

ENJOYING VISUAL TECHNOLOGY

**SYDNEY VIDEO
MAKERS CLUB**



ELECTRONIC EYE

N E W S L E T T E R

SEPTEMBER , 2014

2014

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10-11 Focus 10th September, 2014.



Next Meeting
Wednesday
24th September, 2014

www.sydneyvideomakers.org.au

President's Message

With the AGM next week it's time to look back at the year and consider what has gone well, what not so well and what we might look to improve moving forward.

Looking back at this year

It is hard to think of this year without thinking of the loss of Andy Doldissen but it's good to remember that Andy is far from forgotten and his legacy continues all around us. As you probably know, the **Documentary Award at VOTY** will carry Andy's name from now on and, the shape of VOTY itself with the changes made last year reflect Andy's drive, energy and passion for improving the club and members' videos.

Whilst this year has presented its challenges, there have been many positives and I think it's worth remembering some of them as it perhaps puts in perspective quite how much has been achieved in a time when we may well have been otherwise distracted.

As a committee **one goal we set ourselves this year** was to rely far less on our own members to help us improve, instead looking to more external speakers and professional training videos.

By the end of the year we will have had 4 external speakers and, throughout the year, we've shown a number of 'training' videos which, in just a few minutes each, have given some excellent insights and advice into all manner of areas from scriptwriting to making documentaries and even editing. They have also served to bring variety and the feedback I've received on them has been very positive.

One area we have just started to scratch the surface of - and something which is hugely important to any good video whether it be drama, travel, music or even a 15 second ad - **is the story**.

If we are to move beyond simple dramas, 'holiday video' travelogues or basic documentaries then the quality and structure of the story is key. I found it very interesting that Lile Judickas, the professional editor who came and spoke to us in August, spoke more about story than about anything else when describing what was important to an editor.

This year also, I think it's fair to say that **'logline' has entered our vocabulary** this year and, as a fundamental scriptwriting tool, is hopefully helping to steer our film making.

I know my work has improved from understanding and applying the logline concept and I genuinely believe we will all be able to make much better videos if we apply this thinking far more ruthlessly. Not only is it such a simple tool to understand, it's used by professional script writers and film makers everywhere so its value is clear. **And, best of all it's completely free.**

VOTY 2013

After last years VOTY Andy took a feedback poll and by all accounts it was a fairly significant improvement on the previous year and I think there were a number of factors that contributed to that.

- As well as being funny and universally entertaining, the 1 minute ads **gave pace and variety to the programme.**
- The shorter video categories, whilst not fully adopted last year, I think made people focus on shorter lengths and were all the more entertaining for it.

I think it was Ernest Hemingway who said '**I wrote you a long letter as I didn't have time to write a short one**' and, whilst he never had to think about video editing, his words are as insightful today as they were then. One of the hardest parts about editing is being absolutely ruthless about what's included.

In my view one of the biggest problems with amateur videos is that editors just 'leave stuff in'. Having a well crafted story and good logline to guide the edit helps, as does encouraging editing to a shorter time, it challenges us to learn and is often appreciated by audiences. The 1 minute ads are a great example of having to do this – telling a whole story, with a beginning, middle and end in just 1 minute.

- We also had the **inaugural NSW Interclub Drama Competition** last year which provided some excellent variety and, most importantly, helped keep VOTY financially viable. Last year Newcastle gave us a very good run for our money but we pipped them at the post and I hope they're back for revenge this year!

Membership Numbers

In terms of membership numbers this year we have stayed fairly static. Whilst there has been some member churn I think I can say, hand on heart, that the new members who have joined bring with them a refreshing mixture of enthusiasm, skills and ideas and it's a pleasure to both talk to them and get emails from them full of suggestions and energy. **We as a club must make sure we deliver on their ambition and enthusiasm.**

One of those very members also gave us our **funniest moment of the year**, probably of the last 3 years - if you were there you know what I mean, it was hilarious and, best of all, delivered totally deadpan! If you weren't there, well, clearly focus nights are worth coming along to too!

One of the bigger changes to affect teams this year has been the **simplification of entering competitions.** No more DVD's, just a USB stick and you're done.

Alongside that change we have moved to online judging which has been a **universal success amongst a whole new set of judges** and has hugely reduced the amount of work for the Competition Managers. In fact, the online system we built to do this has proved so simple and easy to use that we are now letting other clubs use it too which also means we have had, and will hopefully continue to have, **better access to a range of willing and capable judges.**

Thinking about next year, where is there room for improvement?

