

North Thames Region



The Film & Video Institute

www.theiac.org.uk

NEWSLETTER

March—April 2016

The Future for our Hobby ?



How do you want the NTRIAC to move forward?

See pages 6, 7, 8 and 12

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Chairman's Chat

John Howden joined Colchester Film Makers in 2004 and took over as Chairman in 2005. He has served as Competitions Officer and is currently one of the Club's projectionists. He joined the NTR Council in 2012 and now also serves on the National IAC Council. He has judged at local, regional and national level and was a Final Round Judge at BIAFF 2015. He is an active film maker, regularly receiving 3 and 4 Star Awards at BIAFF.



So, Andy Murray has still not won the Australian Open and BIAFF 2016 will soon be with us.

There have been some amazing films around. Have you seen 'Lady in the Van' or 'The Danish Girl'? I came away from both performances just itching to get my hands on a decent script and try my own luck at making a drama movie.

Well, maybe that will have to wait a little while, but there is so much we can learn from the film masters.

We can get the technology—it is relatively cheap and getting cheaper. But have you noticed some of the long-held conventions are changing? Framing a shot that does not follow the 'rules' can add an exciting and very different feel to your work. Using simple devices like a slider can add a whole layer that would otherwise be missing. Just watch any half decent drama or documentary on television and you will see what I mean.

Now I am probably teaching my grandmother to suck eggs and you might be saying, 'I know all this, what is his point?'

My point, dear film maker, is this: how can we become better film makers if we don't watch films at home or in the cinema? It staggers me how many times I have heard club members say, 'O I never go to the cinema!'

Speaking for myself I have learnt most of my craft by watching films of all sorts and then adapting what I see to work for me.

Another very important factor is the interaction between me and other film makers and the conversations that often start with, 'how do you do (such and such)?'.

In the professional world, film making is a team activity. In the amateur world we tend to be solo workers and this will tend to make our films look and sound the same.

Having a cameraman, sound man, etc. on a shoot opens up a whole new way of working and often a very exciting outcome.

End of rant.

Enjoy your filming—I look forward to seeing you in Harrogate at BIAFF.

As Editor, I'm delighted that items in the last two Newsletters have raised enough interest for members to want to write in to respond.

Tim Stannard LACI writes in response to Steve Mayfield's piece:

"Steve Mayfield's excellent piece in the Jan/Feb Newsletter was particularly interesting as he clearly has first-hand knowledge of the opinions of active film makers that we should be attracting to the IAC and to clubs and so has a "feel" for what is relevant to them (and perhaps why clubs and/or the IAC are irrelevant to them).

I'd like to pick up on **two points**:

"Could the IAC launch its own YouTube channel?" he asks.

The answer is—we already have ... ish. If you go to YouTube and type BIAFF into the search, the top item is a playlist of all the films (51 of them) that are available on YouTube that were in BIAFF 2015.

Part of the issue is that many members prefer (for perfectly good reasons) to put their films on Vimeo and those obviously cannot appear in a YouTube playlist. Some will be reluctant to put their films on both as it screws the stats (you don't know whether 100 hits on each are 200 individuals or the same 100 people watching on both sites).

For this reason, the IAC website curates a number of pages that bring together all the BIAFF films available on-line.

Go to www.theiac.org.uk and look under "Watch": you'll see films from the past six years of BIAFF and UNICA. The question isn't so much "Can we make the films available to be seen?", but "How do we make people aware of the sites?"

My second comment is in response to Steve's comment **"[My classmates] have no interest in having [their film] projected onto a screen in a darkened room at a club so that a small group of people (who are unlikely to be the target audience) can pass opinion."**

My response is they do not know because they have never done it!

Watching your film on a big screen in a room full (well, maybe half full!) of people is a totally different experience from having feedback from people watching on-line who may or may not be giving the film much attention, who may be your best buddies who will only give you praise, who may be nameless trolls who will do the reverse or who may just be well meaning.

