

What was it like to be on the field at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, during the historic battle that helped determine the outcome of the American Civil War? Some 10 million people will find the answer to that question when they experience Gateway Gettysburg's *Fields of Freedom* in the development's state-of-the-art digital cinema over the next 10 years.

The 30-minute film is a faithful re-enactment of the battle that ensued when General George Pickett led Confederate soldiers in a desperate charge at Gettysburg, clashing with an equally determined force of Union soldiers.

Van Oostrum shot a test with Civil War re-enactors in the Los Angeles suburb of Pacoima. He filmed scenes on 35mm color negative during day, dusk and night. The film was scanned at 4K resolution and down-sampled to 2K for timing in a digital intermediate (DI) suite at LaserPacific, a Kodak subsidiary in Los Angeles.

"The producers were very quality conscious and wanted to do the right thing," Van Oostrum says. "We showed them this was the way to tell their story."

*Fields of Freedom* was produced in 20 days at locations in Maryland with the aid of hundreds of re-enactors, and about 25 actors cast in dramatic roles.

He decided to record all of the images on Kodak VISION2 200T 5217 film, which is designed for efficient and accurate scanning. The negative was processed at Deluxe Labs in Los Angeles.

After scanning, Van Oostrum and LaserPacific Senior Colorist Mike Sowa timed the film in an interactive DI environment using a 2K projector and the same Kodak file server and software that Anderson chose for the theater at the visitors' center in Gettysburg.

"Mainly, we were matching elements of shots that were taken at different times for consistency," he says.

## A journey with Kees Van Oostrum: recreating the Battle at Gettysburg

The film opened in April in a new theater adjacent to the battlefield. It depicts the struggle with the aid of hundreds of re-enactors, and offers insights into the motivations and feelings of participants, including officers and ordinary soldiers on both sides.

*Fields of Freedom* was produced by Greystone Films and directed by David de Vries. The producers recruited Kees Van Oostrum, ASC as the director of photography because his credits include the 1993 narrative *Gettysburg*, and *Gods and Generals*, a 2003 film that focuses on events prior to the historic clash.

During his first meeting, Van Oostrum learned that Greystone planned to produce *Fields of Freedom* in digital HD format. His immediate response was that the story deserved to be produced on 35mm film in order to faithfully represent a sense of the place, time and emotion. He also suggested that at least 2K digital projection was needed. J. Wayne Anderson, the consultant who was designing the theater, concurred.

Anderson subsequently told Van Oostrum that he planned to specify a 2K projector and file server that conformed to standards recommended by the Digital Cinema Initiative, a consortium assembled by the seven major Hollywood studios.

"There was no time for rehearsals with the actors who had speaking roles," Van Oostrum says. "They typically were only there for a day or two."

Four unmanned cameras were strategically placed to record close-ups of explosions and wounded falling. Two main cameras frequently followed re-enactors on cranes, riding tracks as long as 700 feet. There are also static shots, and a few shots from the perspective of a mini-helicopter hovering over the battlefield.

Van Oostrum added painterly touches of light to amplify the drama and create a sense of time with the direction of artificial sunlight. There are a few night exteriors, including some hospital tent scenes that were generally shot at dusk. Light was motivated by practical oil lamps and candles augmented with a little bounce light.



**Above:** Cast and crew on location.

**Right:** Scene from *Fields of Freedom*, shot by DP Kees Van Oostrum, ASC (below).