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The Journal of Surrey Border Movie Makers  
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## In the Blink of an Eye

Written by Jim Reed,  
Illustrated by Peter Frost

It was Walter Murch, editor of films including *Apocalypse Now*, *Cold Mountain*, *The Godfather*, and *The English Patient*, who made the connection between blinking and editing whilst working on *The Conversation* with Gene Hackman. He wrote the book 'In the Blink of an Eye' in 1995 setting out his ideas.

The bits I've read are a bit outdated now, but it did set in motion a chain of research events for me that was very interesting

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Blink-Eye-Perspective-Film-Editing/dp/1879505622>



### Blinking in the role of Magic:

Magicians use several techniques to deceive their audiences, including, for example, the misdirection of attention and verbal suggestion.

We explored another potential stratagem, namely the relaxation of attention. Participants watched a video of a highly skilled magician whilst having their eye-blinks recorded.

The timing of spontaneous eye-blinks was highly synchronized across participants.

In addition, the synchronized blinks frequency occurred immediately after a seemingly impossible feat, and often coincided with actions that the magician wanted to conceal from the audience.

Given that blinking is associated with the relaxation of attention, these findings suggest that blinking plays an important role in the perception of magic, and that magicians may utilize blinking and the relaxation of attention to hide certain secret actions

<https://peerj.com/articles/1873.pdf>

### Attentional Blinks:

Some experts suggest that the attentional blink serves as a way to help the brain ignore distractions and focus on processing the first target. When an event occurs, the brain needs time to process it before it can move on to the next event. If a second event occurs during this critical processing time, it will simply be missed.

<https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-attentional-blink-2795017>

### Why we blink our eyes:

Researchers found that the exact moments when we blink are not actually random. They actually found that we blink at predictable moments. For example, when reading, most people blinked at the end of a sentence. When a person is listening to a speech, they tend to blink when the speaker pauses between statements.

Another example is when people are watching a video, they all tend to blink when the action on the video lags for a moment.

The scientist found that when people blinked, mental activity spiked in certain areas in the brain that function when the mind is in a state of wakeful rest. They felt that activation of this part of the brain serves as a short mental break which then allowed for better attention when the eyes opened again.

<https://www.verywellhealth.com/why-do-we-blink-our-eyes-3879210>



### Blinking, more than Lubrication:

Clearly blinking is more than just lubricating the eyes. Interesting though it is that we typically have our eyes closed for 15 minutes during 150 min films, how can film makers use blinking?

<https://www.newscientist.com/article/dn17526-synchronised-blinking-stops-viewers-missing-the-action/>



This excerpt is from Michael Caine's book *Acting in Film*:

An Actor's Take on Movie Making;  
"I don't blink. Blinking makes your character seem weak. Try it yourself: say the same line twice, first blinking and then

*continues*

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not blinking. I practised not blinking to excess when I first made this discovery, went around not blinking all the time and probably disconcerted a lot of people. But by not blinking you will appear strong on screen.

Remember: on film that eye can be eight feet across”.

This short Michael Caine video clip illustrates his point

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



And its not just the actor who can utilise blinking. The editor also has great power to manipulate the viewers experience of the strength of a character by cutting away just before a natural blink to remove it, and then cutting back to the person moments later.

This is an example from the **'Sudden Death'** film shown at the club last month. In the original footage, notice also how his blink at the start of his sentence seems gives more power to it – almost as if the blink wiped everything before it and it was the start of a new message.

<https://youtu.be/EHXfciHk8>



However at the end of the line he drops his eyes slightly (often a blink conveys the same message – the end of a thought). His eye drop was a natural reaction, such that it passed unnoticed at the time of recording.

But during editing and when set in context of the narrative, it weakened the power of his dialogue at that moment.

<https://youtu.be/zh49dRr1sYY>

In this edited version, the video (not sound) is slowed by about 50% just before the eye drop. This creates what seems to be a brief but icy stare intimidating his card playing colleague.

Blinks serve multiple purposes in real life, and therefore important to ensure they're not lost in film making. For example, attempting to remove all blinks will likely result in an unintended and unnatural or uncomfortable experience for the viewer.

