

# Beaming David Bowie by Marc Johns

Reviewed by Peter Knight -

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I really enjoyed this book and the messages and ideas that I take away from it are huge and I actually feel quite inspired by it all.

Beaming David Bowie is a story which could only be told by one person, and that person is the author Marc Johns. This book is partly an autobiography and partly a sideways look at a new technology which is in a battle against an old established one. Much of the first few chapters of the book are Marc's early life, setting a background to what happens later on.

I'm not normally someone who bothers to review books, but when I read the first few pages from the book on line I was hooked. Marc Johns and myself properly see Digital Cinema in very different ways. Marc makes a number of very good observations about both politics, society and business along with those of Digital Cinema. Many of these observations are from the point of view of film makers, while I tend to see Digital Cinema from more of a projectionists point of view.

Back in 2003 I remember hearing about the beaming of a David Bowie concert using digital technology to a number of cinemas as a way of providing alternative content - something which has always been talked about as an advantage of Digital Cinema. However, I hadn't realised that it had been such a large event and this Marc does a very good job of telling a tale of how a self determined man managed to transmit a live concert with question and answer session into over 100 cinemas across the world.

Reading this book I was inspired about the power of alternative content to cinemas, although I have a number of questions relating to whether the audience would be hungry for all this content after it becomes more of a norm. It was also interesting to read about people and places that you either are familiar with or at least know of.

I think there are two key themes which come across very clearly in the book relating to why there hasn't been more alternative digital content seen in the 300+ cinemas with digital projectors across the world. These two themes can be summed up with the following two quotes from the book:

*"It was yet another naked, shameless example of how greed and short sightedness was hindering the emergence of alternative programming at the dawn of digital cinema."*

*"...I suspected there might be an ulterior motive at work, that perhaps Hollywood didn't want to see a trend of low budget digital movies and alternative programming emerging at the onset of digital cinema as this would clearly threaten the monopoly that the major film distributors were used to enjoying when it came to booking content into cinemas."*

The biggest drawback to this book is that it changes suddenly and without apparent reason from being in the first person, to the third person at the beginning of the fourth chapter, which is rather confusing and makes it harder to read - I have since found out that this was a deliberate artistic decision. The inner voice is also something which is understandable, but a little irritating.

However, those are such small drawbacks to the book that they can easily be ignored by the rest of it. For those interested in the cinema business, cinema technology, David Bowie or anyone interested in a different look at the world then this book is definitely worth reading. I would certainly have made time to read it, even if I hadn't been asked to review it.

For further details and to read a sample from the book go to [www.beamingdavidbowie.com](http://www.beamingdavidbowie.com)