

Scanlines Quickie

Where art and technology meet

Journal of BRISBANE MOVIE MAKERS ~ June, 2017



A Word from the President

Brisbane Movie Makers is growing! We have 39 members which is a sure sign that we are doing things that are interesting, fun and, above all else, challenging old and new members. So my thanks go out to the committee and the creative teams for all their hard work in putting together a good program. Well done!

Creative Thursday

On Thursday 15th June we have the Comedy Shoot taking place at the club rooms. The fun starts shortly after 6pm with the set up and Col has co-opted many people to take part so it should be a fun evening. Col is doing a multi-camera shoot of an Indian Call Centre with real Indian actors that are out for a bit of fun!

There are still spaces to help out on the night. Don't be shy do just join in - you are amongst friends! This is the time to try out new things, learn and go away with a new skill! What have you got to lose?

The fun does not stop with the shooting. Have you ever done a multi-camera edit? Have you even had the opportunity to do one? Not many of us have, so here is your chance! The footage will be made available to all those who would like to have a go at editing. It will be available on a memory stick for you to load into your favourite editor and you can then weave your magic! The results will be shown on 17th August and a prize will be awarded to the best video.

Ugg Cup Thursday

Winter is here and it is a great opportunity to get the camera out and put together a video or two without getting over-heated and stressed. The themes for July are Pets and Beach so now is the time to go to the coast and have some fun. We may not be Kiwis or Brits eager to swim with our pets at this time but I am sure that we can still make a splash. So grab your favourite camera, iPhone, GH4 or heaven forbid an over-heated Galaxy Note 7 and enter the Ugg Cup! You may well take home the trophy for the month!

September Creative Evenings

Catherine and Col have been the trail-blazers for the Creative Evenings with topics of Suspense and Comedy. We have one more slot in the year that needs a leader – is that you? Who will take up the challenge?

Thanks

In finishing I must thank Neal for all his efforts in putting together Scanlines. Neal quietly does the work and I keep forgetting to thank him. So please join me in saying "Thank you Neal!".

On buying a new TV ...

Once upon a time, we owned a Panasonic TV. We had it for many trouble-free years and it was excellent. There was only one catch— it was 4:3. With the continuing evolution of the Universe, 16:9 sets had come to pass, the weight of sets had come down from around 3 tonnes to a few Kgs and, with one thing and another, the idea was settling in that it was, maybe, time to look at a new one. The trigger came when some friends mentioned that they were looking for a second-hand set for their rumpus room, so their toddlers could watch Play School and be quiet for a while.

So, we had to replace it but, with what. This was in the days when TVs were not so cheap and we were well out of touch with the market. The nice salesperson at a long defunct retailer happened to mention that the new shipment due in a few months was expected to show a substantial price-drop, so our plan was hatched. We would buy a cheap little set to fill in and, when we found what we wanted from the new lot, we could consign the cheapie to the bedroom, just like all the rich people did. Perfect.

And we did find a cheapie. A little 650mm set. It was that well known brand, Pangoo and it came from (Shhh) China. Well, that was going on twenty years ago and the Pangoo is still going strong. And it will be consigned to the bedroom because we finally got our new set. But talk about blood, sweat and tears!

Buying a TV, we found, is not like it used to be. These days, they come in every conceivable variety, not to mention size. And price. We had, of course, done some homework. We were well versed in CFL backlighting, plasma lighting, edge LED, boundary LED and OLED. Then, of course, there is 2K and 4K. This is complicated by there being effectively *nothing* available in 4K content but, if I live long enough, in the future ... We had checked our viewing distance for the set size and we were right on the borderline for a 55 inch (why are TVs measured in inches?) or larger. But then, if watching 4K material, one can sit closer due to the smaller pixels. Then there is HDR— High Dynamic Range, as most of you would know. This is a real Furphy, as there are at least half-a-dozen competing systems, all incompatible, seeking market dominance. Thus forearmed, we ventured into our chosen retailer.

It took ten or fifteen minutes before our bright, young salesperson realised we were not swayed by offers of lifetime supplies of laundry detergent but wanted to discuss, seriously, what the sets on offer really could do. Bit by bit, the choices narrowed. We had our choice. An LG OLED, the cheapest one. Helped by a hefty promotion from LG as a new model special. (Once the screen size exceeds 55 inch, the price sky-rockets.) “Wrap it up” we said, “We’ll take it with us”. And we did. It weighed all of 17Kg.

What does it do? It shows pictures, but that’s sort of by-the-way. Unfortunately, the owner’s manual is a download deal. About 150 pages, white-on-black text and cutesy animations. It mostly discusses the 35,726,412 other things the set does. As years go by I may delve into some of them. Things like voice commands, interaction with smartphones, web exploring, USB recording, auto translating— the list goes on. And on.

