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Sci-Tech Oscar contenders demo tricks

Inventors try to impress Academy

By Carolyn Giardina

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Nobody yelled "Fire!" in the crowded theater, but no one would have been surprised if someone had, because Tuesday night at the Linwood Dunn Theater in Hollywood, men were set on fire -- and others were shot into the air.

The incendiary scene might have resembled a performance of Cirque du Soleil, but it actually was the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' annual gathering to study inventions being considered for Scientific and Technical Academy Awards.

Seven of this year's 20 candidates for Sci-Tech awards were demonstrated. Of the other candidates -- which range from software and tools for film production to physical effects -- those that could not easily be transported and presented in the theater will be examined separately at meetings at various locations.

To demonstrate Fire for Hire's Stunt Fire Safety Gel, Sci-Tech committee member John Frazier's arm was coated with the clear safety gel and set on fire to show how the substance protects performers from the flames.

Following the display of pyromania, mats were then placed on the floor and a team of stuntpeople were shot into the air using Precision Stunt Specialists' Pressure Sensor Actuator. The actuator senses the weight of the stuntperson on contact and fires the amount of air required to send him flying over a given distance.

The Eastman Kodak Co. showed imagery lensed with its entry: Kodak's Vision2 color negative films, which have resulted in wide industry acceptance as well as 12 patents to date.

Tinsley Transfers presented its entry, a Prosthetic Transfer, by quickly and easily applying a waterproof prosthetic to a person's face.

Look Solutions presented its Tiny Fogger, a miniature fog generator that could be built into costumes or props. Compact and versatile Joker-Bug HMI lighting fixtures were displayed by K5600. And P&S Technik presented its Skater mini camera dolly -- think camera on a skateboard, but lower and more mobile. The camera sits two inches off the ground and can handle straight or curved moves.

Richard Edlund, four-time Academy Award winner and chair of the Sci-Tech Awards Committee, presided over the evening's presentations.

After investigating all entries, the Sci-Tech committee is scheduled to meet in early December to vote on recommendations for the Academy's Board of Governors, which will make the final awards decisions. The winners of Sci-Tech honors will be announced in January.

The Scientific and Technical Awards will be presented Feb. 9 at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel in Beverly Hills.

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