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Meeting Reports for Season 2010-11

2010

9th September

This meeting was well attended for the start of the season especially as some members were still on holiday.

During the Summer break the club entered the "Midland Moviemakers Midsummer Movie Madness" competition.

This involves making a film with a title which is only announced on the day.

Each club team has to plan, script, shoot and edit their film ready for viewing the same day.

All participating clubs then converge for a evening dinner and film show. The audience chooses the winner.

Our entry was shown at tonight's meeting and those members who had taken part in making it explained the process, problems and fun to those who hadn't.

We had hoped to show several of the other club's entries but it proved almost impossible to obtain them, we did however watch several from previous years.

Members also brought various videos of their own choosing to show, Tim Easton showed a video of an extraordinary garden railway, and Alan Eades showed a video of Kings College Chapel which he made on a tiny 'Flip Ultra HD' card recorder, he also edited it with 'Flip's own on-board edit package. Results were amazingly good.

The evening was rounded off by a showing of the Out Takes from our Midsummer Madness entry, which gave us all an opportunity to look stupid, It's interesting to note that the out-takes video ran twice as long as the real video.

23rd September

Manual or Automatic?

No, we weren't debating the merits of car transmissions but rather our speaker, Roger Lawrie, was reminding us that camcorders have manual settings which we can and should use to great effect. This was just one aspect of a comprehensive session Roger presented on camcorder and filming techniques. There was something there for everyone, from the beginner to the more seasoned film maker. Preparation,

2011

13th January

This was a practical evening with a very immediate purpose. The idea was to produce one or more little videos to promote our club - the finished results could perhaps be put on YouTube.

Some members brought along their camcorders and tripods and filmed the goings on and interviewed each other. Gordon had prepared some useful blue screen props.

Our numbers were increased by some members of Lichfield Movie Makers. It was an enjoyable evening, with plenty of opportunity to talk about film making matters as well as working on the project.

At the next meeting we hope to view some of these promo films.

27th January

The script competition went really well. The best it's been since I've been a member!

- Six Days Sober - Pop video - by Dave Kinnear
- Interview with Death - The death penalty is re-introduced and we talk to a convicted killer on death row - by Doug Hemmings.
- Two Little Boys - A magic stone shrinks two boys so they can play train divers on their model railway and end up capturing a thief - by Tim Easton.
- Survival of the Fittest - A visit to the post is needed to ensure survival - by Alan Moore.
- Ring, Ring - A couple miss out on a luxury holiday by arguing over who will answer the phone - by Alan Moore.
- And What Did You Have for Christmas? - Some are pleased with their special present - by Alan Moore.
- For The Love of money - A long lost son returns home to shop his drug dealing Dad - by Alan Moore.
- Intervention on Good Intention - A potential kidney donor gets mugged as he thinks about the donor recipient - by Joe & Joel.
- Tangled Conversation - An almost identical phone conversation takes place as the previous day, with cut backs - by Joe & Joel.
- Coffee Shop - A man meets a new woman in a coffe shop. He asks her to meet for a drink, she turns him down but asks him to walk her to the station (you decide an ending!) - by Alan Eades.

camcorder support, use of zoom, sound, exposure and white balance and much more were covered. 'Can you ever have too many cutaways?' Roger asked. We all nodded in agreement that they were vital to smooth over those dodgy shots and accidental jump cuts. Could a gorilla help you? Possibly if it is a gorillapod camcorder support that can be attached to just about anything. By the end of the evening Roger had provided us with a wealth of information and reminded us of all the techniques we know we should use but are often too lazy to do so. The next competition will reveal just who took his advice to heart.

14th October

The first two of our annual club competitions took place on 14th October 2010. Each competition was judged by those members who had no entry in that competition.

Results:

Micro Movie - Maximum running time: 1 minute
1st, I'm Bored by J. Lampert. Drama about a magic coat.

2nd. Leave Me Alone by A. Moore. Sleepy man goaded into action by his other self.

3rd. Jersey in Just a Minute by R. Lawrie. Documentary about Jersey Island.

Mini Movie - Maximum running time: 5 minutes

1st. Climate Change Festival by J. Lampert. Documentary about a Climate Change Festival in Birmingham.

2nd. Men of Harlech by P. Walker. Documentary about Harlech Castle and the song "Men of Harlech".

3rd. Shardash by P. Sprague. A violin recital 3 Chairman's Cup

Trevor Mall, former Chairman of the club, presented the Chairman's Cup to Jill Lampert for 'When I'm 64'. The Chairman's Cup is an annual award made at the discretion of the chairman. This presentation was for last year's award.

28th October

Gordon Hunt was the speaker for a very instructive session on editing.

