

**The Newsletter
of the Association of
Motion Picture Sound**

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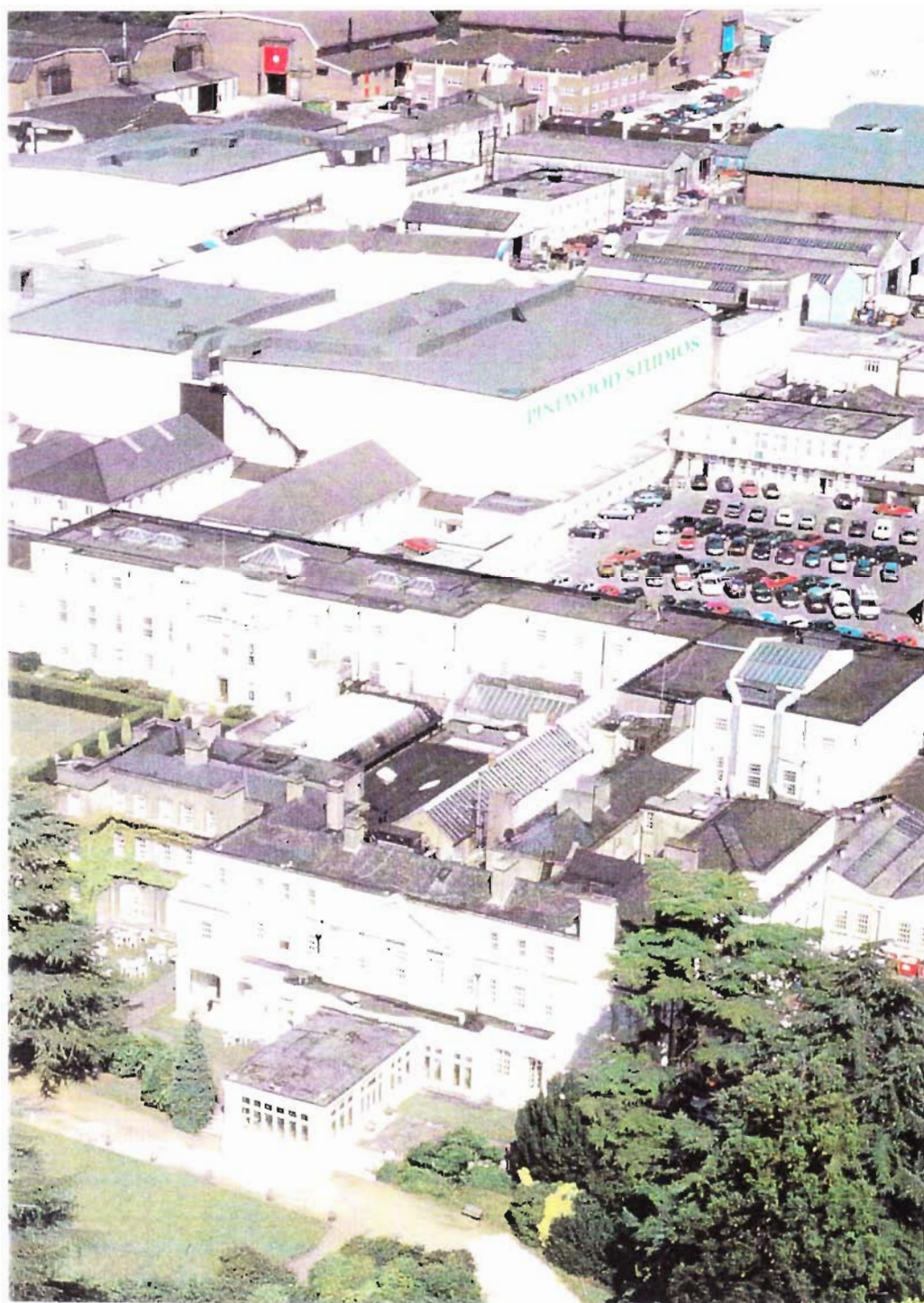
AGM PICTORIAL WRAP

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AMPS

THANK YOU PINEWOOD



VENUE OF THE AGM & SUSTAINING MEMBERS SHOW

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www.technicolor.com

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www.telefilm.co.uk

TWICKENHAM FILM STUDIOS
www.twickenhamfilmstudios.com

TO VAT OR NOT TO VAT?

