

PANAVISIONS OF THE FUTURE

by David Lenham

The Guild's Secretary recently returned from a North American location with another film under his belt and wonderful Travellers Tales unfold. An example to all technicians with any command of the English language, and with some time interestingly spent, he sets forth his experiences below.

For the first time I finished a film on location and did not have to worry about getting the equipment back to England. Panavision in Montreal had supplied everything we needed for the Canadian end of 'A Man Called Intrepid' and it was a relief not to have Carnets and customs along with all the shipping lists to think about. Ken Withers, who was the operator on the film, wanted to go down to Reno to visit his sister who he had not seen for seven years and I wanted to go to Los Angeles to visit Panavision and the A.S.C. so we forked out untold Dollars and bought ourselves a Reno—Los Angeles—London ticket.

We arrived in Reno in time for Thanksgiving and a great family reunion, with Ken meeting his two nephews for the first time (he had met one of them 32 years ago when he was ten months old but everyone agreed that that did not count).

Holiday time in Reno was a sight to behold and it will be hard to forget watching thousands of people, none of them looking too wealthy, pouring literally millions of Dollars into the one arm bandits and onto the tables. The new M.G.M. casino was a sight that would delight an Art director's heart. The main hall was 120 yards wide and a ¼ mile long with illumination being provided by over 100 cut glass chandeliers. Lake Tahoe and Squaw Valley were full of very fit looking Ski bums, and a Mexican eating place on the edge of the Lake provided a meal which I thought, at the time, would last me for a



The exterior of the Panavision plant at Tarzana, Cal. Memorise this and take a good map it's not easy to find.

week. We went up to Virginia City where the original bonanza took place and where they are still digging it out of the ground. All in all Reno was what most people would describe as a tourist trap but I have to admit that it was impressive in its way. One thing that I felt epitomised the town was the claim made by the M.G.M. casino that their Cabaret stage was the biggest in the World. They are probably right. On their first night the curtains swept back to reveal a full size airplane with dancers on the wings. *The plane was a Boeing 747!*

We phoned Panavision in L.A. before leaving Reno and were pleased to find that Sidney Samuelson had already called Frank Vogelsang, Vice President of, Panavision, and told him that



Panavision's President Bob Gottschalk



'You could set up an operating table...so clean and spotless...' The electronic workshop.

we were on our way. We arrived in L.A. late at night and somewhat trepidatious because Ken and I both admitted to each other that this was the first time that we had arrived at any airport with no one expecting us, no transport, and no where to sleep. Ken's family had warned us that driving in L.A. was a nightmare so naturally Ken let me drive. It wasn't that bad. Just about the same as central London so that was our first fear out of the way. We booked into a motel which we hoped was near Panavision and our problems were over for that night at least.

Before going to Panavision I wanted to call in at the A.S.C. to find out what the chances were of having them host us, the Guild, on a visit to Hollywood. I was delighted to find that not only did they know of the Guild but that Herb Lightman, the Editor of the American Cinematographer, had been in London only three days before, and had called in at our office in Cricklewood and met

Kevin Kavanagh. Unfortunately we had just missed the A.S.C. monthly get-together by less than 24 hours but we were made very welcome by Charles Clarke A.S.C., who is their Business manager in L.A. They have what can only be described as 'a luxury pad' just off of Hollywood Boulevard. They have been going for just over 50 years, I believe, and they obviously were well advised when buying the property back in the 20's.

We made a fleeting visit to the I.A.T.S.E. office on Sunset Boulevard, but a visit from two English technicians did not exactly set them alight and casual inquiries into the state of the business in the U.S. was treated as though it were top secret. The less said about that the better.

Panavision was a different story. Tak Miyagishima, the Vice President Engineering, showed us all over the plant and it was everything I imagined that it would be. You could have set up an operating table in the middle of the

engineering workshop; everything was so clean and spotless. Tak told us that they made about 80% of their equipment on the premises, and going through the various rooms we saw lenses being assembled, Panaflexes taking shape and Panaheads scattered all over the place. All the time we were hoping we would get to look at all the new equipment we had been hearing about. We were not disappointed and below you will find listed all the new 'toys' we saw and handled. It was hinted that other 'bits' were around but nobody was offering them up for inspection, so we assumed that they were still on the secret list. Incidentally there are a lot of English guys working at Panavision L.A. which came as something of a surprise to us.

