



Lights, Camera, Action! Hitachi America, Ltd. Goes Hollywood



Hitachi LCD Projectors Play Role in Two Sci-Fi Blockbusters

In today's movie business, the demand for cutting edge display technology continues to accelerate. As the number of futuristic films produced each year climbs, so does the desire of filmmakers to construct the most realistic picture of the future.

Hitachi America, Ltd., has partnered with Todd Marks, a Computer/Video Playback Supervisor, to construct a visually captivating view of the future on two of Hollywood's most highly anticipated films of the Holiday 2002 season. The Hitachi CP-X985, CP-X275W, CP-X380W and CPX-370 will be featured in both *Star Trek: Nemesis* (Paramount Pictures) and *Solaris* (20th Century Fox), starring George Clooney.

"From pre-production and throughout the entire production process, the computer/video department is charged with managing all the set imagery. I do extensive research on the latest and most reliable gear, and need to be aware of where the future of screen and projection technology is going in order to build a realistic image," said Todd Marks. "My department helped incorporate new technology from Hitachi America, Ltd. into the design of the ship's consoles and gadgets, and helped implement some of the latest projection technology using Hitachi's high-end micro projectors. On several occasions we were able to playback elements on the set that would have previously required an expensive post-production visual effect."

During the *Star Trek* shoot, the Hitachi CP-X985, CP-X275W and CPX380W models were used to solve unique scene requirements. For example, the bridge of the alien Reman Ship featured several CP-X380s as part of the alien's control consoles. The compact size and bright image provided the power needed to create very unique alien consoles. The consoles were custom designed to mount the projectors in an upright position and the projected images were split into different directions for a very unique effect. The projection beam passed through a 50/50 mirror and the image was split so half the beam passed through onto the alien Reman's standing above the console, and half reflected onto a special piece of rear projection material mounted on the front of the console.

"The effects we created with Hitachi's projectors looked terrific both in person and on film," said Marks. "We have a great track record with Hitachi and continue to use their projectors to address the live computer and video playback challenges we face and to help us create the advanced visuals we need for sci-fi and futuristic films like *Solaris* and *Star Trek*."

The Hitachi CP-X985's super-bright image and flexibility also helped solve some difficult situations with set design. The front consoles on the Reman bridge had long narrow curved pieces of rear projection material-not typical shapes for projection screens. The playback animation was built to help correct the odd projection angle, but it was the projector's extensive reverse keystone correction that made the effect work flawlessly. The final result resembled a futuristic super-thin curved video screen. Marks notes that "many people standing next to the screens could not figure out where the image was coming from."

Hitachi's CP-275 provided Marks and his crew with a small powerful, yet quiet projector. In a scene where Captain Picard climbs into the alien fighter ship, the *Scorpion*, he fiddles with the controls, and the ship comes to life. The team needed a way to project some of the imagery from the ship's screens onto Picard's face. The CP-275 was small and powerful enough to fit between Picard's feet in the footwell of the tiny ship, giving the crew the ability to easily get the final shot.

Michael Okuda's department (at Paramount) provided the graphics and animation. "Our job was to make them look the best we could," said Marks. "I believe that we helped push Star Trek's playback quality to a new level."

Over on the Warner Brother's stages, Marks used Hitachi's CP-X985 to address the holographic images needed for Academy Award winning Director, Stephen Soderbergh's upcoming 20th Century Fox feature, *Solaris*.

"About a week before production started, Stephen decided that he wanted futuristic holographic projection TV's playing back live on the set, instead of as a visual effect as had originally been planned," said Marks. "We had to scramble and do some quick research and calculations, but we were able to pull it off with Hitachi's CP-X985. The high quality lens and keystone correction allowed us to project onto the holograph screen material from a very low angle, keeping the projector hidden from view of the camera. The holographic TV technique was used in several of the film's scenes and was very effective."

Hitachi's smaller CP-X370 model was used to create imagery for interior shots of a futuristic train and train station by projecting onto special rear projection acrylic materials. The CP-X370's whisper mode was especially helpful in addressing noise considerations on the set.

"We consider ourselves experts creating and playing back visually interesting imagery," said Marks. "It's beneficial for actors and directors to interact with live computer and video imagery as opposed to post-production burn-ins. With today's projector technologies, we can create real-time playback on set, which is cheaper, quicker, and more efficient than doing it in post-production."