

# Putting on a show - Lifting the lid on unseen preparations!

There are many aspects to film making; finding a good script, getting a cast and crew together (at the same time on the same day!), shooting, and of course post production and editing. All this is a waste of time if you then don't take equal care with presentation. You only get one chance of a first impression, so make sure it's a good one. If you get it right, the audience won't be aware of any of this background work. If you get it wrong, they'll never forget...

The following is based on many years professional experience of building, installing, and operating Public Address systems at many conferences and some of the UK's biggest events, a long involvement with Amateur Drama and then a local television station, followed by making films with other members of Bristol Cine Society, now known as Bristol Film and Video Society. It therefore represents a professional and comprehensive approach, and you will need to select appropriate parts of it depending on your needs. But please read it through and be careful you don't miss anything important; for example, Health and Safety may not be top of your list, but you must consider it - these precautions aren't obviously important until they're needed, and then they're essential.

As organizer, if you are running the show, you have by default accepted responsibility for Health and Safety issues. Don't leave yourself open to litigation from 'No win, no fee' sharks, and (in general) ignore any legal stuff at your peril, as the consequences could be very serious. If you can produce a completed document (like the Site Visit Report shown below) as evidence of a full and competent survey, you may at least be able to state that you had paid 'Due care and attention' to any issues resulting in a claim. Pay special attention to access, and facilities for the disabled. Decide whether it will be just a film show, or an event - in which case you may require plenty of space to socialise, take photos for your website and the media, provide a buffet, network with contacts, erect a display stand, attract new members, etc. There is a section of Sod's Law that applies to running these; if something *can* go wrong, it probably will. So read on... a lot of it will seem obvious, and you may ask why I bothered to include it. But without bringing it to your attention, you may not have even considered it at all. Take nothing for granted. And please note that the advice in this document is freely given, but 'without prejudice'. Your show is your responsibility. Any decisions you make are up to you. I can only suggest things you need to consider.

I am indebted to Jan and Dave Watterson of the IAC for reading my draft text and offering further helpful comments.

## CONTENTS

1. Objectives
2. How do you achieve your objectives?
3. Your programme of films
4. Audience
5. Room layout
6. Will your audience be sitting comfortably?
7. Sound set-up and control
8. Music
9. Microphone
10. Loudspeakers
11. Amplifier
12. Projector
13. Lighting
14. Cable runs
15. Mains power supply
16. Screen
17. Catering
18. Costs
19. Signage and promotion
20. Setting-up
21. Creating a safe and attractive environment
22. Competitions and award ceremonies
23. If it's a competition
24. Just in case
25. Merchandising
26. Legal stuff (*see also 9 above re. radio mics*)
27. Music rights
28. De-rig
29. The Caretaker
30. And finally... (*and Site Visit Report*)

## **SOME POINTERS TO SUCCESS...**

OK, you've decided you're going to screen one or more of your productions. Now you need to consider your options and do a bit of planning, especially if the venue will be new to you. First, let's have a look at your possible objectives:

### **1. OBJECTIVES**

To premiere a new production, or showcase previous work with a selection of films from your archive.

To show the results of your own or members' work in the best possible manner and environment - a bit 'special'.

To impress your/their family and friends; to enhance your/their self-esteem (good for new members).

To exceed expectations and attract and encourage possible new club members, maybe with a public show.

To hold a competition, and win prizes. (Always hopeful!)

To establish and confirm your rightful place in the hierarchy of film-makers or video clubs!

To join with another Special Interest Group, or a charity, to raise awareness - or raise funds - for their cause.

### **2. HOW DO YOU ACHIEVE YOUR OBJECTIVES?**

**Research** - define your likely audience and find and select a suitable venue.

**Planning** - the key to success; do as much as possible well in advance. Estimate costs, decide on a budget, and if selling tickets, establish a break-even point. Could you be affected by adverse weather? Do a Risk Assessment.

**Film programme selection** - (which order to show them in); is it a general or themed evening, or a competition?

**Get a team together** - to arrange seating, projection, a screen, sound facilities, lighting, Presenter, signage, catering, programme design and print, tickets and sales, stewards and greeters, a dedicated VIP Steward, a Safety Officer, a First-Aider, final de-rig and cleanup; ensure they know what is expected of them, and work as a team. Make sure those doing the catering visit the kitchen facilities in advance of the show so that they can plan accordingly.

**Make a list** of everything you need - techie kit and catering - and make a note of who will provide and bring it. Make sure that receipts are available for any expenses, and keep a list to provide a balance sheet for your Treasurer.

**On the day** - use your plan to achieve a smooth presentation and impress your audience.

**3. YOUR PROGRAMME OF FILMS.** You could start with a five-minute-ish film so that latecomers can be asked to stand at the back and take seats in a special pause between that first film and the others, and try to have the film which is shown immediately before an interval an upbeat one to keep people talking and happy as they queue for coffee etc. If this is a competition, you need to be careful not to show favour or bias; if the audience is voting for awards, then obviously anyone coming late and missing a film must be denied any vote. Whether a competition or not, do you want to progress through various degrees of humour, serious documentary or other, or mix them up? If you are planning an interval, you need to look at the timings closely - ensure that your film producers haven't understated their running times. Do you want to end on a high, or leave your audience with a serious thought-provoking subject? Is the evening themed?

Maybe you are working with a local issue and an action group to present a point of view, in which case members of the public are likely to be present, affording an excellent opportunity to attract new club members; so have a club stand with displays of film-making and examples of some productions, and a handout. Whatever the content, don't plan to show a long series of films without at least a comfort break. Ensure that frequent changes of aspect ratio are not necessary, as these will almost certainly interrupt the presentation and generally require a 'voice-over' by the Presenter to cover the action with comment appropriate to the subject of the show. For similar reasons, try to minimize the changes of file readers, and if possible put the whole show on a DVD (or two), hard disk, media player or flash memory. And test it!

It's important that everyone concerned knows the script/schedule. It looks bad if after the films the MC thanks people, then the club President comes on and repeats the thanks. Pity the poor guest presenter who does not know if they have to read out award citations or just hand over trophies and smile for photos. Do award winners know how to get onto the stage, and off again? You may need a steward to guide them. If you can find a way to seat them near the aisles, that's great... but barring the Oscar ceremonies where there are known nominees I have never seen that working. And it might indicate winners ahead of the announcements!

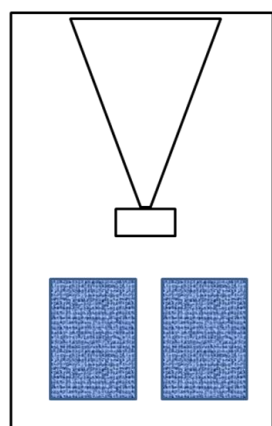
**4. AUDIENCE.** You need to define your target or likely audience. Is it other club members, the cast and crew, and their family and friends? Maybe members of other, similar, clubs - is it a competition with films from other film-makers? Are members of the public invited, in which case you may need to consider public liability insurance against litigious claims (if a member of a club, you may already have insurance cover - check the policy document). Don't forget that if you're showing a few films, a printed programme is a great way to inform the audience of what to expect along with some interesting 'potted' biographies and background details, providing a souvenir of the event. You might include screen-grabs from the films; the free VLC Media Player (<http://www.videolan.org/index.html>) has an easy snapshot tool which even catches the image in the correct aspect ratio. For a small number of programmes you can produce them at home on a computer and colour printer, but for larger numbers it makes better economic sense to have a print shop run them off. Somewhere around 150 leaflets is probably the cut-off point. This is an area where you might look for business sponsorship in kind: maybe ask a large company to print off the programmes on their office machines. Will you issue tickets, either free (just to control numbers) or for a price? Will the seats be numbered? Will there be reserved seats for VIPs? How many people are you expecting to come along?

