

ENJOYING VISUAL TECHNOLOGY

**SYDNEY VIDEO
MAKERS CLUB**



ELECTRONIC EYE

N E W S L E T T E R

2009

February 2009

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**Next meeting
Wednesday
25th February**

www.ncc.asn.au



Through the President's Lens

A party Atmosphere.

Our Jan club night was a hit, we were pleased to see our people so “alive” and keen to get organised into smaller, more manageable teams and actually plan a shoot with their own “crew”.

Significantly, the arrival of so many new members has already had a positive impact on the club with a few offering to help the committee with various tasks. Some have been asking us for advice regarding a purchase of new cameras or software and the team leaders reporting upbeat attitudes from their first ever team meeting.

Again this arrangement will work with your support. Some of us have had a lot of pleasure being members in the past and are able to help out as we tweak the club to be more encompassing. You know that our new directions are a work in progress, and we hope for a brighter 2009 with everyone's good will.

February “Focus” night saw even more new faces taking out their Video Cameras and discovering things they didn't know they had. It was our “first” so if you didn't get everything you wanted, let one of the

committee know and we will get you help – if you don't tell us, we don't know.

You can also get extra help by taking your camera to your next team meeting and your own crew will assist you.

Margaret Tulloh, one of our new members was able to help Ian Scott with the refreshments for everyone (thank you Margaret) and still had time to join in the evening's presentations. If you need more hand-outs there will be a few copies at our February Club Night, or email Chris, or Elvio. (Members only).

February 25th is our regular Club Night and it gives me great pleasure to invite you to the world of Jack Feldstein who is an established screenwriter, script editor, playwright, producer, digital animator, filmmaker, series creator (Zena, Superman) and lecturer in Sydney. His plays have been performed at the Ensemble Theatre, National Institute of Dramatic Arts, The Malthouse in Melbourne, the Royalty Theatre, Adelaide and presented at the Australian National Playwright's Conference. He is well known as a screenwriter and creator of various television shows (ch 7 & 10). Jack is always interesting and unpredictable.

He will show us a DVD then stop it to get you involved in the creative process. Bring your pen, paper and friends along and enjoy this SVM mind body and soul experience.

We will also have time for our new teams to meet to discuss their "Our House" project, or anything else about videomaking that takes your fancy.

Next Month: March 10th. Focus night will be on capturing techniques so bring both your Camera, manuals and your laptop with all the cables as Scottie will show you how to capture the shoot from camera to computer. Ask questions as the presenters have a lot of experience.

Just a reminder for those who live further away from the city, in the south and west, that there are a couple of other fine video clubs. They are the Cronulla Video Club and the South West Video Club in Moorebank. There are also clubs on the central coast and in the Wollongong area. Info is on our web site.

By now you should all have received your new name tags, it's free with your membership. If you haven't then please see Elvio and he will issue a new one. As Gerry Benjamin, another enthusiastic member says, "if you feel left out, turn to the person next to you and say G'day".

My beautiful daddy "Jack" passed away on the 10th. So thank you for your kind thoughts guys, but the SVM show will go on and you'd better not miss the other "Jack" on Club Wednesday and find out about:

* What does your character/protagonist(s) want?

* How does he/she overcome obstacles to get it? He tells me that "if a writer contemplates and clarifies these questions in their own scripts they are half way to creating a good dramatic story".

See you on Club Night,

Rob Nercessian
Club President



VOTY 2008 was again a success with over 100 people turning up to watch the best the club has to offer. Our thanks to Ian Scott for his usual high standard of organization. During the evening we held a raffle to help swell the clubs meager coffers, and for the first time, had a lucky door prize.

The lucky door prize was donated by **Murray Roberts**, Product Manager for **Lako Pacific**. It was Pinnacle Studio 12 Ultimate, one of the new breed of video editors capable of editing high definition content. The prize was valued at \$250. Many of our members already use this software and may like to consider upgrading to the latest version through the sponsor, Lako Pacific.