Production mixer Malcolm Davies, who recently had a couple of VAT queries answered by his accountant thought other members who supplied their services to overseas companies, either in the UK or abroad, could benefit from the advice he received.

I recently did a commercial in Manchester for a Dublin-based company and duly invoiced them, including VAT as the work was carried out in the UK.

When the company paid the invoice they paid it less the VAT and sent a note to say that they were not liable for VAT as they were an Irish-based company. I immediately checked with my accountant who interpreted the regulations as I had had done but he said that just to make sure he would check with Customs & Excise.

Surprise surprise HM C&E quoted VAT leaflet 421 (a 106 page diatribe) which basically says that if you are a technician (they deem sound, camera, dubbing and editing people to fall into this category) then you are in a special area of VAT liability which means that if you do work for someone from outside the UK then this falls outside the scope of UK VAT, even if the work is carried out in the UK.

So the Irish company were correct but were quoting the wrong reasons.

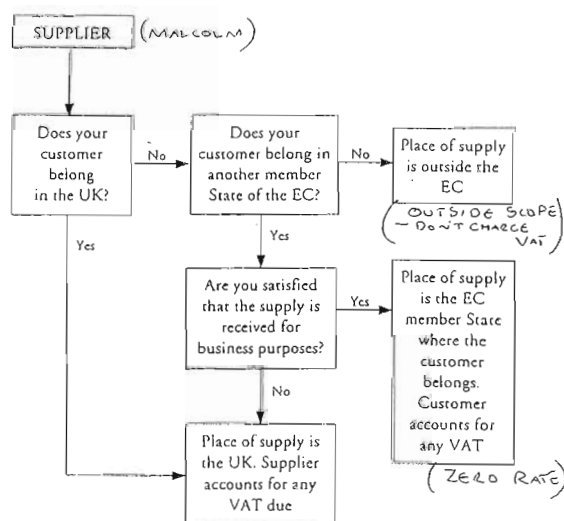
As I do a lot of work in the Isle of Man, I asked the C & E if this arrangement included the island. Back came the reply "Yes it does". Now, this opens up a whole new can of worms for myself and other members who have done productions there. Nearly all of these films are taking advantage of the special tax breaks for film production and most times the production company involved form an I o M limited company and register for Manx VAT. This means unless you are registered for Manx VAT then your Goods and Services are outside the scope of UK VAT and it should not be charged.

C & E went on to say that if this work (which is deemed to be 'abroad' by HM Customs) made a sum of money that puts you above the registration threshold for that country then you are obliged to register yourself for *their* VAT.

I also find it curious that all the mobile phone networks class the Isle of Man as 'overseas' but yet BT have a UK STD code for the island. So beware if you use your mobile phone there - you'll be charged international roaming rates.

To help you to decide if VAT should be charged, here is the Customs & Excise chart from VAT leaflet 421.

MALCOLM DAVIES



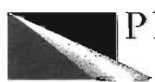
UK SUPPLIER OF SERVICES
FOR HIRED GOODS AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES

CHALLENGE TO HOLLYWOOD - PINEWOOD BUYS SHEPPERTON

A £35 million deal, led by Michael Grade with cash from venture capitalists 3i, brings together two of the largest film studios in Europe, creating a British rival to Hollywood studios such as Warner Bros, Paramount and MGM.

Dan Adler, investment Manager at 3i, said the deal would not lead to job cuts. There are 140 permanent staff at Pinewood and 120 at Shepperton.

AMPS members may be interested in the the following potted histories of the two studios gleaned from Patricia Warren's *British Film Studios*, and Gareth Owen's *The Pinewood Story*.



PINEWOOD STUDIOS

In the early 1930s Charles Boot, head of a large construction

company became interested in the idea of building a film studio to rival those of Hollywood. In 1934 he purchased Heatherden Hall, a large 19th century mansion situated in an 156-acre estate.

J Arthur Rank was producing religious films and distributing them through General Film Distributors, a company that he set up with CM Woolf.

Dissatisfied with the service received from the twenty so studios then available in and around London, he teamed up with Charles Boot and together they formed Pinewood Studios Ltd.

Building work started in 1935 with a new stage completed every 3 weeks. Five stages were built, three large and two small together with workshops, dressing rooms, a power house and sound department. The Heatherden Hall building was converted into administration and production offices, and the old ballroom into a restaurant. The total cost was around £1 million.

RCA sound equipment had been considered first as their quote was lower than Western Electric's. However it transpired that not all the necessary equipment had been included in the RCA price and Western Electric's was actually lower. So WE sound-on-film equipment was installed.

