



Ring Out the Old ...

... Ring in the New ... Year!

2025



Header Creation Peter Frost

FARNBOROUGH INTERNATIONAL STUDIO TOUR

By Kathy Butcher

Surrey Border Movie Makers were delighted to have had the opportunity to tour the amazing and very impressive Farnborough International Film Studio's in November. These leading World-Class film and TV studios have produced many films and TV productions in their vast facilities including the settings for **Ghostbusters**, **Frozen Empire**, **Fast & Furious Hobbs & Shaw**, **The Devils Hour**, **Inside Man**, **Sort Your Life Out**, **Belfast** and **The Sidemen Story**, and many others.

The studios are situated next to the Farnborough Airport Complex making it very convenient for filmmakers, crew and celebrity actors to access.

Following a very interesting and informative introduction about the studios from Studios Director Rachel Morrison and Operations Manager Lewis Jeffery, we were taken inside the studios to view some current stage sets which were made on site using extraordinary skills by the studio team. We were able to visit one of the studio workshops to see stage props being created and also see the huge array of gantry's, screens and other stage equipment used during filming and usually well out of view behind the scenes.



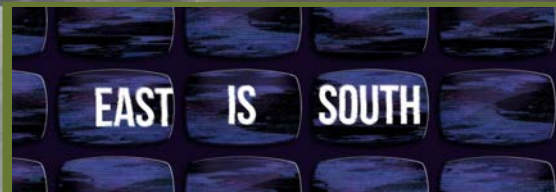
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Lewis guided us around the Hall 1 site, answered our many questions and introduced us to some of the incredibly talented personnel.

We were made very welcome by all of the busy studio staff and thanked them for their time. It was a visit we will always remember.

To find out more about these impressive studios click [HERE](#).



If you are interested in seeing a play about AI made by top Netflix director, Ellen McDougall. It's playing in Hampstead and is certainly worth a trip. *"Logos is a sophisticated artificial intelligence programme on the verge of consciousness. If it escapes its confines it could pose a grave threat to humanity. When there is a security breach, two coders are interrogated in a race against time to find out who has done what and why. This tense thriller from Beau Willimon delves headlong into the questions that rapidly advancing technology demands we confront: What does it mean to be human? And what is our place in a world where we are no longer the most evolved beings?"*

Click [HERE](#) for more details.

Thanks to John Hawthorne for spotting it.

A much forgotten classic of British cinema

As you might have noted over the last year I have a love of movies and the cinema and particularly movies which tell the stories of cinema, are either about cinemas or have scenes inside a cinema.

My all-time favourite in the genre is the 1957 British comedy *The Smallest Show On Earth* directed by Basil Dearden and starring among many others Peter Sellers, Virginia McKenna, Margart Rutherford and Bill Travers.

The Story: Overjoyed to learn that they've inherited a cinema in the north of England, Matt and Jean Spenser are subsequently shattered to find it's less of a grand picture palace and more of a fleapit (with three equally decrepit employees). Can the couple make a go of it or will they be forced to sell up and watch the Bijou Kinema be redeveloped into a car park?

Often appearing on TV it is available on DVD and Blu-Ray, streamed on FlixFling and Amazon.

Here's a Trailer for a taste:



by Ian Absolon

FILM REVIEW

No. 3

Trailer. https://youtu.be/a1dTR1aDdrM?si=9G8PdX_iv1sDLTxi



Cinema^{16/1} Cartoon Animation from Then to Now

Sumarising the Historic Journey

Researched and Compiled by Peter Frost with Ian Absolon; Layout Peter Frost

It's a huge subject with as many stages as the articles we've already covered for live action movies, so this History of Animation cannot cover everything. The early experiments from the late 1800s into the early 1900s are brief and only key developments, people and studios are included throughout.

Animation has always fascinated me as it did some of history's early film makers. They discovered the ability to create 'life' from inanimate drawings and objects through the persistence of vision.

1832, Belgian **Joseph Plateau** invented the **Phenakistoscope** which had a cardboard disc spinning to create the illusion of movement.

1834, Englishman **William Horner** invented the **Zoetrope** which had a drum lined with a band of pictures that could be changed.