Congratulations go to Mrs Walsh who claimed the very nice gift.

VOTY continues to be our premiere event and the committee has determined that it will again be run in 2009.

Each year we aim to break even on the costs and this year will be no different. Breakeven means that we need about 100 attendees and your committee will be encouraging you to attend again this year, on Friday 27 November. Put it in your diary now!



WOT



8



WOTY2008



FOCUS NIGHTS

Hi everybody just a reminder that **Tuesday the 10th March** is our next training session for those interested in developing thier basic video skills.

This coming session we will be looking at various shot types, camera holding techniques and composition. You might like to look at the following article in this month's EE before you attend.

If you have a laptop bring it along together with you'r camera and we will make sure every body can "connect up". If you dont have a laptop or camera just come along and join in with others. We start at 7.30pm sharp in the Craft room at the Dougherty Centre and go through until 9.30pm. Hope you can make it along.

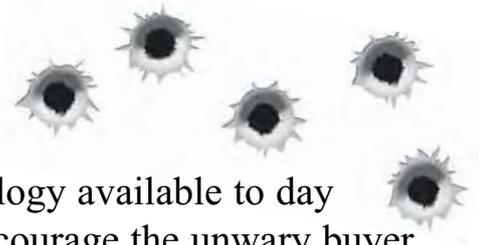
Hi **experienced members** I need a bit of assistance for the next couple of focus nights. I need some mentors with laptops to help me conduct some hands on training. Please let Scotty know if you can assist. I need about six work stations in total to support a reasonable level of "hands on". Kent Fry, Phil Brighton and Chris Kembessos are already in the mentor group. I need three more on top of those and my own to do the trick.

Hope you can assist.

Ian Scott
Vice President SVM Club.



POINT AND SHOOT



With all of the technology available to day sales slogans like our title are bandied about to encourage the unwary buyer to think that taking digital images is a no brainer process. Whether you are working with a still or movie camera I would think a better slogan for better results should be “Aim and Frame”. Lets assume that we have mastered the skill of holding our camera steady and that there are no exposure worries, after all it’s fully automatic! But that is another story for later. The visual impact and interest of our captured shots will be greatly enhanced if we follow a few golden rules. Whether we are working in still or movie, the composition of the visual image is paramount to generating interesting shots.

The first thing we should ask is what type of shot do we want to best capture our subject of interest. Do we want a long shot LS which can show “the bigger picture” and might be used to establish what is around us and where we are. Or we may want to show more detail about a part of the scene around us so a medium shot MS could do the trick. To really focus on some part of the scene around us we could use a close up CU. And if there is a particular point of detail we really want to stress an extreme ECU might do the trick.

A word picture may assist me to communicate the concept of shot types. Imagine you are on tour and you arrive in a village market for a look see and wander around. Of course, you probably have a travel companion with you to use as an unsuspecting actor. A nice LS of the whole market area will help you to tell the folks back home about the market and the extent of the sights and sounds in the marketplace. As we wander through the market an interesting stall catches your attention, no doubt because like me your wife has stopped and is looking seriously like buying something. A MS of the stall, its owner and your wife about to spend your money will suffice here to pass on to the folks at home just where all the money went whilst we were on holiday. Now the situation is getting serious our actor has picked up what looks like a very expensive object and you can tell its about to be added to the family store of useless trinkets. What the heck its worth a CU of the wife handling the item so we can see it in glorious detail. Follow up with an ECU. Probably part of the wife’s hand passing over your precious cash to the grinning stall owner. Slip in another CU of the stall owner here so you don’t forget how much he enjoyed taking your hard earned cash. Now this word picture can be shot as still or movie. Obvioulsy the movie scenes will tell the story as an action sequence where as the stills need to be arranged in sequence with some explanation. Still or movie, composition plays a vital role in your shots. For good composition we must aim the camera and consider what we include in the frame. The most usual points to improve LS scenes, firstly don’t shoot into the light unless its in a con-