The first shooting started in December 1936, finishing off Herbert Wilcox's production *London Melody*, after his British & Dominions studio in Elstree had been destroyed by fire earlier that year. Carol Reed's *Talk Of The Devil* was actually the first feature shot entirely at Pinewood.

Roll on 1998. The 'man with the gong' symbol, that originated in the 30s as the trade mark of General Film Distributors, disappeared and was replaced with the large red dot Deluxe logo.

Several years earlier, in order to gain firmer footing in the USA, Rank had acquired the Deluxe Film Laboratories in Los Angeles and Toronto. In May 1998, at the Cannes Film Festival, an announcement was made that Rank Film Laboratories, Rank Video Services, and Pinewood Studios, along with the US Deluxe Laboratories, would all operate under the Deluxe brand.

Early in 2000, the 460-screen Odeon circuit was sold off for £280 million, the Rank nightclub chain sold for £156 million, and Pinewood Studios was bought by venture capitalists 3i for £62 million. Michael Grade became company chairman of Pinewood Studios Ltd.



In 1931 Littleton Park and its surrounding 60 acres was bought for £5000 by Scottish businessman Norman Loudon with the intention of setting up a film studio.

Louden's company, Flicker Productions, had been manufacturing flick books very successfully and he decided to start producing films for the cinema. He formed a new company in 1932 called Sound City Film Producing and Recording Studios.

The authentic country house, the acres of park and woods for exteriors, and two purpose built sound stages quickly attracted producers. By the end of 1932 three short films and two features had been made. The studios became known as Sound City.

By 1936 there were seven sound stages, twelve cutting rooms, three viewing rooms, workshops and the old house refurbished to provide hotel accommodation and a restaurant. That year 22 productions were completed using the studios facilities.

With the retirement of Norman Loudon in 1944, Sir Alexander Korda's London Film productions, along with British Lion, bought a 74% controlling interest in Sound City Films Ltd, which included the studios, for £380,000.

Fast forward to 1984. Lee International paid £3.6 million for the studios now encompassing nine stages. A considerable amount of money was invested in refurbishment and building new workshops. In 1987 the studios became part of Lee Panavision Inc.

Twelve years on, buy-out specialists Candover, along with Scott Brothers, Tony and Ridley, purchased the studios and facilities in 1995 for £12 million. A new large stage was built and 'state of the art' post production sound facilities installed. The buyout marked significant changes in the fortunes of the studio - during Candover's ownership, Shepperton Studios more than doubled it's profits.

And so to 2001. With cash from venture capitalists 3i, Pinewood Studios buys Shepperton Studios for £35 million. Michael Grade now heads both Pinewood and Shepperton.

BOOK DETAILS

The Pinewood Story by Gareth Owen with Brian Burford
(Reynolds & Hearn Ltd, 2000, ISBN 1-903111-09-9)

British Film Studios by Patricia Warren (BT Batsford Ltd, 1995, ISBN 0-71347559-5)

What Price Radio Mics?

Sandy MacRae and Patrick Heigham report on a meeting with JFMG Ltd.

Last year, AMPS were invited to meet Paul Gill of the Joint Frequency Management Group (JFMG) Ltd to discuss Spectrum Pricing Stage 3, where it affects freelance users of radio mics. On 23rd October, we attended a very useful and positive meeting. It appears that the 'lobbying' we have attempted over the last few years has landed on the sympathetic ears of Paul Gill. Things are changing for the better!

But we must all be aware of the extraordinary money that the Radiocommunications Agency raised for the Treasury in its recent Cellular Phone Licence Auction. Using Government figures, Paul Gill presented a very interesting calculation on what our radio mic channels are worth. It came out at a staggering £80,000 per channel per year! Thus our 14 channel UHF block, for example, would probably realise £1,120,000 per year for the Government, or more if it were auctioned to the cell phone companies. In no way are these figures reflected in the take-up of radio mic licences.