You are there, you hope for that gasp, that laugh, that round of applause at the end.

And one laugh, gasp, clap prompts another - people react differently in crowds.

I never expected the buzz I got when I first showed a film at Staines Ciné & Video Society, and I don't think that feeling is something it is possible to sell without getting people to try it.

Add that to the list of challenges!

Thanks, Tim, for your response.

In response to Nigel Longman's rather pessimistic article on Public Shows, also in the Jan./Feb. Newsletter, Bob Chester, Potters Bar FM's Treasurer, writes:

"I would like to point out that Potters Bar FilmMakers hold an Annual Show every October (this year, 2016, on October 15th).

It is very well attended both at the Matinee and Evening shows. Last year all films shown were made by our members and to see their productions on a large screen with excellent sound and a big audience is quite a thrill.

The profit helps to keep our annual subscription down which hopefully will encourage potential members to join.

Our £6.00 charge for a comfortable, warm seat, with refreshments, is cheap for an evening out. So please put the 15th in your new diary for a grand night out and call Penny Love on 01707 656446 to reserve a ticket before they all sell out!"

Thanks, Bob—a clever way to get a plug in!!

Neville Withers, a member of West London Film Group (ex Ealing V&FM) since 1992, comments on two of the last Newsletter's items:

Firstly Nigel Longman's remarks about Public Shows.

I think 'Joe Public' has a misconception about 'Amateur' films: he thinks of holiday films with granny on the beach at Blackpool and little Johnny building a sandcastle or dad with a handkerchief on his head with a pint of beer in his hand raising the glass to the camera. As we know they couldn't be more wrong,

Holiday films these days are usually travel documentaries (I remember Norman Blackburn was a master of the art at our Club).

Over the years I have seen what must run into hundreds of "Amateur" films not only from the U.K. but from all parts of the world. Many of these "Amateur" dramas and documentaries I've seen in that time would not disgrace a major TV Channel.

I have of course seen ~many years ago~ at our Club a film (made by a young lad) that was so bad it was embarrassing.

However, I also remember seeing two films in the same competition that made me feel sorry for the judges. The first I think called 'Enigma' was about the making of a cello from how the wood is prepared, shaped and put together right through to the instrument being played by a musician.

The other film was about windmills, covering different types of windmills showing how they work. Not only had a lot of research gone into the film but I was also struck by the music ~always an important part of this sort of film~ which was mixed perfectly with the sounds of the sales turning, I think if 'Joe Public' realised the quality and diversity of 'Amateur' films he would put himself out, and go to a Show.

We might not be professional, but we approach film making in a professional manner using all the expertise and knowledge we've gained over the years and the best equipment we can afford.

On Heather Palmer's point about watching a film for pleasure, that's OK for a main feature film. But we may be watching a film for enjoyment but if something like a jump cut or continuity error occurs, that part of the brain devoted to all things film will immediately 'click in' so although we might want to enjoy a film, our subconscious won't let us.

Thanks, Neville.

In the Nov./Dec. 2015 Newsletter, Alan Colegrave had floated the idea of setting up a NTRIAC Database for locations, personnel, actors and even caterers who would contribute for just their expenses.

Part tongue-in-cheek, Dave Smith replies:

“Alan’s ideas sound fine on the surface when pursuing a hobby, but not for someone who is a professionally trained actor/actress.

So why do we amateurs expect the acting profession to give their time and skill for just a DVD, a few photos, biscuits and petrol money? I would not expect a plumber to come to my place and fit a gas boiler or mend a leaking tap for a cup of tea and a pizza—and that after interviewing him/her to see if they are up to the job!!

My suggestion is: if you think you have a good script, then get members of your Club or amateur drama group to produce it. This production can then be shown to the proposed professional cast you hope to employ to see if you & they think it's worth their while giving their time and talent to appear in your masterpiece.