trolled way for impact, like that terrific sunset and the other point is to add depth, usually by including a foreground object, like a silhouetted palm tree in the sunset shot. In our MS we need to cover the subject but look for prominent colours and items to brighten up the scene and make sure any actors are looking into the frame or at the camera. In our CU, if we are capturing an actor make sure the actor is looking into the frame or if looking at the camera position ensure that the actor's best profile is captured and not staring straight at the camera. On the ECU the aim is to compose so that the point of interest is as informative and visually descriptive way possible.

Now my readers are members of a movie Making Club, so some comments about the movie aspects of visual composition are in order. There are some additional golden rules mainly to do with movement. There is a feature on all movie cameras today that is very useful, the ability to zoom. Unfortunately it is an Achilles heel for novice users who immediately use the zoom function on almost every shot whilst filming. Don't do it!..if you watch some quality TV or Film you will not see too many zoom shots, when used they are usually associated with a dramatic need for the viewer to drawn into the scene. The zoom function is there so that you can adjust the frame content to suit your composition before you take the footage. Don't forget shooting at the extreme tele limits of your lens will accentuate camera shake. If you can, approach the subject to reduce the need for zoom, or use a tripod. Panning is also possible because we can twist our body whilst we are shooting. Again look at quality professional footage and you will note that pan shots are almost non existent. If you must pan start at one end with a bit of nonpan steady footage and then very slowly pan the scene to its other end where you stop panning for a bit to get steady nonpan footage, then cut the shot. Viewers have actually been known to get motion sickness trying to watch a badly shot saga. As a general rule let the motion take place within your scenes don't try to create it by moving your camera.

As far as scene length is concerned there is only one golden rule. Take more shots in number and length than you think you need, at edit you can be selective and discard the not so good bits. The final results and viewer reaction will provide you with an indication of your success. If scenes are long and slow the movie will be tedious and boring. If the scenes are too brief and follow in rapid sequence nobody will be able to follow the story as it will be too rapid for comprehension, the only saving grace is it will all be over quickly and the viewers will not suffer for too long.

Those of you attending our focus night tuition course will see some don't do examples and examples of various shot types with pointers on composition.



Examples of shot types

MID SHOT

The mid shot (MS) cuts off people just below the waist.

A variation, the medium close up (MCU) cuts off just above the waist.



EXTREME LONG SHOT

The extreme long shot (ELS) is also known as the vista shot. That's because it's usually used to show a wide location to establish where the action is set.



CLOSE-UP

Close-ups (CU) enable us to get close enough to a person to see their facial features. The cutoff point is normally around the armpits.



LONG SHOT

A long shot (LS) of a person includes the whole body. An LS of people should contain enough of the location to show where the action takes place.



EXTREME CLOSE-UP

Extreme close-ups (ECUs) have even more impact than CUs. They are used to concentrate attention on a small detail in a scene.



LOOKING ROOM



When shooting a person like this boy, the viewer tends to follow his eyes in the direction they are looking, so it is usual to compose people so they are facing the centre of the frame. The space in front of them is known as looking room.

If you shoot the boy so he has his back to the centre of the frame, the viewer follows



his eyes straight out of the TV screen. The part of the frame behind his head is known as redundant space. There should be more looking room in the frame than redundant space.

A lot of space behind someone's head suggests there is something interesting happening behind him, off screen.

HEADROOM



The Rule of Thirds applies particularly to head-and-shoulders shots of people. When you record such a shot, the subject, such as a juggler, looks far more natural if his eyes are a third of the way down from the top of the frame.