This last point is crucial, and obviously has a direct bearing on the size of room you need. If your regular meeting room is going to be too small, you need to look around for suitable venues. It's helpful to use a standard form to assess any you find, as it ensures that you consider all aspects that need attention, and also provides a good record of what you found when comparing details to make a final choice. A suggested Site Visit Report is attached; it's comprehensive and you may not need all of it, so just take note of the most important and applicable aspects. When you've selected a venue, book it ASAP to secure availability for the date of your show; good venues go quickly.

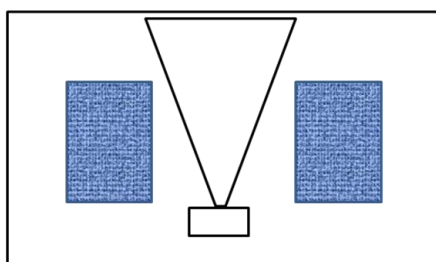
**5. ROOM LAYOUT.** Would it be better to project along the room or across the room? There is no hard-and-fast guide to this, but you need to consider the aspect ratio of the length to width. Unless the projector is ceiling-mounted, a narrow room may need a central walkway to allow for projection along it (or arrange seating behind it), and this can take up a lot of floor space. Projecting across the room may mean that people at either end may not have a good view of the screen. If the room is large or square, you may like to consider a diagonal set-up with the screen across a corner. This can give you a longer projection throw to fill a larger screen, or enable the use of a large screen in a small room (the zoom range on your projector may be limited). It may also reduce some echo characteristics.

For small meetings in small rooms it is usually fine to put the control desk adjacent to the projector, but please *put the projector on a separate table with a gap between them* to avoid any on-screen movement when working; some tables are prone to wobble a bit! That's where beer mats may come in very handy. But when you have a large gathering in a big room this arrangement puts you in the middle of the audience, restricting your mobility, and anything you do - changing DVDs, etc. - is very distracting for viewers. You will also need to run more cables across or along the seating area.

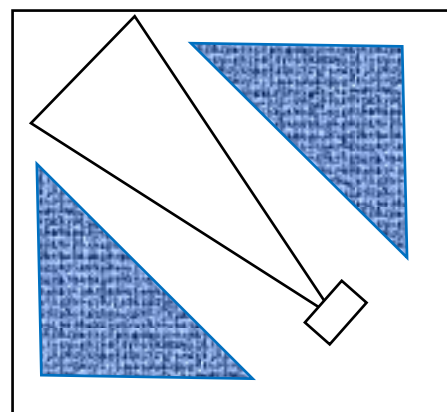
You need effective black-out blinds or curtains. You must provide access and walkways which allow a safe exit in any emergency, especially for any disabled and wheelchair users. Setting up your control desk near an exit door can be useful if you need to liaise with catering, pop out to retrieve a bit of backup kit from your vehicle during the show without distracting attention from the films, or maybe to find out who is making all that unwelcome noise outside!



**Typical projection options**



**Seating areas**



**6. WILL YOUR AUDIENCE BE SITTING COMFORTABLY?** Most halls will probably have stacking seats with a moulded plastic seat and back, some will be clinging on to the very old stacking bent tube type with a plywood (or canvas) seat and back, while some may have a more modern version of folding seats with textile seating areas. Are the seats comfortable and in good condition, or is their shabby appearance likely to spoil the impact of the occasion? You really don't want your audience starting to shuffle around after half an hour, as uncomfortable seating starts to take effect! When putting the seats out, make sure that there is enough space between rows to allow for easy access.

**7. SOUND SET-UP AND CONTROL.** The room or hall may have a permanent sound system which you might be able to use, so ask for permission and instructions on how to use it, or you may prefer to take all your own equipment that you're familiar with together with back-up kit in case of failure. Do you want to use the same amplifier and speakers for the films and for a presenter's microphone (see below)? Whether you do or not, a basic sound mixer can be very useful, not only for use during presentations but during post-production as well. I suggest you have a look at the smaller models from Behringer. These are modestly priced and provide all the facilities you're likely to need, and some have a digital USB output as well as the usual jack and phono connectors.

These and similar mixers (sold under various brand names with slight differences in specifications) have inputs for several stereo line level inputs (useful if you're using more than one signal source, as you can pre-set the input sensitivity for each) and mono mic inputs. These give you the flexibility to adjust sound levels during the show and - particularly for the microphone inputs - offer some simple equalization which may help offset any acoustic feedback (howl-round). When selecting a mixer, two or four mic inputs are probably fine for most users but don't worry too much about how many effects are available such as echo and reverb, as they are of limited use. The very sensitive mic inputs generally accept both balanced XLR, and balanced or unbalanced ¼" jack plugs.

When lots of cables are plugged in - and in particular, mic cables - it can be far too easy to move the mixer around, which can get a bit annoying. Fortunately there is a cheap and easy cure for this and similar equipment. I happened to have some 16mm BumperStops, and fitted one to each corner of the baseplate. The mixer now sits nice and flat, there's no risk of scratching the worksurface with the moulded 'feet' on the side plates, and no risk of a rattle as it moves. It has transformed the whole feel of the unit. It no longer feels like a lightweight mixer which moves as soon as you touch it, but it seems to be fixed to the surface you put it on! It doesn't stick to the surface, but you have to push really hard to move it sideways. It's a really worthwhile and very cheap modification. Here's the manufacturer's info: <http://www.bumperstops.co.uk/uk/hemispherical.html> - look for for their PD.2150, 16mm dia, 7.9mm high self-adhesive hemispherical BumperStop, then enter 'bumperstops 16mm' in your search engine for suppliers. You will be pleasantly surprised at the improvement. Maplin's Code BP58N is a similar item, which may work just as well.



Model shown is the Behringer Xenyx QX1202USB. This has four mic input channels with gain, pan, level and some simple equalization on each, and four stereo line inputs each with pan and level controls. It has a USB output as well as the usual ¼" jack and phono sockets. There is a single Master Fader to control the output level. There are 100 sound effects to choose from if you want them!

There are many similar mixers sold under other brand names.