So, it’s currently been running two days. What do we think? Apart from the nice, big picture the 30,000 hours estimated life appeals. The OLED system really works— blacks are really black. Whites are good, but I feel they are just a touch high. It’s possible to see clipping occasionally, but I suspect it may be the source material. When I get time, and suitable test material, I shall run through the adjustments which are, thankfully, extensive. (Yes, it was on my must-haves list).

It is definitely a better set, understandably, than the Pangoo. One thing we have noticed is the variability of broadcast quality. Local News items, for instance, vary from sharp and crisp to slightly out of focus. The exposure is generally not bad, but when it is off it’s noticeable. The same (very much) goes for commercials. Old material (early nineties) is staggeringly inferior. Even studio game shows have focus malfunctions. Small, but observable.

Are we happy we paid the money? Yes. It’s the most we have ever paid for a TV, but it’s probably our last. Which is part of the reason we went for 4K and the trimmings. It will be obsolete in five years (did you know smellovision was coming?) but it will do us. If a Pangoo can run twenty years, this one should! Now, how do we subscribe to Netflix?

We would like to ... have you on our files

Here is a request. If anyone changes a telephone number or e-mail address, could you remember to let us know? It helps to keep you in touch with this little document, messages, records and other bits and pieces.

We know only too well how easy it is to miss such details but errors in our records tend to accumulate, thus this reminder. We are scrubbing the prison term for those who forget!

An exciting new camera from Panasonic



Thanks to Catherine for alerting us to this new offering from Panasonic. In fact, it's so new you can't buy one, yet— not for a couple of months. If the so-far published specs are any indication, Panasonic has hit the nail right on the head— again. In fact, Panasonic has been doing this quite a bit the past few years. With the gradual demise of Canon in the movie field, Panasonic seems to be making the running. With the AF-100 series back in 2010 (which I am still running), the hugely popular GH4, the eagerly awaited GH5 (now released) and now the Eva1, they seem to have all the bases covered.

Because the Eva appears to be aimed squarely at the Indie market, of which BMM is a part, or should be. The price is quoted as "less than \$8000". If, like me, \$8000 does not mean *lets race out and buy one*, it should be noted that this is a camera intended for shooting feature-quality work. All it's specs are aimed that way. It is in direct competition with RED in the \$30,000-50,000 range and Arriflex up around \$100,000.

It offers a lot of the features of the Varicam LT, in a body that only weighs 1.2Kg (suitable for lightweight gimbals and hand-holding) and is only 475g heavier than the GH5. Importantly, it shares the excellent colourimetry with the flagship cameras that has beaten the opposition for many years.

It has a 5.7K super 35mm sensor, with dual native ISO. What these are has not been revealed yet, but the

betting is 800 ISO and 5000 ISO. Just what does this mean? Well, by having a switchable sensitivity at the sensor, there is no need to add a lot of gain after the sensor, thus avoiding the noise which this inevitably adds. This camera, hopefully, can see in the dark.



The camera can record 10bit 4:2:2, even in 4K (like the GH5) and it records on nice, cheap SDXC cards, not those dreadfully expensive CFAST things. Surprisingly, it takes Canon lenses— probably because there are already so many in the hands of Indie movie makers, but this sacrifices the versatility of their own M2T lenses. A price one pays for a Super35 sensor. It cannot record RAW internally (on those cheap cards) like the Canon C200 or the Black Magic Ursa Pro, but it will be able to output a 5.7K RAW signal to an external recorder (like an Atomos monitor) via a software update. This is similar to what they did with my AF-100, with about three updates over several months. Anyway, with the quality of the in-camera recording, only the keenest will need RAW recording.

Will it be difficult to use? Not likely. A quick glance at the controls in the pic above shows the simplicity inherent in the AF-100, but missing from the GH3/4/5. My first impression on seeing the camera, was that it looks like a true descendent of the AF-100. At last! The only thing I don't like is the silly, red stripe around the controls. Perhaps they want it easily identifiable among a bunch of others ...

Whatever, this looks like a camera that will make it's mark among the hordes of Indie movie makers as well as professionals looking for a light, compact, inexpensive unit. And don't be surprised if it pops up around Hollywood as well.

A young boy enters a barber shop and the barber whispers to his customer. 'This is the dumbest kid in the world. Watch while I prove it you.'

The barber puts a five-dollar note in one hand and two fifty-cent coins in the other, then calls the boy over and asks, 'Which do you want, son?' The boy takes the two fifty-cents and leaves. 'What did I tell you?' said the barber. 'That kid never learns!'

Later, when the customer leaves, he sees the same young boy coming out of the ice cream store. 'Hey, son! May I ask you a question? Why did you take the two fifty cents instead of the five dollars?' The boy licks his cone and replies, 'Because the day I take the five dollars, the game is over!'

Next Meeting

As mentioned elsewhere, the meeting on June 15 will, once again, be something a little different. Col will be directing a short, comedy sketch. Some of us have seen the script and it is, genuinely, amusing. It involves a couple of Indian people and their interaction with a call-centre. I won't spoil the joke, but Col has obtained the services of a couple of people genuinely from the sub-continent just to add authenticity.