If you compose the shot so that the juggler's eyes are below half-way down the

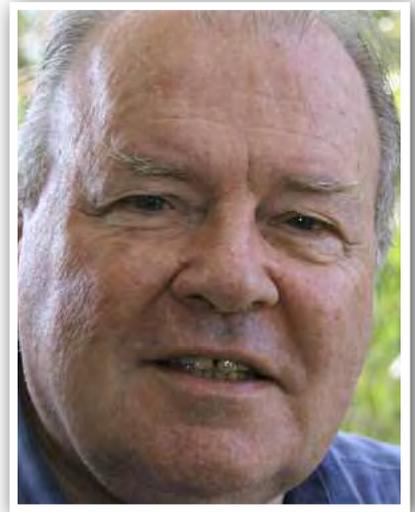


frame, he appears to be sinking off the bottom of the screen. This is known as having too much headroom. If his eyes are higher than the frame, he may look too cramped.

By keeping the eyes at the same point in the frame, you ensure the person's head doesn't bob up and down.

COMPETITION CORNER

*With Mike Elton
Competition Manager*



Editors Note: Apologies for not bringing you the competition corner last month. It was written, and sent, but the email got lost somewhere in the World Wide Wilderness! The email was resent and last months article is reproduced here before this months:

January 2009

At this time of the year I look back at 2008. This was not a bad year for competitions but would have been much better had more people entered. In order to make up the numbers I entered all the contests with mixed results. I was glad to get feedback from the judges to help me improve-I hope! I am not afraid of constructive criticism. This is the value of entering contests. Many members only enter one contest-VOTY - per year. I know that an entry has to be honed and polished and this takes a long time but I still think that there is value in entering contests during the year. Make this your New Year Resolution- to enter as many contests during the year as you can.

The Last Contests of 2008 apart from VOTY were “A Music Video” and “Flashback”.

The winners of the Music Video were those Crazy Rascals of BES. Who went ecclesiastical in Blue Screen and sung about the rise of High Definition in verse. I played the straight man to the mad antics of Phil and Ian. It was great fun. I came second in this category with a music video called “Welcome to Tokyo”.

The winner in the “Flashback” section was Gary Klinger. His was a moving story about his mother. Second was also Gary who worked with Kent Fry on “Bees in the family”. This featured animated bees and a comic turn by Kent.

VOTY was successful with a slightly smaller entry than last year with only 15 entries. To be honest I always give a sigh of relief when its finished. I first have to find and contact 5 judges. Two members of our club are and three from other clubs. Then I assemble the entries, together on a computer. And make a number of DVD’s one for each judge. In fact there are two DVD, s for each judge as one is standard framing the other 16x9. These are sent off to the judges and results are collated to find the award winners. I found one problem two entries from a member and his wife when copied looked slightly unsharp. I think from the codec his computer uses. I had to add these entries one by one from the original tapes to the DVD. Another problem was that results were sent in several different ways and comments were in different forms so that when I had to get these together to give to entrants it was a question of cut and paste. By the way there were issues with some entrants not leaving ten second gaps in the beginning of their tapes. However even so the experience was easier than last year.

The winner of the presidents award for “Video of the Year” and first in the documentary section, was Ernst Cheung with a clever tutorial entitled “Shoot like a pro”. One judge thought it so useful that he is waiting eagerly for the second episode.

Second in the documentary section was “Dragons Abreast” by Chris Saville and Andy Doldissen. A well produced doco on dragon boat racing and breast cancer survivors. Both uplifting and inspiring and well filmed.

The BES team won the best Screenplay section and the Ted Northover Trophy for AAADD. They also won a trophy for the best Meeting Night Videography Team. Not only was I part of the team that made AAADD but I think I have got it myself!

John Sirett was awarded the Excellence in Photography award for Wagtails a clever documentary nature film. This also won the Audience popular vote. How does he have the patience?

Juan Miravillas won the award for the Best Music Video. Spanish dancing at its best.

Gary Klinger won the award for best Travel Video for “Elvis Festival(Parks)” as well as the award for being the Best Meeting Night Videographer .Elvis Festival(Parks) was a good example of how a travel documentary should be made. It was slick and funny. Also he went to the trouble to travel back to the track by car to video the train to compliment video taken inside the carriage.

