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Pip Critten
Writes...

Chairman's Chat & Editorial

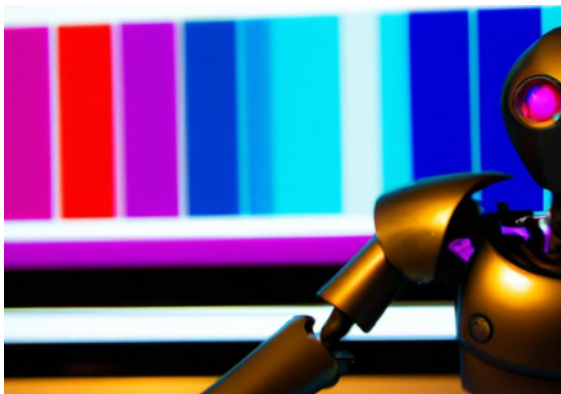
Artificial Intelligence (AI) is revolutionizing the film industry. AI can help film-makers create more realistic characters, generate special effects and create believable storylines. It can also be used to automate mundane tasks such as editing and colour grading. With AI, film-makers have access to powerful tools that can help them create films faster and more efficiently than ever before.



AI is also helping to democratise the film industry by making it easier for smaller budget films to compete with larger ones. AI-powered tools are being used by film-makers of all levels, from independent film-makers to major studios, allowing them to create stunning visuals at a fraction of the cost of traditional methods. In the past year, AI has been used to automate a wide range of processes in the film industry including colour grading, editing, rendering and compositing. Here are four ways that AI is assisting filmmakers today:

Colour Grading

Colour grading is fundamental to improving visual storytelling in film. Traditionally, colour grading involved hands-on work with individual frames through a series of steps such as adjusting the contrast levels of different colours and then masking out areas that should not be changed so they do not affect how an entire scene appears on screen. This process can require anywhere from days to weeks and the results are typically subjective. AI has accelerated this process in providing a more standardized and consistent value for each colour.



Editing

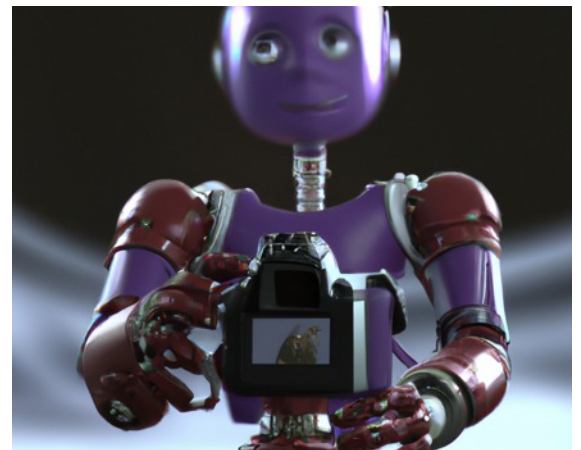
By automating the editing process, AI allows film editors to focus on the actual story rather than technical skill sets such as how best to cut sequences of different shots together or how to manage numerous edits on complex projects with many versions via a single timeline. With AI, editors can use powerful software like Adobe Premiere Pro, which has been recognized for its ability to automatically identify key moments in a film and provide feedback about what might be missing from an edit based on previous seasons of various shows or movies.

Pre visualization

The pre visualization (a.k.a production mock-up) is a process where an artist or technician uses 3D computer graphics to produce a series of photographs that use sound, lighting, camera angles and other special effects to provide an idea of how a scene will look on camera before it is actually filmed on film or video. With AI, the software can create its own palette of colours and patterns without requiring any specific hardware like cameras or screens, which drastically reduces the time needed to complete the process as well as costs related to those items.

Automated editing

The automated editing is a software-based process which allows for the creation of a final edited product without human intervention by combining its different shots and/or scenes into one seamless, continuous motion. With AI, there are two basic kinds of algorithms for automated editing: computer vision image processing and machine learning based programs that analyse the details of an existing production or archived footage. Computer vision image processing is still in its infancy with only minor success in comparison to the more mature machine learning programs at this point.



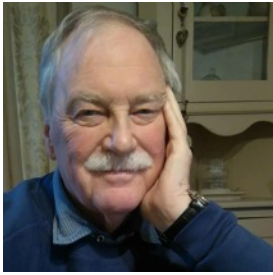
Artificial Intelligence is becoming a powerful tool for film editors, allowing them to create more efficient and creative edits.

AI can also help with tasks like facial recognition and object tracking, making it easier to find the right shot in a large library of footage. With the help of AI, film editors are able to create better films faster than ever before.

In fact, AI wrote all of this article except this paragraph. I also used AI to generate the original "photographs" in this article. What a Cheat!

Keep Smiling, Pip

pipcritten@googlemail.com



Readers Letters

Dear SoCo-friends,

It's very sad to hear that Lee Prescott has passed away. I met him when making "Together with Yoda", a travelogue about the Cotswolds. That was 15 years ago. The story: an old man makes a tour around the Cotswolds in his vintage car. He is accompanied by his papillon dog called Yoda.

How did I find the dog?

It was almost impossible to take my own pet overseas. A health certificate was needed stating that Polly was in good health and free of parasites. I remember a blood sample had to be taken at least 30 days after the rabies vaccination. My vet had to send it to an EU-approved blood testing laboratory. Actually my doggie even had to stay in quarantine for at least four months. That's what I had been told. I don't think Polly would have survived. But thank God Lee Prescott was there to help me! A lady in his circle of acquaintances had a sweet little papillon dog called Yoda.

In Warwick I hired a vintage car and the filming went very smoothly. My Belgian team consisted of Colin Howett, my English friend who lived in my neighbourhood, and three clubmates. All the time when making that tour round the Cotswolds the lady with the dog and Lee followed us. I was spoilt.

How did I find Colin, my actor?

When he was a young sailor Colin arrived in the harbour of Antwerp one day. One night he went out and in the skippers' quarter he met a pretty girl. They fell madly in love. He chose to stay in the City of Antwerp. Colin had incredible acting talent and a soft silky voice. So he became the perfect person for "Together with Yoda". So twice I was very lucky. With Colin and Yoda, I could form the ideal couple.

Both Colin and Yoda are now in the hereafter together with Lee. Time passes extremely quickly. But I still have fond memories of my time with this wonderful trio. Not

long ago I digitized my travelogue and I can send it to anyone for free via WeTransfer or Transferxl.

So Lee contributed to "Together with Yoda" for which I received a "Gold Award" at BIAFF in Chesterfield. I remember that many clubs in the UK wanted to screen my documentary in their clubhouse. Length of "Together with Yoda": almost half an hour, but not boring. That's what most friends said to me. Apparently the style of my film appealed to them. A travelogue does not need to be a mesmerizing display of images. That's what I tried to show them. However, I think that my approach has now surpassed itself. Again we live in a different era.

After having made my documentary Lee and his wife invited my wife and me to dinner in an atmospheric little pub near Stroud. Of course we had a chat about BIAFF and the IAC. I didn't want to show "Together with Yoda" at his own Cotswolds International Film Festival. It would have been pushy. It wouldn't feel nice. But in return I managed to get some clubmates to take part in Lee's festival in Stroud. We hired a minibus and stayed in a little hotel. I remember the auditorium in the Subscription Rooms. It was well organized. I had been told that Lee started his own festival because he preferred a different judging system. Everybody has their own idea and we must respect that.

