

The Scottish Association of Moviemakers



NEWS

September/October 2011 Issue 162



WHAT IS THIS YOU SEE BEFORE YOU, THE FUSES LIT AND THE TIMER COUNTING DOWN TOWARDS ZERO?

SHOULD YOU THINK IT'S A HINT, WELL, YES, IT IS.

A WEEK AGO WE DIDN'T HAVE A SINGLE LINE OF COPY WITH WHICH TO MAKE UP THIS ISSUE - SO IF YOU WANT 'SAM NEWS' TO CONTINUE, YET AGAIN WE HAVE TO ASK MEMBERS TO CONTRIBUTE SOME MATERIAL HOWEVER REMOTELY CONNECTED WITH OUR HOBBY - SEE PAGE 14 FOR AN EXAMPLE OF HOW REMOTE YOU CAN GET!

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THROUGH THE VIEWFINDER



Hi all

It is difficult to believe that we are almost at the start of the new season. Where has the summer gone? I don't know about you but I am always full of intentions to do lots of filming during June, July and August. The actual result - nothing at all. I sincerely hope you have all done a lot better and we have lots of new films to see.

I would particularly draw your attention to the SAM First Awards Competition. We are hoping for a big entry, as we are for all the competitions.

I really hope that you are planning to attend the IAC AGM at the Stirling Management Centre in October, even if it is only for the Sunday. Travelling is so expensive now that it is good to attend a big event when it is on our doorstep. We are fortunate that at least 100 people are willing to travel from all over Britain and, indeed, from Denmark to visit us. So please show we appreciate it and come along and help make them feel welcome.

We would also appreciate the gift of a raffle prize for this event. All the takings from the raffle goes into SAM funds. Please bring your raffle prize to either of the first two meetings on 18 September or 2 October.

The twice-postponed visit from James Webber is at ECVS in Edinburgh on 18 September. Please make an effort to attend for his visit will be something very special.

Indeed your Committee has lined up a very good syllabus for you. They deserve your whole-hearted support so please have a look at the programme set out on the centre pages and resolve to attend all the events.

Best regards

Dorothy

FILM QUIZ - JUST FOR FUN

Here are some more devilish questions to test your knowledge of movies...

True or False:

1. Jackie Chan was born in Toronto
2. Brian Blessed appeared in an early version of Star Trek
3. Sean Connery wore a toupee in all the James Bond movies
4. John Travolta's mother and sister are both in ***Saturday Night Fever*** as well
5. Tommy Lee Jones is a trained opera singer
6. Oscar-winning actor Jamie Foxx was originally a stand-up comedian
7. Drew Barrymore never finished high school
8. David Arquette was a former US Olympic team swimmer
9. Elliott Gould is the only actor to have a cameo appearance in more than one Muppet film
10. George Clooney plays the drums in a rock band

Which Film?

1. Set in Thatcher's Britain, it told the tale of a young Asian Londoner determined to make a success out of a run-down laundrette and launched the career of Daniel Day-Lewis
2. This film had the following taglines: "Hell of a way to end a partnership"; "She smells like angels ought to smell" and "Do I take this cop down and risk it all"
3. Which film was Director Roland Emmerich talking about when he said: "I said to myself that I'll do one more disaster movie, but it has to end all disaster movies. So I packed everything in"?

(Answers in the next issue)

THE SCOTTISH REEL

- The IAC AGM

**at Stirling Management Centre
20 to 23 October, 2011.**

Three years ago when we first agreed to host the above event it seemed ages away. Now it is bearing down on us very fast.

The arrangements are mostly in hand and we have had a terrific response of 96 so far. But we need more of our Scottish Film-makers. The last time the AGM was held here was in 1984. So this may be the last opportunity for many to enjoy an event of this nature.

The words “Annual General Meeting” are inclined to put people off. But I can assure you that the AGM lasts for only one half hour and is all cut and dried.