Some presenters and speakers like to move around as they talk or to demonstrate on pieces of kit etc. which are in different places on stage. Consider a wireless tieclip or headworn mic setup, but make sure the mic is only live (or only ever played to the public) when the speaker is on stage. No one wants to hear the loo flush or their private comments on the chairman! But such mics can also attract feedback, and unless the loudspeakers are distanced from the stage or preferably a little way forward of it, it's usually much safer to offer either a hand-held dynamic mic with a radio transmission adaptor or use a cable connection. Do not encourage the presenter to go walkabout or step

down off the stage (maybe to introduce those who have played some special part in the event), as you will invite sound problems; a cabled mic will restrain them! Remind speakers to keep the mic fairly close to their mouth (usually about a hand span or less) and speak a little *across* it, rather than *directly into* it; i.e. hold the mic below or beside the flow of air from their mouth. This reduces the effect of 'plosive consonants' such as b, p, t, etc.

As there are no practical universal standards or reliable volume meters for amateurs, sound levels on films from several producers (using a variety of video editing software) can vary wildly, and 'loudness' - perceived volume - is a hot topic even in professional circles. Because of this, whenever possible allow yourself some time to preview excerpts of each film *before the show starts* to get an idea of the volume setting for each film, and make a note of it. It's a good idea not to deafen the audience with an introductory fanfare! So make sure you have access to all the films before the show, but if you're accepting films on the night (maybe for a competition) being handed a DVD still hot from burning a minute before the show starts is very unwelcome and certainly not recommended, so be firm with your producers. It's not in their, or your, best interests, and there have been instances of DVDs flatly refusing to play, so it may be a good idea to ask for films to be submitted on more than one media format.

In these circumstances, to help the projectionist, insist on just one film per disk (or whatever, and ensure the media owner is identified), along with details of its aspect ratio (e.g. 4:3, 16:9), definition (e.g. SD, HD 720, HD 1080, 4K) duration and subject matter. Does it have a menu structure? Does it auto start when loaded? Does it have an Academy Leader or countdown at the start? Preferably not! You can't always monitor the film before sending it to the projector and sound channels, but do try to arrange things so that you can.

A word of warning if you intend to play files from an Apple device. Painful experience with visiting speakers tells us that for some reason best known to themselves, HDMI connectors are not common on Apple products, and due to their insular attitude and video connections (of more than one size) peculiar to their computers, you need to physically check whether the Apple kit will actually connect to your projector. Special adaptor leads may be available - at a price - but don't leave it to the last minute to find that you need one! Sound can usually be taken at line level from a 3.5mm stereo headphone socket. This is a good reason to provide the film files on alternative source material such as DVD, a media player, or flash memory via USB (have memory card adaptors available) which can be plugged into a bog-standard computer or laptop (good idea to take one as a standby!) which *will* connect to the projector, as long as it can read the file format. And don't assume it can... VideoLan's VLC player (PC and Mac) copes well with most files, but it can be useful to have Quicktime and Windows Media Player available as well.

**8. MUSIC.** Another word for minefield! If the films have music tracks, or if you intend to use some background or interval music (or possibly a live music performance) during the show, do you (or the producers or performers) have clearance or permission to use this music, and does the venue have the appropriate licence? See 'Legal stuff' below.

**9. MICROPHONE.** If you're expecting a large audience you will need a PA (Public Address) system. If you're not careful this can cause acoustic feedback, particularly in a hall with hard flooring, hard walls, large glass windows (although curtains minimize the effect), and beams where sound can bounce back and provide echo. A high ceiling or roof will create an unwelcome ambience. When on an inspection visit, clap your hands together to assess the sound characteristics of the space. Will you need a lectern for the Presenter? Will it need a reading light? - a small clip-on LED type may be sufficient. The choice and positioning of the PA microphone and its speakers is critical. You are unlikely to be able to test this in advance, so on the day set it up as soon as possible and try it; establish a 'safe area' to move within which is free of feedback. You may need to move the mic and/or speakers to minimize the effect. An audience can effectively 'soak up' some of the sound and reduce the problem, but it's a bit late then! You may be able to use the equalization controls on the mixer to minimize the problem. Have a twiddle!

Your choice of microphone is important, since those used for location filming are seldom suitable for PA. I strongly suggest a cardioid dynamic ('vocal') microphone such as the ubiquitous Shure SM58 Studio Microphone (well established and widely used by everyone from pop groups to Popes, and even on the International Space Station!). These mics have a standard three-pin XLR connection, and a spherical filter which minimizes wind and breath 'pop' noise. They are sometimes available from vendors with a suitable cable and may even come as a complete kit with a floor stand, which you will probably need anyway. Due to their cardioid (heart-shaped) pick-up pattern, they tend to

reject sounds coming from the sides and particularly the rear of the mic, and it's no surprise that this will probably be more effective with these professional mics - it will be money well spent. They are also excellent for recording narration for your productions, offering a very natural frequency response. Here's an SM58 shown in a folding desk stand I bought from Maplin...



*The diagram is an excerpt from information from Shure for their SM58 Studio Microphone, shown above. You probably won't be using a Stage (or 'foldback') Monitor; these are mainly for musical performances.*

If you are considering using a radio mic to avoid having cables, even legal licence-free frequencies used by amateur equipment can be affected by adjacent frequency transmissions from external sources. Pro kit sometimes requires a Home Office licence specifically for the venue, date and frequency allocation. And costs money! But you get exclusive use of the frequency for that location and period, and anyone else using it is liable to attract a visit from the law. If you're intending to buy - or use - a radio mic for recording or presentation, make sure that you will be using a legal frequency. Recent changes to frequency allocation caused havoc with pro gear, so beware of second-hand kit, and check; don't get caught with out-of-date equipment that you can't use. Here's a link to some good and very clear advice from the Institute of Professional Sound: [http://www.ips.org.uk/faq/index.php?title=Radio\\_Microphones](http://www.ips.org.uk/faq/index.php?title=Radio_Microphones) Also note that "...every landlord still has a right to control use of radio on their property". You have been warned.

**10. LOUDSPEAKERS.** You're probably going to use ones you've already got, but be aware that a large room or hall can demand a much higher power than your living room if only to drown out the sound of sweet wrappers, and over-driving the speakers will obviously cause distortion and possibly damage the cones. You will almost certainly need to mount them on stands to raise them above the heads of the audience, or if the screen is on a stage you may get away with standing them either side of it. Putting speakers on a shaky mountain of tables might work just fine, but certainly doesn't look too good! But be very careful if you're connecting to an existing permanent set-up in a hall, since professional installations often use '100v line' amplifier output for distribution with a matching transformer at each loudspeaker; connecting your 8 ohm speakers to a 100v line won't do them much good! As a Rule of Thumb: if every member of the audience can see the loudspeakers, they can hear them. The biggest risk is placing the speakers so low that the people in the front row get between them and the rest of the audience. Ideally use proper speaker stands, but most of us can improvise with step-ladders and tables; the trick then is to have plenty of black material to drape over all the stands and background paraphernalia.

**11. AMPLIFIER.** You're going to use one you've already got, aren't you? It's a good idea before the audience comes in to run some sound and walk round the room to ensure that people at the back have sufficient sound coverage. Make sure you have an amp with enough power to deliver a good sound level without any undue distortion. It's impossible to recommend a power output since amplifiers, loudspeakers and rooms vary greatly, so take a big one rather than a small one! Domestic HiFi amps don't have XLR mic inputs, and as mentioned above you will need a mixer to match the input.

