

'Betrayal' beautiful, but banal 2

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Digital 'Bounce' beams via satellite in demo

By JILL GOLDSMITH

You wouldn't expect Ben Affleck and the execs from Boeing to talk shop, but there they were Tuesday alongside execs from Walt Disney, Miramax and exhib AMC Entertainment to present "Bounce" as the first film digitally distributed via satellite directly to theaters.

The pic opens Friday; however,

there are only about 16 theaters in North America equipped to process and project digital films. One is the AMC Empire 25 in Times Square, where partners in this digital test run extolled a future without unwieldy, expensive prints or film that fades and scratches.

Boeing owns the satellites and has expertise in coding and encryption that it uses for high-level government contracts. Feature films may not be a matter of national security, but piracy of digital files is one of the major concerns at the studios.

The aerospace giant said it is looking into becoming a credit company for the film biz and leasing digital equipment to get the ball rolling. And it's possible Disney

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'Bounce' bows via satellite in Gotham

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and the other studios may explore ways they might legally work together to share the leases — with theater owners paying a fee or royalty.

For now, 35mm is still how most of the country will see "Bounce," but the execs predicted that half of the nation's roughly 30,000 movie screens will go digital in coming years once a formula is worked out to apportion costs — an estimated \$130,000 per screen.

"It's pretty remarkable. What you're looking at is the future of motion picture distribution," Affleck said.

Costly prints

Making multiple prints of a film is costly — about \$1,200 to \$2,000 per print plus \$350 for transport, according to Miramax L.A. prexy Mark Gill. The pic winds up in two cans each weighing more than 40 pounds, thrown onto the back of a truck. "There's got to be a better way," Gill said. The press conference ended with everyone in the group symbolically tossing a film canister into a big garbage can.

Execs showed off a crystal-clear digital trailer for "Bounce" along with other demos.

"Everything you see is real and feasible now," Gill said.

Affleck and others insisted that digital cinema opens the door to indie filmmakers since pics are cheaper to produce and distribution may just mean renting satellite transponder time at the going rate of \$500 to \$700 per hour. It takes about 10-12 hours to uplink a film, and satellites can send movies to thousands of theaters simultaneously.

Texas Instruments, Williams Communications, QuVis Corp. and Energy Digital were part of the "Bounce" project as well.