Then pay them at least the minimum wage for their time.

If a database is set up, I must point out that I have written a superb script. It needs a decorator good with a brush and roller for about a week! The living-room he will be performing in is in a terrible state! Anyone out there willing to take on this role?

Usual rate, tea, biscuits and a thank you!!!

Thanks, Dave. That article elicited this response from Alan:

My thoughts were only a suggestion of a way in which NTRIAC members could help each other in pursuance of their hobby.

However as working with professional actors has been mentioned, I will take this opportunity to address a few matters concerning the subject.

I cannot act and have no aspirations to be an actor—however, many of my friends are professional actors. A few work almost continuously and make an average to good living from the profession. However the majority do not. Most take other jobs to provide an income when they are “resting”. The suggestion was that we only use fellow club members.

For my next film, I want two actresses, and one actor. Two will need to be in the age range 20 to 30 and the other 30 to 40. Looking round my club, I do not think the choice is going to be great. Maybe the situation is different in other Video Clubs.

So it is suggested I ask amateur actors. While many amateur actors are as good as the average professional, many are not. They are used to acting on the stage. Stage acting is very different from acting for film. With good direction, you could get a good performance but I intentionally used the word “could”.

If I am going to make a drama film and I have recruited a crew of say six plus people, I expect them all to know what they are doing. Having got this highly competent crew, be they amateurs or professionals working for free, it seems a total waste of time to use actors who potentially cannot act. So I and many other serious filmmakers, use only professional actors.

The suggestion that you should be able to equate the actor’s skills to those of a plumber, in my opinion, is to say the least, not relevant. Actors need a Showreel to accompany their CV to demonstrate their acting ability. Ideally this should include at least six different short clips from films they have been in. So where does the average new actor get this material?

continued on page 8

The Future for our Hobby 2



Nigel Longman, who is about to inaugurate a Video Group in his local U3A in Rickmansworth, writes about buying a new TV set:

Our old Panasonic TV has given good service for many years but now takes ages to come on and is sluggish to respond to the remote control.

Obviously we need a new telly.

At my local TV mega-store the new sets mostly have much bigger screens than ours, are slimmer and the picture goes right to the edge of the box.

I was told I needed to future-proof my investment by buying a 4K UHD Smart TV with OLED illumination, HDR support, HDMI 2.0a inputs, HDCP 2.2 support and HEVC decoding. Oh, and a curved screen!!

And if I wanted to hear what people were saying, I needed a sound bar because without one the sound from the telly was awful.

I didn't want to appear a complete buffoon so I nodded wisely and stepped back into the shadows. Clearly my TV-speak needed seriously updating.

Enter the good offices of the AV Forums web site (www.avforums.com).

This site, which I've been visiting for many months now, has been a constant source of enlightenment to me in these days of enhanced techno-babble.

Their latest guide lists the 10 must-have features to look for when buying a new TV – not only lists them but explains in non-geekish ways what they all mean.

A few days spent browsing that site and balancing the various reviews to be found online enabled me to draw up a shortlist of models that meet my needs and, more

importantly, my pocket.

As to the size of screen – well, I know that although that 65in display looks compelling in the store, when you get it home its size may well fill the entire wall.

What we did was to make a cardboard cut-out the size of the set we wanted, in order to check how it looked in the space available.

For us a 50in screen was plenty big enough.

Curved or flat? – Well it's really all down to personal taste but we plumped for flat.

I'll be buying our new telly in a few weeks' time.

When I get it home, I'll be using the AV Forums again, this time to set the TV up, using their Picture Perfect Guide. This guide goes through the menus advising settings to give the most accurate and natural colour rendition so that, to use the jargon, we see the picture as the director intended. I hope!

It seems to me that their recommendations are to switch off nearly all the signal processing enhancements. Perhaps they're not so enhancing after all!



TV sets galore in stores!