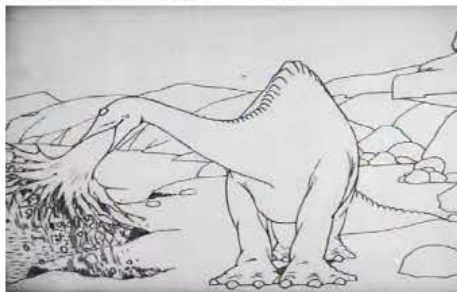
1876, **Émile Reynaude**, a Frenchman, made an adaptation that could be projected to a theatrical audience.

There were many variations on these ideas, each with tongue twisting names, so we'll leave it there.

We jump forward to 1906 and the invention of sprocketed film which American J. Stuart Blackton used for his animation **Humorous Phases of Funny Faces**, featuring cartoons in the style of Newspaper ones of the time. It was the first of a series of animated films for the Vitagraph Company in New York.

Frenchman, **Émile Cohl** also developed a similar system but using 'stick' characters for his film **Fantasmagorie**.

In 1914, American Winsor McCay created the first animated character to have a personality, **Gertie the Dinosaur**, personally drawing the thousands of images, character and background every time. Gertie was the first cartoon star and McCay toured with a performance of Gertie reacting to his instructions, eventually joining her in the film.



Australian cartoonist, **Pat Sullivan**, took the next step in advancing McCay's techniques at his newly opened studio in New York when he discovered the talent of a young animator, **Otto Messmer**. Messmer had invented a character that clicked and **Felix the Cat's** wily antics in one reelers became an extremely popular star with theatre audiences.



Phenakistoscope disc



Zoetrope



Reynaude's adaptation



Humorous Phases of Funny Faces Watch here:

https://youtu.be/wGh6maN4I2I?si=Pfu8cX9_4yZ3nT63

Messmer's design for Felix with his round head and big expressive eyes was soon taken up as the standard for cartoon characters to come.



Oswald

Walt Disney was working at his Laugh-O-Gram film Studio, which he formed in 1922 in Kansas and his long time friend, Ub Iwerks joined him as chief animator. Ub followed Walt to Hollywood when Laugh-o-gram Films became bankrupt and joined Disney Brothers Cartoon Studio formed by Walt and brother Roy Disney.

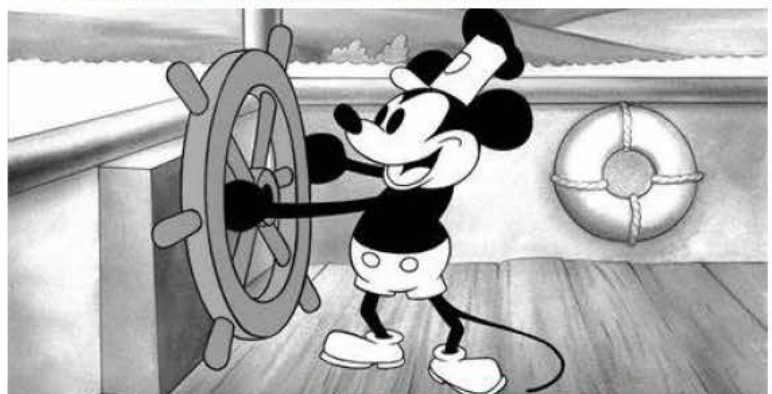
Disney noted the simplicity and flexibility of the design for his first major character, **Oswald the Lucky Rabbit**, virtually a Felix with rabbit ears. But Disney lost the rights to the character when in a dispute with his distributor and he simply modified Oswald's ears to round ones and the odd tweak and BINGO! **Mickey Mouse** was born.

Mickey Mouse shorts were animated by Disney's long time friend, Ub Iwerks, almost single handedly as he was an excellent and fast animator and, as you will read later, a brilliant technician. Mickey became very popular and the character in those early days was rather more feisty than he later became.



But it was Disney's ground breaking decision to create a cartoon with synchronised sound, **Steamboat Willie**, that took America by storm as the addition of sound helped to complete the magical illusion.

Steamboat Willie was actually the third cartoon Disney produced, again drawn by Ub Iwerks, but Walt had it redrawn for the sound track and released first before **Plane Crazy** (picture above) which was the first Mickey cartoon.



