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PANORAMA

OF AMATEUR FILM & VIDEO

SUR LE FILM ET VIDEO

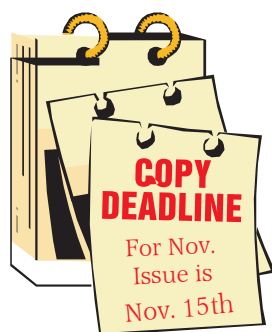


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NOTE
VACANCIES!

ANY
VOLUNTEERS?

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE



Photo by Joseph Bochsler Jr.

Fred Briggs, FSCCA

Late again! But it *has* been a busy month. Once the Convention was over, there were many details that had to be finished up, and there was also all that yard work that had been neglected.

Since our last PANORAMA went out and we came home from Ottawa, we've paid the bills for the convention, caught up on posting some back issues for public consumption on our web pages, and once this goes out it'll be time to post the May Issue!

We've also updated all the Club Contacts as best we could. A Representative of every SCCA Affiliated Club was contacted to confirm or correct the details, but only a few responded, and most of those informed us of a lot of changes. It seems obvious that the clubs don't notify us when there is a change regarding the state of their newsletter, or their web site, or even a change of personnel, or phone number, or email, and would you believe it, Meeting Place! Please try to keep us up-to-date. We're trying to help you reach new prospective members!

And speaking of a disappointing response, only a handful of our members bothered to send in their Proxy, and since fewer SCCA Members seemed able to attend a Convention in Ottawa, instead of the Hamilton area, we needed all the help we could get. If a few of the Executive hadn't gone around to Club Meetings, with pen and spare proxies in hand, we wouldn't have collected enough to enable us to legally hold the AGM, a requisite to continuing our Corporate Status, let alone our Charitable Organization designation! We'd be defunct before you got to read this.

The Amateur Movie Maker Association (AMMA), formerly Society of Amateur Videomakers and Cinematographers (SAVAC), and formerly Society of Amateur

Cinematographers (SAC) threw in the towel this past Summer, and I have it on very good authority that the problems were a declining interest on the part of their members, and their reluctance to serve on the Board! And how's your club doing?

If you have any concerns about the survival of your own home club you'll find some interesting news in the Club News, where you'll read that the Toronto club, once one of the strongest in Canada and perhaps North America, is actively considering their future – To Be Or Not To Be – while the London Club reports an interesting move on their part that may give them a new lease on life! And be sure to read Thom's extended version of that story on [Page 16](#).

Then ask yourself if you could do more for your own club. Can you serve on the Board or Executive? Do you make all the meetings, or just a few now and then when it's most convenient? Could you do more?

And while you're thinking about pitching in, please give some thought to helping out with the SCCA. Keith has Presented or mailed out all the SCCA Awards and Certificates, but he'd certainly like to see more entries. Make a film for the Contest, and it will help your own club, too. Jon Soyka wound up the 2009 CIAFF in September and has sent out those Trophies and Certificates, but the CIAFF also needs more entries to make it all worth the work. Thom is carrying a big load as SCCA Secretary, Honours Chairman, the Reporter for Club News and Membership Chairman. We have a possible candidate for the latter position who has been considering it for a few months, but Thom has asked us to find a replacement for him for Club News.

Last year two members of the SCCA Executive, Video Librarian Stella Magic and Secretary Sandy Whitehouse, retired after several years service. Now our PANORAMA Editor, Joan Bochsler, has been forced to retire because of her health. Can you help out?

Instead of meeting monthly, we now meet quarterly. Attendance at these Executive Meetings isn't mandatory, depending on the position occupied. The President, Treasurer, and Secretary must attend, so they're held in Stoney Creek, which is a little tough on Thom, who lives in London! But we've come to realize that in this day and age, much of our business can be conducted by email and telephone, so living outside Ontario doesn't exclude you.

If you can't take on a regular responsibility on the SCCA Executive, how about helping out in various ways on a part time basis?

You'll notice another article by our Western Vice President, David Fuller, on

[Page 15](#), and another by a new SCCA Member, John Cook, on [Page 13](#). (While you may be tempted to skip over it because you can't afford to buy a Steadycam, don't miss it, because there's a lot of good information about the art of movie making in it!)

Could you submit an article occasionally? Maybe two or three each year? Maybe a regular column (which isn't limited to one column)? Maybe even take over Club News so Thom can have more time for his Internet Articles and other items?

There are other ways you can contribute, too. You can notify us when the information on the Club Contact Page (or your own) needs to be corrected! You can talk up the SCCA to others, whether you're in a club or not! Don't you know someone who might be a good prospective Member? Send him or her to one of our web sites (sccaonline.ca and ciaff.info are the most permanent, and a lot easier than trying to explain to someone that horrible s-c-c-a.ca URL). Direct a video maker to the PANORAMA Page so they can see the back issues. Show them the Music Library. Encourage them to submit a video (or a few) to our Annual Contest. Help us grow. It's easier than stopping people from passing away!

Oh, and there's one more thing some of you could do. Two Club Memberships, three Family Memberships, and twenty-one Individual Memberships are IN ARREARS! Fees were due on June 1st, and are now almost five months overdue. We hate to lose you, so I'll ask Thom to send you another email, so you know I'm talking here directly to you!

After that harangue, I'd like to change the subject. The Ottawa Film and Video Makers are to be congratulated on the fine job they did hosting, organizing, and running the 2009 Convention. The SCCA Executive usually chooses the site, makes all or at least, most, of the preparations, invites the Speakers, etc., and when it's held somewhere other than Hamilton (Kitchener, Brantford, London, Port Stanley, etc.) many inspection visits are necessary.

But none of us went in advance to Ottawa – the Ottawa club did everything, and even provided their own Master of Ceremonies, etc. It's a small club, and we understand that many of them contributed, but special thanks must go to two of their Members, Bob Bayne and Wayne Schaler, who carried much of the load. A BIG THANK YOU!

And thanks also to Thom Speechley and Keith Gloster, from the SCCA Executive, and especially to Jim Small who brought and set up so much equipment and ran it all for two full days and evenings. Thanks guys! ■

CLUB NEWS

By Thom Speechley FSCCA



By the time you read this, most clubs will have launched their programs for a new year of activities. I note, with pleasure that a few clubs are actually growing, despite predictions earlier this year that our hobby was doomed!

