The Power of the Giant Screen Phenomenon

Firstly, on our collective behalf, I wish to thank David Mosena for his presidency of GSTA during the past two years. Our association prospers a great deal from member dedication, and to be at its helm is a significant responsibility. We are fortunate to have had David’s clear leadership and ambassadorial skills as well as the able support of his assistant Eileen Cabrera. His pragmatic approaches that we are stronger together and that our short- and long-term outlooks must be integrated have been right for the times. Key industry relationships have improved, our forum has become more global, volunteer input has increased, committees have quickly aligned with updated strategies, and our administrative support has become more focused on GSTA’s ongoing vitality. These accomplishments were alongside David’s position as president and CEO of the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago, North America’s largest such institution.

It was just five years ago that GSTA took the step of having professional staff with Mary Ann Henker becoming our first executive director. On behalf of GSTA’s board and membership, I express our warm appreciation to Mary Ann for her many formative contributions. Succeeding her as executive director is Gretchen Jaspering, most recently the Marketing/Communications vice president at the St. Louis Science Center and a GSTA volunteer in several capacities.

The common bond across our industry is the unique phenomenon we call the giant screen experience. Its power is such that we can each vividly recall the moments that most affected us. For me, films like The Dream Is Alive and Blue Planet powerfully conveyed what travel beyond the atmosphere feels like and how our world looks from afar. As examples, I was then moved by the beautiful ballet performance in To The Limit, Sting’s evocative soundtrack for The Living Sea, the unfolding drama in Everest, the brilliant colors of life amid pitch blackness in Volcanoes of the Deep Sea, the beat and movement in Pulse: a STOMP Odyssey, the ecological richness in Ocean Oasis, the mother’s emotions in The Human Body, the displays of courage in Shackleton’s Antarctic Adventure and Lewis & Clark: Great Journey West, and humanity’s impact and potential in Jane Goodall’s Wild Chimpanzees.

What all of these giant screen moments share is the poignant assembly of image, sequence, narration, music and the harnessing of the medium’s unique attributes. As declared by its mission, GSTA’s particular interest is that these characteristics be underpinned with a purpose to usefully transform the way audiences look upon the chosen subject. One of my favorite daily moments at Liberty Science Center is the spontaneous applause from audiences in our IMAX dome theater as films end. While our industry is the work of adults in relatively few countries, we should not forget the tremendously positive impact that we can have around the world on all ages and stages of learning.

GSTA’s next International Conference and Trade Show will be the first to be held in Japan, and it is fitting that we go to Osaka. At the 1970 World Expo in Osaka, millions of people experienced the very first 15 perf/70mm film. Tiger Child, a gripping montage about people in all of their complexity, was the pioneering project of the newly formed IMAX Corporation in Canada.

Since 1970, giant screen films have frequently been commissioned for expos. Indeed, Japan has played a major role in enabling this experimentation. Yet expos are events that most of us rarely, if ever, experience. GSTA’s 2005 International Conference will be the perfect time and place to probe the inspirational role of expos in our industry’s evolution. Expo 2005 Aichi, with a focus on nature, is being billed as Japan’s major tourist event for this year. Just a 50-minute bullet train ride from Osaka, this expo in Nagoya ends September 25 and our conference starts September 26.

I invite you to come to Osaka where our industry began and let your giant screen mind expand to more international horizons. There will be new markets to explore and new colleagues to meet in addition to all of the usual must-have reasons of our industry’s leading one-stop annual forum. At the spectacular portside location of the Suntory Museum with its art deco show on tour from London’s Victoria and Albert Museum, and next to Japan’s second largest aquarium, Kaiyukan, that represents the entire Pacific Ocean, the IMAX theater has 446 seats. Early registration is strongly recommended. Whether this will be your first, fifth or fifteenth time visiting the Asia-Pacific rim, GSTA’s hosts in Japan are eager to welcome you with outstanding hospitality for what will be a memorable giant screen industry experience.

Emlyn Koster
GSTA President