Be aware of potential sound sync problems. Some DVD/Blu-ray players and most projectors do some processing of the images that can introduce a very slight delay, and it can be enough to show up as poor lip-sync. Even modern flat screen monitors and TVs take a little time to build an image before displaying it, and incorporate a sound delay to



compensate. Most amplifiers designed for home cinema use also have facilities to insert a similar, adjustable, delay in the sound channels. Hi-Fi purists will also insist that all loudspeaker leads are exactly the same length...

**12. PROJECTOR.** For reasons which I really cannot fathom, all video projectors will show your button pressing up on the screen. Obviously it really should be shown on a small screen on the remote handset and kept from your audience, so you need to make sure the projector is properly set up prior to start, with the image in focus, correctly sized and with no keystone problems. This secrecy falls apart if you need to change the aspect ratio, but you can't escape it - it will be obvious. To minimize the interruption, make sure that your projectionist is familiar with setting-up and operating the projector, and even then, keep the User Guide handy! The audience doesn't need to see you repeatedly struggling with labyrinthine menus. Is there a button on the remote dedicated to Aspect Ratio?

**13. LIGHTING.** Establish the location and operation of the room light switches. Are they near the back or front of the room, or behind a curtain on the stage? It's best to light the presenter separately, so a spotlight and stand - preferably with a dimmer located on the control desk (I use a Zero88 Alphapack dimmer with a 300w Fresnel spot on a high stand) - is highly desirable, as then you won't need to use the room lights between films. This is a particular advantage if the room has fluorescent strip lights which flash before being fully operational (and fully lighting the room - and usually the screen - between films is not a good idea anyway) and you won't need to rely on someone else switching them at the right moment. Or risk them being switched on at the *wrong* moment... Fading the lamp up and down is much kinder to the eyes of the audience, and also helps to extend the life of the lamp.



The Zero88 Alphapack dimmer unit. This can control up to 6.3 amps of lighting (about 1,400 watts) per channel, but the total load will be electronically limited to within 13A (for the 13A version shown). You can daisy-chain these faders to give three or six channels of lighting. The later Alphapack2 accepts DMX512 control. There is a choice of output connectors - mine came from David Lawrence Lighting, who sold it fitted with 13A sockets. Enter [www.zero88.com](http://www.zero88.com) in your search engine for details.

**14. CABLE RUNS.** The position of the mains sockets in the room and other considerations may mean that the control desk is at one side of the seating area rather than at the back of the room, and cables must not obstruct fire exits and preferably not cross the main access doorway/s. If there is no alternative, either cover the cables with a thin doormat, barrier mat or runner (these are available cheaply from the likes of B&Q, and be careful that they don't invite people to trip on them, or jam a door when opened) or see if the cables can be taken *over* the doorway. Some people like to use gaffer tape to secure the cables in place on the floor, but you risk damaging the surface on removal and you won't be thanked if remedial work needs to be done. Note that taping a cable down either side of an entrance rather than taping it down across the whole width of the walkway could offer a trip hazard, as the cable will be constrained if someone catches their foot in it - beware expensive litigation.

There is a gizmo called 'Gaffgun', a bit esoteric for the non-professional, but it will quickly tape down a length of cable. Cable-Tex Rubber Cable Floor Cover Protector is effective as modestly priced trunking, but in my experience similar coverage can be more intrusive since it adds a lot of height and bulk. It protects the cables, but is a trade-off. Make sure it has a slit along its length to insert your cables; some early versions needed cutting, but inevitably these slits reduce its strength as it can then flatten more easily under pressure. You'll see it in heavy-use areas such as retail, and computer rooms and offices. You are very unlikely to be able to open a door over it, meaning that your cable run may need to be diverted.

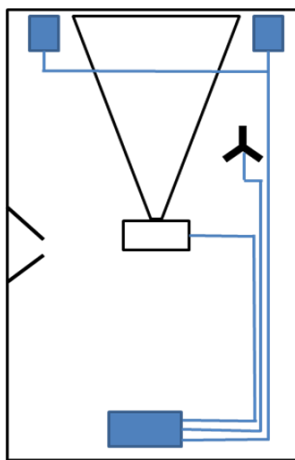
Regarding long HDMI leads, these can be difficult to find in even the large high-street stores (who charge exorbitant prices for a bit of wire with a plug at each end). Try a computer fair, in particular enter 'British Computer Fairs' or 'BCF Gadget & Tech Fairs' (same outfit) in your search engine to see if there's one near you; or may I suggest you look at [www.Rhinocables.co.uk](http://www.Rhinocables.co.uk) Exhibitors at these fairs often have a wide selection of leads (and stuff you never

knew existed and really can't live another minute without!) at sensible prices. Be aware that HDMI leads come in five versions. Have a look and make sure you get the right one: [http://www.hdmi.org/consumer/how\\_to\\_connect.aspx](http://www.hdmi.org/consumer/how_to_connect.aspx)

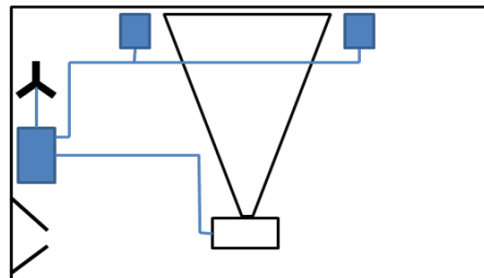
According to this (official) website, if you need to send a 1080p signal more than 25 feet, or a 1080i signal more than 49 feet, active electronics will help boost the HDMI signal to compensate. You can purchase either a stand-alone booster box, or an active cable (also available from Rhino) where the circuitry is embedded in the connectors themselves - both types require an external power source. I suggest you try it first before buying additional kit; your equipment may be able to accept a poor signal, but it might be easier to site the control desk nearer the projector!

A safety tip... When you're using a tripod stand, whether for a microphone (unless it will be removed from its clip for use), a lamp or a loudspeaker, always take the cable down the stand and tuck the cable under one of the three legs before running it out to its connection elsewhere. That way, if the cable gets pulled, it will tend to move the stand along the floor rather than tipping it over - it could save you the cost of a new lamp! For cables running to a projector (or other item) on a table, where it could get pulled off, tape or tie the cable/s to a table leg at floor level.

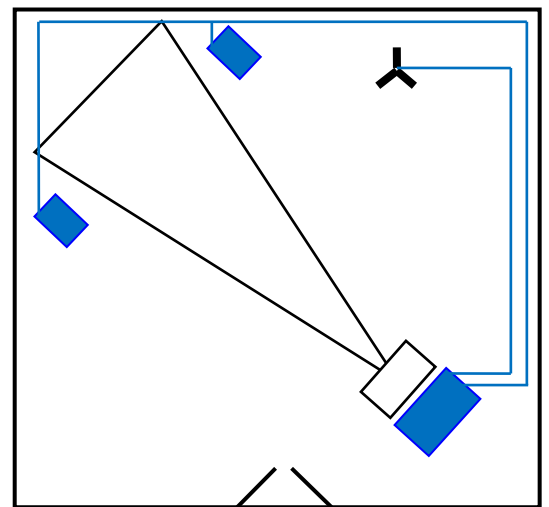
The diagrams below indicate the possible cable runs connecting a control desk to the microphone, loudspeakers, and projector. Using a dynamic mic will minimise the possibility of feedback when unavoidably close to the loudspeakers.