BRANT VIDEO MAKERS

Brant Camcorder News editor, Dan Kennaley

The Brant club's June meeting featured a showing of the video "Bowlation", by Terry Kittridge and Joe Blake.

The event, involving participants with various physical handicaps, was shot at a fundraiser for the Special Olympics. Other videos shown were "The Longest Day" by Dan Kennaley, "The Blue Camaro" by Alex Szatmary, "Guy's Guide to the Kitchen" by Ron Jacob of the London Videography Club, "Caledonia Fair" by Joe Bochsler and "Tiny Geometries" by Don Bradley. The September newsletter contains a plea from President Dan Kennaley to consider the appointment/election of a new president. Dan also suggests that the new year begin with a serious study of how membership might be increased. As a possible way to make the club more attractive, he also suggests the raising of sufficient funds to purchase a large screen HiDef television set to better display club videos.

BUFFALO VIDEO-MOVIE MAKERS

"Camerama" editor Chris Sciolli

Several club members met on an informal basis during the summer, when the club is usually inactive. In July a group met in front of Emil Novak's store, "Antiques World", and held an impromptu sidewalk sale to raise funds for the club. In August, a planned trip to the Niagara Gorge was rained out but the day was saved by a guided tour of the Niagara Power Project. The September meeting was held in a new location, the "My Tomato Pie" restaurant. Several videos were shown, including shorts from this summer's "Buffalo 48 hour Film Contest". "The first was the extremely entertaining, 'Graveyard Shirt' by Reed Rankin and Associates and won best Camera work and Script.

The second short was Ollagnod and Buffalo Nickel Productions', 'Mary's Christmas,' written by Donna Marie Vaughan and won the award for Best Acting." Short sections from 'works in progress', by Chuck Amadori and Emil Novak were also shown. Both are very ambitious projects and are supported by several club members. Jon Soyka showed two international short features from Switzerland and England. A new club contest was announced by Terry Kimmel, "The Found Footage

Contest". Members will be given pre-shot footage and must then make a short feature to be shown at the January meeting.

HAMILTON VIDEO/FILM MAKERS

Reel News, editor Dave Stewart



Paul Francescutti with his mother who was a guest.

Photo by Joe Bochsler

Guest speaker at the August meeting was producer, director, filmmaker Paul Francescutti. Paul, Hamilton born, is very widely traveled. His presentation included an examination of his camera case, with a running commentary about how all the equipment he carries is usually necessary in remote locations. He held the attention of the meeting for almost two hours, ending with a showing of his production, the 24 minute film "Remote Access: Distant Libraries of The World".

Later during the meeting, member Robert Prince showed his production "If I Known Then". The six-minute production revolved around people going into the future to see how their lives will develop and maybe how they can change their lives. Of course not everything turns out as expected.

It's worth mentioning that of the 44 people who attended the August meeting, eleven were potential new members. We look forward to further news of the Hamilton club's good fortune.

Featured speaker at the September meeting was Jacqueline Norton, Manager, Film & Television Office, Economic Development & Real Estate Division, Planning & Economic Development.

opment Department, City of Hamilton. **Phew!!** What a handle. But it seems that Hamilton, like many Canadian cities (see: SCCA 2009 Convention report elsewhere in this issue) is cashing in on the opportunity to make locations available, at a price, for film and video producers. While the rules and conditions imposed by municipal offices will probably have little effect on amateur filmmakers, it is important to be aware that some conditions do apply when shooting in public. Following the guest presentation, six member's videos were shown, including work by Dan Copeland, Harold Cosgrove, Ken Davy, Alex Szatmary and two films by Rick Doelle.

INSTITUTE OF AMATEUR CINEMATOGRAPHERS (IAC)

Film and Videomaker editor, Garth Hope

The October issue of FV magazine contains several articles intended to help people cope with the very rapid shift to HiDef video and 16:9 screen format. Jim Closs "pitied" the beginner who has to wade through the many options for HiDef format, flash memory, tape or (H)ard(D)isk(D)rive recording. Then the questions of editing software and will my computer handle any HiDef format? Do I jump into "BlueRay" or burn HiDef to SD DVDs? It's a jungle out there. Lee Prescott offers a thoughtful article on the ultimate question, what is the best archival storage method? Tom Hardwick takes on the problem of selecting a screen ratio for making film transfers watchable in 16:9 format. And just to confuse things further, in the NLE Group discussion, moderated by Colin James, there doesn't seem to be a simple way to guarantee getting image files (JPEG etc.) onto a Premiere timeline. All these issues illustrate the value of publications like the IAC journal and demonstrate the potential value of video clubs.

LONDON VIDEOGRAPHY CLUB



Photo by Bill Dow

The London club is trying something different in order to attract more potential members. President Kim Brown has proposed that we take advantage of the current phenomenon in digital technology which places still photographers and video makers on an equal footing. Today's still cameras have very good video capabilities and camcorders take excellent still pictures. This 'convergence' of technology seems to be the wave of the future, so why shouldn't we try to encourage both 'schools' of photographic art to meet together? This year's schedule includes a 'still' photography feature and a 'video' component at each meeting. In September two members reviewed their personal choices for mak-

ing hi-def video on standard definition DVDs. The programs Adobe Premiere and Sony Vegas were demonstrated. The second half of the meeting featured a demonstration and review of the new 'megazoom' still camera from Canon, the XS10 IS.

Both presentations were very well received and it should be noted that SIX new members, who were attracted by this concept in a promo blitz at local libraries, were signed up. The October meeting, which attracted **two more** new members, followed the same pattern. The first part dealt with free software for video available on the Internet and the second half was a demonstration slide show of stills prepared by Doug Taplin using the program "ProShow Gold". This dual subject concept may be working since nobody left after the first half of either meeting. We will have to see what happens at subsequent meetings.

SACRAMENTO AMATEUR MOVIE MAKERS

From the club's website - <http://www.samm.netfirms.com/>

The August club meeting had to be cancelled due to a low number of members being available at that time. The September 10th meeting will welcome Rick Daprato and his family and will cover details of the Saturday September 12th shoot at the Stockton Rural Cemetery. Rick and his son will be principal actors in the club's feature production "The Midas Sack of Flour".