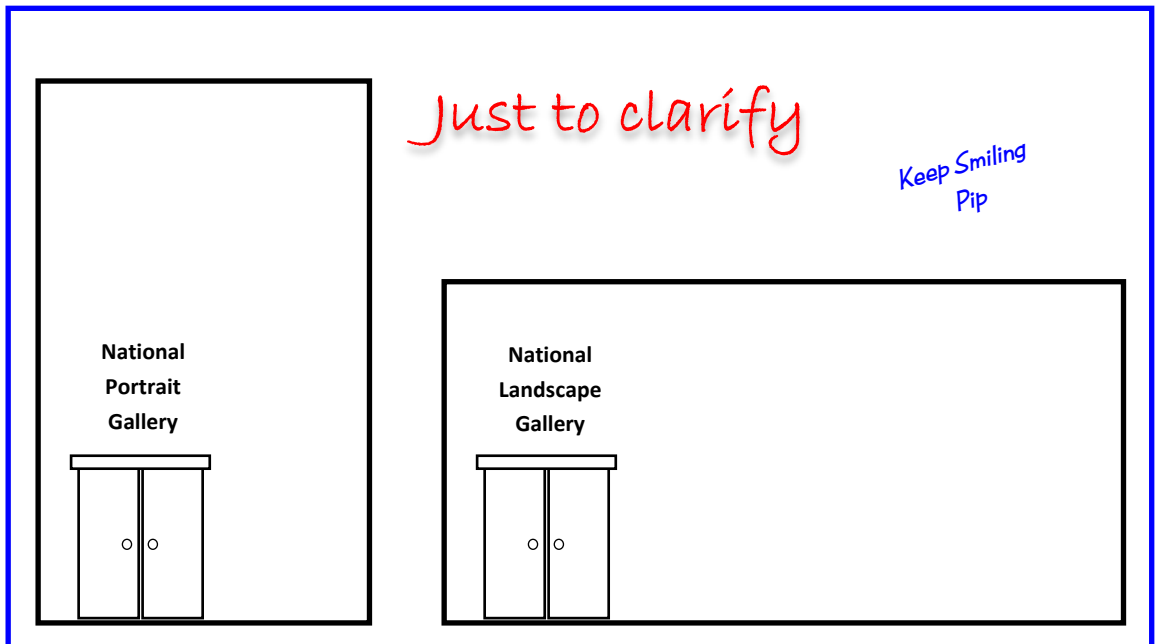
I took the advantage of the film festival to show Vera and a few friends to visit some poetic places near Stroud. You can also see them in my travelogue. I will never forget Painswick and also the little village of Slad. The other Lee was born in Slad. I mean Laurie Lee, the author of "Cider with Rosie". Thanks to making my film I learned a lot about the Cotswolds and also about its literature and music (Ralph Vaughan Williams, Gusta Holst, etc.).

In any case Lee Prescott was very enthusiastic person and I was able to benefit from his friendliness and helpfulness.

Willy Van der Linden

Willy Van der Linden

Recalls his memories of Lee Prescott FACI





There's big and then there's bigger

Tom Hardwick

This month Tom Hardwick widens his eyes in a 360 degree cinema



Standing inside the 360 degree screen, waiting for the show to start

They call it the **Immersive Dome**, and when you walk into this 15 metre diameter all screen cinema, the lights dim around you and the movie starts, you can see why. It's a bit like (but better than) wearing a virtual reality (VR) headset - where as you move your head you can choose to see what's to your left or right, in front or behind you. What's good about this half sphere cinema experience is that you're unencumbered by having a VR lump of plastic strapped to your head, and having sweaty speakers clamped to your ears.

Where to see such splendour?



The 360 degree dome screen is enclosed within Plymouth's Market Hall

Plymouth is a city situated on England's south-west coast, known mainly for its maritime heritage. **The Market Hall** is tucked away in the suburb of Devonport, and was originally built as a fruit and veg market in the mid 1800s. It was extensively modified in 2021 to include this huge domed cinema and it shows a selection of films from space exploration, animations, to life in the deepest oceans.

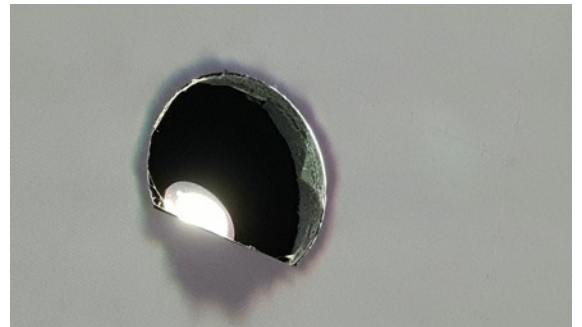
Is all this worth while?

It really didn't bother me as to what was being shown on the big screen the day I arrived, because I was much more interested in the technology and the experience. Is it really so much better than a big flat CinemaScope screen down at your local Odeon? Won't it simply distort the images to high-heaven? What's the point in having parts of the image projected behind you or immediately above your head? Will it be as good as the current state-of-art 3D films shown on a flat screen? And crucially, are current projectors up to filling such a huge area of screen - will the images be sharp, bright, detailed and contrasty?

Let's have a look at the design problems

Let's take **contrast**, because the parts of the image that are being projected 180 degrees 'behind you' at any given time are being reflected back from the hi-gain screen and diluting the part of the image you're actually looking at. Technically not good, but hopefully nobody but

Tom will notice. The projectors effectively jettison their dynamic contrast and **HDR** capabilities simply because of the unusual layout.



Crude cut-outs in the perforated screen allow the twin projectors to peek through.

My quick maths shows that the 15m diameter dome (taking it as half a sphere) has a surface area of **354 sq m** – or the same as an **IMAX** screen. This is a massive wall to light, so two **Panasonic RQ32k** 4K laser projectors sit opposite one-another, firing onto their own half of the dome. They'd better have beautifully multi-coated projection lenses because you'll notice they're firing straight into a rather intense laser light source. The projectors have to be mapped to the dome's internal layout because they're not positioned at the centre of the sphere, but along the circumference, adding to the focus problems. Interestingly and happily there's no obvious 'overlap-line' where one projector's image blends into the other's.

It's gotta be a compromise

The **L'Acoustics** speaker speaker array can feed the dome with normal stereo, right through to 19.1 Dolby Atmos, and the sound comes through the tiny screen perforations as it does in normal cinemas. It sounded really good, filling the dome with smoothly integrated audio.

The floor is flat, there's no fixed seating, and large bean-bags are scattered about predominantly in the centre of the dome. You can pummel them and try and get comfortable, and push them anywhere across the floor. I made sure mine was in the sweet spot – at the centre of the 15 m diameter screen. In this position I wasn't aware of curvilinear distortions, and the scrolling credits looked as normal as they could be considering their circumstances. To read them I found I was having to move my head from left to right.



Bean bags are scattered across the flat floor, and you can move them about

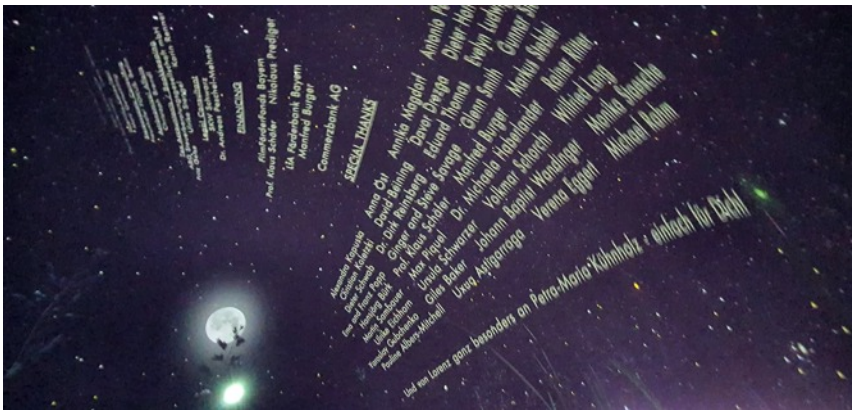
Tom continues



It's impossible to photograph the immense screen even using a super-wide lens – but I tried. Behind my head you can see the wide-open double doors

Is it worth a visit?

The answer for us filmmakers has to be a yes, because at heart we're all showmen and want to wow our audience. But let's look at the realities of the situation. As you squirm about on the floor trying to get comfortable you quickly realise something. Had the film we were watching been shown on a conventional flat screen, then all the action would be happening at bottom-dead-centre. The superfluous, non-action sphere-filler material was being projected behind 99% of the audiences' heads, and my shot of the end credits shows this quite clearly.



The scrolling end credits show that only a small part of the internal sphere is used for any action-safe content

Conclusions

Doesn't this cinema fall foul of the Trade's Description Act? Surely a 360 degree screen would have the audience standing on a sheet of glass inside a complete sphere, whereas all we were being shown was the inside of half a sphere – or 180 degrees above and 360 degrees around us. All the 360 degree cameras on sale right now – such as the Insta360X series, film everything around themselves, north, south, east, west, up down and everywhere.