Let me paint a picture. On Saturday evening in the Conservatory you will arrive to the sound of the bagpipes to be greeted by the President of the IAC, the Hon President of SAM, the Chairman of the IAC (together with their wives), myself as Chairman of SAM and the Vice-Chairman of the IAC. You then enjoy a complimentary drink of wine or a soft drink.

Dress for the men, is either formal, collar and tie, or full kilt outfit. They all look simply splendid. Ladies in their cocktail dresses are elegance personified.

At 7.30 the piper will lead the grand march to the Dining Room where all the guests will find themselves dining at a Scottish Castle.

Following an absolutely mouth-watering three-course meal there are short speeches and presentations. This is followed by a surprise which has been dreamt up by the Committee. You will have to come to find out what it is!

Sunday starts at 10 am with two film competitions - The Mermaid and the Mini Mermaid. They are competitions between the Regions of the IAC including SAM. It is an audience vote so we need your support. Lunch is available if required and in the afternoon we have a talk and film show by Janet McBain, former curator of the Scottish Screen Archive. Janet is a good friend of SAM so you all know how enjoyable her presentations always are.

Saturday and all day Sunday, with bed and breakfast, costs £96 per person and includes tea and coffee breaks, plus £15 for lunch (which is optional). Sunday only is £10, plus £15 for lunch. Please try to come along to this unique event

Phone me on 01738 632761 or e-mail: laura-jane.4389@blueyonder.co.uk

Dorothy

SAM'S FIRST AWARDS COMPETITION

This is the second year for the First Awards Competition. Last year there were nine entries. This year we are hoping for a lot more. There is a DVD of last year's entries in the SAM Library.

Just to remind you - The Competition is open to members of SAM and to members of affiliated clubs or groups who have never won a competition out-with their own club.

The winner shall receive a year's subscription to SAM and a Certificate.

Full rules are attached to the application form which is enclosed with the magazine.

It is known that members of Clubs and full Members are making excellent films for their Club Competitions but for some reason are reluctant to enter the SAM

Competitions. Don't be shy about entering this competition. We all want to see the films which members of other clubs are producing and this competition is open to members of affiliated clubs as well as SAM Members.

The winning film shall be shown on the same day as the 5-Minute competition.

The closing date is 7 January so start choosing your entry now.

Club Secretaries: We are relying on the Club Secretaries to encourage their members to make an entry for this competition. Several copies of the entry form are included and you can photocopy it if required - please do your best.

Dorothy

So that the brand-new SAM printer, with all its super-duper bells and whistles, isn't left idle some eight weeks from now because there isn't enough material to make up the next issue of SAM News – please will you send in a contribution on any subject, however remotely connected with movie-making! This issue has had to be 'stretched' a bit because a week ago not one single story from any SAM member had been received. The deadline for the November/December issue is 17 October – you are going to write something, aren't you? Oh, and pictures are also wanted!

'Thank you' to Stuart Hutcheson

Five years ago the editor of 'SAM News', Peter Heap, had to give up that responsibility due to the demands of a new job. That was a big loss to SAM as his contribution had been invaluable. Finding a successor was no easy matter, especially as Peter also took responsibility for the printing, packaging and posting of each issue, and did so meticulously. The job was therefore very time-consuming and, of course, voluntary. We needed someone to take it on.

Editorship involves a certain skills set - a facility with words, a good eye for illustration and general lay-out, and a lot of DTP and other computer know-how. Add to that, by way of context, knowledge of film-making and of the wider world of films.

The person who immediately stood out as 'ticking the boxes' was Stuart Hutcheson from Perth. He is a natural and spontaneous word-smith; he had previous experience of professional video-making in London. He is a very creative script-writer and innovative in his own film-making. He is computer literate to a high level. And there can't be too many people around who are so imbued with information and insight into the world of films.

At that time, as SAM Chairman, I felt particularly responsible towards the continuation and development of "SAM News". Now, there is a theory that if something needs to be done you should ask a busy person. It's because they volunteer and throw themselves into things that they are so busy in the first place. On that basis I asked Stuart (a self-employed businessman and committed family man) if he would take on the editorship and the printing, and - thank goodness - he agreed.