TORONTO FILM AND VIDEO CLUB

TFVC Newsletter editor Josephine Black

The annual banquet and awards night was held September 26th at a local "Mandarin" restaurant. Certificates and trophies were awarded for seven contest entries. Top winner with five awards, was Richard Ogner, for his single entry, "My Favourite Place". Other awards went to Ben Andrews, Dennis Hemery, Stella Magic, Marilyn Reid and Josephine Black.

The club's Annual General Meeting will be held November 10th. At that time the future of the club will be decided based on a count of ballots, already issued, regarding in what form, if any, the club will continue to operate. This is a very unfortunate turn of events, considering the length of time the club has been in existence. I'm sure everyone wishes for the best outcome of this serious issue.

WINNIPEG AMATEUR MOVIE AND VIDEO CLUB

Bulletin editors, Wallace and Jeanette Robertson

The October edition of the Bulletin announces the forthcoming club season and reviews the very successful annual picnic held at the past season's closing in June. Apparently a group of intellectually challenged young people shared the picnic area and some of the younger people joined in the games arranged by the club. Both Jeanette Robertson and president Al Ross reported that this was a very rewarding encounter. This issue of the bulletin also contains a reprint of an article by freelance writer Pat Agar who, in salvaging family pictures after a damaging flood, relives some precious moments while cleaning and restoring the pictures. A valuable comment on how important those old family photos really are. ■

2009 Annual General Meeting MINUTES

Report on the 2009 Convention

By Thom Speechley

Minutes of the Society of Canadian Cine Amateurs held at the RA Center, Ottawa ON September 12, 2009. The meeting was called to order at 10:30 am by the president, Fred Briggs.

Members Present: Ben Andrews, Fred and Carolyn Briggs, Reinhard Buehling, Ken and Iris Davy, Keith Gloster, Evelyn and Nestor Rosa, Jim Small, and Thom Speechley,

Guests: Bob and Kay Bayne, Roch Brunette, Ching Chang, David French, Helen Gruber, Bernard Major, Christine McGregor, David McGregor, Connie Nozzonillo, Gregori Robinson, Wayne and Faye Schaler, Shawn Sutherland, Chris Swan, and Lionel Wagner.

Welcome: Fred Briggs welcomed all present and announced that we had sufficient members in attendance and proxies to comprise a quorum.

Minutes of the 2008 Annual General Meeting had been previously distributed among members and Ken Davy moved their acceptance. The motion was seconded by Jim Small and carried.

Financial Reports: Financial statements and the Auditor's Report, also supplied to attending members, were reviewed by Fred Briggs. He pointed out differences from the previous year as affected by changes in membership, contest entry numbers and the elimination of a printed version of Panorama. These changes have resulted in a net gain in our year end balances. As a result, the SCCA is in a better position to subsidize the CIAFF if necessary. Ben Andrews moved acceptance of the report which was seconded by Nestor Rosa and carried.

Membership: Thom Speechley presented a report which shows that compared with September 18 2008, Individual and Family memberships are down by a total of seven members. Honourary and Life Members are down by a total of five through normal attrition. On the positive side, we have gained two new clubs and four individual members from the recently disbanded AMMA.

SCCA Contest: Keith Gloster reported that despite last minute efforts, again, only 23 entries were received for the contest. Four of the entries were shown in two categories, resulting in a total of 27. He expressed concerns about our ability to sustain the competition with this apparent decline in interest. Nevertheless he does note a marked improvement in the overall quality of amateur entries. And finally, Keith made a plea to those attending to encourage their fellow club members to become more involved. Jim Small moved acceptance of the report which was seconded by Ben Andrews and carried.

Fred Briggs reported that our PANORAMA Editor, Joan Bochsler, needs to retire as her health is failing, but is reluctant to leave us in a lurch, and two other members of the Executive have also retired. Fred concluded the meeting with a call for volunteers to participate in SCCA affairs by accepting vacant positions on the Board. Carolyn moved that the meeting be closed.

The meeting was closed at 11 AM.

Thom Speechley, Recording Secretary

The 2009 convention was held on September 12 and 13th at the RA Centre in Ottawa. The centre is a very large complex, described at its website as: *The Recreation Association, or the RA Centre as it is more commonly referred to, is the largest private recreation and leisure facility in the Country. The RA offers an extensive range of sports, recreation, fitness and leisure for individuals of all ages.* The facilities were well suited to our needs and members of the Ottawa club, who acted as host, had made arrangements with the centre to accommodate our planned agenda.



The Saturday morning program began with a welcome to members and guests by Fred Briggs who, after a brief explanation of the status of SCCA, called the meeting to order and opened the Annual General Meeting. Following this essential business session, our first speakers were introduced.

Roch Brunette and Bernard Major operate a not-for-profit organization called the "Gatineau Film and Television Development Corporation". Roch explained how their works with the city administration to obtain licenses, arrange shooting, handle liability concerns for any film or TV company who wants to shoot in Ottawa or Gatineau for their production. Roch mentioned that many public spaces have been closed off to cut through the possible interruption. Roch mentioned that individuals or small groups probably do not apply but anyone filming in a public place should be aware of any other restrictions and use common sense.



The next speaker was Professor Randy Dash of Algonquin College School of Media Design. Randy talked about the facilities and programs his students use and briefly described a few of their current projects.

David French, a Patent Agent, was the first of two speakers who talked about "Questions of Copyright" during the convention. This is currently a hot topic since Canada's own laws and rules are under revision and more people are looking for guidance when dealing with other people's 'intellectual property'.



David pointed out that it is important to understand the differences between Canadian and USA regulations when considering the use of commercial materials. An important but little known distinction, used only in Canadian law is one's "Moral Right" in reference to a work they have created. This means that even if you give away or sell the right to "copy" a work, this does not give the buyer or recipient the right to alter, mutilate or distort the work in any negative way. David also talked about the photographer or videographer's rights when shooting in public. Two printed summaries of David's remarks were handed out at the end of the meeting.



