

Last month, we reported on Cinemark's and Marcus Theatres' efforts to "supersize" select theatres with their new brands, Cinemark XD and UltraScreen. Now we turn to the two largest circuits in North America and their plans to deliver "the bigger picture" to their patrons.

Regal Entertainment Group chose the island of Manhattan to debut the Regal Premium Experience, RPX for short ([www.regmovies.com/rpx](http://www.regmovies.com/rpx)). RPX's arrival with the May 7 release of *Iron Man 2* at Regal E-Walk was not only hailed with logo additions on its famed blade-sign façade and a dedicated billboard high above busy 42nd Street, but also with subsequent trade ads touting record grosses.

"The opening exceeded our expectations and impressed moviegoers in the New York City area with our giant-screen presentation," marketing and advertising senior VP Dick Westerling asserts. "RPX presents movies the way filmmakers intended, with powerful, uncompressed sur-

round sound and bright, eye-popping images in 2D and RealD 3D. Patrons enjoy the custom-built premium environment featuring elegant and luxurious seats with high-back headrests and a giant immersive screen illuminated by high-quality digital projectors."

For both the E-Walk and the Kendall Village Stadium 16 & RPX in Greater Miami, which launched a week later, Regal utilizes 30,000 and 21,000-lumen dual projectors for screen widths of 60 and 52 feet, respectively (18 and 16 m). A neon-lit entrance, conceived with Philadelphia's

# THE X-FACTOR

## REGAL AND AMC EXPAND THE DEFINITION OF 'BIG SCREEN'

BY ANDREAS FUCHS



## THE XTREME VUE

by Mark de Quervain  
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On February 12, 2010, Vue Entertainment ([www.myvue.com/corporate](http://www.myvue.com/corporate)) launched a special new Xtreme offering as part of its opening of Vue Westfield, Europe's first purpose-built, all-digital multiplex cinema. The layout and design of the 14-plex included two massive auditoriums which Vue wanted to have a special wow factor. To achieve this, it was decided to trial the idea of installing a proprietary large-screen format similar to what a few other exhibitors had done in other countries including Australia, the U.S. and Canada.

Technically, the ability to do this

was well within the capabilities of the Barco digital projectors and RealD XL 3D systems that were being installed as the standard in this cinema. The additional work required included increasing the size of the screens to over 18.5 meters wide by nearly 10 meters tall (33 by 61 feet), making each one the equivalent size of nearly four double-decker buses. With those dimensions, both

VueXtreme screens are bigger than any of the main premier screens in Leicester Square and are the largest of their type in London including IMAX screens retrofitted at other cinemas and aside from the specially built super-sized screen at the British Film Institute.

To match the picture, we also fitted VueXtreme with an unbelievable digital surround sound



JKR Partners on the design team, alongside logo-embroidered custom high-back pleather rocking seats, and RPX-adorned acoustical wall treatments round out the premium look. To match the slogan “The Best Picture You’ve Ever Heard!,” E-Walk’s “100,000 watt digital audio system

with 9.1 speaker array provides pinpoint sound with 273 loudspeaker components and eight powerful 21-inch subwoofers,” Regal informs. The Kendall Village RPX auditorium is “equipped with a 20,000-watt digital audio system and an impressive 9.1 speaker array, 80 different

loudspeaker components, and 20 18-inch subwoofers for deep resonating bass.”

“All of these elements come together for enhanced sight and sound,” Westerling notes. “Each RPX auditorium will be custom-built to deliver a superior all-digital experience to patrons in every seat. Regal technicians individually design each RPX location.” In retrofitting, they “work with the unique characteristics of the selected auditorium to design a great environment for moviegoing... Our crew is dedicated to surpass guest expectations and will take the time needed for each project. So far, the time for design and construction has varied from one month to four months depending on the scope of changes to the existing auditorium.”