He began the evening by explaining to us what he considers to be the key to good editing, which is that the camera should look where we would want to look if we were there. To illustrate this he demonstrated that if we looked at him in the centre of the room and then turned our heads to face the clock on a wall on our left, what we would actually register would be two images: one would be him and the other would be the clock. We would not register the pan which takes place in between. He explained that the brain automatically cuts out the insignificant data in between the two significant images, and so that is what we should be doing on screen. He discouraged the use of the pan except when following the movement of a person or an animal or some other moving thing.

Gordon lucidly explained that film is about illusion. He pointed out that provided we use footage with appropriate directions and head turnings to lead us to things, we can create the illusion of things being

• I can help - Accident Claim salesman leaves to the office to see a car accident as an opportunity. It's not what he thinks! - by Roger Lawrie. It was very informal. There weren't any full scripts. Most entrants just read out or described their idea for a film. Some were basic structures where further research would be needed to fill out the script. One was a music video with a particular band who had indicated a willingness to be filmed in rehearsal. There were pitches for science fiction, crime, comedy, family drama etc. The judging was done by a show of hands, and the result was:

Joint first place went to - Interview with Death - Doug Hemmings

- I Can Help - Roger Lawrie.

after that we had a rather extended tea break, because people were so caught up in discussion about all the ideas they'd been presented with. That meant that there was just a little time for consideration of which film or films we as a club might want to make. There was plenty of enthusiasm for working on club productions. Both the films that we've agreed to have a go at require outdoor shooting, and so we'll wait for warmer weather.

The evening was rounded off with viewing some of the footage from the previous meeting

10th February

This was our Holiday Competition slot. We were very lucky to have Simon Sumner from Derby to judge the competition. It was particularly kind of him to come all the way as we only had 3 entries.

"Catalan Adventure" - a walking holiday in Catalonia, Spain by Jill Lampert - **1st Place**
"Holiday in Erdington" - a tongue in cheek invitation to a holiday in Erdington by Joe Meehan and Joel Felles - **2nd Place**
"Home of the Lotus Eaters" - a holiday in Capri with a quotation from Somerset Maugham by Roger Lawrie - **3rd Place**

In the time left over, Simon entertained us with two Derby Movie Makers' productions which he had edited. He had also assisted with the camera work. The films were both dramas: **"Situation Vacant"** and **"Locked In"**.

24th February

On this occasion Sutton Coldfield Movie Makers hosted a Trivention. Geoff Bates-Jones, our longest serving member, who joined the club in 1957, was able to remind us of how a Trivention works. Basically two clubs are invited to present a show of films each with a running time of approximately 40 minutes. The host club judges which is the winning programme. An honour is also awarded to the film that is voted the best film from the losing team. Our guest clubs were Wulfrun Camcorder Club and Reading Film and Video Makers. Reading Film and Video Makers had very kindly stepped in at very short notice to offer a programme of films. Because of the short notice, and also the distance between Reading and Sutton Coldfield, it was not possible for Reading club members to attend.

there when in reality they are somewhere quite else. He provided a wonderful example of this which was a film of himself driving a car. There were shots of him speaking to camera and of him looking out of the window. The passing scenery included shots of suburban Birmingham, but also exotic places such as an Austrian tunnel or a mountain covered in snow.

In the end we were shown that Gordon had actually just been sitting stationary in his car all the time. The passing scenery was made up of clips from other journeys.

Gordon had also prepared a short film set in an office. He allowed us to watch it through and then he explained to us some of the difficulties he'd come across, when he was editing it, and how he overcame those difficulties. Examples included cutting together two versions of the same speech to make a more satisfactory whole, and dealing with a shot which was too short for his requirements.

He showed us two versions of the film 'Trouble' which a few members of the club had made for the Midland Movie Makers Midsummer Madness competition earlier in the year. Gordon was able to point out the improvements he'd made in the second editing, and to demonstrate the power of inter-cutting parallel action.

The evening was rounded off with a delightful example of the power of illusion in film. Trevor Mall's film "China Break" purports to be a holiday film of his trip to China. The shots are of oriental looking scenes. The twist is that they were all actually shot in Birmingham.

Our numbers were swelled by some visitors from Lichfield Movie Makers, who we were very pleased to see.

11th November

3D or not 3D?. That is the question

Should we all be jumping on the 3D bandwagon? That was one of the many questions answered by Adam from the Sony Centre. Adam came to give us the lowdown on Sony products, in particular camcorders and tv's. He brought 2 camcorders which we were encouraged to try. One was a high definition model and the detail it revealed when focused on a twenty pound note, was astounding. As for 3D, according to Adam, 3D sales are soaring. However, despite this I think it will turn out to be an interesting fad which will plateau, then fade away.