Next, the **resolution**. As the audience are effectively all the same distance (7.5 m, or four humans) from the screen you can't move further away to make it 'look sharper'. And the reality is that the resolution of the film shown was borderline OK, nothing more. And yes, it's asking a lot of the technology but even so, it would look better if it was sharper. Hoping that the awe-inspiring experience will take our minds off this unassailable fact is a get-out that's not good enough in my view.

Then there's the reduced **contrast** of the image (we've talked about this) and the softening effect this has on picture quality. The dynamic range of the picture is iffy, and with light coming at you from all sides I can't see a way around this. And while we're talking about the picture I was quite surprised to see that the two sets of double doors were left wide open during the performance, cutting big black rectangles out of the picture. The projector apertures are likewise – interruptions in the perfect screen.

And it is a perfect screen. Up close and personal there doesn't appear to be a single join in the material, and it's one big beautiful spherical canvas. There are no flat areas, no seams. How do they do that?



Behind the scenes you can see the exoskeleton that supports the seamless screen material, the projector platforms and the loudspeaker array

The sound system is lovely, as you'd expect it to be in an auditorium of this size, but it's fixed. What this means is (unlike when using a VR headset) if you turn to your left to see where the wild horses are coming from, the sounds remain as if you were staring straight ahead.

2023 is a year when yet more customers will have deserted the warmth and comfort of their home to come to this cinema. Many will have left behind a 4K, HDR, 65" TV, with its level of dynamic range and OLED blacks that this dome can only dream of. The designers and architects know this only too well, and they must also contend with home theatre audio systems that are capable of rocking house foundations. So what it comes down to is sheer spectacle, to the almost uniqueness of the display. Is this enough? To my mind content is all of course, and good content sure doesn't need curved screens the size of a doubles tennis court to put the message across.

Tom Hardwick

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If you have any video equipment for sale contact the editor to feature it in this magazine:
pipcritten@googlemail.com



Adding sound effects to a Country Show

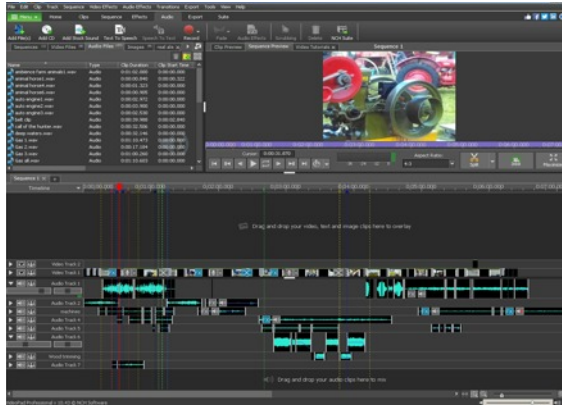
Melvyn Dover

Talks us through his process for adding a sound track after the event.

Every year between Maidenhead and Reading in Berkshire, along the A4, Mr Keeley would allow one of his fields to host a steam rally. Sadly, this year was the final time. It had always been a great attraction for the locals and traction engines would come from a large surrounding area, many on trailers but some literally under their own steam. There was always a lot more to see as well, and the event became quite famous.

I ended up with at least three 50ft Super 8 reels, taken at different times, which I'd scanned to digital a while ago, so decided to put them together to make a short film. The result is called *Country Show*, and it captures various activities usually found at such events, some outdoor and some taken inside marquees.

The original films were silent so I needed sounds for stationary steam engines, traction engines, vehicles, horses and background for ambience (Foley). I set to. The sound effects came from a couple of different sources. Some were taken from the free NCH effects library, and some were generated at home. I needed music as well.



A screendump of the project shows I ended up using two video tracks and eight audio.

Actually there was supposed to be more than eight, but I mistakenly put several sound effects on the same track. I had aimed to give each sound bite its own track - it's easier to keep them in sync with visuals that way. And with hindsight I wished I'd named the tracks earlier!

The vertical dotted coloured lines are bookmarks. I've used these to mark where I want a sound effect to start or end. They're not precise as some of the sounds I recorded don't start immediately. I could have used 'split all tracks' to do a similar job, but bookmarks are easier to delete or change position. Plus I could see if a sound effect was too short for the video it goes with, in which case I'd copy, paste and trim it to fit.

The film starts with a sequence of stationary engines. The picture had already been edited 'in camera'. For these I recorded various motors around the house - an electric toothbrush, electric razor, and a record deck with the sponge of the microphone rubbing gently on the platter. I also recorded a few vocal noises to play with as well. All these were altered in some way.

The sound of a rolled up sheaf of A4 paper hit against the edge of the desk became the clapping of horse's hooves. (And more - some of it became engine noises). I was careful not to tap out a 'musical rhythm', ie emphasis on the first and third beat, but to strike a heavier hit at random.



Making Sound FX - horse's hooves

The 'horses hooves' recording I also used as part of the background ambience on other parts of the film. Horses were usually present as were motors whirring somewhere, so much of the sound track had a sort of 'clicketty' feel.

I used a directional electret microphone, a mono one I first used on my Canon 814 Super 8 camera many moons ago, now plugged via an adapter into an Olympus LS-P1 recorder.

Soon I was getting into sound effects in a big way. A toothbrush stroked against cardboard became the sound of a besom broom handle being trimmed. Inside a marquee a glass-blower was skilfully at work. It was easy to record the hissing of a gas flame (avoiding getting the mike burned!). I increased the volume of the flame when changing to close ups to complete the effect.

Some effects were built up using Audacity and modified in the video editor. Typically, I'd import the original sound and then would add two more tracks, one changed to a higher frequency, one lower. I'd export all three together for a fuller sound, but sometimes I'd play with changing the frequency of the original track to generate a new one. I also played with altering the pitch, which could be done keeping the same (digital) speed or altering it (like analogue).

The NCH effects library gave me a choice of three car engine noises. For an arena sequence, I changed these to match the throb of single cylinder vintage motorbike engines which are slower and much lower pitched.



Free Sound Effects & Royalty Free Music Library
Included in WavePad Audio Editing Software
[Download Now](#)

At the end I'd shown the banner for the beer tent to represent the live music and drinking which went on well into the night at Mr Keeley's do. Dorset group *The Yetties* provided the end sequence music, a suitable drinking song.

It was fun making the sounds for the film and putting it together: The result was an entry for a club competition, though as ever, perfection takes a little longer...

Happy Filming,
Melvyn Dover



The Explosion

Gary Peterson
Editor of
Australian
Movie Maker

Gives a stark
warning

At 1.50 pm on Thursday 27 October Wade was at home when he heard a loud and piercing whistling noise emanating from somewhere within the house and so he began a search for the source of the sound.

At that exact moment Val drove into the garage returning from shopping and Wade thought it may have been air escaping from a tyre under pressure, but on checking, no that was not the source so he then went to the front door to check outside.

Whilst Wade was at the front door Val walked into the lounge room wondering what the loud whistling noise was and about to commence her own search whilst unbeknown to her behind her back the source of the sound began to smoke and then exploded in a fiery flash sending a shrapnel size lithium battery rocketing across the room and ricocheting off the kitchen ceiling then continuing its trajectory and whizzing within a metre of Val's head before striking the wall on the opposite side of the lounge room and ending its deadly journey at Val's feet a couple of seconds later ... spent.

table and after the explosion Wade raced to the unit and disconnected it from the wall socket.



Scorch mark on dining room table

The Tablet was plugged into the wall socket which was switched on, but the tablet was not charging. From the dining room table to the lounge room hall where the battery struck is a distance of about ten metres



The moment of detonation. (Security Camera Grab)

The whistling noise had lasted for about two minutes, but from when smoke first began to gush from the unit to the explosion it was only forty-five seconds. The ensuing flash scorched the table and the extreme heat melted a small piece of tablecloth to the table top destroying the tablecloth in the process.



Ricochet mark on kitchen ceiling



The Lithium battery size compared to a AA battery

The Tablet was made by Lenovo and had an 8 inch screen and was about five years old. The size of the battery which became what could have been a lethal missile is about two and a half inches long with a three quarter inch diameter. You can get an idea of the size by the comparison to the AA battery in the photograph.



