

The Industry's First In-Depth Look at Its Audience

OFF
CAMERA



David R. Mosena
GSTA President

A lot of attention will be paid in this issue of *The Big Frame*, and in general discussions throughout the industry, to the recently published GSTA Viewer and Nonviewer Research Study®.

This study, the first of its kind that was not brand specific, was presented at the GSTA 2003 International Conference and Trade Show this past September in Glasgow. It was commissioned by GSTA, growing out of our last strategic plan, and conducted by the research firm TNS. It was our first glimpse at how current viewers, lapsed viewers and people who have never attended a giant screen theater view both our theaters and our films. A summary of the study's findings was presented to delegates in a standing-room-only ballroom in Glasgow.

The work is important for several reasons. In keeping with our mission to be the global forum for the industry, it represents a first in-depth look at our audiences on an international scale. It is very timely, given that so many of our institutions and companies are looking hard for ways to improve their business performance. And it represents a new level of services delivered by GSTA to its membership, the first of what will hopefully become a series of information tools and resources that help our members grow and develop.

The data is rich, and all segments of the industry will want to mine it carefully. Many theaters elected to do further in-depth research in their own local markets.

I am sure different people will see different things in the study findings. Hopefully, they will exchange their views and interpretations and improve our collective dialogue so that we can all better understand what makes this business tick.

For me personally, I saw hope in the findings. I saw audience reactions of high affinity—people love these films. And they love the experience, too. In fact, the experience is a key ingredient of these films' success. That's why film producers and critics talk so much about taking full advantage of the medium and the format.

I saw untapped markets. There is room for growth and development, where previously some were saying that the giant screen film market was saturated and audiences burned out. The data breaks the market down into segments, which helps

in the more efficient targeting of marketing messages, something all of us operating with limited resources need help with.

The demographic data, by far the most comprehensive and objective snapshot of our audience produced to date, will be invaluable to helping sell sponsorships, which we all know are becoming critical to the economic success of making a giant screen film.

Viewer reactions to film content, film length, pricing and value are also useful findings from the study.

But one key truth we all should know comes through loud and clear. The critical factor that best guarantees success is—you guessed it—a great film. No matter what else we can do to improve this industry and its performance, nothing will do more for it than producing great films. Sounds

silly, I know, but sometimes I think we get caught up in all the other variables that are part of the formula and lose sight of this basic point. Spectacular films that compel our attention are the keys to success.

Marketing is a good example. And don't get me wrong. I think smart marketing is critical, and GSTA gives annual awards for it. There was a lot of talk at the Glasgow conference about marketing and branding and concerns expressed about what some of us were doing to the brand by our various actions. But one comment I heard brought me back to the bottom line—nothing hurts our brand more than a weak film.

So, dig into the data and listen to what our viewers think about us and the products and experiences we offer. And let us know what you think. All of the GSTA board members are listed on page 20 of *The Big Frame*, along with their e-mail addresses and phone numbers. In Berlin, in February 2004, the board will draft the next iteration of our association's strategic plan. Let us know your thoughts, on this research or other matters, *before* we get to Berlin.

In the meantime, I hope the findings of our research give you hope, too.

Turn to page 40 of this issue of *The Big Frame* for an article on the GSTA Viewer and Nonviewer Research Study®. To order your copy of the 150-page study, contact Tori Nonnemaecher at tori@giantentheater.com.

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