Watch Steamboat Willie: <https://youtu.be/hmzO--ox7X0?si=Vegyaul5yijx11hy>

Watch Gertie: https://youtu.be/_c15oS5i5I?si=fBX0n_mCgLYHE3th

Cinema^{16/2} Cartoon Animation from Then to Now

Summarising the Historic Journey

Researched and Compiled by Peter Frost with Ian Absolon; Layout Peter Frost

Walt Disney Ongoing

We stay with Disney as his was undoubtedly the most innovative vision for animation. His next step was with *The Skeleton Dance*, 1929, in which music was carefully synchronised to the dancing skeletons, to almost convince the audience that they had life. That was a feather in the cap of Ub Iwerks who not only drew most of the animation but also designed the synchronisation system to make it possible.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8n0J2c1aYpQ>

And it was this realism that Disney strove for, adding three strip Technicolor to *Flowers and Trees* in 1932 and the multiplane camera designed by Ub Iwerks (yes, him again!) which gave *The Old Mill* 1937, an impressive feeling of depth.



The Old Mill

But this was the year that 'Disney's folly', as the press called it, broke loose with a Hollywood style release for this groundbreaking feature length animated movie, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Not the first, but the most accomplished bringing audiences a truly dramatic experience of abandonment, sibling rivalry, threat, terror and adult passion with near photographic realism.



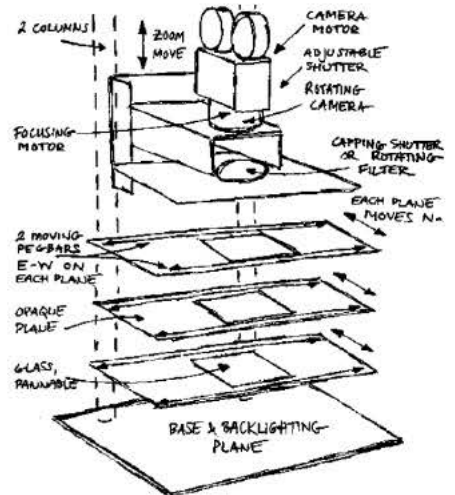
Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs

This move towards realism continued through Disney's following films of *Pinocchio* 1940, *Fantasia* 1940, *Dumbo*

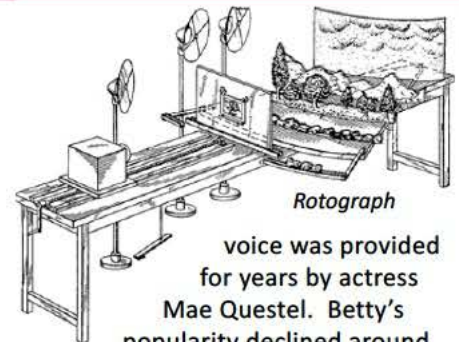
1941 and *Bambi* 1942 but his rivals had other ideas and specialised in their own brand of stylised havoc.



Flowers and Trees



Multiplane camera



Rotograph

voice was provided for years by actress Mae Questel. Betty's popularity declined around 1935 after the introduction of the Production Code which tamed her sexual suggestiveness.

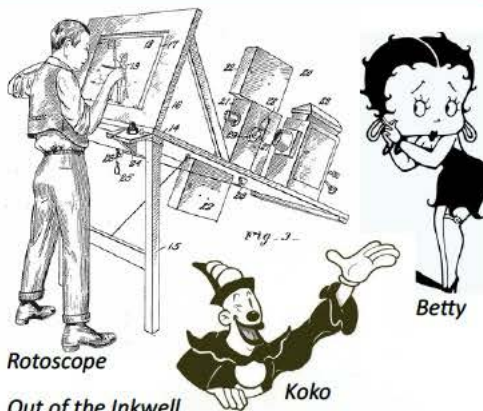
Enter squinty eyed, spinach chewing comic strip sailor, Popeye, created by American cartoonist E. C. Segar and adapted by Max for Paramount. William Costello was the original gravelly voice.



Recordings were dubbed onto the finished film (rather than recorded before like other studios). Mouth movements didn't match the spoken word and ad-libbing was quite usual and particularly amusing with Popeye voiced by Jack Mercer's improvised mutterings.