Video editor and instructor Thomas Leroux next showed and demonstrated a unique hard drive storage device, the Direct-to-Edit "FireStore FS100". This device, about the size of a small still camera, connects through "Firewire" to a Panasonic hi-def camcorder and supplements or replaces the camera's memory card. This extends the storage (shooting time) by about nine times. Tom also showed us a sample "Drobo" cabinet, which stores multi hard drives and is accessible through IEEE1394 or USB2. A high performance array of two or more disks would be the ideal solution for video editing.

Fred Briggs introduced the SCCA music library by demonstrating the use of the Internet to access and sample our vast collection. He explained how paid-up members of SCCA can obtain useful tracks for their productions after hearing the samples at our website.

The final guest speaker of the day was Lois Seigel, filmmaker, director, musician, Professor and all around talented woman in the visual arts. Lois described how she managed to stay involved in the many projects and activities listed at her [website](#). She also showed clips from some of her productions, including "Stunt People", about the



Fournier family of stunt drivers and actors.



Following dinner, the evening was devoted to a showing of winners and other entries in the 2009 SCCA competition. A special guest was the winner of the 'Novice Class', Hannah Steed who made the delightful production, "Hannah and Her

Aquatic Friends", is shown here with her proud Grandfather, Bob Bayne of the Ottawa Club.

On Sunday the meeting resumed at 10AM following the registration of new attendees. Fred Briggs demonstrated the audio SFX available to SCCA Members and also demonstrated the program, "Atmosphere", which allows video makers (or the SCCA Music Librarian, for them) to create their own ambient sound backgrounds, including natural and man made effects.

Wayne Schaler, an Ottawa club executive and owner of "Cinereal Pro Video" productions provided some helpful tips on setting up and shooting for chroma key.



Our next speaker was Dr. David Martin, a



nuclear physicist who operates D J Films-Multimedia, Inc. His presentation demonstrated how he creates videos entirely by computer using various 3D and compositing programs.

Samples of his work can be seen in "QuickTime" format at his [website](#). Following lunch, Dr. Martin's second presentation concerned the restoration and enhancement of old films.

Several techniques were demonstrated for removing visual defects and adding special effects that might not have been available at the time the original film was created. He used an amateur "James Bond" type of production to show how additional action and drama can be created, adding new life to an older production.



Steve Johnson, a musician and "Event Producer" explained the difficulties involved in arranging entertainment events and the diverse and demanding individuals who have to be accommodated. His presentation was titled "Making Everyone Happy". He

passed on a few tips that could be helpful to video producers during event filming.

Shawn Sutherland is a professional "Steadicam©" operator. He demonstrated the latest version of this widely used tool, the "Artemis Pro Steadicam".





Klaus Pohl, Associate Professor and Undergraduate Supervisor at Carleton University School of Journalism and Communications spoke about the manner in which the subjects of copyright and privacy are treated in his classes. He offered added insight to the problems for photographers and filmmakers discussed on the previous day by David French.



Fred Briggs wrapped up the afternoon's events with a demonstration of the latest features of the music creation program, "Band-in-a Box".

Following a break for dinner, most of the day's attendees returned for a showing of selected winners in the CIAFF competition. For many in the audience, it was their first exposure to the quality of CIAFF entries and we heard several favourable comments regarding the films. At the end of the evening, the Ottawa Club was again thanked for their valuable support. ■



All Convention Photos
Nestor Rosa





SCCA ANNUAL VIDEO COMPETITION

CLASS "A" ADVANCED THE BETTY PETERSON MEMORIAL TROPHY

WINNER
TRADITIONS...THOSE DAMN SCHOOLS
HUGH DIMALINE

FIRST RUNNER-UP
THE IMMIGRANT
ALEX SATMARY

SECOND RUNNER-UP
FRENCH CHEESE
ALEX SATMARY

THIRD RUNNER-UP
FROM RAILS TO SAILS
MARGARET CHAMBERLAIN

HONORABLE MENTION
THE ART OF MUMS
DAN COPELAND

HONORABLE MENTION
DEMONS OF MISS BEASLEY
DAN COPELAND

HONORABLE MENTION
**TRADITIONS...THE DRUMS AND
THE DANCE**
HUGH DIMALINE

CLASS "B" INTERMEDIATE THE TORONTO FILM & VIDEO TROPHY

WINNER
GOOD TRADE
OTTAWA FILM AND VIDEO CLUB

FIRST RUNNER-UP
WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD
MILA WERBIK

SECOND RUNNER-UP
EDZNA-MAYAN RUINS
REINHARD BUEHLING

CLASS "C" NOVICE THE EUMIG TROPHY

WINNER
HANNAH AND HER AQUATIC FRIENDS
HANNAH STEEDS

CLASS "D" CLUBS' BEST VIDEO
THE GARLICK TROPHY

WINNER

GIN & TONIC

VICTORIA VIDEO CLUB

FIRST RUNNER-UP

**THE CASE OF THE MUSICAL
PHONE CALL**

OTTAWA FILM AND VIDEO CLUB

SECOND RUNNER-UP

URBAN SPELUNKING

HAMILTON VIDEO/FILM MAKERS

THIRD RUNNER-UP

**DAO-MING FINDS A
MISSING MOTHER**

ROBERT BAYNE

HONORABLE MENTION

NUTTIN FOR CHRISTMAS

OTTAWA FILM AND VIDEO CLUB

CLASS "E" - COMPULSORY THEME
THE INTERCITIES TROPHY

WINNER

URBAN SPELUNKING

HAMILTON VIDEO/FILM MAKERS

FIRST RUNNER-UP

GOOD TRADE

OTTAWA FILM AND VIDEO CLUB

CLASS "F" - SCRIPT
THE SCCA AWARD

WINNER

BUG OFF

DAVID FULLER

FIRST RUNNER-UP

**THE LADY WITH THE RED HORNED
RIMMED GLASSES**
LAWRENCE GAUM

SPECIAL AWARDS

THE SCCA TROPHY FOR
BEST EDITING IN CONTEST
TRADITIONS...THOSE DAMN SCHOOLS
HUGH DIMALINE

THE SCCA TROPHY FOR
BEST USE OF SOUND
HIGHWAY OF HEROES
DAN COPELAND

THE SCCA TROPHY FOR
BEST VISUAL EFFECTS
URBAN SPELUNKING
DAN COPELAND

THE SCCA TROPHY FOR
MOST HUMOROUS
THE IMMIGRANT
ALEX SZATMARY

THE SCCA TROPHY FOR
MOST ORIGINAL ENTRY
CAT-CAN
ALEX SZATMARY

ADAM HOUSTON SPECIAL AWARD
BEST DIALOGUE
GIN & TONIC
VICTORIA VIDEO CLUB
(MARGARET CHAMBERLAIN)