Paul estimated, unofficially, that only 15% of radio mic users are licensed, producing very little revenue. Don't get this wrong, it is recognised that our industry needs radio mics and could never compete with cell phones as a revenue generator. JFMG Ltd is not the ogre that some may perceive them to be. For certain, they are a client of the Radiocommunications Agency, but they do understand that our industry has a need to preserve the frequencies that we currently use. If there is no proof of use, then they WILL go - there are companies with a hell of a lot more money to spend who will snap them up! And the word is, "Use it or lose it". If not enough evidence of use is available to the authorities, reflected in licence numbers, obviously there is a temptation to use the bands more profitably. It is AMPS' position that we should play our part in maintaining the bands for our sole use by promoting licensing - it is the only way. Yes, you can get away with operating radio mics without a licence and the chances of detection are infinitesimal, but what happens when a high-powered cell phone transmitter parks itself in the middle of a radio mics band? Your expensive equipment is now useless and even your livelihood is threatened. This is what JFMG Ltd is trying to prevent.

For all those who were startled at the seemingly high licence fees for 'news-gathering' frequencies that appeared in the last Spectrum Pricing Study, it is necessary to explain the thinking behind the allocation criteria:

- A *Frequency Specific Licence* in this category would be exclusive to the licence holder for use anywhere in the UK, essential for broadcast companies

going live to transmission, mainly for news gathering.

- *Coordinated Frequencies* are controlled by JFMG Ltd on a temporary licence to reduce interference problems between users at a congested location, such as major sporting or national events.

- *Shared Frequencies* means that many users may be on the same frequency, but given the low power and restricted range of most radio mics, interference is probably only encountered between adjacent studios, or round the corner if two units happen to be working within a short distance of each other. These are OUR freelance frequencies.

The licence fees therefore reflect the degree of protection from interference. It is perfectly legal to use your licensed Shared Frequencies for news gathering or at sporting events but you will not have the exclusive protection offered by JFMG Ltd from interference caused by another user.

AMPS' have been talking to JFMG Ltd for some years now and tried to make sense of the various changes and regulations. We have explained our concerns to them on many occasions, mainly about the cost of licences and the allocation of frequencies. As a result of our efforts, we have been told that there is to be a radical change of strategy to encourage more users to take up the licence. What is proposed by JFMG to the RA is a simplified low cost, flat rate licence per Shared Frequency Block, with the two existing VHF blocks combined to make one 15 channel VHF Block. If you were to license all VHF and UHF Blocks, it will cost you considerably less than the present £160 per single block per year! Also, there are no current plans to change the frequencies. All very good news, indeed.

As a result of JFMG lobbying at the RA, it is now legal to use 10 mW Radio Mics on the deregulated and licence-free 173.7 - 175.1 MHz band, but don't rush in here. Everybody (including Sandy's wife!) is using this band for PA, churches, conferences and similar public events, thus the chances of interference are very high and professionally unacceptable.

We discussed the need to make people aware of the regulations, particularly the Producers. We even suggested making the Production Companies responsible for the licensing of equipment, taking into account the penalties that could be incurred if unlicensed use is detected. Under the law, this extends to confiscation of the equipment in use, also any equipment attached; this could include the camera and even the lights! Is it worth the risk? The idea may be considered but it doesn't solve the whole problem.

We hope to hear fairly soon what the final proposals will be on Licensing Fees. It will certainly be good news but, please, *play your part, get licensed* at the new reduced rates when they are announced.

“CONGRATULATIONS”

We would like to send congratulations to Production Mixer Ken Weston who kept the British flag flying at the 2001 Oscars with his contribution to the soundtrack of *Gladiator*, winner of the AMPAS Best Sound Achievement Award. Well done Ken.

Unfortunately Ken was unable to attend the presentation ceremony so AMPS Vice Chairman Sandy MacRae personally delivered flowers and a bottle of champagne to him (on behalf of the members of AMPS), to make up for missing out on the bubbly that would have been in the limo taking him to the awards show.

THE 2001 AWARDS - WINNERS & NOMINEES FOR SOUND

BAFTAS

Film Awards made on 25th February 2001

- BEST SOUND -

Almost Famous Jeff Wexler / DM Hemphill / Rick Kline / Paul Massey / Mike Wilhoit

Billy Elliot Mark Holding / Mike Prestwood Smith / Zane Hayward

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon Andrew Paul Kunin / Reilly Steele / Eugene Gearty / Robert Fernandez

Gladiator Ken Weston AMPS / Scott Millan / Bob Beemer / Per Hallberg

The Perfect Storm Keith A Wester / John Reitz / Gregg Rudloff / David Campbell / Wylie Stateman / Kelly Cabral

BAFTA's TV Craft Awards will be announced on 22nd April

OSCARS

- ACHIEVEMENT IN SOUND -

Cast Away Randy Thom, Tom Johnson, Dennis Sands and William B Kaplan

Gladiator Scott Millan, Bob Beemer and Ken Weston AMPS

The Patriot Kevin O'Connell, Greg P Russell and Lee Orloff

The Perfect Storm John Reitz, Gregg Rudloff, David Campbell and Keith A Wester

U-571 Steve Maslow, Gregg Landaker, Rick Kline and Ivan Sharrock AMPS

- ACHIEVEMENT IN SOUND EDITING -

Space Cowboys Alan Robert Murray and Bub Asman

U-571 Jon Jonson

Gladiator also won the Cinema Audio Society's award for 'Outstanding Achievement In Sound Mixing'.