After the explosion the errant battery can be seen on the floor in the bottom right of the image. (Security Camera Grab)



The damage results of a Lenovo Tablet after the explosion

The source of the smoke and explosion was Val's Lenovo Tablet which had been laying on the dining room

Gary Peterson
Editor, Australian Movie Maker



The first get together of 2023 was the annual lunch at The Livermead Cliff Hotel in Torquay. It was almost a full turnout and members were delighted to welcome Ann Black and Mary Gill to the gathering. Once again the hotel came up trumps with the food and atmosphere.

The Club meeting on the following Monday was a social one at Bitton House when everyone enjoyed a good natter and watched some films by members.

The programme in January also included the screening of films made in response to the Christmas challenge set by chairman Ivan Andrews and a fascinating and interesting presentation by Jill K. Bunting CPAGB-AV LACI who, under the title "What's The Difference", highlighted the similarities and differences of film making and AV presentations, that occasionally merge and overlap.

With February, came a meeting to hear and discuss ideas about the Club project(s) for 2023. During the meeting, several proposals were made and discussed but the real action came after the meeting with ideas flying around via email for several days. The next step will be deciding which one(s) to develop.

The February face-to-face meeting at Bitton House consisted of an excellent and highly informative presentation with practical exercises about recording sound for films. This was delivered by Pip

Critten, Geoff Hodgkinson and Neil Mander and it included a film illustrating a range of microphones set in different positions relative to the sound source and practical exercises in which members recorded pre-prepared scripts and assessed the results. More results from these activities will be shown later in the month for further discussion.

Also featuring in February was a presentation by Alan Sinclair about drones, another fascinating evening.

March will be another busy month with the showing of two challenges (one minute and film that tune) plus a face to face practical presentation on lighting by Pip Critten and Mervyn Brooking.

Details of the TFMC 2022 - 2023 programme are on the website.

Anyone is welcome to attend both the Zoom and physical meetings, whatever your expertise and wherever you live. A limited number of 'visitor' places are available for the zoom meetings which can be 'booked' via the website contact details. Feel free to visit and if you find that it isn't for you, we shall not be offended if you leave early.

Both the website and Facebook page are normally updated on a weekly basis during the season and on a casual basis during the Summer break.

Roger Western

<http://www.teignfilmmakersclub.org>

<https://www.facebook.com/tfmcadmin>



Virtually speaking!

The Virtual Video Group is growing steadily, adding new members on a monthly basis, we currently have 65 and average around 30 people attending every month, which is the second Wednesday of the Month. For 2023 we have embarked on three projects :

1) The VVG Members competition this year will be on the theme of "Fire" with the flexibility to broaden the theme e.g. Cremation, Smelting, Fired (sacked/starting pistol), Firing (pottery), blaze, inferno, bombing, explosion, launch etc.

This is our summer project and last year we had 19 entries which we hope to match in 2023. The member's competition evening and judging will take place at the December VVG meeting.

2) After some debate our VVG Group/Club film will be a Daytime Television type programme where members will contribute a short individual news item on anything the member wants.

We think given we are spread across the UK and abroad this will work and Pip Critten who came up with original idea and a few VVG members will put the wrap around on the entries into a short film.

There is always going to be difficulty in producing a group film where everyone is located over huge distances, but we feel this may work better than our two previous group films.

3) VVG along with two of our members Ian and Carol Bennet have taken over the running of "THE CHOCOLATE SOLDIER COMPETITION" which is open to filmmaking clubs and societies within the United Kingdom. We plan to advertise this to clubs shortly and the competition will be held at our November VVG meeting.

Throughout the year we have the following monthly events, Smartphone filmmaking, 3D animation, Michael Gough on Filmmaking, BIAFF film review evening, Editing with double BAFTA winning film editor Andrew Worboys and an open member's film night.

Our facebook page is:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/166527655673758>



Virtual Video Group



Alan Sinclair

Virtual Video Group

Alan Sinclair
Co founder of VVG

updates us.



Ian Simpson

Wollongong
Camera Club Movie
Makers,
Australia

What Is Your Focusing Process?

Autofocus? It'll never catch on. "John Wade, Amateur Photographer, 1977"

In the recent issue of the magazine *Australian ProPhoto*, there was a change in its title to include "& video". This recognised that many (if not most) professional photographers were being asked to also shoot some video.

The magazine began an education programme to enlighten their readers on how to shoot good video. Whilst reading the fairly standard advice, I found this comment concerning focusing for video:

"The autofocus also needs to be turned off—if the camera is left on AF, it may cause unwanted focusing adjustments while filming."

To support this statement the following justifications were given:

- AF may not focus on your subject *"For example, the character may be out of focus because the camera suddenly focuses on an object in the background."*
- Lenses designed for still photography may *"make a noise when focusing automatically. This noise creates a problem when filming so when pursuing your ideas, it is advisable to adjust the focus manually before filming."*

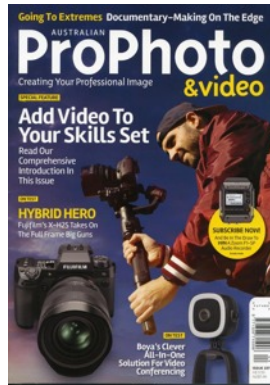
Is this advice still valid?

This advice, and similar advice to adjust exposure manually, have been the mantra in photography since the very first photograph was taken, or the first film was shot. However, considering all the technological developments that have occurred, especially in very recent years, is this advice still valid?

When I got my first 35 mm camera, it was an all-manual affair: a separate rangefinder determined the subject's distance and a built in, but not coupled, lightmeter determined exposure. This arrangement was good as a teaching aide to learn the fundamentals of photography but was totally useless when trying to capture a fleeting moment. By the time I got my first Super 8 cine camera, the operation of the lightmeter had been automated but the focus was still manual. A recommended process was to manually focus at the telephoto position and then zoom out to frame the shot.

When digital camcorders arrived even focus had been automated. So the question now is how much confidence do you have in the AF system built into your camera?

According to the writer in *ProPhoto & Video*, the answer is none. But there are a growing number of voices in both the professional and amateur fraternities that are questioning that view. For example, in an interview in the same issue of *ProPhoto & Video*, award winning filmmaker Matt Norman stated: *"... that autofocus on the EOS C500 Mark II is impressive and a 'must have' on a camera like this because when you are running around trying to pick focus, sometimes you don't want manual. You can simply put the camera on face only and set and forget."*



This quote raises two important qualifiers in the AF, or not, debate. You need to consider the technology that the manufacturer has built into your camera and you also need to consider the conditions under which you are capturing the footage.

Camera Development

Some camera manufacturers, notably Sony and Canon are in the forefront of accurate AF, the success of which depends not only on the AF technology but also on the application of artificial intelligence (AI) and computing power. This improvement in AF has been in step with the developments in the mirrorless cameras. As Will Burrard—Lucas said: *"Initially, the autofocus performance was considered the Achilles' heel of mirrorless cameras, Now we have high-end cameras such as the Sony A1 that can recognise subjects, particularly eyes, which is almost always what I am trying to focus on. It means that I hardly have to think about the focus like I did with a DSLR."* (Amateur Photographer, Tuesday 28 June, 2022, Advanced Autofocus by Angela Nicholson).

In the same article, Tesni Ward stated, *"... only since I got the AM System OM-1 that I've really started to use the AI Detection AF. It's subject detection is in a different league and I use it 90% of the time."*

The difference in the AF systems between DSLRs and mirrorless cameras was simply explained by Professor Newman, *"In short, DSLRs operate using advanced optics assisted by computer algorithms, while their mirrorless counterparts are based on sophisticated algorithms assisted by optics."* Newman explained this development as, *"In mirrorless cameras, autofocus tracking depends on a computational recognition of the subject, which allows the focus point to be moved accordingly. But this is highly processor intensive, so until recently, mirrorless cameras could not track subjects as well as the top DSLRs."*

Type of Movie Making

The type of movie making can also determine if you use manual focusing or go with AF. If you are shooting a scripted video, where the videographer has control over how a scene is shot, then manual focusing may be the preferred approach. However, if you are a lone moviemaker and are either shooting documentary footage or a family event or capturing holiday activities, then the AF and autoexposure features of your camera will help you capture those unrepeatable events and activities. As David Fokos said (*Outdoor Photographer*, Oct/Nov 2022), *"... I find it so much more important to have a useable negative of a perfect moment, than a perfect negative of something else."* This response framed in the context of still photography, is even more relevant for videographers trying to capture reality in motion.