THE SCCA TROPHY FOR
BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY
**SPRING FESTIVAL IN
LEITZHON CHINA**
BEN ANDREWS

THE SCCA TROPHY FOR
BEST SCENARIO VIDEO
**THE CASE OF THE MUSICAL
PHONE CALL**
OTTAWA FILM AND VIDEO CLUB

THE BEN ANDREW'S TROPHY
BEST ENTRY IN THE CONTEST
TRADITIONS...THOSE DAMN SCHOOLS
HUGH DIMALINE

AMATEUR MOVIE CAPITAL OF CANADA
HAMILTON, ONTARIO

Get the Shot!

By Fred Briggs

In this column in the July issue of PANORAMA, I gave some details about a cheap little HD Camcorder, the Jazz HDV178 and some of the surprising uses I had found for it. The last thing I write for PANORAMA is usually the President's Message, and having a little space left over, I started to tell you about a mini-catastrophe that hit my neighbourhood, though I use the term very loosely as a few inches of water in a basement don't cut it compared with Winnipeg, or Katrina! I ran out of space before I completed the story, so I thought I should finish it up now.

We occasionally get a little water on the basement floor, just a trickle, when we have a very heavy rain, and we can always handle it with a few towels on the floor as there is a cement trench around the perimeter that leads the water down to the storm drain. This time it was more severe, and I noticed that the bottom end of the camera was in shallow water as it hung suspended by the balloons. I quickly picked it up and moved it to one of those plastic cartons (from a dairy?) with an open mesh on the bottom and all around that held the bottom of the camcorder half an inch off the floor.

But very soon the water rose to ankle deep and I was running around moving all kinds of things to a higher position, and somewhere in the confusion I grabbed the strings of the balloons and moved them all higher. The water was bubbling up hard from the storm drain, backing up from the storm sewer out on the street.

I had more things to worry about than that cheap little camcorder, and I assumed that if I didn't turn it on in any way, it would dry out in a few days and be OK.

That didn't happen!

I told you in the last issue that this model wouldn't be on the market long, and new and better, and cheaper, models were coming out all the time, but I had little hope of finding another that would just fit into the Fuji Underwater Housing I had left over from my days of film, so I went looking for the exact same model.

I finally found one (three, actually) where I had bought the first one, so I jumped on it. I consoled myself that I would now have a

backup battery, a second charger, and the little case for my belt, etc., so I was very surprised when the battery supplied in a sealed plastic envelope packed tightly with every other item in the sealed box, was much too thick to go into this camcorder, or the old, drowned camcorder. Luckily I still had the old battery and it works very nicely with this camera.

So if you find one, or buy another of the same class, beware, and hang on to all the packing material until you're sure that you won't have to return it!

Anyway, I've used the replacement for recording primarily the sound at a couple of lectures, just like I did with the first one. I sometimes want to record an illustrated talk, usually a slide show or a PowerPoint Presentation, by an expert, not for use directly in my history video, but as a research aid. I always ask for permission from the speaker first, and the President of the Historical Society that has invited the expert to speak (they're usually introducing a new history book they have written) and I've never been turned down. I set up two Camcorders at the back of the room, on tripods, so I can shoot over the heads of the audience and move easily back and forth from camcorder to camcorder, adjusting the aim and focal length as needed so that I always have a good shot on one of the camcorders. The JAZZ is set up on a monopod fitted with small tripod feet in front of the front row, very close to Carolyn so it won't spoil anybody's view of either the speaker or the screen.

The JAZZ points continuously at the screen to record the slides, and the camera is much closer to the Speaker than are the two at the back of the room, so I get some good sound that I can sync to my better footage if I wish, and I have a good record of all the pictures so I can later go to the Speaker and ask him for the source of any shot that I really need, or at least, want. If I later want to include any of his comments to augment those he gave me in the past in an earlier interview or shooting session, usually on location, I'll ask him for permission to use that bit specifically, and I've got video,

sound, and a record of the shot about which he was speaking.

Mention of PowerPoint reminds me of my most recent use of this procedure. A couple of weeks ago, when one of the most well informed, cooperative, and generous speakers I have ever tapped for my video gave a lecture at the Head-of-the-Lake Historical Society in Hamilton. His name is Walter Lewis, and if you have any interest in the history of anything to do with the Great Lakes, you should visit [his web site!](#)

In the [Spring 2008 PANORAMA](#), in my column ([Get Make Fake The Shot](#) in that iteration) on Page 11, in a little box outlined on the third column, I said *TIP: when I first started this project, back in the days of VHS Tape and crash editing, I found that if I 'panned' across a post card of a ferry, with stationary waves, I produced a tracking shot of a boat moving with the waves! I plan to use this effect to animate many boats – it's so much easier now with computer editing and panning software like Digirostrum.*

Walter, in his PowerPoint Presentation, went one better – much better! He was speaking of the cruise ships that used to "shoot the rapids" of the St. Lawrence River, before the Seaway was built, and showing a number of related still photographs. Then he announced "Now I'm going to show you a short film. It's only four frames!" The first shot showed the stern of the boat, on which he had started zoomed-in and slowly zoomed out, the second two shots were from the shore showing the side of the boat, on which he had panned, and the third showed the bow, on which he had started zoomed-out and slowly zoomed in. I have heard that video can be embedded in a PowerPoint Presentation, and even saw it demonstrated once at a seminar in Toronto, but that guy was a wizard. But Walter can even do that!

Suddenly I realized that the "waves" in the rapids don't move downstream with the water. They are "standing waves" that remain over the rocks which produce them!

The simulation of movement from these four stills was marvelous, and adds another arrow in your quiver.