As is natural in all situations of change (particularly in today's world), Stuart put his own stamp on the job. With desk-top publishing advancing rapidly, Stuart took "SAM News" into full colour and new lay-out. This was possible because he was willing to use his own state-of-the-art equipment. He redefined the editorial rôle by commenting constructively on contributions, interacting with readers by suggesting approaches they might like to follow up, introducing material of his own and opening the door to increased discussion and controversy. There was also a gradual shift in the balance between in-house SAM/IAC-related content and pushing feelers out into the wider world.

Two years ago Stuart took the decision to sell his business and go to Stirling University to study for a degree based (unsurprisingly) on English and media. At that point we were again faced with the challenge of finding a new editor - and we hit the jackpot once more with Craig Lindsay (another very busy person) with his journalistic experience and very particular touches of humour. A sharing of responsibilities was reached whereby Craig took over the editorship while Stuart continued to do the printing.

Very recently SAM agreed that it was time to buy our own printer - and Dorothy Borrie will take up the story from there. My wish here, however, is to make sure that readers are aware of the big contribution Stuart has made to the continuing development (let alone the survival) of "SAM News" and offer him very many thanks on behalf of us all.

Pat Menmuir

SAM PROGRAMME FOR

2011- 2012

Members, Ladies and Gentlemen.....after long deliberations the SAM Committee have concocted a mouth-wateringly tasty, delightfully delicious, and truly delectable menu of events for the rest of 2011 and into 2012. Our chef (Pat Menmuir) recommends - absolutely everything! So put the following dates in your diaries...

18 September 2011

3 pm

ECVS

This is an extra get-together to meet **James Webber** and see his **films**. The meeting has been postponed twice! - once because of illness and then later due to snow storms.

James Webber is an exceptional young film-maker based in West London whose work has impacted forcefully over the past 3 years on the world of non-commercial film-making. He has had successes in Canada and the US, Austria and Estonia as well as diamond awards and special trophies at BIAFF, and his film "Dancer" is part of the British entry for Unica 2011. It is understood that he intends to move into full-time professional film-making in the near future. Nothing surprising about that.



Perhaps from SAM's view-point the important thing to say is that his work is very accessible to everybody. If you enjoy watching gripping and moving stories, this is for you. If you are actively involved in making films you will see outstanding examples of all aspects of your hobby. The structure of his films is an object lesson to us all, but then so is his camera-work, and his use of music which is specially composed for his films, and... and ... Not to be missed.

2 October 2011

3 pm

at ECVS

Time to see the fruits of our labours from Saturday, 7 May at Stirling Management Centre - the **films from this year's SAM Workshop**. Of course, there was much more to it than one day's filming - preparatory work and meetings, follow-up consultation (and even the odd bit of extra filming!) and all the post-production work too.



When you see the completed films, you'll make sense at last of your glimpses of other groups' work (and especially their props!), and all the half-baked explanations circulating.

The actors will be invited to come and eventually a whole other set of view-points will emerge from Brian's film of the day. If you weren't able to be there, please come and be an audience for those who participated, and share in the fun. But let's never forget that it is more than fun - it's an effective opportunity to learn and to practise film-making skills.

After tea - remember SAM teas! - there will be more films to see. When the judges of the SAM Members' Competition last May made up their programme, the shortage of time prevented some entries from inclusion. The judges had however been made aware that the entries would be shown over two meetings and took account of this in their recommendations so that quality programmes would be shown in both April and October.

20 - 24 October 2011 **IAC AGM, hosted
by SAM at Stirling Management Centre**

This big event for SAM is featured elsewhere in the issue. It promises to be quite an occasion though. Why not sign up and enjoy? It may not return here for another 25 years



6 November 2011 **3 pm** **St Nicholas Church Hall,
Lanark**

The Strathclyde Event is, sadly, our only meeting in the west of Scotland. It was designed to encourage people to make Club films - an important way of integrating members in the film-making process, and for some a launching pad towards their own movie-making. Clubs compete for the John Coleman Trophy which is currently held by XDL.