Computer Power

So the answer to the question, AF or no AF? is both a technical question - has your camera got the latest AF technology? - and an application question - what type of videos do you shoot? Knowing your camera's limitations regarding AF seems an obvious start, but also following manufacturers' developments seems equally obvious, if you want to update your camera. As the reviewer in the very same *ProPhoto & Video* issue commented when reviewing the Fujifilm's X-H2S camera, *"While Fujifilm's hybrid phase / contrast detection AF system has always*

Ian continues ...

been reasonably competent, it's been a bit adrift of the best in terms of its tracking performance. This has been very convincingly rectified with the X-H2S thanks to the increased AF speed—now sampling at 120 fps and the AI based subject recognition."

Knowing your camera's capabilities regarding AF means reading many reviews, reviews which are more than just descriptions of the camera and its buttons. For example, Jordon Drake, the videocamera reviewer for dpreview, explained the AF limitations of Panasonic's new GH6 mirrorless camera; *"The GH6's AF system is based around its Depth-from-Defocus system that builds up a depth map of the scene by nudging the focus and analysing any changes, DFD is better the more often it refreshes which means it works well in stills but less well in video, especially at slow frame rates and long exposures, where there is no time to reassess between video mode."*

The practical result of this design according to Jordon is that *"in video there's still some flutter, wobble and uncertainty that can appear in your footage, particularly if you're capturing at 24p / 25p."* Jordon's conclusion was, *"the lack of a top-notch autofocus means most GH6 shoots are likely to depend on manual focus frequently."*

An example of the rapid developments in the AF area is the recently released Sony a7R V mirrorless camera. Sony reports a 60% improvement in eye detection and a 40% improvement in animal recognition over the previous model. These are improvements over what is already regarded as a market leading AF performance. These improvements apply to both still and video and are due to the 8 times faster BionXR image processor and AI from a deep learning chip.

Sensor Size

What has not been considered so far is the role sensor size plays in the AF debate. When camcorders used 1/3 or 1/4 inch sensors, the inherently larger depth of focus resulting from the use of these smaller sensors covered up many of the limitations of the early AF systems. The move, in recent times, to larger and larger sensors, with their inherent shallower depth of focus, meant that a major development was needed to achieve better and more accurate AF systems, with even more intelligent AI systems.

So, if you can afford one of the most recent mirrorless cameras, you will probably leave the AF on most of the time, unless you have the luxury of time to manually focus, such as when shooting a scripted drama.

Ian Simpson



Gloucester Film Makers

Our programme for 2023 is well up and running.

To date two competitions have been held. Congratulations to Chris Wheatley whose film "Isle of Purbeck" won the Muriel Gray Trophy. Open Competition No.1 winner was Ken White with "Saved for the Nation - Ships."

Future competitions cover such subjects as Wildlife, Documentary, Travel/Holiday, a film about Gloucestershire, a film made using a phone and filming on location with a drone.

So plenty of choice there for our members. We have also planned a Green Screen and Teleprompter evening plus the use of a 360 camera demonstration. Something for everyone.

We have recently had 4 new members join us and by my reckoning we are now up to 16! Great news for our future.

On March 18th, we will be hosting the Annual Gloucester Inter Club Competition in St. George's Church Centre, Brockworth. We look forward to welcoming film makers and their friends in person from Tewkesbury, Worcester and Bristol.

Our thanks to members of the Teign Club who are going to judge the films via Zoom, or similar system they will announce results and make and comments on some of the winners. The results will appear in my next report.

Keep on filming.

John Greene,

Gloucester Film Makers

www.gloucesterfilmmakers.org.uk



It's probably a long time ago that you gave your email address to head office and some of the email addresses are no longer current. This makes it a little difficult for the committee to keep in touch and to forward out information about competitions etc.

If you have received this email direct from the editor then we have your current email address.

If you have received it from a third party, such as a club secretary or friend, could you please let us have your current email address.

Please send any email address amendments to:

pipcritten@googlemail.com

Many thanks for your help.



Open Film Competition

The Chocolate Soldier Competition

(Formally known as the West Midlands Amateur Film competition)

2023



Hosted by
The Virtual Video Group
November 8th 2023
Via Zoom



Open to all filmmaking clubs and societies within the UK.

Open Competition, no theme.

Maximum running time 10 minutes.

Only one entry per Club.

No entry fee.

Competition Rules

1. The host club is the 'Virtual Video Group'.
2. The competition is open to all clubs and societies in the U.K.
3. The competition will normally be held annually during November.
The 'Virtual Video Group' will arrange the date and advertise as appropriate.
4. This is an Open Competition and there is no set theme.
5. The entry should be the work of the competing club, society or their members and must not have been previously entered into this competition.
6. Maximum running time of 10 minutes including titles and credits.
7. Only one entry is allowed from each club or society.
8. Entries should be submitted via the 'You Tube' platform.
All details must be notified to the 'Virtual Video Group' on the entry form* three weeks before the competition.
9. In the event of over subscription 'Virtual Video Group' reserve the right to pre-select entries.
10. There is no entry fee for this event.
11. Judging will take place on the evening of the competition. The winners will be decided by an audience vote.
12. Third second and first placed winners will receive a certificate which will include a watermarked digital version of the trophy.
13. It is up to individual clubs to ensure that all copyright is obtained.
The 'Virtual Video Group' shall not be held responsible for any infringement of any current copyright law.

* Entry forms to be published soon.



Filming in the dark

There's a moment on-set when for the first time in your life you're suddenly grateful for risk assessments.

It's fashionable in some circles to complain about "elf and safety gone mad" – but not when you're stumbling about in the dark on a set that is dressed entirely in black and shades of red.

We were on the second full day of shooting for our club film, *Unquiet Spirit* – and the look we were going for in this scene was chiaroscuro. OK, I know that's becoming a bit hackneyed, but it doesn't half save a lot of time and money on set design when all you need is metres (and metres and metres) of black fabric.

On a tight – ridiculously tight – schedule and zero budget, the last thing you want is your lead actor tripping on a cable and needing a trip to A&E, so we were all grateful to lighting gaffer (Mervyn) and sound engineer (Neil) for taping their cables to the floor.

Despite the risks, there are advantages to filming in the dark. No one can see the director's face when he realises that he's planned way too many shots and there's no chance of coming back for a second day.

Fortunately for this director, he was also the screenwriter (and producer) and therefore familiar to the point of nausea with the script.



Another advantage of darkness is that the director can't see the frantic hand signals from the script supervisor (Mandy) as she tries to understand what on earth the director is playing at.

At the end of such a day the best thing to do is to go home and lie down in ... anything but a darkened room.

This wasn't the first scene in the dark and it wouldn't be the last – though thankfully there was a fair bit in between when you *could* see your hand in front of your face.

Shooting for *Unquiet Spirit* began on a disused airfield on the edge of Dartmoor. RAF Harrowbeer, Yelverton's Second World War fighter airfield, was the stage for a night-time "RTA, car v bicycle", as the Devon and Cornwall Police press office might describe it. Drunken driver kills innocent cyclist, to you and me.

That too was in the dark. And it was a steep learning curve for camera operator Alex (who has won awards for his own films btw) – if you leave your camera on auto, it will try its best to make a night scene look like daylight.

Lead actor Steve, Alex, me and DP Roger were snug in Roger's car, while crash "victim" Mandy (you've met her already) braved the chill of a spring night on the moors.

Someone brought coffee and biscuits for after the moorland shooting. Bliss. Never mind an army – a film

crew also marches on its stomach. So never forget the catering arrangements.



And, if possible, persuade actor Paul to be in your film. He is a wizard with the cupcakes, and the cast and crew fell on his creations like locusts on a cabbage patch during our (daylight) shoot at Babbacombe Cricket Club.

Just when you think it's all over, the editing starts. That involved several treks across Devon to editor Geoff's studio where, as if we hadn't had enough of working in the dark, we reshot one small but vitally important sequence that hadn't gone right the first time.

We also had a long and interesting discussion. OK, call it what it was: an argument.

Confession time: I was wrong and Geoff was right. Happy now, Geoff?