Congratulations to all winners and nominees of Oscars and BAFTAs, and to the crews who worked with them to produce the sound tracks

JOHN MITCHELL MBE

MBE - For services to the British Film Industry

John Mitchell entered the film industry in 1933, working as a rewind boy in the projection theatre at Ealing Studios. Over the course of the next sixty odd years he rose to become a top ranking sound mixer and sound recordist, working on such films as Olivier's *Hamlet*, David Lean's *Great Expectations* and *A Passage To India*.

He has twice been nominated for an American Academy award for sound and won an Emmy award for sound for *The Scarlet And The Black*. His name appears in the credits of more than 150 films.

During the second world war he was an officer in the Royal Navy's Special Branch, (Anti-submarine branch) and was responsible for, amongst many devices, the design and manufacture of a small underwater echo sounder receiver. This was given to the crews of the Special Service Flotilla based at Dartmouth, so that when agents were dropped off on the French coast, the crew of the small rowing scows could get a bearing on their parent boat waiting up to two miles out at sea. The film Director Guy Hamilton, was the First Lieutenant on board such a boat, and graciously acknowledged to a film crew one day, when he and John met up again after the war, that he (John) was responsible for saving his life and the lives of many other sailors, with his small invention. John was later posted on secondment to the civilian anti-submarine experimental establishment at Failie on the Clyde, from where he was demobilised in 1946, and went back into the film industry.

Although he is now in his eighties, John Mitchell still works tirelessly to improve the work of British films and earlier this year he was asked by Jamie Payne of Epiphany Productions to oversee the sound on *The Dance Of Shiva*, starring Kenneth Branagh. He continues to give talks and demonstrations to society's, clubs, and organisations around the country interested in the work of the film makers, giving away any fees paid to charity.

There is no better ambassador to speak about the British Film Industry than John Mitchell, who has spent a lifetime in films, and richly deserves being honoured for his skill and imagination

I have just read *Scene To Screen*, a publication produced by Sony on the 24P Video Format and I cannot help but be struck by the naivety of the articles, coming from what are claimed to be experienced Producers and Directors.

The main praise for the new technology is its sensitivity and picture quality at low light levels - we don't need lights any more! This, to me, is a basic misunderstanding of LIGHTING. It is not just about exposure and quality - a Lighting Cameraman creates MOOD, an essential part of any - drama - this is his skill. The articles also go on about the new technology reducing the 'large crew sizes' while extolling the virtues of using Panavision's fast lenses and 'film look'.

So whom don't they need? The Lighting Cameraman, obviously (no lights required), the Camera Operator (anyone can point a video camera, surely), the Focus Puller (what does he do, anyway - we probably have a whole inch depth of field with F1.5 Panavision lenses), the Clapper/Loader ('rushes' and paperwork no longer required), the Grip, (who does the Crane and Dolly moves - the Director - sorry, it is all handheld now!). Maybe the Lighting Crew should go (hey, no lights, again!). Perhaps Make-up, Wardrobe, Designers, and Construction - we don't need as many now that it is on VIDEO!

What are we saying here? As far as these people are concerned, the recording media is not an issue. These jobs still have to be done skilfully otherwise the PRODUCTION quality suffers - what has this to do with technical PICTURE quality? This is one fine example of technology getting in the way of art! One director actually suggested in an article that this new camera would enable him to capture scenes usually 'destroyed' by technicians on a feature film crew - magic!

This is all from Sony's marketing people and they are definitely aiming it at the wrong people. The point they miss is, at last they may have an electronic camera that can challenge 35mm quality. But it is now even more important to get the details of makeup, costume and sets right because this new definition and quality means that these areas are featured clearly! It should be promoted this way, not attacking the crews as this is nonsense and can only be met with ridicule. No producer in his or her right mind hires

more technicians on a movie than is required, and there is no logic in changing this with a new media.