The name selection, logo design, brochures and other branding materials were all handled internally by Regal staff as well. About the origin of the RPX name, “Premium Experience is the terminology that Regal has used in describing these attributes for many years,” Westerling says of the circuit’s “highest standards of presentation.” So, “the adoption of ‘RPX: Regal Premium Experience’ is an easy transition,” he opines. “We’ve found that



system. A Dolby Digital Surround Sound THX-rated system delivers seat-shaking, flawless sound through six massive subwoofers and speakers behind the screens and 18 surround-sound speakers mounted in each auditorium. Furthermore, the size and shape of the two 456-seat auditoriums enabled a very high rake and step height for the extremely comfortable stadium and VIP seating, giving fantastic clear and uninterrupted views of the super-sized screens.

Having decided to do this, the next task was to come up with a suitable name, brand image and proposition. VueXtreme was born, together with a powerful creative execution that packaged the offer under the banner of “cinema for thrill seekers and a supporting line of “super-sized sound and vision.”

A special 2D and 3D Vue Extreme brand trailer was also created to help sell the concept among a wide range of other communication elements covering in-cinema, online, outdoor advertising and PR.

A small price premium of £1 (\$1.50) was added to the standard ticket prices—current adult peak price £9.70 (\$14)—for films shown in the two Xtreme auditoriums. It’s a price customers feel to represent good value for money. To date, the Xtreme screens at Vue Westfield are the most popular screens by far and have helped to establish the site as the U.K.’s leading cinema. Already in the first four months since opening, Vue Westfield topped the U.K. charts six times for weekend grosses and surpassed the gross of the premier cinemas in London’s Leicester Square for opening weekends of

both *Robin Hood* and *Iron Man 2*.

VueXtreme is still finding its feet, but customer feedback and response to date with films shown all point to a long future within Vue’s growing portfolio of products, services and experiences that we offer our customers. Feedback from film distributors has also been excellent, with many saying that VueXtreme’s presentation and experience are second to none. This has helped to establish Vue Westfield as a location for world premieres, with *Prince of Persia* having been the first of hopefully many more.

With the success of VueXtreme in Westfield, we are now looking to trial retrofitting this offer in a few existing cinemas in our circuit over the coming months. Vue’s new cinema in Bury already had an Xtreme screen from its opening date, July 16.

these days more patrons are seeking out the ultimate experience and a premium environment. We've witnessed moviegoers asking managers which auditorium number has the biggest and best presentation. And then these patrons will wait until that showtime to enjoy the comforts of a select auditorium in our facility. RPX is a natural evolution of our business to respond to our customers' desires to enjoy a premium experience."

The IMAX Experience has already been in place at 42 of Regal's theatres. And, indeed, Westerling confirms, the circuit expects to add IMAX theatres to additional locations while also launching more RPX theatres. "The addition of RPX extends the number of Regal theatres featuring premium moviegoing experiences," he explains. "We have not announced an exact number of theatres to be added per year for either format."

By contrast, IMAX and AMC Entertainment did announce an extension to ten years of their previous 2007 joint venture and expansion of between 15 to 25 IMAX theatres in both new and existing IMAX markets. A media release further stated, "These theatres are in addition to AMC's current rollout of 104 IMAX joint-venture theatres, 79 of which are in operation and 25 of which are expected



A NEW AMC ETX THEATRE JOINED AN IMAX IN THE EMPIRE 25 IN TIMES SQUARE.



to open by the end of 2010 in the United States and Canada." Between 125 and 135 IMAX locations upon completion will continue to make AMC the largest exhibition partner for IMAX.

So why add your own big-screen brand to boot, *FJI* wanted to know about the new AMC ETX: Enhanced Theatre Experience. "ETX is just one of several ways

guests can experience movies and other content at AMC Theatres," responds communications manager Justin Scott, with IMAX, IMAX 3D, 3D and 2D as examples. "Each option represents a different level of sight and sound technology and all options provide guests an enjoyable out-of-home entertainment experience."

## CINEMAGNUM CUM LAUDE

In an interesting mix of giant-screen variations, Nuremberg, Germany-based Fantasia Film GmbH & Co. Verleih KG ([www.fantasiafilm.de](http://www.fantasiafilm.de)) took over the former IMAX house in Frankfurt, upgraded a classic Dresden theatre and opened a dedicated digital 3D screen in Weimar. Located in the Italian town lifestyle section of the latter city's Atrium shopping center, the first Cinemagnum 3D opened on Dec. 21, 2006. With more than 200 square meters (2,150 sq. ft.), the silver screen is the largest in the state of Thuringia. In Frankfurt, up to 350 people can enjoy the 220-square-



FANTASIA'S CINEMAGNUM 3D IN FRANKFURT, GERMANY.

meter image (2,370 sq. ft.) on the very top of the Zeil Galerie with gorgeous rooftop views to match the panoramic picture inside. Both locations use dual Christie projectors, Doremi servers and "circular polarized glasses and filters."