(Continued on Page 16)

STEADYCAM WORKSHOP

by John Cook

John Cook is a new member of the SCCA, and a longtime member of the Hamilton Video/Film Makers who regularly makes the trip from his farm in Tottenham, ON, to attend the Meetings in Stoney Creek. John wasn't able to get to the Ottawa Convention, but on October 10, he attended a SteadyCam workshop presented by the Multicultural Cinema Club of Kitchener.

Fortunately, John took notes!

Speaker

The guest speaker was Carlito Ghioni, film writer and director who has directed one full-length feature film, sixteen documentaries, numerous shorts and one interactive documentary. Born in Italy, Ghioni studied film history at the University of Turin. He came to Canada in 1999 and studied at the Vancouver Film School and at INIS (Institute National de l'Image et du Son) in Montreal. Ghioni has over 10 years experience as a cinematographer, and his documentaries and shorts have been shown at various festivals such as Edmonton Global Vision, Bologna Visione Italiana, Teheran Film Festival, Bombay Film Festival and Monferrato Film Festival.

In this workshop, Carlito spent time discussing and demonstrating his genuine SteadyCam equipment as well as showing scenes from movies with impressive SteadyCam scenes.

SteadyCam Operator Functions

1. GRIP - person responsible for the proper setup and functioning of the equipment
2. CAMERA - operating the camera & moving the camera in 3D space
3. STORY TELLING - doing 1 & 2 to enhance the story.

ARTSY STUFF

The art of SteadyCam operation is using the SteadyCam and camera functions to enhance the story telling.

In a tripod shot, the director can be right there to control the framing. In a SteadyCam shot, the critical framing responsibility literally rests on the shoulders of the SteadyCam operator

every step of the way. The SteadyCam allows very complex paths in 3D space, as compared to dollies and cranes, which results in a significant amount of the artistic control shifting from the director to the SteadyCam operator.

The SteadyCam operator's nightmare is for the director to discover that the shot doesn't work while editing. Now the SteadyCam operator's reputation can be in real trouble. A disaster can result if the SteadyCam operator has not been paying enough attention to the "Point of Attention". **It is critical in cinema that the point of attention is in the same spot on the screen when transitioning to the next scene. This requirement must be balanced with the need to keep the point of attention moving about on the screen during a continuous shot, to avoid boredom.**

Scenes from *Carlito's Way*, with Al Pacino, were shown and analyzed. We saw impressive pans, zoom, variable speed walking (backwards of course) as well as pattern walking by both cast and SteadyCam operator. One scene used the vanishing point to introduce a foreboding element in the plot. Often used was the so called "banana shot" which has both the cast and crew walking in curves, that resemble the outline of a banana, to ensure that the cast is always facing the camera (to maintain eye contact).

I was really impressed with how stable the shots were, noted by watching background motion on the screen edges.

The best SteadyCam work is highly choreographed for cast and crew. In one particular subway scene, cast and crew practiced every day for 14 days before finally shooting. Carlito had high praise for Al Pacino who was there for every practice.

One has to realize that along with the SteadyCam operator, there is the sound man, the camera man, the Grip and a video monitor man who are right there with him. The choreography becomes quite challenging when the cast and crew run through a narrow doorway. Remember, there are microphone, head-

phone and video cables tethering the crew together. Wireless is not trusted.

Carlito showed us how he made light and super flexible cables to go from the camera to connectors securely fastened to his shoulder. From his shoulder, the usual heavy cables took the signals to the rest of his crew.

One memorable chase scene follows a star running in the street, then up an outdoor staircase. The camera goes through the window of the apartment to capture the star entering through the door and then follows him around the apartment. The SteadyCam operator ran along for the first part of the scene. He then stepped on to a crane platform which raised him while still following the action up the stairs. When the crane platform reached the bottom of the window, he stepped through the window into the apartment to catch the door opening and then following the action in the apartment. The real trick in all this action was the SteadyCam operator's skill in counteracting the jerk of the crane starting and stopping, making it imperceptible on screen. Let's not forget that the crew is tethered to the SteadyCam operator. Worker safety concerns boggle the mind.

SteadyCam techniques have vastly improved from the days of *The Shining* and *Rocky*. The old SteadyCam scenes that were such a hit in their day are painful to watch these days.

Carlito showed several other movie clips and one from a TV series to contrast the different approach used on TV drama. TV productions are on a very tight budget. In a typical TV series, the attention is on the star, who generally wings it, with continuous shooting, without interruption. Camera A is on a tripod, mainly shooting full frame and camera B is most often a SteadyCam. SteadyCams are used mainly because of cost savings resulting from eliminating camera setup interruptions. Time is money.

The Bonfire of the Vanities holds the record for the longest SteadyCam continuous shot (the full capacity of a 35mm film canister - just under 11 minutes).

It is unfortunate that the great SteadyCam shooting of all the clips shown was marred by lousy movie plots - another reason why Carlito has gone on into directing.

Carlito pointed out that there is a lot of cross fertilization of visual techniques among the video games, animation, movies and TV industries. For example, video games introduced the use of a lot of zig zagging of both the subjects and the camera viewpoint. It's a good idea to study all of these media for techniques applicable to your projects.

The SteadyCam can shoot the action from a bystander's point of view or it can represent the scene seen by a character.

There is very little steady work for SteadyCam operators as the business models all call for contractors in both movies and TV. Directors can be temperamental, and if you get on their bad side, you have to move on. Carlito has worked in Italy, California, Vancouver and is now in Montreal.

Significant differences in movie techniques in Europe and America were noted. Hollywood has the star system and its stars are always flatteringly lit. In the long walking and chase scenes inside buildings, the poor lighting would not be tolerated by many U.S. Stars.

Carlito's observed that European SteadyCam operators evolve from kids of two personality groups: the mechanics and the soccer players. He evolved from a soccer player and finds the technical aspects challenging. Those operators evolving from mechanics are often challenged by the physical demands.

TECHIE STUFF

Physical Considerations

SteadyCam rigs give you 40 to 45 Kilograms, cantilevered in front of you, to lug about with extreme grace. One has to be in good shape, so the hand doesn't start to tremble on the still shot, typically at the end of a chase scene. The largest physical strain is at the lower and center of the back. As a result of the back strain, most operators are forced to retire young - another reason for Carlito moving into directing.