Cable runs - mains not shown



There are usually many doors



You need to apply the same care with cable runs for mains, microphone, and loudspeaker leads, and to avoid getting in each other's way it is always advantageous to set up the control desk and cables before putting out the seating. And before allowing an audience to enter the room, carry out a full survey of safety aspects such as cables and other trip hazards, gangway widths, the possibility of someone nudging the carefully-aligned projector, and so on.

**15. MAINS POWER SUPPLY.** if you're using an old village hall or similar, these days it's unlikely but possible that the wiring is also old and fed from a fused consumer unit rather than a modern one with trips. You may like to take an RCD unit (Residual Current Device, like the one you would use with a lawnmower) to provide protection just in case. You could be forgiven for thinking that mains sockets are made of solid gold, because all too often you will find just one at either end of a large room or hall, but they are provided for the floor polisher, not you. Halls are usually intended for drama, not film shows. When conducting a site visit, make sure that any socket you intend to use is live; you don't want a nasty surprise on the night! You can do a simple test by plugging-in a nightlight. If you're using commercial premises, it's very unlikely but you may be asked to confirm that your electrical equipment has been PAT tested (Portable Appliance Test). This could be an unwelcome expense. Tested equipment will have a label attached - do not remove it. See <http://www.hse.gov.uk/electricity/faq-portable-appliance-testing.htm>

**16. SCREEN.** If the venue has no screen or just a small screen, you will need to provide one. These are always a problem since they are usually wide and difficult to transport, especially if you need something like an 8' or even 10' screen; the screen size depends on your room and audience numbers. If you have an existing set-up it's a good idea to measure the projection distance and the height of the screen and projector from the floor, so to save time you can replicate this when setting-up at the different venue.



It can be a major task to transport and erect/disassemble a large screen, and using it for a show lasting just an hour or two is a lot of extra work which is difficult to justify, and hiring and transport can be a significant item in your costs. A venue which has a large screen installed is a real advantage, and there may even be a suitable ceiling-mounted projector; if so, find out how to connect to it and how to control it. A room that has an acceptable screen will score highly in your comparison rating! White painted walls are sometimes OK, but rarely white, so be careful, as it may give all your images an undesirable colour cast.

**17. CATERING.** Will there be an interval, or will you serve refreshments before or after the film show? An interval means that used items can be cleared away and washing-up completed during the second half, and at the end of the evening you can all have a friendly natter before a timely departure. If it's an evening event, people will have had their lunch and tea or dinner, and you don't need to feed them; a cup of tea or coffee, maybe with some fancy biscuits or cakes, is fine. Is there a separate room available where the refreshments can be served, or will you set up a table at the back of the hall? Remember that if you do the teas/coffees etc. yourselves, it ties up members who will not then be able to see all the films, and you would need to transport all items, set up the table, maybe serve, and then clear up and possibly wash up. Not ideal, especially if you're dealing with an audience of 100 or so.

Should you look for a venue which can provide catering, maybe with all the other presentation facilities you need? If you're expecting visitors from other clubs and VIPs, they may have travelled some distance and would welcome a refreshing coffee on arrival. Be prepared. But beware the all-too-frequently offered plates of rather tired-looking sandwiches, sausage rolls, cut pork pies, goujons, bowls of soggy crisps etc. which have been hanging around for hours under clingfilm; they do not look (or taste) delicious. I'm sure people eat them just to be polite. If you're going to offer a buffet, this is where it pays to use a commercial venue where they can prepare the food immediately before your event, or even during the first half, and present it absolutely fresh. Don't let your audience remember you for poor catering. It's a reputation that will stick.

Generally, get ready for cleaning. Someone WILL spill something / drop crisps and worst of all leave half-chewed sticky toffees stuck to the floor or under the chairs. If you are prepared with a bucket, mop and an old towel to clear and dry up a spill it can avoid a lot of unpleasantness and possible delays to the rest of the show. And a spillage can present a slip hazard - it's a good idea to ask a steward to guard it and warn those nearby until it's cleared.

**18. COSTS.** Hiring a venue where everything is provided will appear to cost more, but you just turn up, enjoy the show and refreshments, and depart, so all members (who might otherwise be attending to catering etc.) can relax and enjoy the films. The venue is likely to be of a much better standard than an old or local church hall and may have a cash bar, and staff who can look after cloaks, seating arrangements, and provide refreshments. The room will probably be carpeted and furnished, have good seating and have a much lower ceiling than a hall, so offer better acoustics. Think hard about your budget, and make sure it doesn't run away with you. Are you doing this from funds, charging at cost, or looking for a profit? To offset the costs of better surroundings and facilities, you could charge a small amount for tickets to cover the cost of room hire and the provision of refreshments; I always equate the charge to 'How many cappuccinos will this buy on the high street?' OK, I like cappuccinos, but it's a good reality check.

**19. SIGNAGE AND PROMOTION.** Even in this age of SatNav it can be hard to track down venues in the dark, particularly at a remote country venue where a single postcode can cover a very large area. Make sure someone makes and brings large, bright signs to point people to the right place, and don't forget one for the entrance door! You may like to advertise the event in local shop windows, so an A4 poster would be required. If it's a show dealing with local issues or maybe a film of a community event, some leaflets for door-to-door delivery might be a good idea. If it's a club event, keep sending regular reminders to members, and plug it at your meetings. Don't wait until the last minute, when ticket sales are poor and you realise that apathy has set in. If it's a major event, perhaps the local rag, radio station or TV would give you a mention. If you don't ask, you don't get.

Earlier I mentioned a break-even point for ticket sales. This is when you've sold enough tickets (at your chosen price) to cover your costs, and I suggest it should be set at a realistic number of seats rather than a full house. Unless you are happy to cover the shortfall, you will need to decide on a Go/No-go situation for the show. If sales don't meet expectations and you decide to cancel, you must do so in good time so that your ticket holders can be contacted;

you should place a 'Cancelled' banner over any posters - don't just take them down. And of course you will also need to update your website.

If you're working with a charity to raise funds for them, make sure you work *with* them, and not in isolation. In the past, we've put on very successful film shows for charities by charging a low flat fee to set-up and run a show (providing all the films and techie stuff), but leaving everything else - the venue, seating, ticket sales, advertising, catering etc. - to them. You could try suggesting to your local Round Table or Lions Club that they hold a 'Sausage and Mash Supper with Films', or similar. We got a small donation to funds, and after a few shows they benefitted by thousands! Films from the archive showing events and coverage of the past went down extremely well as they wallowed in nostalgia, and we added some drama shot in locations that no longer existed. Many members of the audience were very complimentary afterwards, and added their own precious memories which may prompt an idea for another film! Why not consider making an archive film now, for showing some years in the future? It certainly opens your eyes as you become more aware of your present surroundings; cars, traffic, what people are wearing, shop window displays and prices, local parks, buildings due for demolition, and so on.

