system is falling way short of its potential.

WSR Reber: They're using PCM but it's 16 bit, 48 kHz. They're not even using 96 kHz, 24 bit.

Kane: I knew it was PCM, but I didn't know it was limited to 48/16.

WSR Richelieu: It isn't limited to 48/16, but that is what they are using right now.

WSR Reber: So, will that change or do you think they're stuck with that because of the 25-GB single-layer limit?

Kane: I believe the Blu-ray Disc format is going to be limited to what is required for sup-

port in the player. The better codecs that are mandatory in HD DVD players are optional in Blu-ray Disc players.

WSR Richelieu: Warner's putting Dolby Digital Plus on all of their Blu-ray Disc releases.

Kane: Good for them. The idea is if somebody makes a player that will see it, which is not required, then they will get that audio.

WSR Reber: So, it stayed as an option?

Kane: Yes, support for these extended audio formats is an option; it's not mandatory in Blu-ray Disc players.

WSR Richelieu: And it won't be supported in Pioneer's or Sony's players.

Kane: I believe the article Kevin Collins wrote for *Widescreen Review* [Issue 110, July 2006] spells out the details of what is optional and required for those players. In addition, Blu-ray Disc players aren't required to support the interactivity. This hints at studios not using the interactivity that is possible in the format because the players aren't required to support it.

WSR Reber: That would be a shame. You may have read yesterday in the Business Section of the *Los Angeles Times* how the studios are freaking out right now—they're cutting staff; they're losing money; they're cutting back like crazy. And DVD is totally flat for them right now—it's not growing—and so they're looking at their costs. So, that's a way to not incur more costs by eliminating interactivity on discs. It will cost them more money to include such.

Kane: Yes, it sort of looks bleak.

WSR Reber: For Blu-ray Disc?

Kane: Yes.

WSR Reber: But so many people have bought into so much of the promises made by the Blu-ray Disc group.

Kane: I'm not sure how that happened...

WSR Reber: They bought into the 50-GB-plus capacity.

Kane: Yes, and of course, the capacity is needed for MPEG-2 but not for VC-1.

WSR Reber: But people bought into the 50-GB capacity, and so now their egos are getting bruised because Blu-ray Disc is not performing like they think it should at 25 GB, and they initially went out and knocked HD DVD, betting that Blu-ray Disc would prove superior performance. We had to deal with that problem within *Widescreen Review*. And now reviewers are saying, "Well, HD DVD does look good."

The D-VHS® D-Theater™ format used MPEG-2 at an average bit rate of about 23 Mbps (the format's maximum bit rate is 28.2 Mbps on a 50-GB HS tape), and the picture was superior to what we are seeing from the Samsung Blu-ray Disc player. VC-1 would have been the right choice to make, given that less than 25 GBs are available for video on single-layer releases with linear PCM and lossy encoding taking up the rest. If the studios initially releasing in the Blu-ray Disc format had used VC-1, then there should not be the differences in picture quality that are being reported with

using MPEG-2. I believe the potential for good pictures is there in the Blu-ray Disc format, but we will have to wait to see releases encoded in VC-1 on single-layer 25-GB discs, or at substantially higher bit rates for MPEG-2 encodings, made possible by dual-layer 50-GB discs.

The next question I have is, what about next-generation HD DVD players? Will the next-generation players have true 1080p native output as is rumored?

Kane: I don't have an answer for that yet.

WSR Reber: And also, at what frame rate? Is it going to be 24 frames? Is it going to be 60? Is it going to be 72?

Kane: You already know from the article I wrote for *Widescreen Review* ["Progressive High-Definition Video," Issue 109, June 2006], I'm pushing reproduction at multiples of the 24-frame rate.

WSR Reber: But no one's gone that way, they're all going 60 right now.

Kane: For the time being...

WSR Richelieu: Pioneer.

WSR Reber: That's right.

WSR Richelieu: Yeah, 24-, 30-, and 60-frame for Blu-ray Disc.

Kane: As much as the HD DVD camp is producing a much better picture, they aren't yet "perfect" as claimed in some of their advertising. We also need to hold their feet to the fire.

WSR Richelieu: What are some of the things that aren't perfect?

Kane: Some of the basic things are they're decoding using Rec. 601 versus 709 in the first-generation players. There is an issue of providing video information from below-black to above-white, an issue shared with the approach being taken in the Sony MPEG-2 encoder for Blu-ray Disc.