The biggest danger, of course, is falling with the camera system. Carlito has a quick release buckle system, so if he topples, he can quickly shed the harness, with its heavy equipment, in order to save himself. When that happens, the operator typically moves to another continent. Unfortunately, the crew's instinct is to grab the camera if he starts to lose his balance, which only makes matters worse. The best way to help a toppling SteadyCam operator is to pull back on his shoulders. I suggested he mount a large yellow handle there.

Balance Adjustment

Properly centering the camera on its mount on the SteadyCam is tedious, and must be constantly checked.

"Dynamic Balance" is the setting of the "falling time" - the time it takes the SteadyCam axis to move from horizontal to vertical. You should start with a 1 second falling time and practice, practice, practice, before increasing it to 2, then 3 then 5 seconds. Your first practice exercise is hands free control of the camera while standing still, then turning and then walking - remember - all hands free. The faster the motion, the longer the falling time to make counteracting the pendulum effect manageable. Near neutral balance is used for specialized shots, such as overhead, to avoid your hand tiring. In any case, you must control the camera motion with a very light touch to keep it smooth. As a rule, body rotation is used for panning, with the fingers used mainly for stabilization and elevation.

The pantograph suspension springs (Luxo lamp suspension) are usually adjusted so they sit horizontal at rest. If there's a lot of running, they should be adjusted tighter (higher).

History (war based as usual)

The harness and suspension used in the SteadyCam was originally developed for the US military as a portable gun platform, and is still used for that purpose in the world's armed forces. (Note to self: check the war surplus stores.) Being a military device, the early production units cost over \$100,000. Carlito got into SteadyCam operating after serving in the Italian military - both are about steady shooting.

Custom Parts

Carlito has a number of custom-built camera mount adapters. He has custom built cages for "low camera applications". In the low camera shot, the SteadyCam is upside down, with the camera mounted low. The camera must also be flipped so it is right side up. As the camera is then the lowest point and quite vulnerable if mounted from its top handle, Carlito has made a family of box cages to fit the various cameras, to protect them from the ground and his soccer kick. Low camera applications are most demanding physically, as the camera is in the way of your feet and there's a terrible strain on your back. The low shots are hated by all SteadyCam operators, including Carlito. Now that he's a director, Carlito confessed that the low shots have become his favorite.

Carlito also has a custom heavy plate with various attachable weights for light cameras.

He can then maintain the same system weight and feel, independent of the camera. As mentioned earlier, he has also made up audio, video and power cables that are very light and flexible so as not to upset the SteadyCam balance.

Gyros

There is provision for attaching and powering a gyro attached to the bottom of Carlito's SteadyCam. A gyro gives super steady images, especially for telephoto shots, but is not suitable for rapid motion. A gyro also enables shooting under windy conditions that would otherwise blow the SteadyCam around. Remember, a gyro's noise requires the use of an external microphone or post production sound.

Horizon

The SteadyCam operator has bubble levels, as well as an electronic level displayed on the monitor screen. These are mainly for training. A seasoned operator develops instinct and can tell if he's gone off level for even a second, so the scene can be re-shot.

Monitor

A green phosphor monochrome CRT is used, as it is visible in all lighting conditions. Carlito also runs a mini-DV recorder mounted on the bottom of his SteadyCam, mainly as evidence in case he gets undeserved blame for a screw-up. There's a limited number of continents to move to, with temperamental directors in every one.

Vehicle SteadyCam

This consists of a SteadyCam mount fastened on a board that you sit on in a vehicle seat. It's quite effective while using a vehicle as a moving platform.

Stage Fright

When Carlito appeared visibly nervous on his first movie shoot, the director took him aside and told him a story, directly from a film he had himself directed. The subject was a boys' basketball team, from a small country school, who managed to make it to the finals at the super dome. They were also very nervous when they entered the dome. The coach took the team out on the court and measured the distance from the foul line to the net and from the ground to the rim and pointed out that the distances were exactly the same as in their school gym. ■

FROM THE ARCHIVES

By David Fuller

Our club membership is around the "comfortable 20" mark. As the Contest "due-date" looms on the calendar, we need a motivator to "get cracking" and make movies. Sometimes it takes a Club Contest to do the trick. As the Contest Chair receives entries, there's a cry from the back of the room, "What a rush! I finished mine at lunchtime today."

Now here's an idea to get ahead in the game. Rummage through your old archived original tapes, months ahead of the Contest closing date. Hidden in those boxes of unpruned old tapes lies a wealth of images and memories. "I wonder....," I mused. "Could I make a short movie of under four minutes duration about all the bird life that has arrived on our patio, our feeders and on our lawns over the years, so that the "action" seems to have occurred during one afternoon ? "

Maybe it's pay-off time. I think about it. All those years during the Hi-8 era, and beyond, I maintained 3-ringed binders where I'd write "tape number, brief descriptions of scenes and time codes". At the time when I made the entries it looked like an all-consuming, petty-fogging clerical task - all that cataloguing, which seemed to deny my time of enjoyment at the editing bench.

In most recent years, my memory hasn't been noted for spontaneous recall! I can use some assistance. "Backyard Birds" Mmmmmm, I mused again. "It'll be, relatively speaking, a piece of cake to locate the 'bird-feeding' scenes. " But, as I knew too well, it meant also a lot of tape shuffling and transfer of scenes on to the editor's hard drive. "Yes, this might fit in. And this one of the humming birds."

Whoa! I could make life easier by first deciding on a movie "theme" or "approach" or "premise". How will I set up a "premise" and be able to deliver it from the archived movies of birds feeding?

I thought, "You know, how lucky we are in this blessed corner of the world, where the hum and din of the city is only a kilometre away, and here we are. Our feathered friends daily join us at our "backyard bistro for birds." Well,

that phrase has a ring to it, too. It seems as if at least, I have fallen on the host's introduction - or the title.

I could almost hear my movie host's introductory words. My long suffering wife, my loyal ally through thick and thin. will once more agree, thinly, to be the "host" of the movie. I can see her as she walks across the park, [action cuts], past the firs, across our back lawn, and sits on a lawn chair and turns her head to speak into the camera. "We are so lucky to be able to enjoy watching our wild birds... etc. etc." [Cross-fade into a few CU shots of juncos at the feed tray on the patio.]