However, it is a reminder of just how quickly technology advances and depressingly, just how quickly our equipment becomes dated. However, I consoled myself with the thought that there is many a good tune played on an old fiddle!

The second half of the evening featured a documentary film about Sutton Arts Theatre made by Roger Lawrie. The film included an interview with longstanding member of the theatre, Hilary Dorman, and provided some fascinating stories about the early days of the theatre and footage of a dress rehearsal of the Wizard of Oz directed by Nick Barnes.

Wulfrun on the other hand brought along quite a few of their members to watch the show, and we were delighted to welcome them.

10th March

Michael Gough Visit

Burning the midnight oil

Not literally, but our guest speaker, Michael Gough, was not averse to getting up from his hotel bed at midnight when he had a Eureka moment. It was the last night of his holiday when he realised he needed some night time shots of the Welsh village he was staying in. He explained that fortunately he has an understanding wife who understood his need to leave their hotel bed in the early hours! The film that resulted was one of several shown to us on the theme of holidays and travel. A packed audience included members of neighbouring clubs, Derby, Lichfield, Nuneaton and Wulfrun. However, none of them had travelled as far as our speaker who had trekked all the way from Newcastle upon Tyne. He came to us fresh from his success at BIAFF where the two films he entered were both awarded four stars.

Michael kept everyone's attention as he showed us a selection of his holiday films from around the globe and explained the thinking behind them. Most people would be surprised at how 'last minute' his decision is, as to subject or theme of the film. Michael also shared many of his techniques for filming and editing. Of particular interest was his demonstration of how to take an acceptable tracking shot by bending your knees as you walk. It looks strange but it works! He also addressed the often overlooked importance of the commentary and the benefits of making it the first part of the editing process on the timeline. The evening passed very quickly but we all left full of the enthusiasm generated by our proficient and entertaining speaker.

24th March

Advanced Camcorder Techniques

Roger Lawrie hosted an evening on advanced camcorder techniques. He had prepared a comprehensive PowerPoint presentation in which he reminded us of all the basic points which he'd gone through at the beginning of the year, and explained to us how we could extend the use of our camcorders beyond the basics.

His talk included such things as the use of filters, the use of wide angled lenses, telephoto lenses and fish eye lenses. He talked about pans, tilts and zooming, stressing that generally zooming is used for only as an aid to focussing. He covered the use of accessories such as items which would assist in movement e.g. dollies. And the use of external microphones. There was some discussion of a digital recorder called a Zoom which is a compact and relatively affordable external sound recording device.

The presentation inspired lively discussion and I think everyone went away feeling they'd learnt something.

A varied evening for members with something for everyone.

25th November

This year our Video to Music competition was judged by those club members who were at the competition. Each person was given a voting slip. On the slip was a list of the names of the films, and for each film there were two questions with spaces for short answers. The questions were: "What did you like best about this film?" and "How could this film be improved?"

This method was suggested by Patrick Sprague as a way of getting feedback on our films when we don't use an outside judge.

After each film we were given time to fill in our answers to the questions, and at the end we were given time to write down our choices for which films should come 1st, 2nd and 3rd. Entrants were not allowed to select their own films.

Roger then collected the papers and worked out the results. After the tea break he read out the comments on each film and then announced the results of the competition:

1st. Bicycle Race by Jill Lampert. Montage of shots of a Sky Ride cycling event.

2nd. Night Ride by Alan Moore. A funfair at night.

3rd. Heavy Weather by Roger Lawrie. Montage of weather films with a message to reduce Carbon Dioxide.

In the time that was left over after the competition and we watched an entertaining programme of prize winning music videos from Geof Caudwell (Derby Movie Makers), John Fox (Chesterfield Movie Makers) and Ian McDougall (Reading Film and Video Makers Club).

9th December

Bits, Clips and Chips

Despite snow and ice still lying on the ground, many members managed to get to the meeting, and brought an array of interesting clips and bits. Equipment brought along included Alan Moore's new Panasonic HD camcorder which he demonstrated to us. It certainly produces exceptionally good pictures in his capable hands. The camcorder was from the 700 series. It has an internal memory and can take a memory card. It can only take High Definition video, not Standard Definition. The manual controls are via a menu on the LCD screen. Unusually for consumer level camcorders these days, this one has a proper viewfinder as well as an LCD screen. Alan finds that on the whole the camcorder works very successfully without using manual controls. Taking us back in time, Graeme Tench brought along his Standard 8 cine camera with various lenses. He demonstrated how the cassette works, to those of us who had no experience of such things. It seems extraordinary to think that the maximum running time for each little reel was 4 minutes.