Some of the equipment we saw was either a prototype or the first off the production line, but much is now available in America and we should be seeing it here in the very near Future.

The Super Panahead

A heavy duty Panahead that will take the P.V.S.R. or any other studio sound camera except 65m. Very similar to the standard Panahead in appearance except that it does not have a built-in wedge, though there is a separate adjustable one that comes with the head, the centre of gravity of which has been calculated with this wedge in place.

The "Super" P.V.S.R.

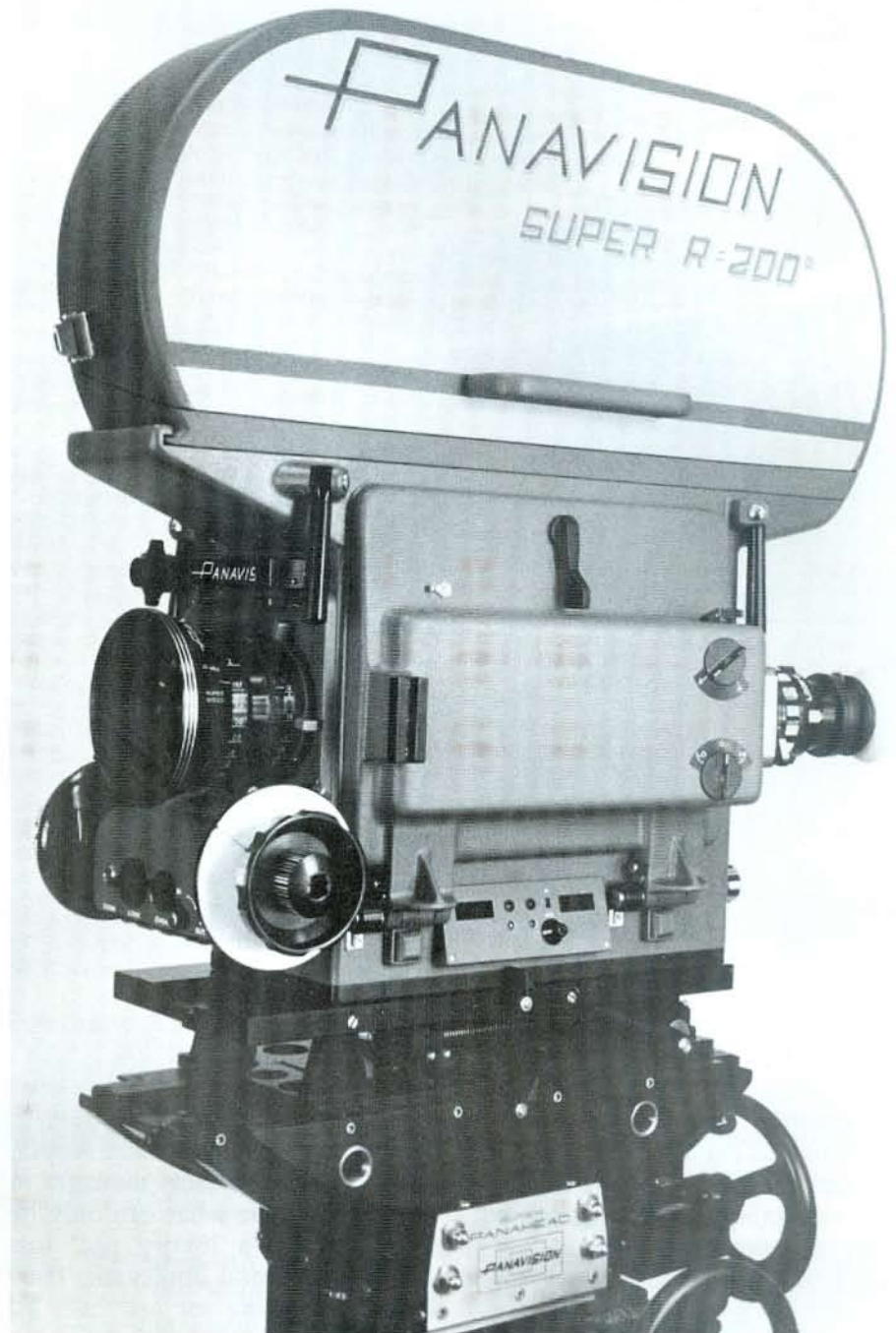
Nothing new about the actual camera itself but the blimp housing has been 'cleaned up', and the footages, speed indicator and speed control are now all electronic. They are situated in the position one would normally expect to see the side finder. They have also fitted the same motor as that installed in the Panaflex (but somewhat beefed up) so the motor housing is now much smaller, and the motor will in future 'ride' on the camera.