In New York the brothers Max and Dave Fleischer were producing *Out of the Inkwell* cartoons from 1919 to 1929. They starred *Ko-ko the clown* and Max who was working at his drawing table, while Ko-ko and friends ran riot. Ko-ko was Dave cavorting in a clown suite which was filmed and rotoscoped for animation.



Rotoscope

Out of the Inkwell

Koko

Betty

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3xnWKWRg4VY>

his animated characters by the use of revolving background models. Ko-ko was a very popular character produced and distributed by the Bray Studios. However when the Fleischers opened their own studio in 1921, they continued their Inkwell series with *Song Car-Tunes* silent bouncing ball' sing alongs.

In 1930 Betty Boop, the sexy flapper popped up in *Dizzy Dishes*. With large head with curls and her little pouty mouth and her small, curvaceous body, her 'distinctive baby doll'

Rotoscoping was invented and developed in 1917 by Max Fleischer and was a means of tracing live action and animating it, a shortcut for animators and is still used today. It was also the forerunner of today's motion picture capture techniques.

Max, the inventor and animation pioneer, also devised the **Rotograph**, a machine that made it possible to use model scenes as animation backgrounds creating a moving sense of 3-D depth for

Cinema^{16/3} Cartoon Animation from Then to Now

Summarising the Historic Journey

Researched and Compiled by Peter Frost with Ian Absolon; Layout Peter Frost

Fleischer Brothers Ongoing

Three 2 reel featurettes were produced: *Popeye the Sailor Meets - Sinbad the Sailor* (1936); *Ali Baba's Forty Thieves* (1937); *Aladdin's Wonderful Lamp* (1939), each of which used the 3-D moving backgrounds of Max's Rotograph to good effect.

Also in 1939, with the success of their characters Betty Boop and Popeye they moved to their more spacious Miami studio. Here they released their first full length animated feature *Gullivers Travels* and were second only to the Disney Company.

In 1940, Paramount acquired the rights to Superman and turned to Fleischer Bros to produce a series of shorts. However, Fleischers were already working on *Mr Bug (Hoppity) Goes to Town* which Paramount had ordered due to the success of *Gulliver* and not wanting to overstretch themselves they quoted four times the normal price and double the normal production time.

It didn't quite work and they were committed to Superman for double the normal fee for the first episode. Rotoscoping was used but much of the action had to be drawn from scratch.

Fleischers 17 Superman films, coined the phrase "*Faster than a speeding bullet! More powerful than a locomotive! Able to leap tall buildings in a single bound!*" which remained entrenched, even after Dave and Max's relationship broke down making Paramount jittery and they



Popeye the Sailor meets Ali Baba's Forty Thieves



Popeye the Sailor meets Sinbad the Sailor

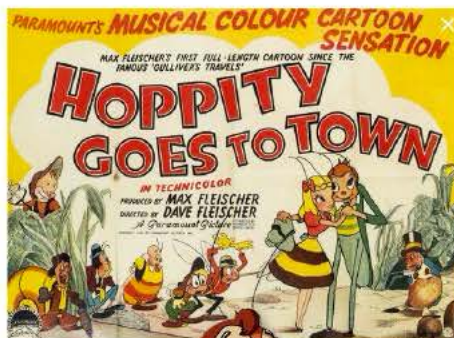
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QlwUpvf2jXY>



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tPRV_8u09Cg



removed them from their own company and changed the name to Famous Studios, completing another ten before interest in Superman declined and Paramount pulled the plug.



Mr Bug (Hoppity UK) Goes to Town has much to credit it from the impressive opening and the quality of story, characters and animation.

Years before the advent of computer animation, the Fleischer's breath-taking opening three-dimensional set of New York City was built in balsa wood and plastic in miniature, on top of a revolving steel turn-table. Although it takes less than two minutes of screen time, it took Fleischer artists four months to construct and shoot. All that work and it runs behind the credits. Watch it with the link below.



Stills above: Top, artist's animation sketch. Below, it a cel set up

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5RhzSMRGiAI>

Cartoon Animation will be continued

SBMM Awards - A word of thanks



By Jim Reed

Two of my videos that both extensively used Ai, each received awards in SBMM's December 2024 Annual Members Competition.

