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Deluxe, Technicolor open new film labs

BY PLAYBACK STAFF

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Montreal: Deluxe Film Laboratories and Technicolor, the two giants of the film processing industry, have deepened their worldwide battle for market share with the strategic opening of new facilities in Toronto and Montreal.

The investments by Deluxe, a division of Rank Group PLC of the U.K., and Technicolor, a unit of France's Thomson Multimedia, represent a major strengthening of the Canadian film infrastructure and vote of confidence in the hundreds of skilled managers and technicians who will operate the new facilities.

Despite the now-ritualized prediction of the demise of film, and the reality that digital cinema is very much on the mid-term horizon, the total number of screens worldwide is in fact increasing, and recent market studies indicate the trend will continue over the next three to five years, independent of the recent mayhem and changing confirmations in the exhibition sector.

Representing an investment of \$30 million, Deluxe's new 100,000-square-foot Canadian headquarters in suburban Etobicoke (just west of Toronto) officially opened June 24. The facility is designed by Page and Steele Architects of Toronto, and offers film processing, dailies and a full range of major motion-picture post-production services.

The plant is expected to generate more than \$200 million in annual revenues, says Deluxe president Cyril Drabinsky, who attended the official opening along with Canadian director and filmmaker Norman Jewison, Toronto Mayor Mel Lastman and others.

'The key thing is that we are able to retain some outstandingly skilled people, and when you move somewhere new you normally can't do that,' says Warren Stein, COO, Deluxe Laboratories in L.A.

Representing an investment of close to \$40 million, Technicolor Mirabel had its official open house on June 20 and will primarily service the North American bulk-release print market for theatrical motion pictures for major distributors and

contract clients such as Disney, Buena Vista, Warner Bros., DreamWorks, various Canadian clients and others, says Michael Schuler, general-director, Technicolor Mirabel.

Schuler says the strategic business plan is to 'end up with about 70% to 80% of the total North American market for major release.'

Technicolor's new 125,000-square-foot plant in the Montreal suburb of Mirabel houses high-speed printers, called continuous contact printers, designed and engineered in-house by Technicolor. The facility incorporates six high-speed Michelson motion-picture processors and quality-control devices for full digital soundtrack analysis and high-speed picture evaluation. There are two screening rooms for side-by-side projection and comparison of match prints (an accepted working print signed off on by the distributor or filmmakers) and release prints.

Production capacity at Technicolor's plant is approximately eight million feet per day, or the equivalent of 800 release prints, says Schuler. Staff numbers 184, with expansion potential up to 240.

Deluxe's film lab operations are located in Hollywood, Toronto, London and Rome and process more than four billion feet of film annually for a worldwide customer base that includes Hollywood's leading studios, independents, TV and spot producers.

Deluxe Toronto provides extensive sound and video post-production services. Deluxe Toronto is also a consultant to Citelab, Global Vision's recently opened front-end processing laboratory in Montreal. Citelab operates a U.K.-manufactured Photomec processing unit for 16mm, Super 16mm, 35mm and Super 35mm negative film. The lab feeds all of Global Vision's other post services, including its film-to-video telecine services.

Covitec, Technicolor's Montreal-based post-production and technical services company, also operates a front-end and transfer laboratory located in downtown Montreal.

Technicolor operates six plants in North America and Europe. The primary bulk-release facilities are in North Hollywood, Rome, London and Mirabel. The New York and Covitec-Montreal operations are mainly front-end negative processing and optical-effects facilities.

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