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CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

Welcome to 2010!

The Club Competition was again judged by Dave and Jan Watterson, alas, the last time for a few years. I wish these two would give workshops for future judges on how to make useful comments, not negative ones. They are so positive in their critiques about the films and always suggest helpful improvements. They even took the trouble to go onto the internet and watch Paul's Clare Park Web Video and suggested a better way for it to be uploaded so that it would play better on line!

This year, as well as receiving an excellent and thorough critique, the members who entered a film also received an extremely useful book written for Amateurs called "Creative Video Sound", written by Ivo V. Dašek and translated by Dave and Jan. They are a hard act to follow.

Last club night Steve Bissett mentioned he may be going to Bahrain to work. As Al and I lived there for two years before and during the First Gulf War, we both gave

him a few hints and tips about living in the Middle East. Then a few days later we learnt that he was there! Steve arranged for his recently won trophies to be left with Val and has said he will become a Country member. What would we do without his films being in the Club Competition each year? He thanks everyone at the club for making him feel so welcome and for being so generous with their help and advice.

I am writing this before Christmas and looking out of my window is a Christmas Card scene with snow covering everything, so I have to predict certain things will have happened by the January club night, weather permitting, but the last part of the Albany Competition film should have been filmed on 4th January which should leave plenty of time for editing before the actual competition. What a good start to the year and let's hope that 2010 will see record numbers of new films being made by members.

Rita Wheeler

DECEMBER CLUB NIGHT

The annual Club Competition of Surrey Border Film & Video Makers took place on the first Friday of December. The two judges, Dave and Jan Watterson drove up from Bath for the event. Thirteen films competed for the nine trophies including three submitted by new members Tessa O'Sullivan, Rod Garnet and Alan Hussey.

The club felt honoured that the Watterson's, who are well known on the international judge circuit, had taken time from their busy schedule to present the evening. As well as pre-judging the



films they had also written extensive and encouraging critiques on each entry with suggestions for improvements. Both Dave and Jan praised the general standard and diversity of the films entered which ranged from drama, documentary to holiday films.

After the coffee break members were delighted when our newest and youngest member, a self taught 11 year old, showed us the entertaining and very professional film he had made for a school project. Steven Spielberg watch out!

NORTH vs SOUTH SOUTHERN HEAT

On Sunday 29th November, Vivien and I attended the Southern Heat of the North vs South competition, for which there were no less than 21 entries from the South, including our own "Zapped" by the WriteAngle Group. (Jersey, Derby, Epsom and Spring Park produced two entries each, and no less than five entries came from the Orpington Video & Film Makers, who also host the competition, led by Chairman Mike Coad.)

As usual, the films were judged on the night, to select the five best entries from the South to compete for the trophy with the five best entries from the North, with the Grand Final held at Farnborough (Kent) on Sunday 31st January. The audience are also provided with voting slips for each member to choose his or her best five films, with a prize for whoever comes closest to the official Judges' decision, bearing in mind the competition theme "Trapped".

Unusually, the audience vote, collated by Mike Coad, (and my personal list) included three of the Judges' top five in their list (but in nothing like the same order, putting the Judges' top film last!) The Judges' choices to go forward were, first, Not Enough Rope from Medway Film Makers, Alice and The Lock-in from Derby Movie Makers, Gotcha! from Orpington Video & Film Makers, and The Inventor from Nuneaton Moviemakers. They don't usually, in my experience, enjoy so much agreement with the audience vote – so we'll just have to see whether their choice of films can wrest back the trophy from the North, who have won it now for many years in succession.

Put the 31st January in your new diaries – it will be a good show!

Paul Holden

RESULTS OF MEMBERS CLUB COMPETITION 2009

Best Holiday, (David Good Trophy), "A Tale of 4 Bears" by Paddy Haines
Best Photography, (Arthur English Trophy), "A Tale of 4 Bears" by Paddy Haines
Best Creative Film, (Clements Shield), "The Making of the Clare Park Web Video" by Sir Paul Holden
Best Use of Sound and Commentary, (Pat Doherty Cup), "Groomers are Go!" by Steve Bissett
Best Documentary, (Moorey Documentary Trophy), "Canary Wharf" by Tessa O'Sullivan
Best First Time Winner, (Jack Stribbling Trophy), "California Roller" by Alan Hussey
Best Overall, (Jackson Trophy), "Groomers are Go!" by Steve Bissett
Best Editing, (Pauline Johnson), "California Roller" by Alan Hussey
Highly Commended - none
Commended - "La Senza" by Steve Bissett and "A French Connection" by Gillian Gatland

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING ...