I have to admit that I was delighted and very pleasantly surprised. It was less than a year ago that many considered that using Ai was 'cheating' and not 'proper video making'. Indeed as recently as September this year, when my video 'Move 37: Dreaming of Electric Sheep' was entered into our Annual Documentary Competition, I posed the question at the time as to whether it should have been allowed because, aside from the research and concept, almost everything else was either archive footage or Ai generation. Even the narration was an Ai clone of my own voice that was responding to my written text. All of which might seem to support the notion that using Ai is simply a lazy cop-out. But as it happened though, far from being disqualified, 'Move 37' was voted Documentary winner by our September meeting club members. View this movie [HERE](#).



And far from destroying video making as some might believe, Ai shows all the signs of being an enabler for a wider range of video creators. As I suggested in my earlier feature on the music generator, SUNO, Ai is something that enables far more people to access and create their own music, and should be encouraged, not shunned.

I added the new credit of 'Ai Engineer' at the end of one of my recent videos, because that is exactly how I see the legitimate use of Ai in video making.

Thanks again to the external judges and our Club Members for both accepting and embracing these newly emerging technologies in the way that they have. I have no doubt that this is the future, and the club will be all the richer for it.

So I'm really pleased and thankful that SBMM members, and our external judges, have embraced Ai as a legitimate and significant tool to be used in video making, and not something that should be ignored.

Ai is not a lazy cop-out or even a quick fix, instead its something that requires dedication and time to learn to use properly, and needs creativity to apply it appropriately to the videos.

NOT REAL....



See the film NOT REAL click

[HERE](#)

An Editor's Struggle...



To see the film Editors Struggle click [HERE](#)



ACT one.....

By Jim Reed

In a previous 'Ai Corner' edition I mentioned that video generation is not quite fully accessible to amateur users such as ourselves : Text to Video prompts (or even image to video prompts) still tend to produce unpredictable generations, resulting in several abortive attempts before the required output is produced. This not only impacts time, but also more importantly, costs.

All of these issues will no doubt be fixed eventually, but in the meantime we need to be more creative in how we explore and use Ai generation for videos. My video ' An Editors Struggle' which features my English language Piece-to-Camera recreated and re dubbed by Ai into French, with perfect lip-sync, showcases what I may be one way we can tackle this. And the second video 'Not Real...' extends the concept.

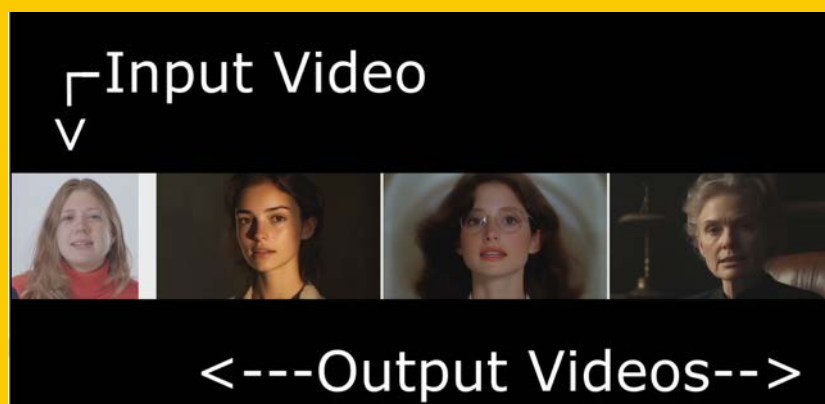
Both of these make use of Avatars which can be either static or moving images. HeyGen provides a selection of pre-made Avatars as used in 'Not Real...' but also allows the user to create multiple versions of a personal avatar. Details of HeyGen are included in the 'Editors Struggle' video.

Taking us slightly further down the path of Avatar creation is this new offering from **Runway** that shows the rapid and amazing development that Ai is taking and helping both enhance and extend our video making. Although I have not yet tried the software, **Act-One** appears to be part of Runway Gen 3 Alpha (image and video to video). At time of writing (December 2024) the cost for each generated second is 10 credits, with a maximum of 30 seconds output. The standard plan (\$15/month) offers 625 credits and the Pro plan (\$35/month) offers 2,250 per month - but as with many Ai products the terms may change.