The nub of it was this: If you want a point-of-view shot of someone looking at himself in the mirror, can you just use a full-frontal shot as-is, or do you need to flip it? Answers on a postcard please.

For a film that stumbled around in the dark for much of the time, we think we've done a reasonable job.

Unquiet Spirit was a Teign Film Makers production, written and directed by Keith Rossiter and starring Stephen Andrews and Sophie Yarde-Buller.

Roger Western was DP, and club chairman Ivan Andrews (no relation) composed the original score.

Geoff Hodgkinson was the long-suffering editor.



The full list of cast and crew is available on the film itself, which you should be able to see at the British International Amateur Film Festival (BIAFF) 2023, on Vimeo: vimeo.com/781509452 and eventually on our club:

[website www.teignfilmmakersclub.org](http://www.teignfilmmakersclub.org).

Keith Rossiter

Keith Rossiter
Takes us behind the camera in the making of "Unquiet Spirit"

Images by Mervyn Brooking



Dave Jones

Shares his thoughts

Do we Analyse Enough?

Do we set the trend or do the manufactures set it?

Do they “listen” to customers or collect enough data to ensure accuracy, or do they simply dictate by restricting choice? If you observe what is on offer, it would appear we are going backwards in some respects.

Not a very long time ago, cameras were becoming more compact, smaller and we had a trend of inclusivity, namely “bells and whistles” bristling with “come and buy me. During that era, I just happened to come across a Which magazine, in which it displayed a Sony camera and declared it “the best”. There was a short report accompanying the article, not technical with listings of specifications to baffle the uninitiated, but enough to say that it was a wonderful little device ... for the price.

In its carrying case that you sling over your shoulder, containing its accessories, it weighs 0.786 Kg. In English, that's just over 1 lb 11 ozs. It has a lens mounted in gimbals and it is the Sony model PJ530E. It boasted stabilisation some 15x more effective than digital Steadyshot. In today's money it would cost £850-ish. It takes superbly steady pictures. It has a zoom lens, which is quite powerful and when in use, it produces rock steady pictures in a gale of wind. Where did this kind of video camera go?

The clunky cameras on offer today are twice the weight, and if you want stabilisation, then you are looking at another kilo, adding up to about two kilogramme, which you now have to hold out in front of you, but to do so, you have to grow muscles and end up like a lobster with a huge shoulder and a small shoulder. I'm not going to mention the prices of today's packages, but it's a lot.

If we do an analysis, we observe that a 4K camera can be installed in a device the size of a slab of chocolate, so we aren't held back by size. If you look at the size of the zoom lens in a large DSLR, it could be mounted on top of the small bodied camera and be gimbal mounted, and interchangeable. The handle per se could hold much of the necessary circuitry and the screen could be mounted and stowed away virtually anywhere. High impact plastics today, weigh very little and prove durable, and may cover a metal framework if necessary.

Here's the rub ...

If we were now to take the Sony PE530E and fit within it 4K circuitry, it would immediately outclass just about anything on the market today for the price.

Given the weight of a DSLR + gimbal, you may just as well have a shoulder mount camera with digital stabilisation. It is easier to use, in that I've actually filmed continuously for 45 mins, using a shoulder mount, when in my sixties. The posture one takes up with a shoulder mount camera is a natural one, and is one of the reasons that professionals still use them.

Ergonomically, it is quite puzzling why the DSLR has become 'The camera of the future', when it is so cumbersome, sitting on a gimbal that could be an integral part of the camera. You don't need a whole camera to be stabilised, you need the lens and its sensor to be stabilised. I paid out £500 for a stabiliser to mount a Canon 700 series camera. It will not accommodate a zoom lens. The removal of lenses invites particles of dust and you won't know about them until the shots are in the

editor... yes we know about the methods of in-camera cleansing, not always effective.

You know the way it goes. When you become elderly and after a lifetime of filmmaking, you are likely to end up with umpteen cameras, they varying in operation from clawing a film through a gate to an iPhone. If filming a documentary, quite often the demands are such that, you may need a small camera to get into small spaces. You may resort to a iPhone if pot holing and a large tripod mounted camera if filming a stage show. For a good all-rounder with simple controls and a 2K format, despite all my outlay over the years, I find I'm still using the little PE530E, which is still producing rock steady pictures, even if I run or sit on the back of a motorcycle going over rough terrain.

Don't drop it!

Yet, this camera is extremely delicate. It will not take knocks, as the lens is so delicately poised, any shock will destroy its mounting. If dropped, it won't be working when you pick it up, that's for sure.

The wider the angle of a WA lens, the easier it is to stabilise, and iPhones today are the bees' knees when it comes to picture locking in the frame, which has its disadvantages when panning, but they are super-wide angle, often necessary. In the PE530, the amount of picture lock power may be adjusted incrementally.

Having read thus far, you may be wondering why I'm writing about the past and the cameras back then. It is simply that they have left a hole in the camera market.

We could now have a 4K camera with gimbal mounted lens, weighing less than a kilos, dedicated to the production of video footage and simple to operate. With the technology available today with intelligent systems, computer ground lenses producing superb definition, small sensors with an incredibly large pixel count and if the technology used by Black Magic were to be applied when it comes to pixel formation, it would prove breathtakingly superb.

You know, they almost got there. Sony was on the road to producing an out-and-out winner, but for some unknown reason, they dropped the gimbal lens mount. Yet here I am, over a decade later, when you won't even find it mentioned if Googled, none are on sale anywhere ... and I'm still NEEDING to use it. There is a good reason for doing so, as I don't have to carry a tripod, I don't have to carry a gimbal, it is light, compact and fast into action ... flip out the screen and hit RECORD and within three seconds it's up and running.

You cannot buy a camera with a gimbal mounted lens today, which is as light and easy to use, with a zoom lens, producing 4K pictures ... they simply don't exist ... and that, dear reader, means that there is hole in the market, waiting to be filled.

If you do the analysis and realise that what you have in the cupboard cannot be matched by ticking all the boxes, you leave the money in the bank ... and with what is happening today, that isn't a bad idea!

Dave Jones



Alan's Ramblings

Alan Wallbank
Shares his thoughts

In Tom Hardwick's article in the last F&VM he says that in 2001 "I was using Premiere 4.5 on a very expensive windows XP built for me by DVC in Hove". That rang a bell as three members of the Portsmouth Cine & Video Club also had a PC's built by this business having made visits there in 1998 and 1999.

One member recalls that their systems were very expensive as mentioned by Tom, but the within a year to 18 months the price plummeted! These computers were well outside my means, as at that time I was only earning £85 a week as a train driver, so the club bought a Casablanca for the non P/C members that included me.

It was lent out to each member for a fee who could keep it for two weeks before passing it onto someone else, but over the years the club only recouped a fraction of the initial outlay. I had too many films to edit so I bought one myself.

As the years passed I bought other Casablanca, but as I mentioned last time this will all change at some point as I need to go down the PC route.

I will of course need another camera ideally one that has similar features to my Sony PD 150. This includes XLR mic inputs, 3 ND filter settings, accepts 58mm filters and will accept an 80mm wide angle lens that fits over the lens barrel and would prefer a Sony camera. Does anyone have suggestions as to what cameras I should be looking at please.

Club files

Recently I was given the clubs files kept by our chairman who passed away some years ago. They cover the period from 1998 – 2013 and are a reminder of the clubs activities over the years, such as the yearly Quadrangle Competition between Portsdown, Gosport, Chichester and Portsmouth.

There was also the purchase of a Panasonic PT-AX2000E for £450 in October 2008 apparently found on the internet, (Ebay perhaps?) as projectors at that time were over £1000. We discussed whether to purchase a new bulb, but at £350 it was decided that funds were not available. Luckily we didn't need a replacement and I still use that same projector with the original bulb.

Were other clubs faced with this dilemma?

I wonder how many IAC members still have their original membership cards as I found mine quite recently. Looking at the number of renewal stickers, I have probably been in the IAC since 1996, but what did the earlier ones look like and who has the oldest one?

DVC Card-Only Sales
Over the years we at DVC have veered away from selling capture cards on their own but as they get easier to install we have decided to change this. Now you can buy just the capture card from DVC to install in your own PC. Each card-only sale will come with a DVC installation guide as well as the usual manuals etc. from the relevant supplier and you will have the option to buy reduced price DVC tutorial tapes.