The Future for our Hobby 3

John Astin considers the current camcorder situation:

I recently enjoyed a short winter break in the lovely Canary Islands, and as usual I took along my trusty Panasonic SD900 camcorder.

I felt rather self-conscious.

Admittedly, most people go to the Canaries simply to relax in the lovely winter sunshine — but I did not see another camcorder the whole week!

Tablets in video mode, yes. Smartphones in video mode, yes. But camcorders? No — not one.

When I went to use mine, I flipped out the screen, but could hardly see a thing. The low, strong sun behind me made it very difficult to make out the image on the screen, and I would have had to guess at the exact framing of any shot I took using it.

So, in the end, I filmed around 90% of the clips through the optical viewfinder, which, fortunately, the SD900 features.

Yes, I know there are hoods available that fit on and around the flip-out screen with straps and Velcro, and shade the screen. In fact, I have one. But it has to be fitted and removed before and after every shot if I want to close the flip-out screen (essential on the SD900 as otherwise the battery would soon run out), and that is too fiddly and time-consuming.

To me, an optical viewfinder seems essential.

These experiences got me thinking. Are camcorders still widely available? Was it true that manufacturers now considered optical viewfinders a luxury?

On my return to the UK, I did a bit of research.

I'm sure many of you remember the days when a plethora of stores had "camcorder bars", where you could move around trying out one camcorder after another, with all the stores vying to undercut each other on price.

Those days are long gone. Where today can anyone go to try out consumer camcorders before buying? How many consumer camcorders are actually available these days?

continued overleaf



Only 7 or 8 traditional camcorders on display, with only 2 or 3 having optical viewfinders (or manual overrides)



A lot more bags than camcorders!!

Alan Colegrave's response, continued from p. 5

The answer is simple – get involved in a short film and work for free.

I would suggest not giving the actor a DVD as suggested but a video file, preferably H264 (MP4). Then the actor can add a short clip to his/her Showreel. Maybe the filmmaker can even offer to compile the Showreel itself.

Just before I leave the subject, let me mention the script.

Whatever the type of story, it must be formatted in the universally accepted layout. I use Final Draft Pro but there are several free programs available for both PC and Mac which do the same job.

And catering? The filmmakers should ensure that food is available especially if you want to make an early start. Likewise, travel expenses should always be paid.

Just a quick note before I finish. Several years ago we placed an advert which said “London-based actor”.

We had somebody apply from Belfast!

All the filmmaker has to do is produce a great script (correctly formatted), advertise and you will have actors by the trainful wanting to get involved.

John Astin, continued from previous page

Jessops, an erstwhile IAC sponsor, first springs to mine. Well, although they have a decent selection online— and the major retailers do seem to offer a wider selection online than they stock in their stores— the vast majority of Jessops stores do not even stock camcorders on site. They'd get one in for you to try, but five or six? I'm not so sure!

Argos, in their current catalogue, have just six camcorders on offer, but no real opportunity to try out and compare.

Sony Centres no doubt have a display of Sony camcorders, with advice available and the chance to compare – but just for Sony products!

The **Currys/PCWorld** in Enfield and **John Lewis** in Stratford both have their camcorders out on display to try—but ***only seven or eight, and more or less the same ones, from just three companies (Canon, Panasonic & Sony).***

Ironically, alongside there is a stand with a dozen or more different sorts of tablets on offer, and next to it, a rack with thirty or more bags & cases!

I should add that ***the GoPro style of camcorders are much in evidence, so presumably they're becoming very popular.***

And what about optical viewfinders?

I discovered that traditional camcorders nowadays seem to fall into two price brackets: £125 - £220 and £500 - £600.

And what is one of the features missing in the cheaper camcorders? Yes – an optical viewfinder.

So not one of the camcorders sold by Argos (dearest £219.99) or on display in the Currys/PCWorld store has an optical viewfinder. One Sony camcorder even has an in-built projector – but no viewfinder!!