From the **Act-One** website, click [HERE](#)

"**Act-One** can be applied to a wide variety of reference images. The model preserves realistic facial expressions and accurately translates performances into characters with proportions different from the original source video. This versatility opens up new possibilities for inventive character design and animation."

This video is a compilation of clips from their website. Click [HERE](#) to see them.



The 'Factors' Involved in Film Production Green Screen

By Mike Sanders



Addendum

An addendum to Mike's excellent article on 'Factors Involved in Film Production' in last month's Border Post.



The 'Factors' Involved in Film Production.....

By Mike Sanders

Target Market

Theatre Distribution – Best revenue budgets £1–50million for drama (not block buster).

DVD and Television can be the onward market after theatre distribution has come to an end.

It is also a backstop if Theatre Distribution fails, but the budget to make the film much is less £650,000 to £1.1million (BBC High end drama).

Other markets: Streaming services, Netflix, Apple TV, Amazon Prime, Netflix's. Stranger Things, for example, cost £30million per episode.

Sell the concept and script and they will do the budget and raise the money.

Production

Self-produce and raise the money (hard work).
Hire the technical staff and talent.

How was 24 frames per second arrived at?

It comes from film of course, and it was clear as soon as talking movies came out that there needed to be a standard universal frame rate otherwise cinemas wouldn't be able to get the film speed right and the dialogue pitch to sound OK.

16mm film was at 18 frames per second but had quite a bit of film flicker and movement wasn't smooth.

The film producers, where filming is done on real film not digital, are of course always very concerned about cost, and the more film that was used the higher the cost. So it was fairly empirically decided that 18 frames wasn't fast enough and 24 frames per second gave acceptable movement and flicker, but didn't burn too many five pound notes on the floor by using up too much film stock.

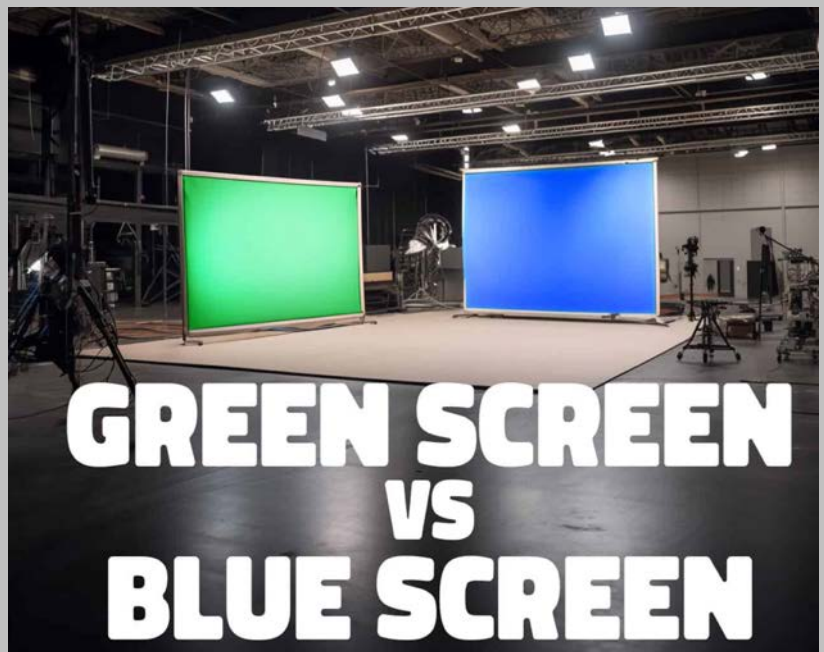
With today's modern electronic devices it is easy to set them up to film at 24p.

Green V Blue

Last month during our visit to the Farnborough Studios visit we saw a professional crew filming a night scene with a dimly but evenly lit blue background.

Having done some online research, blue is used in this circumstance because a green backdrop would effectively light the backdrop at a 50% white level making the scene overall too bright. Also green will appear in any reflective surface on the set and look odd whereas blue will not notice, and with the lower luminance level won't so obviously reflect, and anywhere it does will mix with the overall blue look of a night scene after the footage has a "blue look".