Work is proceeding with our Albany Competition entry, and the first shoot took place before Christmas in Ivan Dally's kitchen in Camberley. Many club members were present as well as volunteers from Loddon Players to act out the main characters.

The second and final shoot takes place on January 4th in Farnborough, and by the time you read this hopefully, all the filming will be complete. Then its over to Gillian Gatland and Roger Gould to work on the editing.

REAL SOUND, OR REALISTIC SOUNDING?

Imagine the sounds of a good Western without the sound effects of horses, gunshots, bar scenes and a fist fight. Your soundscape is just as important as your visualscape.

As the sun sets in some anonymous Western town, we watch a poker game unfold in the local saloon. As the camera moves in on the poker table, we see a couple of bar patrons enjoying themselves as they slap each other on the back and shuffle across the wooden floor. Just as they clear the shot, our hero is wrongly accused of cheating and a fight breaks out. Chairs and punches fly as our hero gets in a few good hits before two thugs grab and hold him for the villain. The bad guy throws several punches to the midsection before our hero kicks him to the floor and immobilizes the two thugs. But wait. Don't they use stunt men in Hollywood? They don't really hit each other, do they? So where does the sound come from? They come from Foley artists, who learnt their art from Jack Foley who was the king of improvisation. Foley artists match live sound effects with the action

JACK DONOVAN FOLEY



of the picture. The sound effects are laid "manually" and not cut in with film. And believe it or not, you can produce the very same techniques as the Foley artist to enhance your own productions.

The big-time Foley artists have several specialized tools at their disposal., Wooden floors, brick, concrete, gravel, dirt and sand are the most common. The Foley artist chooses an appropriate pair of shoes and, watching the scene from the movie, attempts to match the footsteps on screen.

In a perfect world, we could just record the sounds during the shoot, but that's not exactly practical. However, armed with a good microphone and some headphones, you can capture the actual sounds from the scene after the shoot or during a break. Did your actors walk down a gravel path? Have them go through the scene again, while you point a shotgun microphone at their feet. It won't match perfectly, but don't worry about that for now, timings can be perfected in editing. The same goes for any props the actors handled in the scene. Place the microphone fairly close to the object, but far enough back to capture the entire sound. Think magnifying glass rather than microscope.

For a far better explanation and video examples, go to these web pages:

<http://www.videomaker.com/video/watch/tips-and-tricks/480/foley-sound/>
and

<http://www.videomaker.com/video/watch/tips-and-tricks/491/foley-sound-part-2/>

Don't just sit there and think, "that sounds really good, I'll look up that website later". NO, DO IT NOW while its fresh in your mind

from reading this article. These videos are REALLY USEFUL, so get clicking.

Here are some techniques for making common sound effects:

- Cornflakes in a leather pouch makes a good snow crunch.
- An old chair can produce very controllable squeaking sounds.
- A heavy staple gun makes the sound of gunshots.
- Crumpling cellophane makes a crackling fire.
- A large sheet of sheet metal suspended and shaken produces thunder.
- Coconut shells, stuffed with padding, will make the sound of horse hooves.
- Hit a heavy rolled up and taped phone book or a raw chicken for punching sounds.
- Break celery to create the sound of breaking bones.
- Step on tape from an unraveled audio cassette to make a convincing substitute for walking in grass.
- Squeaky Doors Make Great Sounds

If possible, capture and edit sounds for later. You never know when you will need a unique sound effect that isn't in your library - for example, that torrential downpour, the gale force wind, the sound of walking in snow. Capture them when you can!

Foley sounds are even more fun because they allow you to show your creativity. Don't have a foghorn? Try blowing across the top of an empty two-litre bottle. While your lungs are still full, an earthquake sound is available by blowing on a microphone. Leave the windscreen off your lapel mike and try a few gusts from several inches away. The sound possibilities are endless.

MIKE'S NEWS - December Competition comments and observations

We are now getting a wide variety of delivered films in for the competition, they are either widescreen, 4 by 3, on mini DV, or on DVD.