14 Day Money Back Guarantee
When we sell a complete system we can guarantee that the computer and card will work together. Sadly we cannot promise that a card will work perfectly in someone else's computer system, so we offer 14 days support via email to help you install the card. If you cannot get the card working within this time we will take it back and refund your money provided everything is in pristine condition and all the software is unregistered.

The cards themselves have the usual manufacturer's warranty of course, which we will honour through DVC once the 14 days has 'expired'.

Pinnacle Targa 3000
Pinnacle's latest board, the Targa 3000 will be available shortly. As yet we have not seen the board in action but it promises three layers of video with effects in real time together with full DV (i.e. Composite and Component) to plus DV (i.e. through 1384 and even SDI) in addition to the 3 layers of video you will also be able to have 6 layers of titles. The package will include Premiere and Comotion for more complex painting and layering effects. It also promises real time previews for more than 3 layers of video - if you have 4 or 5 layers the effects may not played in real time but will drop frames to be able to play the effect at full speed for better previews. From the initial information the board looks like a huge leap forward. Prospective price is around £4,660 for the card and around £10,000 - £15,000 for a fully configured system. More information is available at www.dvc.uk.com/sales/targa3000 and at Pinnacle's website www.pinnacle.com.

Lightwave
At DVC we have been using Lightwave for several years. Now we have been appointed an official distributor for Lightwave and other Newtek products. Lightwave 6 has just been released and has many improvements over Lightwave 5.6. These include:

- Surfacing now available in modeller
- Better integration of Modeller and Layout
- Better and quicker previews using a new 'viper' preview mode
- Better volumetrics
- New caustic lights for more realistic effects
- Better morphing using 'morphmorph'
- Using bones is hugely improved through the use of 'flexbones' - bones that can be applied to the model in modeller and saved for use in future scenes

4 way views in layout and a much improved graph editor. Plus the ability to key frame movement and rotation independently.

The whole of Lightwave has been reworked to make it sleeker and better to use. I would thoroughly recommend getting this latest upgrade.

For those of you who have little experience but want to get into 3D then we also have Inspire from Newtek which allows you to make very complex 3D animations (it practically has all the tools used to create effects programs like the first few series of Star Trek) which can be easily upgraded, for the difference in price between the two, to Lightwave.

More information is available on our website and all versions of Lightwave, including upgrades, are available on line.

DVD writing
At present we can supply systems that write DVDs using either a Pinnacle DC1000, RT2000 or DV500 and using software such as DVDStyler to make simple DVDs. The big cost at present is the Pioneer DVD writer which is currently £3,000 ex VAT, and the only DVD writer that is currently available. Most people are expecting prices to drop dramatically soon although the best rumour we have at DVC are that this will not happen until at least next year. If you want more information please ring.

Typical Systems
The typical spec of a DVC system has improved of late, here are sample prices and specs. All small size customised PC systems to suit your needs.

Matrox RT2000 System	£1,966 ex VAT	£2,310 inc VAT
550MHz PIII, 256MB RAM, 13Gb Programs drive, 30Gb video drive, 17" Monitor, Laplink tech support package		
Pinnacle DV500 System	£1,576 ex VAT	£1,852 inc VAT
550MHz PIII, 128MB RAM, 13Gb Programs drive, 30Gb video drive, 17" Monitor, Laplink tech support		
Pinnacle DC1000DV System	£2,099 ex VAT	£2,467 inc VAT
600MHz PIII, 128MB RAM, 13Gb Programs drive, 30Gb video drive, 17" Monitor, Laplink tech support		
Canopus Rex RT System	£3,839 ex VAT	£4,511 inc VAT
2 x 600MHz PIII, 256MB RAM, 13Gb Programs drive, 45Gb video drive, 17" Monitor, Laplink tech support		
Notebook Editing System	£2,737 ex VAT	£3,217 inc VAT
600MHz PIII, 128MB RAM, 18Gb drive, Laplink tech support		
Final Cut Pro Apple Mac System	£2,533 ex VAT	£2,976 inc VAT
17" Monitor, DV Cable, FireWire, Apple Use 4G-40 10GB Hard Drive, 256MB RAM, DVD-ROM Drive, Mac OS9, 45Gb video drive, Final Cut Pro		

DVC.UK.COM
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Unit 8, Hove Business Centre, Fonthill Road, Hove, Sussex, BN3 6HA
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Don't forget to join the email mailing list at www.dvc.uk.com

NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2000

Here at DVC we have been spending a considerable amount of time updating our website at www.dvc.uk.com. We now have around 300 pages of information regarding video capture cards and systems as well as user bulletin boards and tech support areas. At DVC we have always tried to give as much information as possible to customers, but with all the latest developments we simply do not have enough space in the brochure to explain everything. The website allows us to display as much information as we have time to write and gives you the freedom to browse the sections you want. All sections are available for browsing online and also for downloading and browsing offline.

The website contains:

- The DVD Shop - buy capture cards, tutorial tapes, blank tapes and software online via a secure connection for shipping next day from DVC.
- Customer Bulletin Boards - we have set up a series of bulletin boards for anyone to use. Ask any questions you like. These are constantly monitored by DVC staff and we try to answer all questions. These boards do not require any user passwords or accounts.
- News page - again, this is regularly updated with the latest rumours and news in the world of DTV. The same information also pops up in our regular email newsletter. We endeavour to send these out every couple of weeks, always assuming there is something of interest to you! This is a free service - all you have to do is visit www.dvc.uk.com and add your name to the list.

DV500 Price Drop
Pinnacle's DV500 was released at the end of 1999 and has been extremely popular. Now the price has dropped to **£499 ex-VAT**.

The DV500 gives you:

- 1 layer of real time effects: over 300 different transitions including dissolves and wipes, real time titles, either using Pinnacle's own Title Deck or Premiere's built-in titles, or one of the built-in real time titles - brightness, contrast or saturation. The real time effects only happen through analogue - if you want to output through DV all real time effects have to be rendered.
- Analogue and DV inputs and outputs - and you can mix footage captured through analogue or DV on the timeline in Premiere.
- Full control of DV cameras via Firewire.
- No more ZCB, or 9 minute, capture limit (under Windows 98 there is a 4Gb limit and no limit under Windows 2000 or NT).
- Complete with Premiere 5, Sonic ACID Music, Minerva CD Impression Pro 2, plus 3000 Splice Tracks, transitions and Title Deck.

Pinnacle DV500 System
£1,576 ex VAT £1,852 inc VAT
550MHz PIII, 128MB RAM, 13Gb Programs drive, 30Gb video drive, 17" Monitor, Laplink tech support

Portables
We started to have a decent editing system based around a portable computer for some time. Now, at last, we have, using a Gateway Notebook that has a built-in Firewire port.

The Gateway computer is a powerful portable PC. It can have a 600MHz to 700MHz processor and you can have up to 36Gb hard drive space (about 2% hours worth of video space) installed. The screen is decent size and quality (roughly equivalent to a normal 17" monitor) and when in the office you can even plug in an ordinary monitor and spread your editing over two screens. Battery life is also good at around 3-4 hours using the one battery supplied.

You can add editing facilities in one of two ways. The first is to use Gateway's compact docking station into which you can put a device like a DV Raptor. The Notebook then acts just like a standard Raptor system.

The second is to add a program like EDIT DV, which will talk to the Gateway's built-in Firewire port. Then you can capture and edit video just using the notebook and a camera.

EDIT DV itself is a very good editing program. It was initially produced for the

Notebook Editing System
£2,737 ex VAT £3,217 inc VAT
600MHz PIII, 128MB RAM, 18Gb drive, Laplink tech support

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MEMBERSHIP CARD
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Robert Paget

Tips, advice and
chit chat.

This and That

“More than the sum of its parts”

I read those words when sitting in the dental surgery waiting room in January. In trying to distract myself from thoughts of what was just going to happen to me, I realized this was the very essence of making a film. When all of the component media comes together, the timings of edits and shot lengths down to individual frames, the mixture and order of those shots, the timing and relevance of titles with as much care taken of those as goes into the design of a dust cover on a book.

During the editing process you can sometimes begin to experience points in the film where you are bringing something to life. You may get the experience of “this edit suddenly seems to be working better”. It goes right down to tiny matters of timing, and how those relate to the audio track, especially if that is musical. Reviewing edit points on a subsequent day often discloses a better and overall view of how the most minor editing alterations make a difference, and cause you to alter it again.