To really get rid of colour fringing an RGB backlight should be used with the opposite vector colour of the backdrop. Green backdrop use a magenta light, blue background use straw colour. Vary intensity until it looks right on camera.



<https://www.lencarta.com/gb/newer-660-pro-rgb-led-video-light-with-barndoors>

Costing about £124

For those of us that use Black Magic camera app on your mobile phones it would be useful if the App could show the key result.

Timecode



On the studio visit it was very odd that there were no scene numbers shouted out or 'take numbers' nor clapperboards in use.

Is that done electronically somehow? Online research says timecode logging has replaced that. I did see a monitor with a timecode superimposed on the bottom maybe that was it.

To make that work it requires that no camera is switched off and the timecodes are synchronised together and set to Free Run not REC run.

Whenever you have a question just ask Google AI for an Overview:

How is timecode logging done?

Traditionally, timecode logging was done by hand with pen and paper. Today, it's usually done with shot-logging software on a laptop connected to the camera or timecode generator.

What's the software used for timecode logging?

Some apps that can be used for timecode logging include:

Timecode+: An app for iPhone or iPad that can be synced with a camera's timecode to generate notes and timecode markers.



Timecode Logs: An app available on the App Store for iOS, iPadOS, macOS, and visionOS.

We really enjoyed our visit to Farnborough studios as it is always incredibly thought provoking and useful to watch film professionals at work.

AI investigation



Darren Mostyn - Colourist

From Ai Sleuth

I have recently used an AI-generated voice over in a video and found it to be a straight forward process. However, I was intrigued to discover this YouTube video from one of the UK's leading colourists, Darren Mostyn, who found he was saying what he didn't say on his own channel.

It's another case of stolen voice identity.

Watch here with YouTube link:

<https://youtu.be/CDMy4YMFOOg?si=bt4yeX1-ACIObOYK>

Rita's

Rib

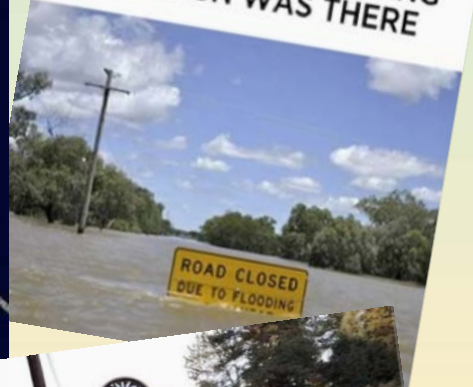
Ticklers



Why did the art thief's van run out of gas as he drove away from the museum?

Because he had no Monet to buy Degás to make the Van Gogh.

BOY, IT'S A GOOD THING THIS SIGN WAS THERE



Don't forget your reading glasses for your ears.

LARGE PRINT AUDIO BOOKS



How come there is enough asphalt for speed bumps
But not enough to fill pot holes



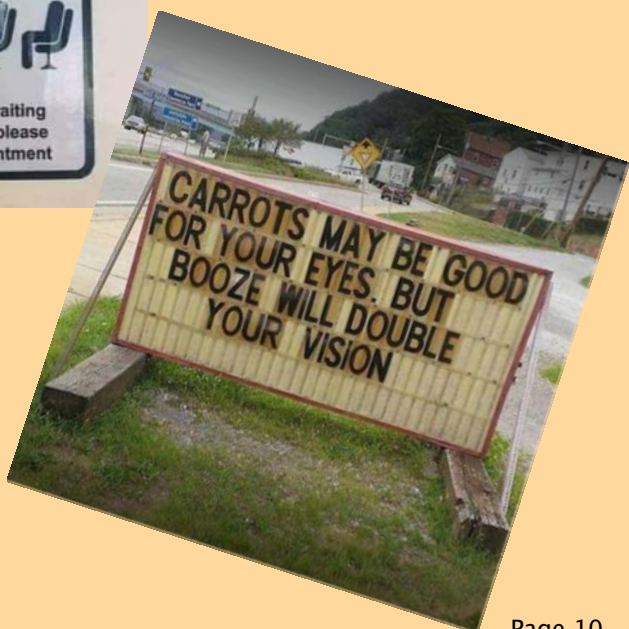
I NAMED MY DOG ROLEX HE'S MY WATCHDOG



IF YOU HIT THIS SIGN, YOU WILL HIT THAT BRIDGE



CARROTS MAY BE GOOD FOR YOUR EYES. BUT BOOZE WILL DOUBLE YOUR VISION



On the night of his inauguration, Trump is visited by three ghosts.