And ***only three of the eight on display at John Lewis (all between £549 & £599) have viewfinders.***

No wonder, in my opinion, that people aren't buying them, seemingly preferring the all-singing, all-dancing tablets and smartphones!

Is it the beginning of the end for the traditional camcorder?

SPOTLIGHT ON THE FUTURE



SATURDAY MARCH 19th

East Anglian Audio Visual Competition
at Margaretting Village Hall, Wantz Road,
Ingatestone, Essex CM4 0EP.

Judging commences at 9.45 am. Gala Show &
Presentation at 7 pm.

Contact: Dick Williams 01708 748580

dickwilliamsav@yahoo.co.uk

THURSDAY 14th > SUNDAY APRIL 17th 2016

IAC BIAFF 2016 hosted by NERAC in the Cairn Hotel, Ripon Road,
Harrogate, Yorks.

Contact Derek Mathieson: *dereks07@gmail.com*

THURSDAY OCTOBER 20th—SUNDAY OCTOBER 23rd 2016

The IAC AGM Weekend hosted by the NTR in the Maids
Head Hotel, Norwich.

Contact: Penny Love (*see front cover*)

On the IAC Website

Are you aware that all the Newsletters dating back to January 2009 can be accessed on the IAC website, and that each Newsletter appears there several weeks before you receive your paper copy. This March/April edition, for example, would have been on the website since around Feb. 14th.

The route is: www.theiac.org.uk > IAC > Regions > North Thames Region IAC > Newsletters



Welcome!



The Film & Video Institute

No new members

To join the IAC, contact:
IAC, The Film and Video Institute,
McCracken Park,
Great North Road,
Gosforth,

NEWCASTLE ON TYNE NE3 2DT

Tel.: 0191 303 8960

E-Mail: admin@theiac.org.uk

Club Directory

ACORN FILMS, CHINGFORD

Contact: David Piggott 020 8524 9642

AYLESBURY CAMCORDER ENTHUSIASTS

www.the-ace.org Contact: Alan Bowles,
50 Queens Mead, Bedgrove, Aylesbury,
Bucks., HP21 7AP

BOURNE END VIDEO MAKERS

www.bevm.co.uk Contact: David Jarman,
Secretary, 4 Lowlands Crescent, Great
Kingshill, High Wycombe, Bucks., HP15
6EG.

BRENTWOOD VIDEO CLUB

Sec. Betty O'Neill, 28 Leafy Way, Hutton,
Brentwood, Essex CM13 2QW

CHANNEL 7 PRODUCTIONS

E-Mail: Darren@channel7.org.uk.
Contact: Darren Lalonde 01480 405615 or
07887 932498

COLCHESTER FILM MAKERS CLUB

www.Cfmclub.org.uk
Contact: Paul Desmond, Secretary.
Tel.: 07831 452295

ENFIELD VIDEO MAKERS

www.enfieldvideomakers.co.uk
Contact: Eric Jukes. Tel.: 0208 366 6162

THE ESSEX AUDIO-VISUAL GROUP

www.essexavgroup.org.uk
Contact: Mr. R. Williams, Tel.: 01708 748580

FINCHLEY FILM MAKERS

www.finchleycinevideo.co.uk
Contact: Alan Douglas, 1 Nethercourt
Avenue, Finchley, N3 1PS.
020 8349 3623 or 07715 171 446
aljendouglas@btinternet.com