The 'new' Panaflex

Once again no change in the camera mechanism but operators will be pleased to know that the optics have been changed and that this modification provides a much brighter image with a less critical 'exit' point at the eyepiece. One drawback I felt needed mentioning was that they have removed the magnifier on the camera body and retained the one on the look-through tube - which is fine except that this magnifier is now sprung-loaded so that you now have to hold it in position. The snag is, of course, that you have to hold it with the same hand that you would be hoping to focus with. I hope they amend that design slightly, otherwise I can see focus pullers resorting to camera tape which is not good for the image. Corporate image rather than photographic that is.

The 'Panastar' camera

Viewed from the focus pullers side this camera looks just like a normal Panaflex; however on the motor side the motor housing looks like the one on the old S35 blimps. This camera is, in fact, a crystal controlled high speed camera working at 'stepped'



The new 'Super' PVSR 200 seen on the equally new heavy duty Super Panahead. A picture to make the fingers itch.

speeds between 24fps and 120fps. It has a specially designed movement and has an 'electronic' control. That is, you set the speed at which you want to shoot and switch on. The electronics will bring it up to speed at a 'safe' rate. It is also possible to use it as a crystal controlled sync camera at 24 fps, although obviously it is much noisier than a normal Panaflex. One snag is that it does not take the standard magazines in its high speed mode. The high speed mags look similar to standard mags but with one or two obvious differences around the motor drive. It is possible

however to use the high speed mags on a standard Panaflex so perhaps the magazine complement need not be all that greater than normal.

The Panaflex 'X'

I heard about this camera three years ago and have been trying to get a sight of one ever since. It was originally to be marketed as a 'spare tyre' insofar as you would normally be expected to rent one of them in addition to a Panaflex. It is similar to a Panaflex except that it has a vastly simplified look-through, rather like an S35, though it does

not have the same hand holding capability. All the standard fittings go on it with no difficulty. It has a variable shutter and speed and believe it or believe it not, the hire price I was quoted in L.A. was less than for a full Arriflex outfit — if you just took the camera body on its own. Obviously life is never that easy; should you want to use it as an entirely separate second camera you will need a head and legs with extra magazines (though this is an option I am sure most crews will want to take up). Extra batteries would also be needed and, depending on the director's lens requirements, you might well find you will be doubling up on some lenses. I think it will prove a very useful second camera and I was pleased to find that it will be available here in the early part of the coming year. Jack Hildyard has booked one.

The 'Panafinder'

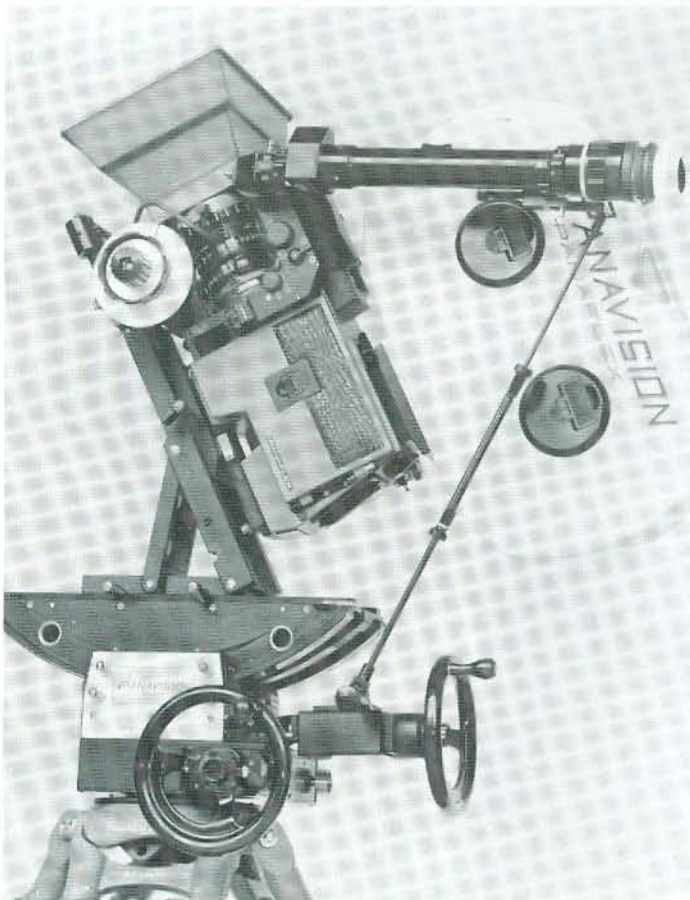
I have discussed this piece of gear with a number of people since I came back and have received mixed reactions. I think