This year's theme is "Out and About". If your club doesn't have an entry this time, please come all the same. Maybe you'll be inspired for next year. Besides all film shows need an audience. If your Club is entering a film, remember that you must have a minimum of 3 Club members present to qualify for taking part in the judging. And - here's an "if only!" - let's try again to entice more SAM members from the west of Scotland to join us for other SAM meetings.

Yes, "if only" they'd come.

4 December 2011 **3 pm** **ECVS**

Tom Hardwick is coming. Mind you, at the time of writing we don't yet know what Tom will talk about, but just remember that he is right at the top of the hierarchy of technical experts in the field of film-making - camcorders, DVD, sound equipment, lighting - you name it.

Right at the top then, fully up to date, and greatly in demand as a speaker and as a judge (who doesn't mince his words!) and as a writer of technical articles both in print and on the internet. You'll



find him, for example, featuring strongly as an adviser on the DVdoctorcommunity forum. And in case you're wondering - yes, he is a skilled film-maker himself, both of original films and also in the field of specialist wedding videos.

Even though we don't yet know the topic of his presentation we can be confident that it will be relevant and enlightening. Let's take the opportunity to bombard him with our questions when we have the chance.

11 December 2011 3 pm Stirling Management Centre

Last year we had to cancel the **SAM Christmas Social event** due to extreme weather conditions, and that was disappointing - in fact, surprising just how disappointing it felt. Better luck in 2011!

It is, as it says in the syllabus, a **social** event, leisurely in pace, undemanding and friendly, but yet structured so that no-one can feel that they are left hanging about without purpose.

Whatever the programme still to be devised, you can be sure that light-hearted and amusing film entertainment will be central. And, by the way, why not bring a partner? S/he might even enjoy it!

Dinner is usually served around 6.30 pm - another Stirling Management Centre quality dinner! This allows us to travel home again relatively early since it is in December. Or, of course, you can book in (in advance) to stay overnight.

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Laminated cards summarising the SAM programme for 2011 - 2012 will be given to paid-up members at the October meeting of SAM. If the above more detailed explanation is useful, the 2012 programme will be similarly summarised in a later edition of SAM News.

WOULD SAYING 'NO' MAKE LIFE EASIER THAN SAYING 'YES'?

Might your camcorder club be diminished in any way if, when faced with a request from a local group to record for posterity what to them is an important event, you said: 'Sorry, no, we are not in a position to help you'? Surely your club's mission statement, or one of the reasons it exists, is to make a record of local events for local organisations so that many years into the future the latest generations can look back at how we did things now? Most clubs probably do leap into action and happily accept the task of filming a gala, or a concert, or some other significant bit of local history.

But after two experiences so far this year alone, personally I am not quite sure what my response will be if ever asked again! Right now, I think I would run the proverbial mile from any project, however innocuous it sounded. And here is the reason why...

In February our club agreed to film a stage production of a musical, called 'Disco Inferno'. Some weeks afterwards I was referring to it as 'Disco Infernal' for reasons which will become clear in the next few sentences. The plan was simple (yes, there was a plan) and it involved attending the dress rehearsal so we – the three club members who volunteered to do the shoot – could get an idea of what

it was all about. Fine. At the end of the rehearsal we spoke to the director and producer and said we were happy with what we had seen and, come the show over the next three nights, please, please, impress on everyone in the cast to ensure they wore the same clothes and hit the same spots on the stage in exactly the same places every night. This was because for logistical reasons none of the three of us could be together on any of the nights of the show, so we knew we would end up having tapes of different performances. Stitching them together would be a breeze, child's-play, provided the youngsters stuck rigidly to their well-rehearsed routines.

After the run – to sell-out support – I collected our tapes together, loaded them into the computer – and on playing them discovered that on each night the leading characters, and some of the chorus, wore slightly different costumes. Nothing startling, a different shirt, a different jacket, a different skirt. But enough to mean cutting between them was going to be, well, awkward. If not impossible.