Well, perhaps first a question, are we making the best films we think we can? I know from talking to many of the active filmmakers in the club that they feel they're not and want to aim higher, a fair bit higher in fact.

If you have kids, or grandkids, you've probably told them to be ambitious in life, that 'just ok' is not acceptable and that if you do something you should aim to do your best at it. **The purpose of the Club, both as originally conceived and today, is to help videomaking members achieve those ambitions.**

Some people say 'we're a social club', and they're right. Absolutely right. But not first. We are a video club first and, just like any club whether it be football, tiddlywinks or knitting, a social element fast becomes an important part of the clubs' fabric but, **our primary focus is, always has been, and always will be if we follow the constitution, on producing better videos.**

If we lose that focus I suspect many of the more accomplished videomakers will leave for a club or group which does focus on helping them achieve their potential. There are groups like that springing up in Sydney and the bottom line is that we as a club need to compete with them.

We have a great platform from which to do that. We have **structure, a strong membership base, active teams, consistent competitions, excellent club equipment, enthusiasm and ability** but, we must bring those things to bear to help achieve the ambitions of many of the members, both new and old.

If we can, and it may take a few years to really lift the bar, we will see that membership will in fact grow and, it will grow amongst that holy grail of a segment - **'younger members'**!

But **what is the club's ambition?**

Here's a straw man for you to pull apart...'we will aim to be able to compete in film festivals, produce films that tell great stories, are well acted and have high production values - all on a club budget.'

This is not a drama only ambition, it could be for a travel or music video, all it needs is a good, well told, and well edited story and you have yourself a travel video that will fill the room.

Can we achieve this? Yes. Can we achieve it in a single year. No, probably not. It will take a while but it's a target we can work towards.

How will having an ambition like this change the club? Primarily I think it will **help us set the programme direction.** To grow and learn we need to again look outside the club and learn from people who have expertise beyond our own.

We will also need to have a more **open approach to critical review.** The only way to get better is to reflect on what went wrong and more importantly, why.

Ideas for next year

Another area to consider for next year is around ensuring there is a genuine opportunity for anyone, or any team, to win the four competitions we hold during the year. One idea to consider might be **levelling the playing field through a simple 'handicap' system** which would run like a golf handicap and be based on performance of a team in the previous year.

Another suggestion for improvement relates to people who are keen to learn technical skills. They often say things like "I'd like to learn editing" etc. In reality that's a bit **too general and almost impossible for the Club to deliver on**.

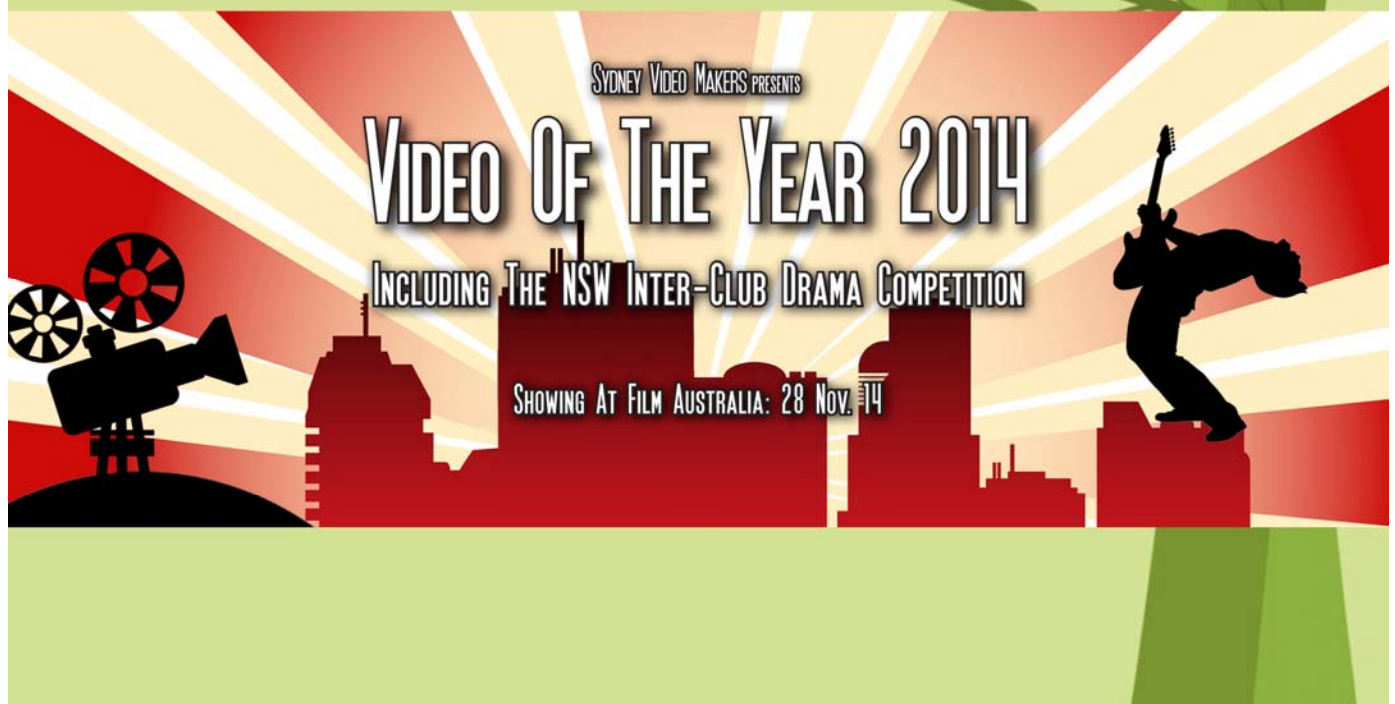
Instead, if people **ask specific questions**, for example, "how do I J cut my audio" or "how do I three way colour correct", or a question related to whatever specific challenge they face, people within the club can help.