The real difference is the fact that this sketch will be shot with three cameras and everyone will have access to all the material on a USB stick so that you can have a go at editing the show. The prize (yes, there's a prize) is a brand, new camera bag. So, don't miss this. The forecast is 24°, so it won't be cold, so come along.

Also don't forget the Ugg cup for next month — subjects: Pets and Beach. Don't worry, this time of year the water is often warmer than the air!



What to take??

Are you one of those people who have implicit faith in the functionality of your equipment? Do you believe that everything will go perfectly, always? If so, you have lots of company. But, what about the pessimists among us? Are they just looking for trouble? More specifically, what is needed in case trouble comes along?

If you are simply shooting in the back yard, the casual approach is probably appropriate. But as you venture further afield, caution should raise its head. You don't need to be far from base before a minor hiccup can be a disaster. If you are a casual, amateur shooter it probably doesn't matter too much— just charge your 'phone. But if you are a more serious, knowledgeable movie-maker and as a member of a group like BMM one would have to assume you are, you should be taking your shooting seriously. Imagine you have taken some people on a half-day drive for a vital scene in your latest opus. Oops, you have left your battery, lens, costume, lunch— you name it— behind. What does that say about your professionalism? And how keen will your associates be to risk doing it all again?

The reality is, Murphy was right. If something can go wrong, it will! The trick is to outfox him. So what back-up should you carry? Well, to have every difficulty covered, the list is astonishing. It's probably not possible. And it depends where you are. A couple of hundred Kms up the road, with the car boot at your disposal is easier to cover than if you are hiking through the Himalayas. It's horses for courses. Following our shift, I have been re-assessing the stuff I have accumulated over the years in my back-up kit with a view to down-sizing. And, surprise, surprise. I have finished up with pretty much what I started with plus a few things I have let slip. Because, over the years, I have needed pretty much all of it at one time or another.

So, herewith is my list of necessary bits that I tend to cart about on serious shoots. I have been known to leave a lot of it in the car, especially if I have to carry the stuff. In that case, I always keep fingers crossed.

Essential items— cameras and associated bits.

Appropriate camera(s), lenses, batteries, fittings, supports (tripod, special mounts, etc), nuts, bolts and necessary hardware for mounting, and any item specific bits. All *completely* assembled before departure to make sure nothing is missing.

All audio gear, recorder, microphones, necessary mounts, wind guards, cables, adaptors, screws and bits-and-pieces. All *completely* assembled before departure to make sure nothing is missing and tested *with the camera* to make sure it all works (including cables) before departure.

No-one should need the above advice, it should be second nature.

Non-specific items

A small waist-bag with closable compartments.

A selection of largish clips (Bunnings).

A selection of clothes pegs (stainless steel).

A small, LED torch.

Some lengths of Velcro strapping.

A collection of smallish wooden wedges (for levelling things).

A steel tape-measure.

A small, adjustable spanner.

Fixed spanners appropriate for your rig.

Allan keys, 1 set imperial, 1 set metric.

A small spirit level.

Compact screw drivers, all types including Torx.

Small mirror on extension stalk.

Scissors, substantial.

Gaffer tape. (note: Duct tape is *not* Gaffer tape.)

Small spray can of Inox. (much better than WD-40).

Length of strong Nylon cord/ light rope.

Selection of cable ties.

Roll of double-sided tape.

Lens/filter cleaner kit. (keep in small bag if possible).

Micro Fibre cloth.

Lens brush.

Small paper towels/wipes.

Small LED light. (possibly head mounted).

Small, flexible USB light.

Spare dry cells/batteries.

Any other adaptor, fitting, cable or device to fit your particular rig.

Small first-aid kit.

Pain killers.

Rain protection for you and your gear.

You get the idea. The principle is simple. If there is something you need to make your set-up work and you don't have it, you're done. All of this can get quite heavy and I have graduated to a plastic bin to carry it all. This is not very elegant, but I'm too mean to spend a couple of hundred dollars on a specialised location bag. Still, burden or not, my bin of bits has got me out of trouble on more than one occasion.

It's the State of Origin Final, and a man makes his way to his seat right next to the field. He sits down, noticing that the seat next to him is empty. He leans over and asks his neighbour if someone will be sitting there. 'No,' says the neighbour. 'The seat is empty.' 'This is incredible,' said the man. 'Who in their right mind would have a seat like this for the Final and not use it?' The neighbour says, 'Well actually the seat belongs to me. I was supposed to come with my wife, but she passed away. This is the first State of Origin Final we haven't been to together since we got married.' 'Oh, I'm so sorry to hear that. That's terrible....But couldn't you find someone else, a friend, relative or even a neighbour to take her seat?' The man shakes his head. 'No,' he says. 'They're all at the funeral.'