I received the Gwen Stoney Award for the most improved videographer. I hope this inspires me to become better.

And In 2009

In January the first contest is an Open Contest in which somewhere there should be something “Yellow” this can be up to 5 minutes long and will be shown in March. Yellow doesn’t have to be featured it could just be a compliment to the story. The second contest in April is about “My Home” This could be Sydney- Australia- Your Suburb or your house or anything else you can think of. It could be fiction! And again can be up to 5 minutes long and will be shown in June.

The Third Contest in June will test your skills with “Chroma Key”. Again 5 minutes to be seen in August. The reason for Chroma Key is not important. Tell a story of somekind.

In August the contest is “A Screenplay” which will test your imagination and give a chance to make fiction film. 5 minutes again to be seen in October.

There is a 5th contest called “Transport” this time for a THIRTY SECONDS VIDEO to be shown in October at the same time as contest 4. This will challenge your editing skills.

I hope this list is challenging enough to inspire you to take part. Please remember that you get out of the club what you are prepared to put in

Of course entrees for VOTY are also lodged in October. By that time I hope to see plenty of masterpieces for our delight. Remember winners from the club competitions with enough points can also be entered into VOTY.

Competition Corner, February 2009

The first judging results from the first competition Open + Yellow are coming in. This time the judges are mostly from different Video Clubs. I am trying to create a closer tie with some clubs so that we can view and judge their competitions too. When we screen the entries in March we will have the entrants give some back stories and explain any difficulties they may have had or special things they did.

The Next competition is My Home entry is in March and the length is again up to five minutes. My Home can be the country you live in, the town, or you're house or flat. Indeed it could be the universe and earth. Or it could be the home of an animal or insect. Let your imagination run riot.

I have found that when making videos that good enough isn't good enough. Check and recheck you entry to make sure the sound is good and the edits are neat and appropriate. Start early to give yourself time to do the subject justice.

Start thinking now about the rest of the year. Coming up are, Blue Screen, Scripted Video and a 30second video on Transport. All will need some effort.

There are many experienced members who are not bothering to enter monthly contests. I will propose that we have another category for people who have won the competition several times. Platinum and the name of master videographer. We have to work out details so send me any ideas you may have.



Club Contact Details

President	<i>Rob Nercessian</i>	robncc@hotmail
Vice President	<i>Ian Scott</i>	9484 4439
Secretary	<i>Kent Fry</i>	secretary@ncc.asn.au
Treasurer	<i>Elvio Favalessa</i>	9415 2634
Membership Secretary	<i>Elvio Favalessa</i>	9415 2634
Webmaster liason	<i>Glenn Booth</i>	9401 6677
Training Officer	<i>Joy Saunders</i>	
VOTY Organiser	<i>Ian Scott</i>	9484 4439
Publicity Officer	<i>Peter Frybort</i>	9960 4456
Editor Electronic Eye	<i>Terry Brett</i>	9451 1851 editor@ncc.asn.au
Web Master	<i>Eric Chung</i>	
Service Desk Manager	<i>Peter Deklerk</i>	8920 0795
Help Desk Coordinator	<i>Eddie Hanham</i>	9327 4118
Librarian	<i>John Maher</i>	
Visitors Host	<i>Ron Cooper</i>	9982 1147
Competition Manger	<i>Mike Elton</i>	9904 6295
Copyright Registrar	<i>Jim Whitehead</i>	9416 7162
Video Director	<i>Terry Brett</i>	9451 1851
Audio Director	<i>Garry Murdoch</i>	9807 3706
Catering	<i>Bob & Margo Hallett</i>	9587 6925

Please address all correspondence for Committee Action to:

The Secretary,
Sydney Video Makers Club,
P. O. Box 1185
CHATSWOOD NSW 2057