Another approach might be to ask "what could I do better with this clip" or, even, "how is this done" and in each case showing an example of a clip.

And finally on the subject of broad suggestions for next year, perhaps another **shared script**. It might also even be interesting to ask other local clubs if they'd like to participate. Perhaps we have a mid year shared script made potentially by double the number of teams, it might well be very interesting.

All food for thought ahead of the AGM.

Please do try and come to the AGM, it's here that these things need to be discussed and resolved so that people volunteering their time and energy to be on the **committee have clear direction** on what they should do and, more importantly perhaps, only sign up for the committee if they believe they can genuinely help contribute to that direction.



So, focusing briefly on the AGM agenda...

As well as the financial report there will be some **small amendments to the constitution** talked through by Jim Whitehead. Details of this were published in the last EE and, whilst small in detail, they have taken some time to finesse and I would like to thank Jim and Peter for their work in preparing them.

I would also like to **thank the entire committee** this year for all of their hard work in making the club run and run smoothly. We say this every year and it is true every year, without them nothing would happen.

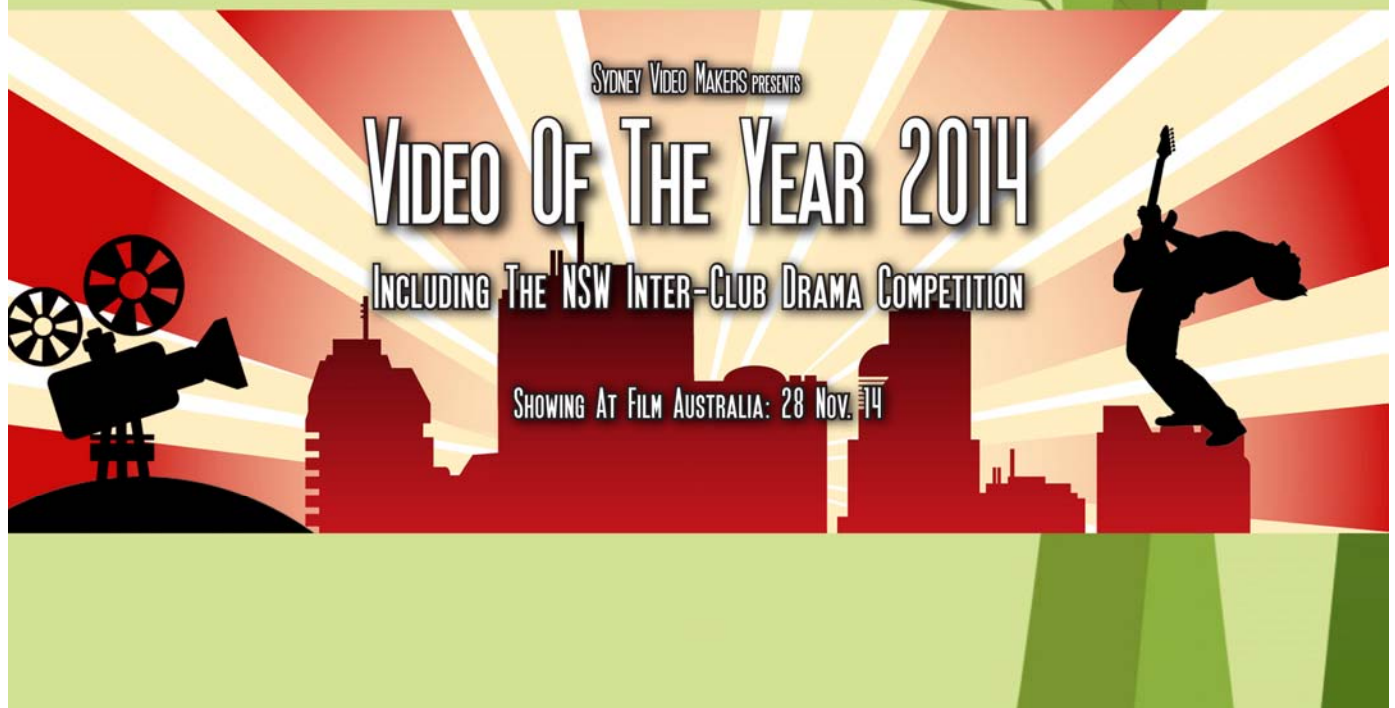
This year I'd also like to single out a couple of committee members for special mention. **Ilma Cave has done a tireless and really committed job** in promoting the club all around the North Shore. From developing posters to speaking to the Council and visiting camera shops promoting the club, Ilma has quietly and unceremoniously done a spectacular job and we all owe her our thanks.

