

Dolby Theatre turns up the volume for first Oscars

February 14 2013, by Derrick J. Lang



This Monday, Feb. 11, 2013 photo shows the interior of the Dolby Lounge located inside the Dolby Theatre in the Hollywood section of Los Angeles. Dolby gave a makeover to the VIP lobby lounge. The 85th Academy Awards will be broadcast from the Dolby Theatre for the first time on Sunday, Feb. 24, 2013. (AP Photo/Jae C. Hong)

(AP)—Dolby is ready for its first date with Oscar.

The Academy Awards will be broadcast from the Dolby Theatre for the

first time since the audio-visual technology company plastered its name and logo on the awards venue last summer. While the 11-year-old space mostly looks the same as it has in years past, Dolby has diligently worked for the past seven months to ensure it will sound different come Feb. 24.

"We looked at this from the inside out," said Ramzi Haidamus, Dolby's vice president of marketing and business development. "It was never, 'Oh, here's a building. Let's put our name on it because the Oscars are here.' It was about this being the place where the industry's best come to showcase their content, and how we can elevate their experiences with our technology."

Since the venue previously known as the Kodak Theatre was re-christened the Dolby Theatre last June, the space has hosted premieres for the Oscar nominated films "Brave" and "Zero Dark Thirty." It also served as the headquarters for the Cirque du Soleil production "Iris" until the cinema-themed acrobatic production closed last month following poor ticket sales.

But those were merely sound checks for Hollywood's biggest night, the Academy Awards



This Monday, Feb. 11, 2013 photo shows the Dolby Theatre in the Hollywood section of Los Angeles. The 85th Academy Awards will be broadcast from the Dolby Theatre for the first time on Sunday, Feb. 24, 2013. (AP Photo/Jae C. Hong)

The posh 3,400-seat theater at the Hollywood & Highland Center has served as the Oscars' home since 2002. CIM Group, which owns the Hollywood & Highland complex, dropped the Kodak name from the venue last year after a bankruptcy judge approved the early exit of the Eastman Kodak Co. from the 20-year naming rights deal it signed in 1999.

Dolby Laboratories Inc. hasn't disclosed the financial details of its deal with CIM Group, but Kodak previously paid a \$3.6 million annual fee for the naming rights. Dolby sees hanging its name on the venue as a sound investment, especially when it comes to those Oscar viewers who might still confuse Dolby for a fruit distributor or "Harry Potter" character.

"We're facing an opportunity to deliver on the promise of Dolby to 1.2 billion people," said Haidamus. "Whether they're watching the Oscars on a tablet or PC, in a home theater, or here in this theater, we feel like it's our moment to deliver on that promise with the quality of the sound. It's also an opportunity to explain to people who we are. Even though we're a 47-year-old company, some people still don't understand exactly what we do."

In preparation for the star-studded ceremony, Dolby outfitted the theater with all of its audio-visual gizmos and plans to update the space with new technologies as they become available. From the outset, the company worked closely with this year's Academy Awards producers, Craig Zadan and Neil Meron, as well as Oscar telecast director Don Mischer.

"We weren't coming in here and saying, 'Well, we want to do this and this and this,'" said David Gray, Dolby's vice president of content services, who noted the biggest technical challenge was mounting 187 new speakers in the theater. "It's nice that we both have the same agenda here. We both want the show to sound the best it can possibly sound."

One of Dolby's main goals for the Oscar ceremony is to make sure that the entire show will be broadcast in Dolby Surround 5.1, including every film clip and pre-taped segment. In the past, not every part of the broadcast was spread across five channels. That meant working closely with the motion picture academy, film studios and telecast network ABC.

Dolby updated some of the theater's look, too. Beyond scads of new signage, including renaming the ballroom outside the theater after founder Ray Dolby, the company gave a makeover to the VIP lobby lounge, adding glowing tables and walls accented with the rectangular Dolby logo, as well as a curved ceiling sculpture inspired by the look of a sound wave.

"It's really like turning a big ship in the ocean," said Gary Epstein, Dolby's product marketing manager of professional content tools. "There are a lot of elements and a lot of people involved. The direction that we're heading in is to make everything more sonically engaging. We're certainly moving there, and each year will be better and better."

The executives at Dolby insist that this year's Academy Awards are just the beginning of a long-term relationship with the Oscars, which are slated to stay at the Hollywood & Highland Center for 20 more years. It's an open relationship though. There are already plans for the Dolby Theatre to host three more movie premieres this year.

Copyright 2013 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Citation: Dolby Theatre turns up the volume for first Oscars (2013, February 14) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-02-dolby-theatre-volume-oscars.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.