Roger Lawrie showed us a fishing rod he had acquired and adapted to become a microphone boom pole. It is very light, being made of

14th April

Commemorating John Foster

This was a special evening devoted to the memory of John Foster who died in December 2010. John was a much loved member of Sutton Coldfield Movie Makers for many years. He was hugely influential in the running of the club, and his contribution was outstanding.

We were very pleased to welcome some members of John's family who came to share the show with the Sutton Coldfield Movie Makers club members and visitors from Lichfield Movie Makers.

The evening was introduced by Stuart Mann who spoke warmly and eloquently about his memories of John as a film maker.

The rest of the evening was a showing of some of John's films. Grahame Tench projected some of John's earlier films on cine film, and Alan Eades projected a selection of the later digital video films.

John was a very accomplished film maker and so the evening was most entertaining. He had galvanised the club into making a number of club films which he edited and directed, and several of these were included in the programme.

The pre digital films shown were "One Man Metre", "BMX Action", "What about the Gardens" and the film which perhaps drew the most laughter, which was "Up The Garden Path". A very original comedy. Other films that were shown included "Alhambra Palace", "Yellow", "Car 67", "For One Year Only", "Coming Shortly", "Revenge", "Memories" and "Team Guinot".

John was a prolific film maker and members would very much like to see more of his films, especially his early films, but unfortunately at the time of this commemorative evening very few of his cine films could be found. If they are ever found, then the Club would like to screen them.

28th April

Making Thrillers Howard-Smith way

Howard-Smith from Wyre Forest Movie Makers was our special guest on 28th April. He is a very successful film maker who specialises in fiction and in particular thrillers.

By the time members arrived Howard and his friend Vaughan Williams had prepared the room for us. It looked wonderful. There were posters of Howard's productions all around the room, and a display of his dvds laid out on a table. DVDs were available to be taken freely by club members. Howard entertained us with some of his films. Perhaps the highlight was his latest film CASHBACK. He has made two versions. One for audiences who are quite comfortable with rough language and explicit violence and another one for those who might be uncomfortable with such things. He asked which one we would prefer, and the audience voted overwhelmingly for the uncut version.

It was much enjoyed by the audience. We were fascinated by the special effects, and Howard gave

fibreglass, and very much cheaper than the type of pole which is sold commercially for that purpose. A wide variety of films were brought along - though there was a bit of a theme of transport running through them. Rally cars, a motor show, 1920s/30s aeroplanes in East Africa (taken with a 16mm cine camera) and Trains from Sir Robert McAlpine's private railway. We were also treated to an episode of Morph, snippets from The Thomas Crown Affair, a BBC advert for the Barcelona Olympics, contrasting trailers for the two versions of "Trons" and a humorous film made by Roger called 'Hmmm...'. And all this was punctuated with a delicious meal of Fish 'n Chips which Mike Gutowski kindly organised.

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us plenty of time of ask questions which he answered in detail.

Howard uses many professional actors in his films. They are happy to play parts in his films for expenses only, if they are not busy on another production at the time. The result of this is that the standard of acting in his films is considerably higher than in the average amateur fiction film. A very good evening.

12th May

Video Cup and Technical Awards Judging

We were fortunate to have David Newman come all the way from Derby to judge our Video Cup competition.

The results were:

Buther's Mere Phil Walker 3rd

Dreamy Knight Jill Lampert

Frozen in Time Roger Lawrie

Jack and Grandad Alan Moore

Music Builds Bridges Jill Lampert

Running Together Jill Lampert 1st

Short Cut Gordon Hunt 2nd

Tallylin Railway Tim Easton

The Eccentric Accountant Phil Walker

Raining in Baltimore Joe Meehan and Joel Felles

Members also scored each film from all the competitions held over the year for the Entertainment award, and the committee members scored the films for the technical awards (best photography, best sound and best editing).

26th May

AGM and Awards Presentations

The AGM was held and the new committee, chairman and president were voted for. The Chairman continues to be Gordon Hunt who has done such a good job for us, and was willing to stand for re-election. The committee members voted in were: Tim Easton, Patrick Sprague, Jill Lampert, Roger Lawrie and Mike Gutowski. Mike continues to be the treasurer. We are very grateful to him for that. Trevor Mall was voted President. He has since been co-opted as a committee member and has agreed to be the Secretary. Some minor amendments to the Club Rules were made. The purpose of these was to bring the rules into line with the practice of the club. The following Trophies were awarded:
 Entertainment Award: Short Cut - Gordon Hunt
 Best Sound Shared between: The Eccentric Accountant - Phil Walker and Shardash - Patrick Sprague
 Best Photography: Jack and Grandad - Alan Moore
 Best Editing: Running Together - Jill Lampert
 Chairman's Cup: Roger Lawrie for his outstanding contribution to the Club.
 There was time left over to be entertained by a few films brought in by members.

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