HARROW FILM MAKERS

www.harrowcinevideo.org.uk
Contact: Geoff Foord: 020 8868 4021

HEMEL HEMPSTEAD MOVIE MAKERS

www.hemelmoviemakers.org.uk
Contact: Mary Harris
Tel.: 01442 256393

MILTON KEYNES CAMCORDER CLUB

www.mkcamcorderclub.co.uk
Contact: Tel.: 01908 236419

POTTERS BAR FILMMAKERS

www.pottersbarfilmmakers.co.uk
Contact: Penny Love Tel.: 01707 656446

RADLEY VIDEO

www.radleyvideo.co.uk
Contact: Radley College, Abingdon, Oxon.,
OX14 2HR

SOUTH ESSEX FILM MAKERS

www.sefm.org.uk
Contact: Geoff Woolfson.
Tel.: 07964445356

ST. ALBANS MOVIE MAKERS

www.stalbansmm.weebly.com. Contact:
Mike Cobert 01727 853819

STAINES VIDEO MAKERS

www.stainesvideo.co.uk Contact:
Mrs. Cathy Clarke, Tel.: 01784 433580

THREE COUNTIES MOVIE MAKERS

Contact: Tel.: 01442 214990

WALTHAMSTOW AMATEUR CINE VIDEO CLUB

www.wacvc.org.uk
Contact: Venner Gilbert, Tel.: 01708 746586

WANSTEAD AND WOODFORD MOVIE MAKERS

www.wansteadcinevideo.org.uk
Contact: Martin Page, Tel.: 020 8508 6312

WEST LONDON FILM GROUP

Contact: Karen Cherrington 020 8429 8497

WOODSTOCK VIDEO CLUB

www.woodstockvideoclub.co.uk
Contact: Secretary: Brian Battrick
secretary@woodstockvideoclub.co.uk

NTR 100 CLUB

Contact: John Farrer

Tel.: 01462 434948 E-Mail: jffarrer@masafish.com

Each of the following wins £12:

January 2016

20 Mrs Harland
c/o Potters Bar FM
98 Eric Granshaw
Wanstead & Woodford MM
75 Brenda Granshaw
W&W MM
37 Lorna Gill
W&W MM
47 Jean Biskeborn
Harrow FM

February 2016

90 Eric Jukes
Enfield VM
8 Margaret Farrer
PBFM
21 Jim Gatt
Harrow FM
46 Dave Smith
Harrow FM
102 Tim Stannard
Staines VM

The NTRIAC 2016 KNOCKOUT COMPETITION

The Draw, Dates & Venues:

Round A: Walthamstow ACVC v St. Albans MM v Staines VM

Thurs. Mar. 17th at 8 pm at Stafford Hall, St. Barnabas Road, Walthamstow E17 8JZ

Round B: Enfield VM v Hemel Hempstead MM

Tues. Mar. 15th at 8 pm at St. Stephen's Church Hall, Village Road, Enfield, EN1 2ET

Round C: Bourne End VM v Harrow FM v Potters Bar FM

Thurs. Mar. 10th at 7.45 pm at The Bourne End Community Centre, Wakeman Road, Bourne End, SL8 5SX

Round D: South Essex FM v Colchester FMC v Wanstead & Woodford MM

Sun. Mar. 20th at 2 pm, at Wyburns School, Nevern Road, Raleigh, SS6 7PE

The Winner of each Round goes through to the Final to be hosted By Colchester FMC on Saturday May 14th 2016 at 2.30 pm in the Hythe Community Centre, Ventura Drive, Colchester CO1 2FG

The Future for our Hobby 4

WHY? WHY? WHY?

There are 22 Clubs listed in the Directory on page 10.

In the NTR Festival & AGM 2015 (reported in the last Newsletter):

- Only 28 films were entered
- Around 75% of those were from members of just three Clubs
- In mid-afternoon, there were just 40 people in the audience, of which nearly a third were from one Club
- At least three of our erstwhile most prestigious Clubs were totally unrepresented both in entries and in the audience

WHY? WHY? WHY?

Your NTRIAC Committee desperately needs to know what you want from it, how you see the future for our hobby, how you think the NTR Festival Day & Competition can be re-energised and what to plan for the future.

That is, if there is to be a future . . .

Please let us know—contact details below and on the front cover

Deadline for the next issue is Sunday April 3rd

**Please send all contributions by e-mail & attachments to:
john.astin1@ntlworld.com**