WSR Reber: I see. And what's the difference between Rec. 601 and Rec. 709?

Kane: It's going to take an article to properly convey that topic, one that I'll have for you in an issue of *WSR* soon. As it is being used here, we are talking about the way the RGB signal is encoded to YCbCr. All high-definition video is encoded following the specifications set out in ITU-R BT.709.

WSR Reber: So, the player and/or display device should decode the video to RGB following the 709 specifications?

Kane: Yes, display devices should decode HD content using the 709 formula and decode standard definition using the 601 formula.

WSR Reber: And Toshiba used 601 decoding for their RGB output at the HDMI connector?

Kane: Yes, they decoded the high-definition video using a standard-definition decoder. The fault lies with Toshiba picking an HDMI interface chip that decodes HD with an SD formula.

WSR Richelieu: So, is the Samsung doing that as well?

Kane: No, from what we've been able to determine from test patterns on existing Blu-ray Disc releases, Samsung is decoding prop-

erly. We do still need to establish that the test patterns on the discs were encoded properly.

WSR Reber: So how could something like this happen?

Kane: Up until just recently, the majority of high-definition TV sets were decoding at 60i, and few reviews of "HD Ready" sets are reporting this. The Professional version of *DVE [Digital Video Essentials]*—which is a tool we'd like to see reviewers using—points this out.

WSR Reber: All right, so we don't know what Toshiba's going to do for this next generation of players, or even when they're going to release them, but all of the ones that were initially released, I assume, have been purchased with more units being brought to market. Still, while available, HD DVD players can be difficult to find.

Kane: That I didn't know. I'll have to go online and take a look. [Joe Kane writes: After checking it appears as a lot of places now have stock, so much so the players are now being discounted.]

WSR Reber: Samsung now has a challenge facing them because once the known flaw is widespread and understood, there will be complaints...

WSR Richelieu: I talked to them today.

They said they're going to have a download on their Web site that you burn onto a CD, then you put the CD in the player and it updates. But, it won't be available until September, at the earliest.

WSR Reber: Some people are just going to say, "Screw it, I'm taking it back to the retailer."

Kane: And the player upgrade isn't going to fix the MPEG-2 encode choice.

WSR Richelieu: Exactly.

Kane: It's still not going to be good.

WSR Reber: Incredible. The D-VHS execution of MPEG-2 is better than Blu-ray Disc.

Kane: The thing that has been most impres-

sive to me is while doing HD DVD demonstrations between Munich and Orlando, is seeing some audience members in tears, as they've never seen anything like this before. At INFO-COMM, I started out with off-the-air 1080i material and then I went to 720p, then moved to Windows Media® video, then to HD DVD.

Every single person in the audience saw huge differences as I stepped up in source quality. The 720p image was a lot better than anything in 1080i, and then Windows Media video brought the reaction, "That is a lot better than anything we've seen in MPEG." In going to HD DVD they said, "Wow, content that we can buy in the quality level that you're showing in WMV."

WSR Reber: Yeah, okay.

Kane: And, so, it was funny because the reaction on a 720p projector I had from most every member of the audience is, "This is the best high-definition we have ever seen."

WSR Reber: So, what I am hearing from your perspective, Joe, is that HD DVD is superior—do you think that HD DVD is going to win this format battle?

Kane: Oh, I think Internet delivery is going to win the battle.

WSR Reber: I know you're a fan of that, and I think that will be an upcoming significant part of the equation, but there are still people who want to hold and feel packaged media and collect it and have all the materials, and everything else associated with a packaged product, and not have to hassle with download challenges.

Kane: Gary, I have around 900 DVDs in my collection, which relatively speaking is a small collection. I also have 600 LaserDiscs on my shelf, and it's like, gee, do I have to create a whole new set of shelves to do this all over again?

WSR Richelieu: Two sets—one for HD DVD

and one for Blu-ray Disc!

WSR Reber: No, it's time for you to get rid of your LaserDiscs, probably. You know what I'm saying? Especially with movies, as you don't view them like you listen to music. I see Internet delivery as a part of the delivery of content, but I don't see it as 100 percent; I just see it as one part, and potentially a significant part of all of the possibilities and options available.

Kane: Yes, well, I do. I see where that's going, but there is too much history in it. There are too many things I want to be able to remember, and I want to be able to pull up for demonstration.