<https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwio-42dyr7hAhVJTBoKHaZ1Cw4QJRxBAGBEAU&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.citizenme.com%2Fpublic%2Fwp%2Fai-citizenme-and-you-introduction%2F&psig=AOvVaw3b2DagdUKd6SO1OoukL4m0&ust=1554747022329203>

Haley Joel Osment, who plays the android boy David in Steven Spielberg's A.I. Artificial Intelligence, doesn't blink at all during the film until right at the end, when he is perceived as a real boy.



It's his lack of blinking that creates a subconscious impression that there's something inherently 'manufactured' about his character.

What I've learned from my limited research is that observing and controlling blinks in film production can be very powerful. I'm certain that there is much more to this, and I hope this might inspire others to delve deeper into this fascinating area.

## Persistence of Vision in Animation

Written by Peter Frost

As a rushed last minute article and addition to Jim's observations and research, and as I am an animation enthusiast, I will add that it is the perception of movement created by flashing still images in front of our eyes in quick succession that is the basis of animated movies, although science disputes this. If you like it's a sort of rapid blinking which can be demonstrated by opening and shutting your eyes rapidly while watching quick movement across in front of you. This 'breaks down' the movement into very short bursts of action, not quite single frames or scans as in movie animation, but it gets close enough to make it understood.

But we all know this, however, it is the extent to which the great animators like Bob Clampett discovered that it was possible to show multiple 'frames' in one drawing to generate speed, not possible when movement is on one frame after another. Here are some examples from "Falling Hare" in 1943:



Above: Bob Clampett's ability to create an impression of fast movement by drawing multiple images in one frame as a vibration travels down Bugs' body. Below: A gremlin has hit Bugs in blurred motion which leads to an extreme 'take' reaction pose for Bugs. The eye never sees these extremes but study animation a frame at a time and all is revealed!





# A Writing Weekend

Written and photographed

by Rita Wheeler

It was a great way to end February by going to Advanced Structure with John Yorke (<https://www.johnyorkestory.com/>) at Ealing Studios. This was organised by Chris Jones from the London Screenwriters' Festival <https://www.londonscreenwritersfestival.com>

**Ealing Studios** is a television and film production company and facilities provider at Ealing Green in west London. Will Barker bought the White Lodge on Ealing Green in 1902 as a base for film making, and films have been made on the site ever since. It is the oldest continuously working studio facility for film production in the world. The current stages were opened for the use of sound in 1931.

Since 2000, Ealing Studios has resumed releasing films under its own name, including the revived St Trinian's Franchise. In more recent times, films shot here include Shaun of the Dead (2004), as well as The Theory of Everything (2014) and The Imitation Game. (2014). Interior scenes of Downton Abbey were shot in Stage 2 which is where we were. The Met Film School London also operates on the site.

## Stage 2

One hundred and twenty of us spent Saturday and Sunday, 23rd and 24th February with John as he patiently explained and illustrated with excerpts from various feature films and also television series and serials how to structure a story.

## John Yorke

John Yorke joined the BBC in 1986 and has worked in radio and television. He was story consultant for Eastenders and Casualty. He has also written for several television series. In 2010 he became Controller Continuing Drama which includes Continuing Series, Series and Serials. His book Into The Woods: A Five-Act Journey Into Story is much respected in the screenwriting and novel writing world. He now speaks at Conferences and holds Masterclasses both in England and America.

<https://www.ljohnyorkestory.com>

The method he uses can be adapted for all writing be it screenplays, plays or novels. To help us use and understand these methods, before the end of each session we were split into groups of five and given writing exercises, the results of which

we then had to present to the audience. This was great fun although sometimes too much time was spent talking through what we should be writing about rather than actually writing it.

It was good to meet up with several familiar faces from previous London Screenwriting Festivals.

If you are serious about writing I would recommend going to any of John's events. <https://www.johnyorkestory.com>

Successful writing!



## Advanced Structure with John Yorke (July 6th and 7th, Ealing Studios)

He has written the best book on the subject, run Ch4 and BBC drama and won an Emmy. From Procedural to Longform, terrestrial to Netflix and beyond... Two day screenwriting masterclass and workshop in London.