I leave sound till last - well, that is where we belong! The illustrations show attractive female operators (more) hugging the new camera on their shoulders (if it is THAT light - who needs tripods?) with only the microphone on top of the camera shown. Great. The reality is probably a large loom of cables stuck up the back of the camera for multitrack sound inputs and returns, timecode, power, video outputs and this is

supposed to be the new FEATURE tool. How can they talk 'quality' in one breath and show such misunderstanding of feature film skills in another? And does that 24P video camera run in sync with separate sound yet - no mention here, but the Sony DigiBeta never did. Another quote from an article was that the new producers don't want 'prefabricated' sound - what the hell is that? This, to me, shows no respect for the audience who pay to put bums on seats to see and hear an EXPERIENCE they cannot

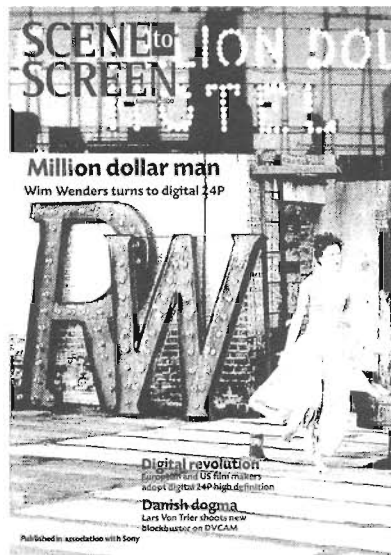
get at home on the telly!

Now I may appear Luddite, in favour of the status quo from the above but no, this is not my attitude. I don't care if it is silicon-coated wet string that is used to record the images and sound as long as it is BETTER for the PRODUCTION. Videotape is cheaper, certainly, but in reality, film stock costs are only a relatively small part of a feature film budget and this is a problem for Sony. Electronic distribution to digital projectors and no cost of release prints are real savers and this is the way we will go. But this is not PRODUCTION as such - the sharp end. One article does suggest that they will still shoot on 35mm but post on 24P - not a bad idea - but what is the 24P camera for, then?

AMPS must be part of this technological revolution. Surely we must raise our voices (in a positive way) and tell them where they are going wrong? Or have WE been wrong all those years? I'm sure the Camera Guilds have some similar thoughts - let's ask them.

But until someone from Sony actually asks us how we all do our jobs, we have little hope changing this 'TV Documentary' mentality. So, hey, Sony come and talk to us; we can sell your camera, honestly!

SANDY MACRAE



AMPS AGM & SUSTAINING MEMBERS SHOW

Exactly how we do it is a mystery but, true to form, the morning of Sunday, January 28th was another day of brilliant Winter's sunshine - completely against the prevailing weather but something we've managed to achieve for the last four years. While the low sun makes driving difficult, it creates an ideal backdrop for the AGM and Sustaining Members Show in Pinewood Studios' Green Room and Gatsby Suite that overlook the studio gardens.

The socialising started over coffee as members arrived. It was an ideal opportunity to catch up with old colleagues and meet some new members. The meeting was called and gradually the gathering moved to the Green Room for the AGM itself. As the audience was seating, the cry went up for more seats as it was standing room only! Tim Blackham, the organiser on the day, conjured up a dozen extra chairs and the meeting began.

Outgoing Chairman, Peter Hodges gave his report of the year's activities while AMPS treasurer Lionel Strutt outlined AMPS' financial position at the year ending. Both of these reports will be carried in detail in the separate AGM leaflet. Outgoing AMPS Secretary, Bob Allen proposed a vote of thanks to Pinewood Studios for their support and contribution to the day's events.

The minutes and agenda were addressed and worked through with discussion of certain issues including the topics of recognition of AMPS and charitable donations. The meeting ended promptly and moved into the Gatsby Suite for the Sustaining Members Show.

Each year we extend an invitation to all the companies who are Sustaining Members of AMPS, to come and show us some of their equipment, meet the membership, and the opportunity for an informal exchange of ideas. It has always been well supported and this year we had eleven companies take up the invitation.