that, providing it stays with the Camera crew and does not become a Director's 'toy', it could be very useful. It should help operators a great deal in terms of both the set up and in time saved with 'wasted' set ups — those that are not proceeded with once the operator gets the camera in position and is able to look through. All the new piece of equipment amounts to is an eyepiece and a lens mount with the ground glass of your choice inside it. Many operators know through experience what effect perspective is going to have with a particular lens, but there are always those shots where you need to know *exactly* how the image is going to look, and generally the only way of finding out is through the camera. When it's just a question of wheeling a dolly a few yards there is no problem, but if it means climbing halfway up a mountain, or rigging a car, or getting permission to shoot from the Queen Mum's bedroom window then I think this 'finder' will be found to be very useful. It is very small. Every lens can be

attached and the ground glass can be matched exactly to the one in the camera.

Panavision 'Ultra' zoom

The 'Ultra' comes from the aperture rather than the focal length. It is a high quality 20–125mm lens, and the aperture is T1.9. The focal length doubles when used as an anamorphic lens, i.e. 40–250mm. One fantastic innovation which the lens has incorporated within it is the capability to focus, zoom and alter aperture REMOTELY! I asked if an armchair was included in the kit for the focus puller but I wasn't taken too seriously. Panavision are also working on a remote focus and zoom control for use with *any* lens which will be radio controlled. A snag for us here is the wavelength on which they have it working. Apparently it will be well nigh impossible to get permission to use it in this country but if you are going abroad it may well prove very useful. 'Phoning it in' may very well become a reality in the very near future!



Panaflex with automatic viewfinder levelling system fully operational.



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For further information contact:

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Requests

While I was there I asked if the company would consider some or all of the following: Change the whole system of plugs on the zoom lenses to a sturdier design;

Provide a base plate on which to put the Panaflex camera when it is 'made up' with zoom lens and focus control etc; Make some provision for graduated filters larger than the standard Panavision issue

for use on the 20-120mm lens, whilst *still* retaining the use of the two existing filter trays; To increase the speed of gears two and three on the Panahead so that Three becomes *very* fast, Two medium and One slow. Ken Withers found that, for him at least, third gear was the most used speed; And working on the principle that the speed you use most should be in the middle of the range, Ken asked if such a change would be possible. We were told that individual heads could be modified to the tastes of all operators but that, in some cases at least, it would entail cutting special gears. Another thing that Ken asked them to consider was whether it was possible to move the 'neutral' position to the end of the gear train, rather than have it between gears Two and Three. A number of times, especially on zoom shots that started or ended with a fast pan, he wanted to change from third to second gear (or vice versa) but did not dare to do so because of possible camera movement in that neutral position.



The Panaflex X -- a handsome reserve camera, available for U.K. hire this year.



The PV Ultra Zoom. High quality 20mm-125mm with an aperture of a startling 1.9. With an anamorph it's focal length doubles to 40mm-250mm, and focus, aperture setting, and zoom can all be controlled remotely.

Conclusions

All in all I was very pleased that I went to L.A. and especially Panavision. They were amazed when we told them that they were the reason for our long detour on the way home and promised their full co-operation if the Guild should decide to have a group visit there. In fact, Bob Gottschalk has already agreed to host a visit to the Panavision plant and urgently wishes to know how many "Refreshment" vouchers will be required!

One thing which was evident to Ken and I was the fact that a great deal of research and planning would be needed before such a visit; there is so much to see, and do, that there would be a very real chance of our missing something good simply because of a lack of knowledge of the place. I think a visit would be really worthwhile and I for one would be happy to go back.

DAVID LENHAM
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