Early in the night, FDR appears. When Trump asks him how he can make America great, FDR replies "Think only of the people; do not make laws based on hatred, bigotry, or with the thought of lining your own pockets." Trump's face sours, and he yells "FAKE NEWS!" A few hours later, he is awakened by George Washington's ghost. Trump asks "how can I make America great again?" Washington replies "I would suggest you never tell a lie", which infuriates Trump. Around three in the morning, he is visited by the ghost of Abraham Lincoln. Again, he asks "how can I make America great again?". Lincoln responds, "go to the theatre."

Editor's Note

We wish a heartfelt "Thank You" to all those Members who have supported this publication throughout the year.

As we close out 2024, it's the perfect time to reflect on the incredible contributions we have received from members. Your dedication, creativity, and passion have truly elevated this publication and we couldn't be prouder of all that you've achieved.

One of the most remarkable aspects of our Club is the sheer range of skills that have flourished within our community. From the storytelling prowess of our screenwriters to the technical brilliance of our cinematographers, each of you has brought something invaluable to the



Next Meeting

3rd Jan: Zoom meeting Members only. Film analysis. Films entered in to BIAFF. Watch the films, see the judges comments and discuss.

Future Meetings

7th Feb: Club AGM. Then Dave Skerchly in his "Dave's Animation Evening"

7th March: "Let's make a Film". A hands on evening. Lighting, sound, camera. Action!

4th April: Edit Exercise.

2nd May: Make a quality film on an iPhone using Black Magic with Philip Morley

table. Our editors have woven magic in post-production, while our directors have shown exceptional leadership in bringing concepts to life. Even more, the ability of our members to adapt and learn new techniques—from mastering drone cinematography to experimenting with AI tools for scriptwriting—has been nothing short of inspiring.

Beyond the technical skills, this year has demonstrated the power of teamwork and collaboration. Every successful project has been a testament to the collective effort of a group that values creativity and respect in equal measure. You've not only created impactful films but also fostered an environment where ideas thrive and new members feel welcome to contribute and grow.

We wish you all a very **HAPPY NEW YEAR!!**

Looking forward to making more use of Ai in 2025!

Philip and Brian

So far 9 sparrows, 3 pigeons, a police helicopter, air ambulance, and 38 planes have received speeding tickets this week!



Thanks to Mike Sanders for spotting this picture.

Contributors!

Thanks to all members and guests who helped us by contributing to this issue: Peter Frost, Ian Absolon, Brian O'Connell, Philip Morley, Jim Reed, Mike Sanders, Rita Wheeler and John Hawthorne and Kathy Butcher

COPY DEADLINE! February 2025 issue will be 14th of January so keep it coming. Late copy will be carried over to the next month. Thank you for your co-operation - Eds!

Come and see what we do!

See what other movie makers are up to and you may get 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

or email the secretary: secretary@surreyborder.org.uk

We are also on Facebook:

www.facebook.com/SurreyBorderMovieMakers/timeline

Meetings are held at St Joan's Centre, 19 Tilford Road, Farnham GU9 8DJ, on the first Friday of the month, starting at 8.00 pm and finishing at 10.00 pm. If you are interested then email: secretary@surreyborder.org.uk

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.

Your contributions for inclusion will be appreciated together with photographs if possible. Please send them to The Editor Border Post for the next issue:



Your Club Contacts

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Webmaster Slack & The Brain	Jim Reed	
Competition Officer	Tim Stannard	
Movie Projects Co-ordinator	Dave Kershaw	
Public Relations Officer	Kathy Butcher	
Editor - Border Post	Philip Morley & Brian O'Connell	
Social Events	Rita Wheeler and Gillian Gatland	