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Canada's IMAX film top draw at New Orleans Expo '84

When the 1984 World Exposition opens in New Orleans, Louisiana on May 12, the star attraction in the Canadian Pavillion will be a 15-minute film that is described as a revolution in entertainment.

River Journey, made by Canada's IMAX Systems Corporation, is a completely different system of film production and projection that involves viewers in an exciting and dramatic experience.

In *River Journey*, viewers sitting in a special custom-designed theatre will be swept across rivers and waterfalls, and will plunge into a whitewater cauldron hemmed in by steep canyon walls. They will be carried across pastoral landscape, race with windsurfers, and fly over cities and harbours.

Behind the scenes, a single powerful projector throws an image on the screen ten times the size of that in a conventional movie theatre. A six-track Dolby state-of-the-art sound system completely surrounds the viewer with the music and sound of the picture. The result is breathtaking: the viewer experiences the action.

The IMAX story is one of daring and inventiveness, experimentation and success. Its roots go back to 1967, when the hit of Montreal's Expo '67 was undoubtedly the National Film Board of Canada's *Labyrinth*, a powerful, multi-screen film. Popular and critical acclaim for *Labyrinth* and *Polar Life*, another outstanding multi-screen Expo film, convinced long-time friends, Graeme Ferguson, Robert Kerr, and Roman Kroitor, producers of the two films, that the giant-screen experience could be used effectively in a new generation of motion picture theatres throughout the world.

Their goal was to develop a completely new system, using a single, powerful projector instead of the cumbersome multiple projectors used at Expo '67. The sys-



Roger Scruggs

tem would have to meet the highest technical standards while projecting images on the largest screens in cinema history. The three men formed Multi-screen Corporation (now IMAX Systems Corporation), a small Canadian company that would revolutionize the art of the cinema.

The incentive was an invitation from Japan to premiere the new system at Osaka's 1970 Exposition. The new company accepted the challenge. Consultants warned that the technical problems might be insurmountable: how for instance, to project the largest film frame ever used without tearing it to shreds?

A close associate, Jean-Philippe Carson, was aware of a new invention. Half-way across the world, Ron Jones, the owner of a small machine shop in Brisbane, Australia, had been working on a similar problem. His lifelong fascination with cinematographic equipment had just led him to the invention of the Rolling Loop, a mechanism that pushes the film in gentle, caterpillar-like waves. Recognizing its importance, the Multi-screen partners immediately bought the patent rights, and invited another friend, William Shaw, to join the team. As director of development, Shaw's first assignment was to



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