I'd also like to thank **Mike, Elvio and Ilma again** for collectively saving the club around \$500 this year by opening up their homes to host committee meetings. If only we all lived nearer to Elvio we wouldn't have to drive and could enjoy the wine he always has on hand! Not only a great treasurer, but also a great host!

Next week, as well as the AGM, we'll have **results of the documentary competition** and some news about a very exciting project which is coming soon and which will feature more prominently in the next focus night!

See you then.

Ruskin



Technology Corner by Ami Levartovsky

Sony Action Cam Mini: A Shrunken-Down Shooter for the Adventurous

Gizmodo - 4 September 2014

Sony will ship in October a smaller version of its Action Cam, called, what else, Action Cam mini.

The new model is 30 per cent smaller and weighs only 57g. It shoots 1080p video at 30 or 60 frames-per-second, or 720p video at 120 fps. The Mini can take 12MP stills, just like the older Action Cam. It's got the same Steadyshot Zeiss lens, and the same Bionz X processor. There is actually one improvement in the Mini's specs over the regular Action Cam; it records video with the new X-AVC S codec, which should make for cleaner, higher quality footage.

The Action Cam Mini is splash-proof without an additional case. For deeper submergences, the cam is bundled with a waterproof case that will survive up to 5 meters beneath the surface of your favourite body of water.



The biggest sacrifice in the Action Cam Mini is the battery life. When using the camera with Wi-Fi turned on and paired with the Live View Remote, you will get a paltry 70 minutes of record time. The larger version of the Action Cam would run for at least a couple of hours before dying.



The Action Cam Mini will sell in the US for \$US250 with the waterproof case and a tripod mount. Bundled with the Live View Remote, it will cost you \$US350.



Vello Freewave Stryker Lightning/Motion Trigger - *B&H*

Vello has just released a new camera trigger that utilizes a Passive Infrared Sensor to activate your camera's shutter when it detects movement within a range of about 5m. It can also be set to be triggered by lightening or fireworks. Available for both Canon or Nikon for US\$80.

The Mother of all Telephotos you'll never be able to afford...

B&H



The Canon 1200/5.6L USM (priced at \$120,000) has been built on a special-order basis since 1993, and the 'official word' is there are "more than twelve, less than twenty" of them in existence.

The delivery time is about 18 months. National Geographic magazine, Sports Illustrated, Canon Professional Services, and a few well-heeled enthusiasts are counted among the fortunate few who own these unique optics.

As for image quality, even wide open it's quite lovely. Stopped down to f/8 and f/11 it's actually quite remarkable but when you are shooting images of objects literally a mile away or further you start contending with haze, smog, and heat radiation that can greatly diminish the image quality.