**20. SETTING-UP.** On arrival at the venue, check the room and immediately report anything broken or damaged, as you don't want to get blamed or billed for repair or replacement of anything which is the result of a previous room letting. Then, it's all very well taking care to fix everything down when installing, but you also need to consider de-rig, when there's usually very little time available (beware programme over-runs!). If you tape cables together or to anything, it's a good idea to fold over just a little of the end of the tape so that it's easy to find when removing it - please don't just cut the tape and leave bits all over the room and furniture. It's also a good idea to resist passing long cables through holes, or behind radiators or furniture etc. unless you absolutely have to; better to take the cable across the front of an object (e.g. a furniture leg), loop either side behind it and secure it with a bit of easily removed tape round the cable at the back of the item. Then when you remove the tape, the cable is free to collect and wind up. Try to avoid having to use steps to lay out cables, because you will need them again to de-rig at a time when your audience is hanging round chatting after the show and getting in the way! Keep it simple.

**21. CREATING A SAFE AND ATTRACTIVE ENVIRONMENT.** On the day, when you've set up all the kit, tidy away all the stuff you don't need, just ensuring that backup items are still accessible. Please don't leave piles of odd cables, boxes and flight cases in clear view. Check that all emergency exits are clear, and not blocked or locked, and that all cable runs are safe and trip-free. You will need to appoint two or more Stewards who know where the emergency exits are and can direct visitors to an external fire assembly point (and if there was a fire, ensure the safe egress of everyone in the hall), and also know where the First Aid Box and Incident Record Book are kept. Make sure you have access to a fully-charged mobile phone (and a good signal!) for use in an emergency, and make sure each Steward has a good torch in case of power cuts. Greeters (apologies for the Americanism!) are always a good idea to welcome your audience and direct people to their seats, to cloakrooms, and to toilets, and they could also act as Stewards. You may need a few extra seats for unexpected guests, so find out where the chair store is. You may like to start the show with a request to turn off all mobiles, and of course end it with a reminder to turn them back on!

Particularly for a large event, consider first-aid. It is always good to have a trained first-aider on hand in case of accidents, but more likely in case someone is taken ill. Many shows have an aging audience. It can be useful to have a couple of strong stewards on the team, as sometimes the best way to deal with someone feeling *really* poorly is to pick them up *in their chair* and quickly carry them out of the auditorium. That reduces their embarrassment and delay to the show, and enables speedy first aid to be given in a less public area outside of the room.

**22. COMPETITIONS AND AWARD CEREMONIES.** These can be quite large in terms of attendees. Who will present the goodies? If there are to be special guests at these events - speakers, the Mayor, a representative of a charity etc. - appoint someone whose sole job is to look after them. Try to arrange a Green Room where they can relax in private before the show. Some are happy to meet and chat with the audience coming in, others prefer to sit quietly and prepare their remarks. All will appreciate the offer of water / tea / coffee / toilet (not necessarily in that order!). This special Greeter should double-check how to pronounce any unusual name, what title the speaker prefers and which organization/s they represent if any; then write that down and communicate it to the Chairman or whoever is MC for

the evening. If they're not charging a professional fee, you may consider giving a token of thanks (we used to refer to it as a bottle of Film Cement, but hopefully it tasted much better! Times have changed).

You may need an extra table to display the trophies, which may be engraved after the event (not before if they're on display - you will give the game away unless you cover the new name with a bit of tape!). Clearly label all prizes to ensure that they are presented to the right people. If cups etc. are to be held for a year, make a special note of the winners so that you can track down the trophies for the next competition - you may give small trophies as a keepsake, and maybe a Certificate, which could be on parchment presented flat, or rolled and secured with a ribbon, or even framed. Arrange for a photographer, and possibly coverage by the media. The prizewinners would probably appreciate a print to add to their scrapbook, and some of the images can be displayed on your website.

Some trophies can be very large, very heavy, or even very valuable, and some recipients may balk at taking them home and possibly arranging insurance cover. That's if they've actually got a mantelpiece to put it on, along with a couple of china dogs and a clock with a wedge of postcards from Torremolinos behind it. A certificate, and a nice photo of the trophy presentation, might be much more practical and acceptable. And you won't need to arrange transport to return the trophy for next year. Points to consider, especially if you're introducing a new award!

**23. IF IT'S A COMPETITION**, you need to identify, invite and confirm a team of judges. Will they charge a fee? Sometimes the entries will be judged on the night (possibly by or with the audience), sometimes judged in advance, and it's nice to offer entrants a written critique afterwards. Make sure that the judges have pens and pads. Are you charging a fee to enter? Are you limiting entries in any way? Are they, for example, on a pre-set subject, or to a piece of music, or to pieces of prose, or to a given duration? - make sure the judges are aware of this. With competitions, you have little other control over content and programme for your show as you have to choose between films that are entered. Be sure to inform entrants of your preferred file format and recording medium (e.g. DVD, HD, Blu-ray, flash memory...) and aspect ratio (now usually 16:9, but could be almost anything - even a 4:3 black-and-white silent film, as long as it has a dog in it!). You may be able to get some local shops and businesses to donate some prizes. Ask them nicely, maybe offering a free ticket. They might even buy another for their partner!

For awards and even for normal speeches in a large hall, consider a live video feed to the screen, with a camera watching the winners come up to the stage and offering a middle-close shot of the presentation. Technically it may mean little more than a long lead between the camera and video mixer or projector.

**24. JUST IN CASE.** You need to be prepared for any eventuality; you probably won't have time to go home for something you forgot, and all the shops may be shut. Duplicate equipment wherever possible. Your audience won't like it if your kit lets you down and you can't project the films! So you should consider taking...

A few basic tools, spare fuses and a test meter.

Some 'beer mats' are excellent for levelling the projector and stabilising table legs. Take lots! Also good for beer.

Spare projector and amplifier, brought by another member in case of travel difficulties with the prime equipment.

Spare DVD deck/media player.

Take User Guides for all the kit; that's all those books you haven't opened yet!

Spare interconnecting leads, e.g. phono, 3.5mm, HDMI; and some connector adaptors.

Spare batteries for remotes, e.g. AAA, AA, PP3.

Long and multiway mains extension leads. Long speaker leads.

A long HDMI signal lead for the projector (see 14 above).

Microphone stands (table and floor) and long XLR leads.

Mats or trunking to cover cables, and gaffer tape.

A small torch or clip-on LED lights, and a desk lamp, for the Control Desk; and larger torches for the stewards.

A large umbrella in case of rain when a VIP arrives or leaves.

I also take three reels of insulation tape; black for general use, white for labelling mixer inputs, and yellow, which is used to identify anything faulty. This could be a troublesome cable, a particular input or output, a dead amplifier, whatever. This saves time back at base when you need to find it and sort it out before the next show.

If you're using non-commercial premises such as a village hall (as opposed to part of an hotel or club, other areas of which will be open), make sure to take a spare toilet roll. Chances are that if/when it is urgently needed, the caretaker will not be around and no one else will have access to the stores. And make sure it's soft paper - some installations use a macerator, and these require consideration. Don't block the loos! You will be VERY unpopular.

