

# Olympic Spirit provides a taste of the games

**V**ery few individuals know what it's like to compete in the Olympic Games, but soon many people will get to experience the thrill of being in the center of the action—competing for a gold medal.

Licensed by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the first of four Olympic Spirit Centers recently opened in Munich, Germany. The Center features multimedia exhibits and other attractions, but the centerpiece is a motion-simulation theater that literally takes the audience for a ride.

The audience views a series of short films produced and presented in Showscan format. Showscan films are produced in 65 mm format at 60 frames per second. They are also projected at 60 frames per second on 70 mm print film.

Each film tells a story from the point of view (POV) of an athlete competing in such games as boxing, the 110-meter hurdles, the 10-meter high dive, kayaking, pole vaulting and mountain biking.

"It's the closest thing to being there, when you are sitting in that theater, and the seats are rock-and-rolling in synch with the action of the screen," says director-cinematographer Rod Paul of Primary Pictures in Atlanta, Georgia. "When that big (ceiling to floor and wall to wall) screen is filled with images, it grabs and holds the audience's attention."

Paul filmed action at the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta and also recreations at the Ohio State University stadium in Columbus. He mainly worked with a Todd A-O 65 mm camera that was developed for **Ben Hur** 40 years ago. The 47-pound camera was augmented by "the latest grip technology", including a Lenny

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▲ Boxing proved to be one of the more challenging sports to film



▲ Director-cinematographer Rod Paul by the 110 start

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Arm, an 83-foot long crane with a Louma head that tilts on three axes. Underwater diving was filmed with a Panavision 65 mm camera in a Hydroflex housing.

Paul says the IOC and Olympic Spirit Centers wanted him to focus on sports that are especially appealing to young audiences.

There are many shots of competitions from an athlete's perspective, in addition to such stirring visuals as the opening ceremonies and the reactions of the fans in the stands. Paul wanted to convey a total Olympic experience.

"These films are supposed to take you to the Olympic Games on many

levels," he explains. "We needed to include the color, pageantry and spectacle of the Games. We had to always remember that the audience was going to experience these films on a 55 feet wide screen, and they would see every nuance," says Paul. "That's where the 65 mm negative really shines."

Boxing proved to be one of the more challenging sports to film in Showscan format. For an aura of reality, the ring was surrounded by photographers shooting pictures of the bout.

"Even though we had 200 instruments lighting the arena, the background was still in deep, black shadows," says Paul. "We were shooting with wide angle lenses, because we wanted to show the photographers and news camera crews in the background. I used the Kodak Vision 500T film, which allowed us to dig into the darkness and capture details. The images really pop."

Seats in the Olympic Spirit theaters are on a motion base that moves with the action. This was another factor Paul had to consider.

"Part of the challenge was factoring in motion simulation used in conjunction with the POV shots," says Paul.

Paul also recorded footage at the 1998 Winter Games in Nagano, Japan. He is scheduled to shoot at the 2000 Summer Games in Sydney, Australia and the 2002 Winter Games, in Salt Lake City, Utah. Three more Olympic Spirit Centers are planned.