WSR Reber: Well, I feel for you because we've got 2,500 widescreen-formatted LaserDiscs and over 6,000 DVDs in our *Widescreen Review* library, and we're deciding which ones we're going to keep. I started going through our collection trying to decide which ones to let go. And it is very painful.

Kane: Yes.

WSR Reber: Emotionally, and plus, I love the cover art—the big covers and all that stuff—and especially all the special editions and the box sets; I'm not letting those go. They just don't package stuff like that anymore. But I understand, and agree with you. The download component is going to be a significant component, but it's going to be one part of the mix—packaged media will still be there. It's always going to be there; I really believe that.

Kane: What I'd like to do is continue writing articles for *Widescreen Review* as I see things out in the field.

WSR Reber: You're always welcome to contribute. This was a great conversation we had today, and we learned a lot. ■

Advanced Calibration Seminar at CEDIA!



Lion Audio Video Consultants, in conjunction with Datacolor, is pleased to offer a variety of educational sessions at the 2006 CEDIA Expo in Denver, CO. During the show (September 14-17), there will be three-hour introductory classes on the basics of video calibration. These courses are geared toward the calibration "newbie," and will provide an opportunity to learn the features and benefits of the ColorFacts Professional software. Upon completion, the "newbie" will have all of the necessary training to effectively use the ColorFacts Professional Software.

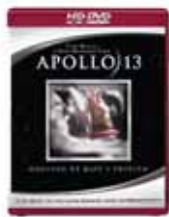
On the Tuesday and Wednesday prior to the show (September 12 and 13), Lion AV will be presenting a two-day (22-hour) comprehensive class titled "Hands-On Calibration Training," for technicians with knowledge beyond the basics, as well as those seeking ISF Certification. Instruction will include the

essential theory behind the creation of a reference calibrated image. Hands-on training will include a variety of display technologies including CRT, plasma, LCoS, LCD, and DLP, in both front and rear projection formats. This class will also allow the attendee to obtain ISF Certification (www.imagingscience.com), pending successful completion of the written exam. All attendees that successfully demonstrate essential calibration procedures will be awarded CCP (Certified ColorFacts Professional) Certification.

For the advanced practitioner, Lion AV offers the "Advanced Color Space and Color Space Management Class," featuring Joe Kane (Joe Kane Productions), the most widely noted Color Scientist in the home theatre industry. This four-hour class is being offered on Wednesday and Thursday evening. It will cover a series of advanced topics including

the differences between SD and HD color space, adjusting a display with CMS (Color Management System) capabilities, and manipulation of the CCA and CMS menu systems in order to appropriately calibrate a display. Real-world examples will be provided as well as in-room demonstrations using a variety of displays that allow for CCA and CMS manipulation. Datacolor, as sponsor, is offering ColorFacts customers the opportunity to attend at a reduced rate.

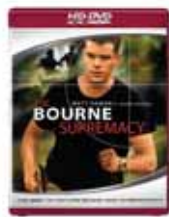
Please contact Cindy McMorris at Datacolor, (919) 570 3115 (cmcmorris@datacolor.com), or Gregg Loewen at Lion Audio Video Consultants, (201) 232 3380 (gregg@lionav.com) for more information or to enroll in an educational offering. While at the CEDIA Expo, please be sure to visit the Datacolor booth #633.



\$34.98



\$34.98



\$34.98



\$34.98



\$39.99



\$34.98



\$28.95



\$28.99



\$28.95



\$34.98



\$28.98



\$28.98



\$28.98



\$39.99



\$34.98



\$38.95



\$38.95



\$34.98

High Definition—now in optical form!
HD DVD & Blu-ray Disc available now at
Widescreen Review's HD Store:
<http://www.WidescreenReview.com>

Everything is in stock! Buy now!



And introducing the Monster/ISF HDTV Calibration Wizard DVD. Only \$29.95!

SUBSCRIBE NOW! TO WIDESCREEN REVIEW

Print Subscription Special

One Year—12 Issues

U.S. - \$34.00

Canada/Mexico - \$40.00US

International. - \$55.00US

All pricing includes shipping.

Two Year—24 Issues

U.S. - \$60.00

Canada/Mexico - \$70.00US

International - \$100.00US

All pricing includes shipping.

Online Subscription Special

12 Month Access

\$15.00

24 Month Access

\$30.00



To Subscribe Go To:
www.WidescreenReview.com/subscribe

The Essential Home Theatre Resource™
WIDESCREEN
REVIEW® NEWSLETTER