The image below was taken on return from an important presentation after unloading from my car; the odd colour is due to a street light. And there's more - two other people brought the two projectors (prime and standby) and DVD player, along with some more microphone cables and kit! Just in case (and here's some of the cases!)



Lighting stand, lights, dimmer unit, leads, loudspeaker stands, loudspeakers, loudspeaker leads, projector stand, two amplifiers, box of assorted interconnects, box of assorted HDMI leads, audio mixer, headphones, microphone stands, microphone, XLR leads, long mains cables, floor mats, torch, kitchen sink...!

To help identify any mains supply problems, you may want to take a 'Martindale Ring Main Tester' (a simple modified 13A plug which indicates correct wiring of the socket), and a really good gadget is a 'Kewtech Kewstick One', a non-contact device which looks similar to a pen, and glows when brought close to a live mains cable or connector - excellent for identifying a failed fuse, tracing a broken wire, or finding a dead socket. Useful to have around the home, too! Highly recommended, as it can very quickly help you get under way again. There are cheaper versions of similar indicators, but you are much more likely to see tradesmen using the Kewtech, which gives a clear indication, is robust and easy to use. I have found it to be very reliable, and that's important. Don't mess with 240v.



You may like to suggest that your tech team should wear black, comfortable clothes and quiet footwear so that if necessary they can move around during the show without distracting the audience too much, and one might bring a pair of posh shoes and a jacket just in case the MC fails to arrive!

**25. MERCHANDISING.** This is where a lot of commercial offerings in the local cinema make their money, rather than from bums on seats. You probably haven't got the T-shirts, posters, badges, books, plastic figures of the cast, bags and rucksacks, pencil cases, mouse mats and all the other stuff, but if you're intending to sell DVDs to aid club funds beware any copyright issues, especially for any music you have used. It may come back to bite you.

A sales table is not enough. Place a notice on a stand or on the wall, well above head-height, telling people they can "Buy X here for £y" otherwise only those standing in front of the stall will know it is there, so ensure that it is promoted by the presenter. And it never hurts to prompt the Chairman or MC to thank the technical team publicly and privately at the end of the evening - then your helper/s may be more willing to turn out for the next show!

**26. LEGAL STUFF.** We touched upon **Public Liability** - that is your duty of care towards the people you have invited to the event or who are your customers. People should be safe at the event, but accidents do occur, most often slips and falls. You should make sure you are covered against the risk of any accident victim suing you or the club. Some

halls have their own Public Liability insurance which covers all users. Your club may have a policy which covers the club premises and occasional use of other venues. If necessary get insurance for the day/s you are in the venue... but shop around or use a reliable broker to get the best rates.

The local authority issue Entertainment Licences to premises or for specific events. These are intended to ensure public safety. Most venues you might use will have such a licence, but check. See also...

**27. MUSIC RIGHTS.** Any music heard by the audience, whether live or recorded or on movie soundtracks, requires relevant licences. Generally PPL licences cover the rights of the record companies, and PRS Licences cover the rights of musicians and publishers. A PPL (Phonographic Performance Limited [www.ppluk.com](http://www.ppluk.com)) Licence may be held by the hall, but check. If not, get one. Film soundtracks may be covered by the IAC copyright scheme if the maker is an IAC member and has bought the licences. Note that IAC licenses for a club only cover productions made by the club as a club and not those made by individual members. IAC licences for individuals only cover their films and not those of the club. If anything is not covered in this way contact PRS for Music ([www.prsformusic.com](http://www.prsformusic.com)).

The suppliers of “royalty-free” or “buy-out” music - for example, AKM ([www.akmmusic.co.uk](http://www.akmmusic.co.uk) - and scroll down for good info), who have a wide range of existing tracks, and for a fee will even write and record music specifically and exclusively for you as a commission - usually do not require such licences, so if your film makers use such music you may be off the hook! It’s tempting to take a chance, but you can never know who will be in the audience; a musician, a music publisher or someone who works for one of the agencies like PRS. If you are considering filming a published story or play, remember that the author has similar copyright; unless it’s just for your own personal viewing (and don’t ever let it migrate to the web or be entered in competitions) even as an amateur you must first ask the publisher or author for permission to film it. They may intend negotiating film rights to a professional outfit.

**28. DE-RIG.** When the show’s over, first grab all the expensive kit - microphones, lamps, etc. - and put it away safely before it gets lost or damaged. And beware offers of help from people you don’t know, who put things down where you don’t expect, and then you spend ages looking for them or leave them behind! And as previously mentioned, when time is likely to be short you don’t want to faff about carrying and putting up steps to reach cables that were placed at a high level, because it’s more than likely that people will hang around chatting and get in the way.

When clearing up after an event, all too often I see people winding a long cable over their thumb and elbow. Don’t do it! It puts a twist in the wire, and after a few such treatments it’ll never lay flat again. If the cable is just a few metres long, collect it as loops in one hand and alternately gather up more loops on the left and right of the already held loops of cable. That way, you alternate the twist and it should even out when you next use it. OK, you may need to be careful when paying it out again, which is why it’s not so good for very long cables. For long and possibly substantial cables, lay them on the ground or floor and build them up in a large figure-of-eight. When you come to the end of the cable, put cable ties around the far end of the left and right loops, then gather these up together and you will have a large single loop of cable which you can put another tie around. To pay out, undo this last tie, lay the cable out as a figure of eight, remove the two remaining ties and the cable will pay out very easily. I saw a national TV broadcaster doing this with very long and heavy camera cables at a large outdoor event, and it works! Alternatively, use a proper cable drum and winding frame.

Establish a collecting point near the exit door of the room to gather everything together, so that you can check it’s all there and you have everything you brought before taking it out to load up your vehicle (and discourage others from using the same spot for any of their stuff). This makes loading a lot quicker, and it’s easier to keep an eye on it if working in a dubious locality. When you’ve packed it all away ready to head for home, go back to the room and have a good look round. Not just for any cables and kit you may have left, but for coats and other clothing left on chair backs; handbags, scarves, gloves, and any cups and other crockery. Before locking-up, make sure that no-one has collapsed (or is hiding) in the toilets (male, female, and disabled - don’t be shy) and that the lights there are off, and any power sockets are switched off and any unused plugs pulled out (especially in the kitchen, where electric kettles may have been used). Heating, extraction and air conditioning fans should be checked, and any PA system that you may have used, switched off. Check the curtains and blinds are pulled back, or as they should be. You may be expected to stack all the seating away.

*Whatever else you do, please never forget...*

**29. THE CARETAKER.** This can be a very important aspect. Always, always, always, treat the caretaker with respect. They can be your best friend, helping with seating, being flexible with times, and so on. Essentially it's *their* building, so be nice to them. Leave the room clean, tidy, safe and secure; keep to the agreed access and departure times, and don't overstay your welcome. If the caretaker will be absent on the day, have you got a contact number? If they've 'gone the extra mile', a nice box of chocolates usually ensures a warm welcome next time. And make sure you pay the room hire costs in good time, usually in advance or on the same evening. You may want to use it again!