This year for the first time I put all the films onto a widescreen background so that we wouldn't have to keep jumping up to change the projector settings from 4 by 3 to 16 by 9 in between each film. And messing with the menu is never a quick job. We can get away with this at our club venue as the screen size is large, so the 4 by 3 films were not disadvantaged on height over the 16 by 9 ones.

Steve Bissett was a challenging entrant, delivering his films on a memory stick; but also they were NTSC 720 by 480 60Hz instead of the normal PAL 720 by 576

50Hz we are all used to. Luckily my Edius editing software is multiformat so I just dropped the material on the timeline and out comes PAL without rendering. Luckily Steve has broken that NTSC camera so we might actually see some UK PAL standard from him in future. (Fingers crossed!)

A number of films were delivered on DVD this year. There is no problem with that per se, but mini DV is always going to be better quality than DVD. So if you want the audience to see top quality films then it's mini DV every time. Sorry this is a bit technical, but the data rate on mini DV is 25 MegaBits per second and DVD is a maximum of 8. So DVD is compressed video, and like all compression systems they are a compromise on quality. The higher the bit rate the better and closer to the original footage quality the end result is. Some of the DVD's suffered from "worms" in areas of plain colours like sky. Let me explain. Any noise on the video in a plain area like sky will be treated as blobs of a subtly different contrast or brightness when encoded. As the noise or picture grain changes from one pixel to another the blob position changes hence the description of worms as the blobs appear to move. You will see this in particular evidence on freeview, where we are treated to a variable bit rate of only 1.5 MBits minimum and 3.5 MBits maximum. Variable bit rate is used to further compress the material as this intelligently looks at the video and allocates less space to talking head shots as opposed to live sport. For the kind of short videos the club makes select content bit rate and best quality, as the DVD can take 1 hour at this setting. Now of course we don't know in some software what "best" actually means. 8 Mbits is about the safest maximum you can run the video at; the DVD spec is 9.5 but players often cough and stutter at that. Sound: anything over 192 KBits is fine Dolby

stereo. In systems where we don't know what's being set for you, it could be better to export to the hard drive as a video file and use a third party DVD encoding program that allows you to get at the controls. Don't forget too that its best to burn your DVD at times 4. Its tempting to use times 16 for speed, but I often find the times 16 burnt ones are OK on a computer but no good on set top DVD players, as they can stutter.

During the X-Factor there were Cheer Leaders encouraging us to vote. Unfortunately they had in their hands silver stranded fluffy balls which totally overloaded the freeview encoding system with active/moving detail in the picture. As there was no more bandwidth available for

the encoder at the transmitter (Ofcom are demanding broadcasters to use the minimum) the picture broke up into big blocks and we were treated to poor internet old style quality viewing.

So you can see getting the bit rate set right is important for a good viewing experience. Even the so called professionals get it wrong these days.

There were a number of issues identified talking to participants. Casablanca is used by a few and this seems to suffer difficulties with placing audio in the right place, for instance. So two bits of voice-over tend to bump into each other because they can't be placed where you want them. Like all these things, technology moves on - there are much later models of Casablanca than units the club members have, so some problems they were having may well be fixed. But I suspect that its a costly process to keep upgrading. Tessa had tried to do her film in iMovie on the Apple but found she was fighting it somewhat, as what she was trying to do was over and above what iMovie could provide. So now it's Final Cut for her but it's a very big step forward in complexity from one to the other, iMovie being nice and simple. Its more difficult to learn whole new software packages and ways of doing things when over 21!

A point or three on zooming in on oversized stills. (Pictures bigger than the video frame)

Rules: (which are only a guide as all rules can be broken) if one picture follows another with a dissolve in between, use linear interpolation of movement between the pictures - so it seems to flow from one into another. But at the start and finish of a group, or a single picture, use bezier interpolation (acceleration) and the last time we leave a still, use bezier

deceleration. If you do it this way you are cutting on a still frame and going into movement and coming out of movement to a still, then cutting back to video. If you leave linear movement at the start and finish, it requires a dissolve to get in and out of the movement.