Then her voice-over adds sparse voice-over commentary. And we return to a concluding shot of her on the chair uttering a "wrap" about "living so close to a big busy city and yet so close to natural...., etc. "

This recipe or movie "design" is as old as my beach hat. A live host makes a promise, the video delivers it, and she tidies up the movie with a concluding insight, after the last bird eats the last peanut.

If my design sounds like "old hat", then the strength of this movie has to rely on the "freshness" of its content. Only the best shots will do, and tightly edited.

Some minor colour and luminance changes, plus "image sharpening" and the visual part of the production is done.

Now, over a couple of summers, I've recorded "bird-song" samples on a DV tape.

And I have on that tape, also, "background" noise, featuring a light breeze and subdued tweetering "birdsong". All from which I can draw to construct a "natural" background audio.

A touch of music, the commentary, some "birdsong" and background audio, and I'm done.

Yes, all those tedious entries were logged; the exercise in "pettifogging cataloguing" (I'm a poet!) has paid off.

So, what are you waiting for? Start digging into those archived original tapes you have stashed away and **MAKE MOVIES!** ■

BREAKING NEWS And UPDATES

3D TV coming soon
to a living room near you
October 9th, 2009

Sony's Monocular 3D Camcorder
Equals Binocular One
October 9th, 2009

Samsung shows 55-inch,
240Hz 3D TV
October 14th, 2009

Vicon Launches Bonita
October 16th, 2009

Sony designs 360° 3D TV
October 19th, 2009

5 New Technologies That Will
Change Everything
October 20th, 2009

How 3D TV Works:
Part I - With Glasses
October 20, 2009

How 3D TV Works:
Part II - Without Glasses
October 26th, 2009



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CONVERGENCE

(Or, why it may be time to include still photography in video club activities)

by Thom Speechley

The “Club News” column in this issue mentions that the London Videography Club has set off in a new direction in an effort to attract members who may be interested in other forms of digital technology. Each meeting will now open with a topic related to video and during the second half, the subject will consist of presentations primarily concerned with still photography. This was inspired by the fact that most new digital still cameras take excellent video and new camcorders all take respectable still photos. On the surface, this may seem like an elaborate marketing gimmick, but taken in the context of a small technical revolution, it deserves some study. The photo hobbyist and amateur videographer now have more in common than ever. Recognition of this situation could help smaller clubs stay alive.

It is all due of course to the parallel developments of digital camera technology and the computer. Anyone remember the Canon “XapShot” floppy disk camera? However it was still quite a while before computer design escaped from the bean counters and mechanical draftsmen, to more creative graphic applications. For lack of a better definition, I selected this one from Wikipedia: “**Technological convergence**, a trend where some technologies having distinct functionalities evolve to technologies that overlap.”

There has always been resistance to attempts to introduce one format or the other into organized clubs. East is east, the argument went, and no one expected the two entities to coexist for any length of time. And there was always the suspicion that one group would monopolize resources or try to run the show. Another argument was that a bunch of stills, no matter how cleverly strung together, was not a substitute for motion, and should not be considered worthy of a “film” group. But if the presentation tells a story, how does it differ from modern film documentaries which, often due to their historical context, are just a series of talking heads with action consisting of panning and zooming in on still pictures?

The idea of combining still and motion photography within one group is not new. In fact, the British organization IAC, while primarily about film making, has a related wing called the AV Group. Some of these people still shoot transparencies and show their work with stacked, synchronized “Carousel” projectors accompanied by appropriate music. Presently there is a trend toward digital, using popular programs like “Pro Show Gold” (I suspect that both groups still speak to one another.) Other examples are the numerous “Digital Media Clubs” found on the Internet, usually associated with a school or university and working in all digital formats, including audio, phones and games.

The first two London Ontario meetings were quite successful and what became obvious was that both still and motion photographers are using similar digital techniques to make their productions. Since presentation by way of DVD projection is the common objective, members exchanged helpful comments during extended Q&A sessions at both meetings. It is hoped that dialog between the groups will continue since the technologies are both evolving and there should always be an opportunity to trade information and ideas. However it remains to be seen just how long the two creative concepts continue to be compatible. Incidentally, the club has picked up eight new members so far this season. I will be reporting further on the subject.

(Continued from Page 12)

In the July Issue of PANORAMA, in the article about the Speakers for the upcoming convention I mentioned that David Martin would be giving two Presentations, one entitled *Making Digital Movies From Scratch*.

I also added “I’m holding back on the link to his web site because we don’t want you peeking! The September PANORAMA will provide the link for those who weren’t able to attend and for those who do attend and suddenly develop a powerful urge to see more of his stuff!”

It didn’t seem right to use his own work as a preview to his Presentation, and I thought it would be much more impressive for those in attendance to see his product for the first time while he’s there to explain what he is doing.

I was right. He only devoted half an hour to that presentation, and screened only two of his works, but he blew away his audience, and left them wanting more.

Now you can have more, and those who weren’t there can see all his examples for a first time at [David Martin’s web site](#) and click on the film reel.

This is also a great introduction to a new subject that I’ve been waiting to introduce.

I’ve been a big fan of 3D, Real 3D, the stereoscopic stuff, for decades, and I’ve always been annoyed by people who use the term 3D and 3D Animation when they “only” mean flat drawings that are lighted to simulate 3D.

But over the past year, while searching for ways to animate photos or drawings by computer in-betweening the intermediate frames between two “key frames”, and the search has taken me to some fascinating sites.

I have preliminarily explored several programs, from very expensive to absolutely FREE. My personal quest has been for systems, programs, models, characters, costumes, etc., that will help me cover stories in my epic that would be very difficult to cover with re-enactors. The list starts with War of 1812 armies, navies, and ships, and includes Steam Trains, Bi-Planes, Trans Atlantic Float Planes, Gas Balloons, and smaller items such as canoes. Yours are sure to be different. There are a lot of opportunities out there, from wild animals to science fiction props, vehicles, etc., and elves, Kewpie dolls, 007 types, pirates, and what have you.

Of course, much of this is beyond many of us, but we keep finding individuals in the various clubs who have been experimenting with many special effects and advanced techniques, including 3D Animation.

Buckle up because it’s going to be an exciting ride, and it starts in the next issue! ■