

FIAF publications review #1

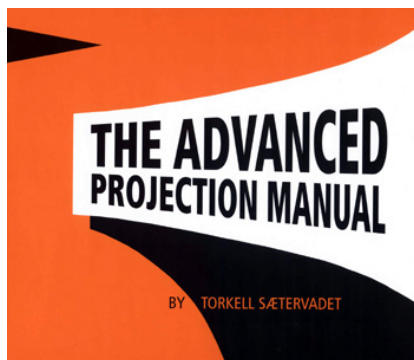
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The Advanced Projection Manual: Presenting Classic Films in a Modern Projection Environment. Torkell Sætervædet. The International Federation of Film Archives & Norwegian Film Institute, 2006. (300 pages, hardcover).

The *Fédération Internationale des Archives du Film* (FIAF) is the peak international body representing film archives around the world (www.fiafnet.org). FIAF has issued a number of books, journals and brochures over the years. This is the first in a series of reviews discussing some of these publications.

The Advanced Projection Manual is a practical guide for cinema engineers and projectionists engaged in the archival field, museums, repertoire cinemas and cinémathèques, i.e. institutions presenting classic and archival films with modern equipment. As private film collectors own and screen 'old' films, this book is certainly worth a look. Some knowledge of motion picture technology is required.



The book is divided into chapters on how to set out your cinema, which projectors and other equipment to choose (46 pages) and how to maintain it (divided into sections on projection and sound equipment; 14 and 11 pp.). A very short chapter describes the treatment of film and archive material (6 pp.). 35mm film format and projection ratios (36 pp.) and sound formats (46 pp.) are very well described and explained. This is followed by chapters on non-standard formats, i.e. 70mm film projection (22 pp.), 3D film (12 pp.) and narrow gauge film (10 pp.). One large chapter discusses the presentation of video and digital images (54 pp.) and is certainly worth reading for people venturing into these 'modern' formats.

Ideas on what to look out for when designing your cinema or screening room are certainly useful, however, the film collector is often constrained by the space available, and the costs involved in building a cinema or acquiring projection equipment. I found the thorough overview of 35mm & 70mm film formats, and sound formats, very informative. For someone who just uses a mono white-light solar cell without a special sound processor, the different types of sound formats are rather confusing. The author also writes about obscure formats, e.g. Sensurround. (It was interesting to read that there are films that will not play on a red light reader at all, esp. if the soundtrack is printed in grey colour; a white light reader reproduces them without problems.) All 35mm and 70mm formats and aspect ratios are very well explained and illustrated, and a good explanation on how to recognise them and project them is given.

An obvious omission in the book is a chapter on nitrate film, how to handle and project it. Film archives are probably the last places to 'officially' screen nitrate prints to the public (e.g. British Film Institute, London, or George Eastman House, Rochester) — though we all know that many collectors own nitrate films, as well. We are not even told how to recognise nitrate film stock, and I cannot recall having come across the word 'nitrate' while reading, at all. It would have been interesting to read about the requirements and procedures of projecting nitrate in a large cinema today.

The treatment of small gauge film in the *Manual* is very disappointing. Only a few pages are devoted to 16mm and Super-8. The author seems to think that non-standard format prints is not suitable for the big screen, and that there are too few good quality projectors available for these gauges. As many films from the 1920s, 30s and 40s are only available as 16mm viewing prints this is a rather poor stand to take. Furthermore, many documentaries, educational films, TV productions and news footage were originally shot on 16mm and should be presented in that format. The same applies to experimental films and home movies on Standard-8 / Super-8 as well as other gauges, like 9.5mm and 28mm, since many early films only survive on these 'obsolete' formats.

Nevertheless, I enjoyed reading the book very much and recommend it to everyone working professionally and privately in 35mm, 70mm or digital presentation. There are hardly any recently published projectionists' manuals available, most books on the topic are more than 20 or 30 years old. The book is very well designed and printed. It can be purchased online, e.g. with amazon, or visit the FIAF web-site (price: EUR 55.00).