In Dresden, the Cinemagnum is part of the famous Rundkino, the first cinema to be built there after World War II ([www.rundkino.com](http://www.rundkino.com)) and one of the very few in the former Democratic Republic to get Dolby sound during the 1980s. In true socialist-revolutionary fashion, the 1972 building lives up to its

name with a fully circular design of 50 meters (164 feet) in diameter. Marking another milestone ([www.rundkino-dresden.de](http://www.rundkino-dresden.de)), on Nov. 5, 2008, Fantasia took over the 898-seat/638-lights-in-ceiling main house with the largest screen in Saxony (220 sq. m.). Cinemagnum programs 3D Hollywood movies there. Specialty 3D shorts are also shown digitally during the morning and off-hours alongside first-run films in the five basement auditoriums that were added in 1992 by UFA Theater AG. With 200 and 84 seats, two of those offer additional 3D capacities.

Of the ETX enhancements currently available at nine locations, Scott highlights “a 20-percent-larger high-gain silver screen” and “nearly twice as many audio channels compared to typical auditoriums.” The upgraded ETX sound system includes 60,000-plus watts delivered to an 11.1.1 lineup (five stage/screen channels, six surround, two low-frequency) of QSC speakers and amplifiers. “As a result of this improved experience, guests will not simply watch a movie,” Scott says, reiterating the launch message, “they will live it in ETX.” In other words, “guests see movies like never before inside an ETX auditorium. With the upgraded screen and sound system, in addition to the premium viewing experience digital cinema offers, we believe our guests who watch movies inside an ETX auditorium will walk away with a new perception of how movies should be delivered.”

On June 18, AMC Forum 22 in Montreal became the second AMC theatre in Canada after AMC Yonge & Dundas 24 in Toronto to offer ETX and the latest of

seven ETX auditoriums across the entire circuit. Back on March 26, the concept debuted in California with *Alice in Wonderland* at AMC Burbank 16 and AMC Century City 15. AMC Pleasure Island 24 in Orlando, Florida (a great venue for ShowEast 2010), AMC Northpark 15 in Dallas, AMC Metreon 16 in San Francisco, AMC Ontario Mills 30 (Ontario, Calif.) and AMC BarryWoods 24 in Kansas City have since followed suit.

With AMC Aventura 24 (Ft. Lauderdale, Florida) and Loews Lincoln Square (New York City) still on the upgrading board, the August 8 launch of ETX at AMC Empire 25 certainly upped the big-screen competition in the Big Apple. Both locations already have IMAX auditoriums of the redesigned MPX/digital and original 80 x 100-foot varieties. In fact, in November 1994, Lincoln Square launched with 18,000 watts of Sony Dynamic Digital Sound (SDDS) and an active 3D system with built-in speakers dubbed Personal Sound Environment (PSE).

Another circuit that has joined the bigger-screen wave is Honolulu, Hawaii-based Consolidated Theatres. The circuit’s Titan Extreme Cinema (Titan XC) concept launched on June 18 with *Toy Story 3* at the Consolidated Theatres Ward 16. The 66-foot-wide and 35-foot-tall screen (20 by 10 m) is billed as “the largest commercial movie screen in the state.”

The media release trumpeted the 75,000-watt digital surround sound system with 32 surround speakers and announced that “vibrant film presentation from the new NEC digital projection system will be paired with the latest innovation in 3D technology, XpanD 3D, for eye-popping images that are the first of their kind in the islands.” Unfortunately, Consolidated passed on further participation in this article. For those interested, more Titan XC information may be found on The BigScreen Cinema Guide (<http://bit.ly/FJI10big11>).

For more on this big trend, be sure to read next month’s report on Cineplex Entertainment and Carmike Cinemas.

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