## FILM IN AN EVENING BRAINSTORMING

Written and photographed by Kathy Butcher

The April club meeting started with the four 'Film in an Evening' groups gathering together to write a short script based on a theme called 'The Diary'. Rita Wheeler put ideas forward to the groups to enable them to make a viable story line. The four scripts were then read out by the group leaders.

Rita announced that the actual theme for this year's competition will be 'A Change in Direction'.

The 'Film in an Evening' brainstorming session was followed by a selection of previous years films which included 'Input Output' and 'Not His Type' based on the 2011 theme 'Easier said than Done', 'Bird and Peacock' and 'Spiritual Knowledge' based on the 2013 theme 'A Shot in the Dark' and 'Baby Shots' based on the 2011 them 'Elephant in the Room', the film 'Making of Baby Shots' was also shown.



## Border Post Clippings

### Netflicks Frensham Filming UPDATE

By Peter Frost

Photo opportunity WITHDRAWN!

I regret that the very valuable yet novel prize I was offering for 'best photo' has to be withdrawn for the reason opposite!

According to the 1st Feb edition of the Farnham Herald, the Netflix filming at Frensham Little Pond that I reported in last month's issue had already taken place between the 27 and 29th of January.

How strange, as we were told on the 26th Feb that it was to take place on Easter Day (an odd choice for such a busy place, admittedly).

If these facts are right, you will see it in a Netflix series called 'The Innocent'.

From Peter Frost as

#### Guest Editor

I have stepped in at the 11 3/4 hour to help Paul Saban, who is buried under a job involving him taking thousands of photographs but I didn't expect to be doing this again. It's temporary.



If you tried to become an extra in this film, it was my 1st April joke in the April issue!

## Border Post Contributors!

These members kindly helped me by contributing to this issue of Border Post:  
Jim Reed, Kathy Butcher, Rita Wheeler

### COPY DEADLINE!

June 2019 edition will be 14th of May

with **no extensions.**

Late copy will be carried over to the next month. Thank you for your co-operation - Ed!



Surrey Border  
movie makers

## NEXT MEETING

**Friday 10th May** (NOT 3RD!!) Foley Edit results + some previous examples

## MORE DATES 2019

► **Friday 7th June** Tech Evening with photographer Jason Butcher **AT HIS ALDERSHOT STUDIO NOT AT THE HALL. DETAILS WILL FOLLOW ASAP**

**Friday 5th July** Film in an Evening. Groups have 3 hours to film and edit then show the results at the club.

► **Sunday 14th July** Summer Social BBQ at Rita and Al's

**Fri 2nd August** A selection of films to enjoy

**Fri 6th September** Documentary Competition

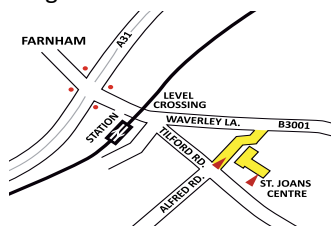
**Fri 4th October** Inter Club Competition

## COME AND SEE WHAT WE DO!

See what other movie makers are up to and you may get some inspiration for your own projects. We always welcome new members and you can sound us out for free, too. You can find out more about us by visiting our web site [www.surreyborder.org.uk](http://www.surreyborder.org.uk) or email the secretary: [secretary@surreyborder.org.uk](mailto:secretary@surreyborder.org.uk) We are also on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SurreyBorderMovieMakers/timeline>

Meetings are held at St Joan's Centre, 19 Tilford Road, Farnham GU9 8DJ on the 1st Friday of each month at 7.30pm for 7.45pm. Meetings close around 10.15pm. When coming for the first time, please email: [secretary@surreyborder.org.uk](mailto:secretary@surreyborder.org.uk) or turn up at the door!

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



**REMEMBER!**  
**Your first visit is free!**

Our members range from beginners to ex professionals, shooting video with DSLR Cameras, Camcorders and Phones, editing on both Mac and PC platforms. But that's not all, we welcome those who want to learn or participate in all aspects of film making, including script writing, storyboarding, producing, directing, lighting, editing, props making, acting, learning about equipment, helping out as crew or simply improving your family and holiday films. Whatever you are interested in, you are welcome to take a look at us as detailed above.

# Border Post