Holding attention

As a child, on the very rare occasions I saw a cinema film, I found the experience totally involving. The queue from the Gaumont in Stroud extending half way down Russell Street, only made it more exciting to see. You were entering a palace of entertainment, where all your senses would be impacted. The thrilling story of group captain Douglas Bader in the 1956 “Reach for the Sky”. I would not be watching for the camera and editing skills, the unrealistic grass nor the array of famous actors. None of that mattered to me. I was the audience, it held my emotions and the illusion was complete.

Douglas Bader was one of the nation’s outstanding heroes, and when Dawn and I met him unexpectedly at a book signing in 1981, I instantly picked up on his direct and honest people skills which are shown in the film. I nervously asked if I could take a photograph, but my 35 mm camera let me down with the film jamming. He reassured me straight away, but I never got the shot.

Getting “that shot”, is of course the very first stage of making your film, whatever level of experience you have. My intention is never to take just one shot, but several, including every angle I can think of at the time. If you have not picked that particular camera up for a month or so, there may be tiny settings you may have forgotten about. Thinking about continuity issues, remembering that you need to get the “all important” and sufficient “content”, and to give you alternate editing options. My last three completed films, and one I completed this week, have each been shot with the intention of filming in one day. Weather and lighting conditions could pose issues, particularly viewed by a critical audience, and if you have captured all of the footage, there would be no excuses why the edit could not get underway.

Having seen clients spending more each month on finance for a smart phone and the mobile contract provider than I would be prepared to pay on HP for a car, I used to tell my family that if I ever wanted to buy the same phone, then to have me shot. Once you start using your smart phone to control drones and cameras, the phone processor has to deal with more demanding software, and there are websites showing the optimum phones for your particular drone. What looks a lovely phone screen on the supermarket shelf may not be such

a good performer in terms of lag, screen reflection and brilliance when in bright sunshine.

That smart phone struggled with image delays and even dropped out of the program it was running when somebody rang me. The latest drone controllers with built in view screens are very convenient and great products, look further up the range and you can have a better screen but for more than the price of the drone.

First Time

My first experience of wanting to make films was slide shows on my 35mm Halina slide projector, and recording a music soundtrack to a tape recorder. It was the most basic AV audio visual you could attempt, and how you would show your holiday snaps to the rest of the family. Even without a PC your action camera or smartphone can produce that in the device, and even produce a half reasonable edit to music.

In the 60s and 70s I always considered the best cine film makers were those who had started out taking stills, probably because they were used to putting care into composition and thought before pressing the shutter and spending money on film. Many had realized that AV presentations held potential for telling a story from more than just a single image, and colour TV screens, non-linear, non-destructive editing were just dreams of the future for amateurs.

I have no issues with what any camera or editing system others use. It is just a matter of personal choice to match evolving skills and ambitions. I rarely think of my phone as a very useable 4 K video camera, probably because of the morass of badly shot footage you see uploaded to social media.

Last week I had walked around Stroud looking for a small information panel about the 18th century “Stroud Food Riots”. when some people in civil protests preferred to be hanged than to be starved. The panel had been an artist’s impression and would have fitted in well with a project I have in mind. I knew that it was on a north facing wall, so would not photograph well if badly lit in January, so just walked there. The panel was long. I decided to take some stills and handheld 4K video of the historic area using my phone. I had no idea of the internal storage capacity in the phone, which would for me would be limiting factor, and thought it was stuck in 30fps frame rate. I had not discovered I could change that to 25 fps, but beyond that in terms of focus and exposure you have little control. I later had to ask my daughter the simplest way of copying files to the PC. I confirmed it was no more than plugging a cable to a USB socket, and the phone asked if it was okay to connect. Until you have attempted these things it is a mystery.

In dull afternoon light I was not going to have high shutter speeds in video which I would generally avoid, did not know what the internal stabilization would achieve, let alone the audio recorded, and knew there could be issues with electronic displays in windows or transport signage. I took half a dozen stills and video clips, and I was pleased with the result.

I experimented filming with the phone again when we went to see the “Knife Angel” in Gloucester, and although I took sufficient material to make a very short film, the shortcomings of the phone became apparent when the



Robert Paget continues....

absence of a lens hood produced unpleasant and non-artistic light leaks, and where I had no control over the focus mechanism. The colours are fairly saturated, but when being edited there is a reasonable amount of bit depth to fine tune colouration. Apart from altering its shutter speed, I am sure it also alters gain to achieve good exposure, and one shot had far too much motion blur even though it was in good light. Another shot, where I panned up slowly, made exposure changes in "steps", although that did not always happen. Wide angle was very useful, there was loss of quality when switched to the narrower field of view.



Video frame from phone

In the early days of the original Cotswold Cine Club in the 1960s, members were always encouraged to bring along freshly shot 50ft films or unfinished films for open discussion. If you were still at secondary school the Club membership fee was waived, and a school mate brought along film of the Red Arrows based at nearby Kemble, but often practised over Stroud. His Standard 8 "Chinon" zoom cine camera with manual focus and built in light-meter gave a sharp image. Intercut with random shots of

bunches of party balloons being thrown en-masse out of an upstairs window by my Mum, into a modest gust of wind, took them over the roof, and never seen again. Without titles, and played with the music "Up, Up and Away" by the "Mike Sammes Singers", it was a totally random event each time you projected it, and very exciting for us young film makers.



Mike Sammes Singers

The 1963 film "It's a Mad, Mad, World" presented a similar opportunity to add film to a zany music track music. The film content was carte blanche, the shortest of film clips, and even a Church choir processing out of Stroud Parish church on a Sunday evening would do. We asked nicely at the Church entrance and were obliged with the full procession outside. The Vicar never knew we planned to intercut it with still images of nuclear explosions, images of Hitler, film stars, traffic jams. It was just for teenage fun in the style of 1960s early Top of the Pops music films (later video films) and late-night TV satire. Our teenage enthusiasm came as a surprise to an audience when the untitled short was screened. For us beginners, we were unconcerned whether it would be liked or understood by others, as long as we enjoyed making it.

We were experiencing the "more than the sum of component parts" once it was edited. It involved ambition and risk of complete failure. I am always impressed when I see that in the work of another amateur filmmaker.

In the 1970s I often worked on the annual accounts of various coal merchants, and coal deliveries played an important part of what I have just finished editing.

I had struggled to move a film project forward because I had such a range of ideas for it.

I recorded a piece to camera, additional drone footage in a strong wind and enjoyed a walk in strong but low sunlight. Having made several music style videos in recent years, I selected three copyright free music tracks from YouTube library, dropped them on the time line and began to experiment. Patterns of music slowly get into your mind, and what I had thought was "just ordinary" when selecting the music, began to mean more to me. A six and a half minute film, with two silent gaps, evolved over the next few days, and I could now plan to insert other material to complete the my story.



Research including the price of coal, beer and bread in the 1800s, had given me several pages of scribbled notes. I typed and printed out nine pages of A4, and resorted to physically cutting out paragraphs and stapling them to a fresh sheet of paper. The surprise was that I had at least fifty percent more narration than the film, which had now grown by four minutes, would need.



Sitting in the car wearing an overcoat and woolly hat, I recorded the narration, including additional and alternate versions of some sentences. I was determined to include the words "...and winter gnats were flying in pools of warm sunlight".

The edit took far longer than anything I had previously attempted, but it includes several events or stories within an overall story.

For many, this will have seemed a "wrong way round" of assembling a film, but an audience will never know.

Robert



One To Watch

A few from Pip Critten

Zach King's Best Magic Videos of 2022

https://youtu.be/dD_0NnC5e2U



How To Write A Twist Ending

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3xuVF_5kFPw



Cinematic SOUND DESIGN Tutorial for FILMMAKING

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JoNT_kob3-8



Recording voice overs like a pro

<https://youtu.be/jqaxg58IPUU>



From Neil Mander

I used to enjoy the behind the scenes extras on DVDs.

I came across this on the NETFIX film "All Quiet On The Western Front", well worth watching.



The Making of All Quiet on the Western Front | Netflix

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3qP0Z04UrJY>

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