Try to think too what you want to direct the viewer to look at in the picture; what is the most significant thing in the picture? You will have to set the movement up manually to do this; the automatic picture zooming effects won't know what's important in the picture or where that important spot is. If it's a persons face that's where you want the anchor to be - say on the bridge of the nose. Some software allows you to put an anchor point down - others you will have to put your thumbnail on the screen at that point. Create the zoom in to the picture, and make sure the point you have chosen does not move vertically or horizontally by changing the X and Y ending positions to make it so. When you play the clip through, you will find you automatically focus your eyes on the point you selected. Think too about speed: its a gentle creep in to the picture thats needed not a mad dash. It should be subtle - just to draw the viewers attention to the point you have directed them to. You need the clip on the screen long enough to absorb sufficient detail and get the point of it, before you move onto the next. Get some consistency into the stills - the same percentage of zoom on each one and also the same clip length, unless there is editorial reason to change that, such as a longer voice- over explanation of what we are seeing in the still scene.

Voice-over factoids

I was taught when doing documentary and programs on local radio not to give audiences lists of facts, as after fact 3 they forget the first one. Tease the facts out as you go through, try to give the audience a visual way to remember the fact by something you are showing them, don't let them just tumble out of the speaker. Let some emotion come through on the voice-overs. A holiday movie is personal to you; you need to enthuse me about the place you have been to to make it sexy! I think we still have some way to go on voice-overs: between those of us not so good at it and microphone batteries dying, so its well worth club members selecting some amongst us to do voice-overs who are good at it. Don't forget I have a proper recording booth.

I do hope that members, who had all that superb effort in terms of written comments from the Wattersons, will in a couple of months time be badgering the Chairman to show their re-edited films.

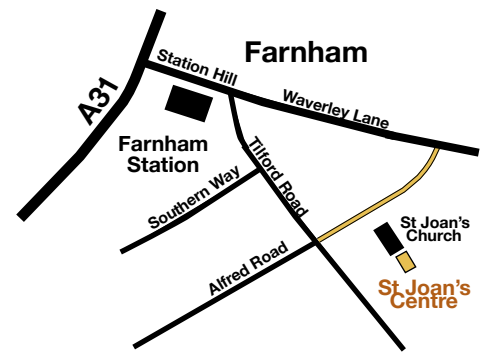
For those that haven't fallen asleep yet, that's the end of this edition of Mike's News.



MEETINGS are held at St Joan's Centre, 19 Tilford Road, Farnham on the 1st Friday of each month at 7.30pm for 7.45pm. Meetings close around 10.15pm

New members are very welcome, either phone 01252 717877 or turn up at the door!

St Joan's Centre is 200 yards south of Farnham station and is in the grounds of St Joan's Church. The entrance to the church is by a narrow road opposite the junction with Alfred Road, and St Joan's Centre is to the right of the church. There is ample parking.



CLUB DATES

2010

- 8 Jan** Festival winners' films or club competition films not shown in December 09
- 6 Feb** AGM and 'Gone Fishing'
- 5 Mar** 'Finding Esther' 45 min film with discussion
- 2 Apr** Creative film making of 30 second ad or 1 minute epic

DIARY DATES

TBA

COMPETITIONS

BIAFF (British International Amateur Film & Video Festival)

Closing date: 31 Jan 2010, Festival: 16-18 Apr 2010

This is the greatest amateur film festival in the British Isles. There are no limits on length, topic or style. Every entry receives written comments from the judges and is graded.

The Guernsey Lily International Film & Video Festival

Closing: 31 May 2010, Festival: 15-17 Oct 1020

The Guernsey is the friendliest festival in the British Isles - and it takes place on the Channel Island of Guernsey. Entries up to 30 mins in length

The IAC

You don't have to be a member to look on the IAC website:
www.theiac.org.uk

Here you will find an events diary and all the competitions being held, entry forms, news and competition results.

A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

The 2010 Albany competition will be hosted by South Downs Video & Film Makers on 25 April 2010. The venue will be the Ferring village hall, Ferring, West Sussex.

The theme for 2010 is "In the Hot Seat", and the planning and shooting our club entry has already taken place. Editing will shortly completed.

ONE-2-ONE TUITION

Don't forget, One-2-One tuition is always available at the club, and currently Gordon and Val are helping folk with the basics of Final Cut Express.

We have quite a few mac owners now - yay! - and some are struggling to make the transition from iMovie to Final Cut. So make your needs known to Gordon or Val so that help can be arranged for you.

IMPORTANT CONTACTS

Name:

Telephone:

Email: