ENJOYING VISUAL TECHNOLOGY

SYDNEY VIDEO MAKERS CLUB
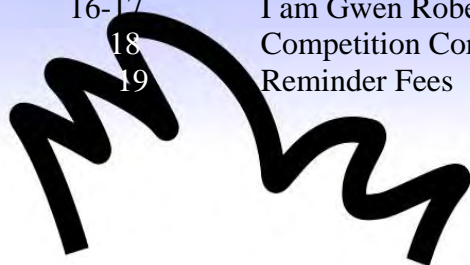
ELECTRONIC EYE

N E W S L E T T E R

FEBRUARY 2012
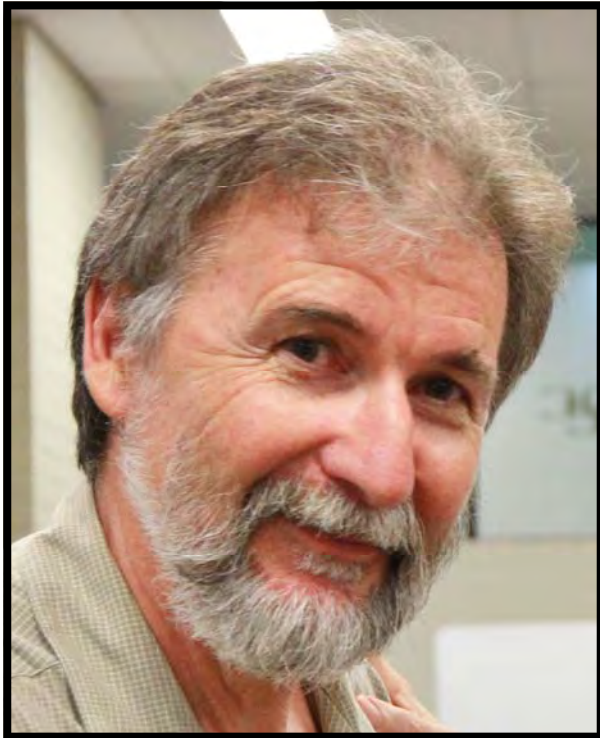
NEXT MEETING
WEDNESDAY
22nd FEBRUARY,2012

www.sydneyvideomakers.org.au

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Andy Doldissen

The February club night will see James Nowiczewski return. He presented to the club a few years ago and all agreed it was one of our best nights. James Nowiczewski has been working as a sound professional in the film, television and music industries for over twenty years. Don't be put off and say "that's way beyond me, I could never do that". The club has new audio equipment which will enable you to significantly improve your audio recording. Radio mics and shotgun mics on boom poles enable the microphone to be much closer to the sound source and this fact alone will improve your audio recording. So come along to hear James share his experience and technical knowledge. The second half of the evening will be some 'hands on' with a few different scenarios, where you can try out the new equipment. Bring your camera, tripod and headphones. James and a few more experienced club members will be there to assist. Make sure you bring your camera's manual and remote in case you are unsure of how to modify your settings. You can record using your camera's mic and then compare to the radio or shotgun mic through a portable mixer and see the difference.

Obviously with the club now having some really good audio equipment available for members we need to ensure everyone knows how to use it properly. This seems a logical place to start so our first few Focus and Club nights will be centered around audio. Audio is often taken for granted but it is just as important as capturing a good image.

Our first Focus night of the year we connected up some of the new club audio gear and gave it a trial with some member's video cameras. The radio mic kit was the most popular item with two members lining up to borrow it. The radio mic is required for Club nights so must be returned for use on that night. If you can't return it you will need to pass it onto someone who can. The gear is

lent out on an honour system, each kit has a contents list, so please check everything is there when you borrow it and return it. As a start I will be the coordinator for borrowing equipment so let me know if you have a shoot planned and would like an audio kit.

Teams

Geographic location, members availability (e.g. working or retired) was never considered when teams were formed. So there is an opportunity for members to move between teams and work with different people or form new teams. I realise some members may not want to be part of a team and that is fine as well. I have the role of team coordinator so please let me know your wishes. So far I have had a couple of responses and I will be coordinating with Team Leaders to try an accommodate all requests.

Ideas for a club Social night?   Mike Elton will be asking for ideas at our next club meeting. So if you know a suitable restaurant let Mike know.

Don't forget to wear your badges on Club and Focus nights, it makes it easier for new members to make contact.

Stay Focused

Andy

Feb 2012

GUEST SPEAKER—FEBRUARY, 2012

James Nowiczewski has been working as a sound professional in the film, television and music industries for over twenty years. Starting in the studio, he has worked for Lucasfilm, Nickeleode-on, Hanna Barbera and Warner Bros amongst countless others. Looking for new challenges, he has since moved on to be come one of Australia's foremost location sound recordists, with countless film and television credits including Better Homes and Gardens, The Biggest Loser, Masterchef, The Renovators, Wife Swap, Selling Houses Australia, Location Location Location and Atlas. His extensive experience and technical knowledge have also seen him as an educator and speaker at seminars such as Digital Media World and Tropfest Roughcuts .

James Nowiczewski

James has been asked to present

 - good audio recording practices

 - when to use what gear - blimps, radio mics, fluffies

 - overcoming typical problems like wind or background noise

 - setting up the mixer to match the camera

This is a follow on from our Focus night and it will assist members make the most of our new audio kits.

James has agreed to stay on after his presentation to assist members with some 'hands on' using their own cameras and trying out the new audio gear.

a few scenarios in smaller groups e.g.

 - using a radio mic - someone walking toward camera

 - outside with a blimp recording a conversation

 - recording an interview

letting people plug into their own cameras, do some recording, then listen to the results at home

So please bring your camera along. And bring along some questions for James, this should be a very worthwhile night. James has presented at the club a few years previous and was very well received.

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- good audio recording practices

- when to use what gear - blimps, radio mics, fluffies

- overcoming typical problems like wind or background noise

- setting up the mixer to match the camera

FOCUS NIGHT REPORT   8 FEBRUARY 2012
SOUND CONNECTIONS.

First focus night program for the year was devoted to connecting up and using our recently purchased audio equipment. Our President Andy did the honours and a very fine presentation it was too.

Andy reviewed the equipment available, which is now divided into two kits, both suitably contained in their own canvas carry bag. Each bag is a complete audio capture kit comprising mic, mic boom pole, wind blimp, mixer and XLR cables. Quick start "how to use me" information is included in each kit. The first kit has the higher function mixer in other respects the kits are identical.

A Sony radio mic system was also on show. This will be used during Club Night presentations, to enable the presenter to be "on mic" but hands free. The radio mic kit will also come into play when a team requires it for use on those occasions when only a radio mic will do the job.

The presentation started off with Andy describing the kit contents in general and demonstrating how to connect the various components together. A very excellent "How to use me" DVD had been produced by Andy with some assistance from Chris Saville. Copies of the DVD will be in the club library and a copy will also be in the appropriate audio kit.

For the equipment we now have, the audio "noise free" functions depend on the correct application of the XLR system and components. A number of us do not have professional grade camcorders equipped with XLR balanced termination connections. The benefits of the XLR system can still be experienced when using an "ordinary camcorder" as long as the XLR cables are terminated close to the final recording device (usually the camera) in a balanced termination device. There are lots of easy to read and understand dissertations accessible on the web where the technology is reviewed in "how to do it" terms. A little home work is recommended to get connected correctly.

The remainder of the evening was devoted to some hands on experimentation by attendees. By the look of the photographs the whole exercise was well received and lot of know how passed on.

Many thanks to Andy for a well prepared and presented session. I am sure our productions will now all sound a bit better from now on.

I Scott

Secretary SVMC.

Voiceover, content & delivery.

Most of us do some voiceover from time to time. The usual places for a spot of voiceover are when we produce a travel video or when we make a documentary. We use a voiceover to give a description of what is being shown and a well scripted effort can also add interest to the subject.

To produce a good voiceover requires a little planning. When I am doing a voiceover for a travel video or a documentary I make sure that I know the content of the video thoroughly. I usually produce a fairly detailed script with a description of what is seen (video) and what is to be heard (audio). Each shot in the video is logged, with its duration as well as the visual content. Since not every shot requires comment and a number of shots may be covered with an overall comment, this may be served by a column listing the number of shots to be included. Now the time available for comment can be measured and suitable wording arranged to fit.

Thought should be given to 'Show and Tell'. Don't tell if the subject is shown and is self explanatory. In other words don't tell your audience what they can see for themselves. Use the voiceover to impart interesting facts about the subject, be brief; don't overburden your audience with a mass of facts and figures. Less is often greater than more.
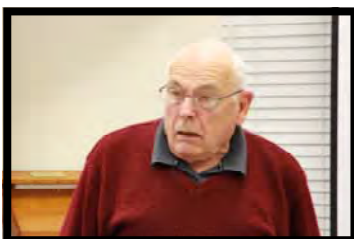
It is usually a good idea to avoid difficult words. Try to keep it simple, if troublesome foreign words have to be included, write them out phonetically and practise them beforehand.

Another use for voiceovers is in the cause of economy. Quite often difficult dialogue scenes in say, a story video can be helped along by allowing some of the characters to voice their thoughts. Care must be taken to ensure that the voices are authentic and that the ambient background matches.

Voiceovers are vastly improved by proper inflection of the dialogue. A flat monotone isn't the best way of capturing the attention of your audience. Introduce variation both in the pronunciation of the dialogue and the rate at which it is delivered. However, try to avoid the dreaded rising inflection!

When recording a voiceover thought should be given to 'Lip-distance'. Speaking into a microphone which is very close, say 25-40mm can give a much more intimate result and conversely, to position the microphone at a greater distance will allow the ambient qualities of the room to have an effect. A word of warning, close-up recording requires a 'Pop-filter'. This doesn't necessarily keep dad out of the room though.

If you have access to a sound editing program such as Audacity or Sound Forge, it is a good scheme to record your timed voiceover in to one of these. Final adjustments can be made and levels sorted out and any imperfections removed before transferring to the timeline of your editing program.

Phil Brighton

XLR or Balanced Audio Cables & Connectors?

During the January club Focus night a few questions were raised about XLR cables. What are they and why do we need them?

Put simply they are audio cables and connectors that can be used over long distances with little unwanted noise from electrical interference. That is why they are the cable and connector of choice for professional audio equipment.
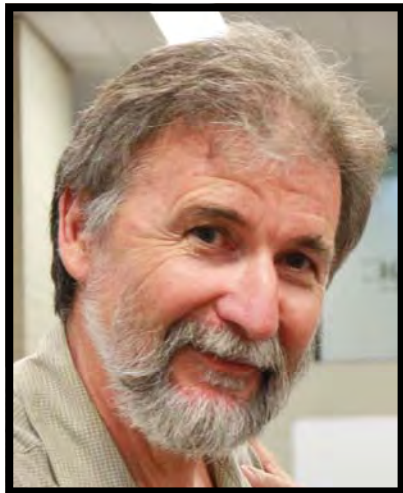

XLR3 cable connectors, female on left and male on right

So how does it work?

An XLR cable has three wires two of which are identical signal wires from one of the stereo channels. If stereo is being transmitted a second XLR cable is used for the other channel. The cores are wrapped in a shield which connects to one of the non signal wires hence only three pins. The term 'balanced' comes from the way the signal wires are connected and terminated. The noise rejection performance relies on the fact that the wanted signal is transmitted from its source, along the two identical signal wires in each XLR cable to the receiving device. Since both signal wires are identical the inevitable unwanted noise picked up in the wires will also be identical. At the XLR receiving device the two signals are connected, one into each end of a specially designed transformer. The action of the transformer is such that the unwanted noise exactly cancels itself out and a clean (noise free) signal is extracted from the centre of the transformer. The clean signal is now matched with one of the other four XLR cores and we are back to normal stereo wiring for one channel, but importantly without the noise. The second stereo channel is treated in identical fashion. If you are using a camera or device at the receiving end which is equipped with XLR terminations you will not see any of the transformer connections or the resultant stereo output. Cleaned up signals are all fixed wired within the device. If you have and add on termination accessory then you will probably have a short stereo lead out of the termination accessory box into the recording device. The important thing is you must terminate the XLR cables, or cable if mono, into an XLR balancing termination device or you are just wasting your time.

Phantom power is often mentioned when discussing XLR connection systems. This refers to the fact that some mics need power to do their job. Now the mic power can be provided at the mic by battery or from the receiving source power supply. There is of course a real risk that the receiving source power could destroy the mic or interfere with its battery operation. Since the XLR cable has three cores isolation of the remote and local power supplies is achieved by careful connection protocols. Since the connections are a standard throughout the audio industry you do not have to worry about them as long as you verify that your system is specified to use phantom power correctly.

Andy Doldissen / Ian Scott

diagrams source wikipedia.org

SOUND IN THE EDITOR

We all know but perhaps undervalue the importance of getting the sound correct in the non linear editor. The editor is not intended as a fix up to improve the sound you captured at the shoot location. The only way to get good quality sound onto your media during capture is to apply all the best practice methods that you can to reduce interference and extraneous sounds. Having ensured that all the interference etc is eliminated you must constantly monitor you mic input levels and listen in to hear what is actually being recorded.

With the introductory comments in mind, what then are the major contributions that the editor can make related to the sound quality of final production?

- On the timeline separately display the audio which was captured at the shoot.

- Enable additional audio to be positioned on the timeline in required relationship to the visuals.

- Display the audio waveforms on each track if required.

- Show the audio levels on analogue or digital graphic scales.

- Enable SFX (sound effects) to be mixed into the other audio tracks. These can be from the simplest fade right through to other complex effects.

- Allow normal edit of the audio in similar fashion to the video tracks.

- Provide a facility to adjust individual clip and track audio levels.

Except for the most elementary and trivial to our needs, all NLEs provide the above listed features to a basic or sophisticated level.

A normal editing session, after all required content has been transferred into the editor, might be as follows.

- Arrange the video in the required sequence

- Apply all the required video various transitions.

- Apply all the audio transitions required, i.e. fades.

- Complete a first pass balancing of the audio.

- Add additional voice over or other audio effects.

- Add any music.

- Finalise the audio balancing

The most significant audio problem evident in club VOTY 2011 entries was out of balance, that is level set too high or too low. This applied to full productions or parts of the production.

Audio level indications are a measured display of sound intensity. The scale used to indicate the level is marked in Bels, a unit named after Alexander Graham Bell who did so much of the World's development work on sound measurement and, of course, invented the telephone. In telephone circuits and indeed any sound handling devices the audio level is reckoned in decibels or one tenth of a Bel. The Bel is too large for practical use today. The reference level is the threshold of normal human hearing. On the scale normal sounds such as the human voice should fall in the range of 0db to +6 db on a digital scale or -20db to -14db on the analogue scale. Both scales appear in parallel in most editors, mixers and cameras. If you work outside there limits the sound will be too low or too high.

Low sound can be overdriven (turned up) but unfortunately the background hissing will be amplified as well. By the way, hissing cannot be eliminated as it results from random electron movement in all the circuits and devices. The only way to avoid it is to keep the level up so that the hissing is so low it is not heard.
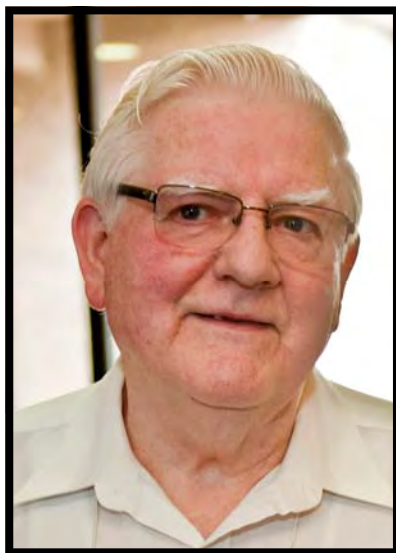
Sound that is too high will clip and all the tops and bottoms of the waveform will change the sound quality to a marked degree. The clipped off bits are gone forever, they cannot be recovered. It is a bit like standing a 2 litre bucket on a bed of sand and hoping to put 4 litres in the bucket. If you persist the additional water will spill off into the sand and you end up with only 2 litres in the bucket, the rest is gone.

Back to editing and balancing audio. Let us suppose that you did a good job on the sound capture you will not have too much adjusting to do. The first thing to do is to adjust your earphone or local loudspeaker volume so that your listening level is normal and comfortable. Note that adjusting what you hear in you earphones will not alter the timeline levels. Having set your listening level leave it alone for the rest of the balancing session.

So, starting at the beginning of your timeline, play your video. If you have voice over or other added in audio, you should mute these temporarily. Use what you are hearing to alert you to sound that is too high or low, the sound level indicators will show the same level situation. If a clip that needs adjusting, use the audio mix facilities to adjust the level up or down, as appropriate to achieve a result in the 0 to +6 db range. Recheck the adjustment and if ok move to the next clip etc, etc until you have done the lot.

Turn off your main audio, the one you just balanced and turn on your other audio tracks. Repeat the level adjustment for these tracks as well. Now it is time to ensure that the multiple audio tracks, including music, all mix in to give the result you want. For example, where you have some voice over you will no doubt want to turn down the main audio so that the voice can be heard, and up again when the VO is over. All editors have some form of rubber band audio level adjustment feature, which enables a level indicator line superimposed on the clip to be marked with key frames. Then using the cursor pull the line down or up, like a rubber band, to adjust level. I have included a page from the Avid user guide which should be generally applicable to any reasonably featured NLE.

All you need do now is play your entire video segment to be sure all levels are good in the range 0 to +6 db range. Good luck with this bit of sound advice.

Ian Scott

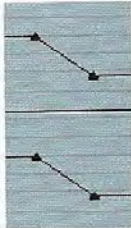**Secretary SVMC**

Feb 2012.

Here are a few typical scenarios for adjusting the gain on a selected track or tracks.

Add a single keyframe to adjust gain evenly throughout a segment:

▶ Add a single keyframe in the segment, and then drag the keyframe up or down to increase or decrease the gain within the entire segment. Adjusting the level using one keyframe has the same result as adjusting the level for a segment in the Audio Mixer tool.
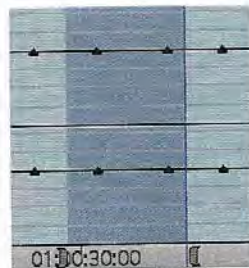
Add two keyframes to create a gradual increase or decrease (fading up or down) within a segment:

▶ Add one keyframe at the start of the desired change in level and another at the end, and then drag a keyframe up or down to increase or decrease the gain at that point.
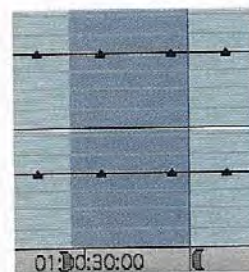
Add three keyframes to perform a quick drop in the audio level within a segment:

▶ If you need to quickly lower the audio level for a frame or two—to mute a pop or flaw in the audio, for example—create three keyframes around the flaw, and then drag the middle keyframe all the way down.
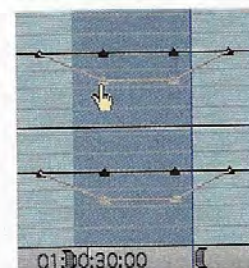
Add four keyframes to adjust the gain within a region of a segment:

1. Add four keyframes to the Timeline.

2. Add an IN mark between keyframes 1 and 2 and an OUT mark between keyframes 3 and 4.

3. Drag keyframe 2 or 3 up or down. Notice that the keyframes outside the IN/OUT marks do not move.

   This is a great way to ramp audio up or down over a defined area when, for example, you want to reduce a music track level while someone is speaking.

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HELLO MEMBERS—I AM GWEN ROBERTS

Meet and Greet person for SVMC

I was born in Junee in south western N.S.W, in the Baby Boomer era where my Scottish grandfather was a stock and station agent. This was not far from Grong Grong where my parents ran a sheep and wheat farm. Being number seven in a family of eight held many challenges. It was a great life of wide open spaces, trees and freedom.

In 1950 we moved to Sydney. In the 60's I went to Canberra to commence my nursing training which I finished in Balmain. Over the next 40 years I worked in Early Childhood Centres, Community Health and Mental Health in the private system.

By 1969 I was married, and was married 33 years. I have 3 children who encourage by diverse interests.

When I retired in 2003 I was interested to help my brother, Bert in researching the Roberts' family tree. To make it more interesting to future generations I wanted to interview older members of the family and record this on video. My old Hitachi video recorder from 2001 was very cumbersome and I looked around for something better. I found this in the Panasonic SDR H2Q which was good for me as a beginner.

My son, Christian, very patiently helped me with the computer technology. There were outbursts of frustration at times. Not only from him! My daughters, Claire and Natalie have assisted with graphics and locations.

In 2010 I joined a workshop called "Young at Heart" , this probably emphasises the fact that we are older in other places because it was sponsored by The

Department of Ageing. A scary department to work for? This was offered to the general public who had an interest in movie making. I was very happy to be one of the 20 people participating in the workshop We spent one week under professional guidance writing a script, acting filming editing to produce a 5 minute movie. It was a busy, fun week and we learned so much. Barry and Lee Crispe were in the group so I had my first contact with the SVMC. This seemed to be just what I needed to gain more knowledge and experience, with such a large group of enthusiasts.

I am enjoying learning more about video making with my group G7.they are supportive and helpful, supplying technical information and creative input. The program for the SVM this year has many interesting presentations to look forward to. I plan to give my latest camera Panasonic HDC SD 700 a workout in 2012.

I have travelled the world in the last 10 years and a trip in Cuba stands out as the best. We experienced the most fabulous music and dancing and met such spontaneous people on the trip.

COMPETITION CORNER

On Wednesday night the entries for our first Competition—"Open" closes. Please remember to have your all your Disc clearly marked and your Competition Entry Form filled out and signed by all participants.

I am looking forward to this year. As you have the new equipment to help with your Videos. This months speaker will help with his talk on Audio.

Please remember that the competition was changed for April.

The competition for April will close on 26th April. Title to be **Excellence in Audio,** either a **Interview or a Musical Rendition or both.** No more than 5 minutes.

The third competition will close 27th June **Drama** and titled "**Who done It".**

The final competition is due on 22nd August and to be a **60 second Ad.** titled "**Roadside Service**

I wish you all the best with your Entries.

Margaret Tulloh
Competition Manager.

REMINDER

The Annual Fees are now due.   They have stayed the same as 2011.

Annual membership:-

Single $56,

Self and Spouse $76.

Country member $28 with an initial joining fee of $10.

President:

Andy Doldissen

Vice President:

Gerry Benjamin

Secretary:

Ian Scott

Treasurer:

David Rogers

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 $56, self and spouse $76, country member $28 - with an initial joining fee of $10.

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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Video Director		
Team Coordinator	Andy Doldissen	0403 838 783
Catering	To be undertaken by Groups.	

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> **CHATSWOOD NSW 2057**