Then, as I went through the shots, I discovered more differences. Simple things, too, but just as awkward to use during switches from any of the three

different camera positions. One instance – disco owner during performance one throws the bar towel over his left shoulder during an important part of the scene – and over his right shoulder on the next performance. Between these sorts of details it all added up to a nightmare of continuity.

But, we're not finished. Our troubles with the continuity proved to be nothing compared to working in the material from one of the camcorders – a super-duper High Definition job. My version of Premiere could not, would not, play with miniDV and HD content. Owner of said HD machine – his pride and joy – went home and made a copy on to a miniDV tape.

Problem solved? No. The sound and vision were not in synch. Over the next couple of weeks (or was it a month? It felt like years...) John made copy after copy from the HD original, and we found things such as, if the picture quality was excellent it was never in synch with the sound, or if we got pictures and sound in synch then the picture quality was reminiscent of a 10th-generation VHS tape!

We persisted because the HD camera was the one we used to get the punchy close-ups of the cast, to mix in with the wide and medium views from the other two cameras.

To keep the youth theatre people happy we provided a DVD made without the close-ups and they seem

reasonably satisfied with it. But it's not what we set out to produce, so...

Eventually we got something from the HD source that was acceptable. Now all I have to do is go back into the original edit, four months on, and try to stitch in the missing close-ups. That is, if I can work up the enthusiasm to tackle a subject, the attraction of which has long worn off! I will, of course, but maybe, just perhaps, not right now.

The other bit of the story concerns the club accepting the 'invitation' of our local Royal Naval Association branch to make a record of their Diamond Jubilee weekend. It seemed, like the theatre show, pretty straightforward. Cover the dinner, speeches and a dance on the Saturday evening, and the wreath-laying ceremony, the church service, and the march-past of their flags in Inverkeithing on the Sunday morning.

The dinner was relatively easy, but because the RNA branch wanted every word of the speakers it meant some fancy camerawork to try to make sure this part of the proceedings wasn't too dull. Afterwards, the dance session produced very poor video because the lighting was almost non-existent and my Sony VX2000, which usually can get decent pictures given just a few candles, struggled to cope.

Come Sunday, the wreath-laying went off with no bother, and the church service seemed ok. It wasn't until we looked at the footage on screen from the

three cameras, and listened to the sound on big speakers, that the flaw became apparent – the camcorder we had set up near the pulpit to act as the main static shot-gatherer and to be the principal soundtrack, had picked up a beaut of a whine right through the tape. It was clearly audible at all times except during the singing of the hymns when the sheer volume of sound drowned it out! We think it was caused by interference from the church sound amplification system, something which never crossed our minds to check when setting up – but we will in the future, if ever we do the same kind of thing again!

All you sound experts out there will be thinking, use a notch filter and the whine is no more than a memory...wrong! If some SAM member would like to give me some lessons, I will be all ears, as no matter what was tried the whine stubbornly refused to lie down and die. So for the 45 minutes of the service I juggled three soundtracks until eventually I found a balance that was acceptable.

The piece de resistance of Sunday's proceedings was the parading of the standards. All the Navy people had to do was line up, march 200 yards to the town square where the VIPs would be on the saluting dais, and march another 200 yards to the Civic Centre for a well-deserved lunch. The first spots of rain began to fall as the standards and their bearers, and the rest of the participants in the parade, assembled outside the church. By the time John Davis and I had

run to the saluting base every particle of rain within a hundred miles was aiming itself at Inverkeithing High Street.

Within seconds we were filming in a deluge of Biblical proportions! Cannyly, John had thought to bring a big broolly. While it had crossed my mind there might be a chance of the weather being wet, all I had done was stuff a bit of clingfilm in my pocket – but it provided no protection for the old Sony. For all the difference the clingfilm made I might as well have dunked the camera in a bath. Amazingly the old VX is still working, albeit that the two tally lights come on when the power is switched on, and they stay on regardless until the power is switched off again!