**30. AND FINALLY...** a few extra thoughts. When transporting your kit, use some relatively cheap 'flight cases' such as those found in the tools department of B&Q. These not only give a better impression than a few cardboard boxes, but if anyone offers help to bring them in from, or take them out to, your vehicle, they can easily and safely do so. Don't be tempted to put everything in one huge box - you won't be able to lift it or carry it! But your osteopath will soon be able to book a world cruise. A few more, smaller, cases are far easier to handle, will be better for packing in the boot of your car, and might fit on a sack truck if you need to carry them for some distance. If you need some cable ties, look in the garden centre for plastic plant ties which can be easier to undo and re-use. If you're manning a club stand where you are likely to meet the general public, have a small bowl of Mint Imperials handy. Not just for when your throat gets a bit dry when chatting, but should you be approached by a bad case of halitosis, you can offer a mint and be presumed generous rather than defensive. Much better than asking them to take a step back..!!!

You will have gathered by now that this covers large and small events, and some considerations can be put aside depending on circumstances. I realise that the kit I use and have illustrated above may seem too expensive - and cannot be justified - for some, but it's equipment that I already have. There are cheaper options which may work just as well. And choose your show date with care; depending on the time of year it may be cold, wet, windy, or snowing, in which case make sure you have facilities to deal with muddy boots, raincoats and umbrellas.

The underlying principle is to think through every step of the event and make sure you know how it is intended to work, and then think it through again. This is an excellent procedure for film making, too. Don't just grab a camera and run out of the door. No matter what type or genre of film you are making, planning helps. No matter how experienced you are there is a risk of forgetting or overlooking some detail. Compiling a checklist or project plan and discussing these with your cast and crew can help identify potential problems and their solutions. And when planning a film, don't forget to ask yourself what sort of audience it is intended for.

If you're intending to use several cameras on a shoot, try to choose ones which have a similar colour rendering on their recordings - different makes can appear 'warm' or 'cool', and you could spend a lot of time with colour correction during editing. It's also a good idea to compile a Guide for Camera Operators, which will list camera settings to ensure the images from several cameras will match. The sound crew should also be aware of an upper volume limit, and with digital recordings it's usually best to record at a lower level than we were used to with analogue, since recording noise from the electronics and tape is now virtually eliminated and the signal to noise ratio is very much better. And to make editing easier, don't forget to record a minute or two of ambient sound when on location!

This document deals primarily with presentation, with some other apposite tips thrown in for good measure. All of the above is based on many years of experience from myself and, as previously mentioned, Jan and Dave Watterson. Together, we've spent a lot of time recalling events and outcomes, good practice, things that went wrong and things that went well. We kept remembering odd bits of advice that we could include, and this is the end result of very many versions of the document. No doubt we will be told of anything we've missed or got wrong, or maybe another gem will be offered by our readers - and please feel free to get in touch and tell us, and whether you found it helpful. Although originally intended as a guide for people or groups who may be new to organising video presentations, elements of this will also apply to other events. See below for a suggested Site Visit Report which you may like to print off for use during inspection visits.

Best wishes for a successful show! Pete Heaven.



## SITE VISIT REPORT - THINGS TO CHECK AT POSSIBLE VENUES

Full address of the venue with postcode.

Contact name and phone number.

Is the date available?

Access. Vehicle parking: how many spaces? Are there any convenient bus services? Is there any secure parking for bikes? Is there good access for unloading and loading? Are there any steps or stairs which could be a challenge for carrying equipment, or for the disabled? Check disabled access and facilities (you may not know who will come). Are car park areas, external paths and entry/exit points well lit at night? Is there CCTV coverage of these areas?

Facilities. You can usually judge an establishment by the quality and cleanliness of their toilet facilities.

Check that soap, hand drying tissues or an air drier, and spare toilet tissues, are all available.

Are there separate facilities for the disabled, or 'family' rooms? Is there easy access?

Is there a coat hanging, or separate cloakroom, facility? - it might rain on the day. Is there a Green Room?

Capacity. Halls and commercial premises are licensed for a maximum seating capacity for a stated configuration.

Look for a room not too big or too small; and ask for the capacity of the room/hall in theatre layout.

What is the quality of the seating; upholstered, plastic stacking type, or old tubular steel and canvas or plywood?

Are tables available for the projector, the control desk, possibly for loudspeakers, and for any catering requirements?

*Make a sketch of the room, and note the position of the following where appropriate...*

Fire Exits - check their position and signage, and that the exits are clear and available and not blocked or locked.

Where is the Fire Assembly Point? Where are the First Aid Box and Incident Record Book located??

Acoustics. You will need an amp and loudspeakers best suited to the height of the ceiling and size of the hall.

Hard walls (e.g. brick or glass) and hard floors (like polished wood) give problems, as does a very high ceiling, as do large cross beams - clap your hands to check for any indication of an echo. Is it a 'lively' or bright ambience?

Are any sound facilities installed and available? Are they suitable for your use? Who knows how to operate them?

Is there any likelihood of noise from adjacent or external activities or equipment (e.g. a disco next door, or chillers for the bar which operate intermittently)? Are there any noisy heating or air-conditioning fans and vents?

Is there a suitable projector and screen; if so, screen size? (screens are usually measured by horizontal width).

Is there a stage, or raised dais, that you could stand a screen and loudspeakers on?

Is the ceiling high enough to raise the screen to provide a good view for those seated at the back?

Is there an effective blackout? Are any curtains easy to draw? Where are the controls for the room lights?

Power points. Look for mains supply socket/s. Are they 'live'? Where is the main distribution box?

Where would you place the control desk, the presenter and PA microphone, the projector and the loudspeakers?

Check likely cable runs for extension leads for the control desk and the presenter's spotlight, and especially for the projector, which may be in the middle of the seating; also for the presenter's mic cable and the loudspeaker leads.

Refreshments/Catering. In a separate area? Done by you, or them? Or use an outside caterer?

Provision of refreshments; suitability of the kitchen. You could use disposable cups and plates to avoid washing-up.

Do they have kettles, or if a water boiler, how do you operate it?

If you use the back of a hall for coffee (and any buns) you will need some tables - is there enough space to socialise?

Is there a Bar? Not essential, but some visitors would doubtless appreciate it.

Note: some church and other halls do not allow alcohol, *and sometimes no raffle or similar* - ask first!

And do you need / do they have an appropriate music licence?

Costs. Is there an extra charge for use of the kitchen, and possibly a side room where refreshments can be available?

Halls and rooms are often charged by the hour, so it is essential to make a realistic estimate of the time you need. As a general guide, you will require at least 30 minutes and preferably 45 or more to set up and test before expecting the first arrivals (and that's usually 30 minutes before the show starts), and another 30 minutes to clear at the end, so say 6:30pm - 10:30pm for an evening show, depending on the duration of the films and any interval for refreshments.

Quality of the venue wrt self-esteem. Is it up to acceptable standards? Is it warm and welcoming? Is it clean and tidy?

Do they have a current insurance certificate? This should always be displayed, usually at the entrance to the building.

General impressions. Is it suitable? Would it be somewhere special? Would it impress? Is the cost acceptable?

Inspection visit done by:

Date and time of inspection: