Slide Projector Encyclopedia Article

Slide Projector

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Contents

Slide Projector Encyclopedia Article.....1

Contents.....2

Slide Projector.....3

Slide Projector

In our world of animated film, the slide projector, which projects still images onto a viewing screen, occupies a small niche, mostly in education and business. The earliest written record of a slide projector, then known as a magic lantern, dates from 1646, when Athanasius Kircher, a German Jesuit scholar, depicted a candle-lit device in his publication *Ars magna lucis et umbra*. Magic lanterns that projected images from hand-painted glass plates were popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The first public shows, Gaspard Robert's Fantasmagorias, took place in Paris in 1798. After projectors and slides were massed produced beginning in 1845, they became available to ever wider audiences. In the 1870s and 1880s, J. A. R. Rudge developed a number of magic lantern projectors, and in 1880 Eadweard Muybridge introduced his Zoopraxiscope, the first projector to show actual photographs.

When color film came on the market in the early twentieth century, allowing amateurs to take high quality color slides, slide projectors came into great demand. Using the same basic process as the magic lantern, the modern projector shines a beam of light, which is concentrated by mirrors and lenses, through processed film (positive transparency) held in a carousel or tray. A straight tray called the Slidex, in which the slides are laid flat, had been popular in Europe before its introduction in the United States in 1987. An audience can view the projected photos can on a wall or screen. In addition to enhancing business presentations, families could view photos together. As rival technologies, like videotape, developed in the late twentieth century, slide projectors became more sophisticated. For example, the Arion Mirage 901, introduced in 1995, allows slide shows to have special effects like fades, dissolves, and a synchronized soundtrack. Computer engineers also developed a projector-computer hybrid that allows the user to project the contents of the computer cathode ray tube onto a screen for group viewing. Though the slide projector has proven its utility, the emergence of the computer and the video monitor have taken over many of the slide projectorÕs functions both in the business and domestic arenas.