What made up for the soaking was the last shot John Davis got of the parade going out of sight down the hill towards the Civic Centre – on this long telephoto shot the bottom third of the picture is obscured by the rain bouncing some 18 inches in the air, giving the effect that the marchers were slowly sinking into the veil of water! Funnily enough, at that point, the rain stopped as if someone had turned a tap off.

At the time of writing, and a month gone since we handed over copies of the DVD, we still haven't heard whether or not the client liked the result...

So perhaps now you will understand the introduction to this tale of woe. And now I must go and find some bits and pieces and make a proper rain cover for my porous old Sony!

The Best Laid Schemes...



Throughout the last 50 years I have been involved in organizing many different functions and have always felt that the secret was good planning and attention to detail. But I still have nightmares about one function which went badly a-gley.

It was brought back to me when we toured the Stirling Management Centre recently in connection with the forthcoming IAC AGM. We expect to have 120 people having short tea/coffee breaks on the Sunday in a room 10 mins from the bedrooms. I checked the cubicles - 8 - oh Dear, the disaster came flooding back!

It was about 1965 when it was decided by the staff of Perth & Kinross Council to hold a barn dance in an isolated barn outside Perth. It was meticulously planned - the Young Farmers were having a Barn Dance the night before and we were able to use their chairs and dance floor and book their caterers and band. We arranged entertainment through an agency - Peter Morrison, the well-known Scottish singer, and a warm-up act recommended by the agency.

We decided to include the food in the price of the ticket so the caterers could bring the right amount of food (no wastage) and we bought a supply of small sausage-shaped balloons for a competition for the best animal made from these balloons. We hired two port-a-loos as those hired by the Young Farmers were not available. We sold about a hundred tickets. What could possibly go wrong!

Firstly the band of five arrived, along with an entourage of wives, sisters, aunts and second-cousins twice-removed. As they had no tickets there was no food for them! There were complaints that the dance floor was sticky and I went to the nearest pub looking for something to shine it up, only to be overhead by a group of youths who rounded up their friends and gate-crashed the dance. There was no food for them either. Peter Morrison turned up but not the warm-up man - As Peter was in a hurry we put him on first and he was very good. The warm-up man went on last and he was terrible. He completely spoiled the earlier enjoyment.

When we judged the animal competition there were red faces all round as some people (I blame the gatecrashers) had made rather rude animals with these sausage balloons!

But the toilets were the worst nightmare. It was soon clear than one single toilet was not enough for the ladies, so we had to give them both toilets. We found some buckets lying about and put them round the side and rear of the barn for the men! Earlier in the day the men from the Committee had dug a hole beside the toilets. Every so often they had to empty the tanks from the toilets into this hole - they also had to collect and empty the buckets! They had a rota system, but it was not a pleasant evening.

The next morning we had to go back and tidy up the barn, stack the chairs etc. and fill in the hole. We all agreed - no more barn dances. It is hoped that all goes well at the IAC function but - the best laid schemes...?

Anon.



SAM has a new printer - please make sure it gets lots and lots of articles to print!

As Pat says elsewhere in this edition, we have been obliged and grateful to Stuart for printing out SAM News despite his heavy schedule. Clearly this could not continue.

Fortunately, two good things happened earlier this year - firstly Peter Heap took part-time retirement and offered to assist in the printing and distribution of SAM News and he not only had received a special offer on a ink-jet colour printer, but in addition the company was offering £130 cash-back.

We have had to buy a supply of ink and paper, which will put up the initial cost, but the printer will pay for itself over the years. In addition, we are able to make use of it for printing the information booklet for the IAC AGM, which is a bonus.

It takes a great deal of work to produce this magazine and we all look forward to receiving. Craig will continue as Editor, while Peter will do the printing and distribution. It is sensible to share the workload. However, there will be no magazine if members don't contribute articles and photographs.

We are fortunate to have two willing and expert volunteers - please do your best to assist them.

Dorothy Borrie



The Film & Video Institute

**National AGM
Weekend
Including the
Mermaid and
Mini-Mermaid Competitions**

20th - 23rd October 2011

Spectacular

Amazing

Magnificent

Experience



THE SCOTTISH REEL

Hosted by

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