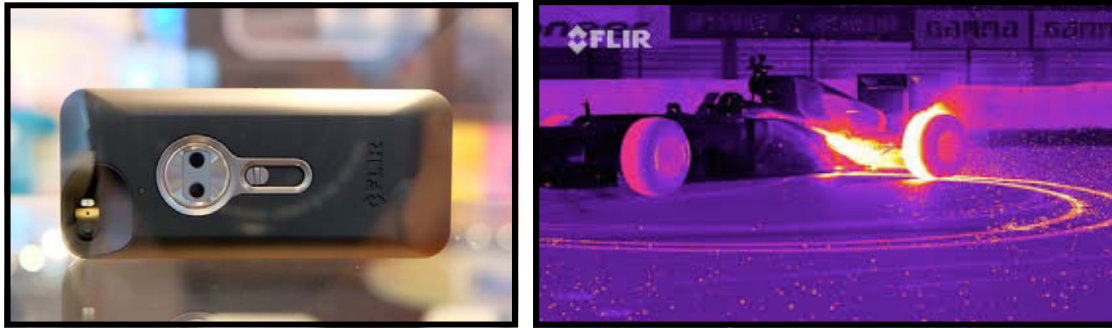
Need something longer? A Canon Extender EF 1.4x boosts the beast up to a 1680/8, and the Canon Extender EF 2x will get you to a 2400/11. For what it's worth, if you couple this lens to a Rebel XTi or EOS 40D you end up with the 35mm-equivalent of 1920/5.6, a 2688/8 with a 1.4x extender, and a 3840/11 with a 2x extender. If you need to focus any tighter to your subject you'll have to hop a plane and fly there.

For a video see <http://www.gizmodo.com.au/2014/08/walking-around-with-a-giant-1200mm-lens-is-sure-to-draw-a-crowd/>

FLIR One gives your iPhone infrared *Predator* vision

<http://www.flir.com/flirone/>

For US\$349 you can photograph heat signatures using this iPhone accessory.



Previously, such cameras were bulkier and more expensive.



The reason for my bringing this accessory to your attention is that it is capable of stealing your PIN!

This photo shows not only the PIN but also the order of the digits – the hottest being the last...

The solution is to touch other keys (without pressing hard) before, during and after pressing your PIN digits.

For video demonstration see:

<http://gizmodo.com/how-to-protect-your-atm-pin-from-theives-with-thermal-c-1627833781>

FOCUS NIGHT

10TH SEPTEMBER, 2014



Lee Crispe



Chris Kembessos



Barry Crispe & Gerry Benjamin



Howard Gregg



Jim Whitehead & Ian Scott



Eddie Hanham & Ruskin Spiers



Graham Sainty & Mike Elton

President:
Ruskin Spiers

Vice President:
Ami Levartovsky

Secretary:
Peter Frohlich

Treasurer:
Elvio Favalessa

The Club meets on the **FOURTH WEDNESDAY** of each month (except for November & December) at 8PM at the Dougherty Centre, Victor Street, Chatswood. Tea & Coffee are available from 7PM. **FOCUS** nights, which usually cover technical subjects, are held on the **SECOND WEDNESDAY** of each month (except January & December) at 7.30PM at the Dougherty Centre, Victor Street, Chatswood.

The Committee meets on the **FIRST WEDNESDAY** of each month. Members are always welcome to attend, and for meeting time and venue, see any committee member.

Member's guests may be invited to meetings; the first visit is free, subsequent visits are \$5. New members are always welcome. Annual membership is single \$60, self and spouse \$85, Overseas and Country members \$35

Note: Equipment brought to a Club night is not covered by the Club's insurance. Members should study their household insurance and check whether their video equipment is covered away from their premises and consider whether their cover should be extended.

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President	Ruskin Spiers	0420 834 080
Vice President	Ami Levartovsky	0419 0419 01
Secretary	Peter Frohlich	0414 414 441
Treasurer	Elvio Favalessa	0438 980 060
Membership Secretary	Elvio Favalessa	0438 980 060
Library Manager	Graham Sainty	0412 764 771
Event Organiser	Mike Elton	0401 928 994
Committee	Ilma Cave	0410 758 941
Committee	Kerry Gibson	0423 645 532
Committee	Stuart Plant	0412 509 25

other roles

Presentation team	Phil Brighton, Ian Howard, Stuart Plant, Kerry Gibson	
Editor Electronic Eye	Margaret Tulloh	0451 9718
Competition Manager	shared - Ruskin, Ilma Cave	
Web Master	Glen Booth	0413 159 003
Visitors Coordinator	Gerry Benjamin, Rob Nercessian	
Team Coordinator		

Please address all correspondence for Committee Action to:
The Secretary,
Sydney Video Makers Club,
P.O. Box 1185,
CHATSWOOD NSW 2057