Exactly how the companies wish to present themselves is entirely up to them but it was good to see so much equipment on display. Notable, as always, were Audio Developments and Nagra GB who have supported this event since the very first. Other regulars with plenty of equipment to show were Audio Ltd and Richmond Film Services, and we were pleased to welcome back Dolby who had been absent for a couple of years. It is more difficult for large format mixer manufacturers to bring gear but AMS Neve and Harrison had plenty of literature. First time exhibitor, Sony Cinema Products attracted interest, allowing us to catch up with progress in the SDDS format. Present, as a guest of Sony SDDS, was John Allen, an American theatre sound system designer, who just happened to be on holiday here.

The prize for the most heavily loaded table easily goes to RPS (UK) for a comprehensive display of recording media, and a compact video projection

system. It was also interesting to see dB Post, a post production facility, take a table. They were the first studio Sustaining Member to accept AMPS invitation, and chose to distribute post production advice notes that they have prepared for as an aid to their clients.

As last year, the size of the excellent free buffet lunch easily exceeded the capacity of the visitors to finish it. The informality on the day, a chance to discuss all aspects of motion picture sound over a drink and food, and learn a few things about equipment, has proved a very attractive combination. Attendance was considerably up on last year and everyone - members and exhibitors were thoroughly pleased with the event. We were

From: Ian Richardson <ian.filmsound@ntlworld.com>
To: ampsoffice <ampsoffice@tinyonline.co.uk>
Date: 01 February 2001 14:16
Subject: Re: An enjoyable AGM

To the AMPS Committee

Many thanks for arranging an enjoyable AGM. From one from the 'Provinces' it was well worth the effort!
Could you pass on my thanks to the Supporting Members who took the time and trouble to exhibit their wares.

See you all soon

Ian Richardson amps.

Production Sound Mixer

delight to receive thanks from several attendees, particularly those who'd travelled further than most.

As the AGM / Sustaining Members Show rapidly turns into the AMPS' event-of-the-year, I encourage all members to consider attending next year and find out what you've been missing.

KSA

(See the pictorial record on the following pages)

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Many thanks to all those members who responded quickly to the new Standing Order request recently.

There have been one or two glitches, whereby a double debit has occurred, probably by the members Bank branch not reading the new form correctly and failing to cancel the existing Authority.

In the event that this has happened to you, a refund will be made by cheque once our bank statements have been scrutinised. PAT HEIGHAM

FOR SALE

Old-type folding Ustacart with the large wheel mod on one end. Well used but in good condition.

- £525 plus VAT, including UK delivery. More details from Malcolm Davies on 01457 876163

THE 2001 SUSTAINING MEMBERS SHOW



▲ General views of the Gatsby Room gathering ▲



▲ Audio Ltd's display presented by Kishore Patel



Dolby's John Iles explains ▲



▲ dB Post's Janie Dahn answers studio questions



Nagra GB's John Rudling demonstrates ▲



Audio Developments present the portable side of mixing



Richmond Films - the Woodfords (right) discuss hire and accessories

Pics: Patrick Heigham, Bob Allen & Keith Spencer-Allen



RPS (UK)'s extensive media display



Harrison's Jamie Gray talks consoles



The Buffet



The Devourers

GOING FOR THE CHOP

On Friday, Jan 10, Technicolor hosted an AMPS screening of the much-acclaimed Ang Lee film, 'Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon'. Many thanks to them for a faultless SRD presentation and for the truly excellent spread of food and drink.

This was the first foreign language film screened by AMPS and happily it was a full house with equal numbers regrettably being turned away. The decision was made to go with the subtitled version, as opposed to the dubbed version. Most agreed it was a good decision with the sound of the Chinese dialogue being an integral part of the sound track.

Though weaned on a diet of fast and furious Hong Kong fight films, Taiwanese-born Ang Lee has demonstrated an extraordinary breadth of directorial talent with films such as the American civil war drama, *Ride With The Devil*, *The Ice Storm*, set in New England in the 1970s and, perhaps most famously, *Sense and Sensibility*, Jane Austin's period drama with Emma Thompson. *Tiger* is a mythical tale set in early 19th century China and is unusually beautiful to look at, with its spectacular shots of enchanted emerald green forests, silver lakes and vast panoramas of rocky deserts and stark mountain ranges.

The storyline contains all the essential narrative elements of love, honour, betrayal and retribution, plus a generous helping of acrobatic punch-ups. The main protagonists are all superb exponents of Wudan, a spiritually-based martial art founded on the principles of renunciation and self-discipline. Hence, the film is also gently laced with timeless pearls of wisdom from the Taoist and Buddhist traditions, concerning the underlying impermanence of corporeal life and how there's nothing in this world you can hold on to. They didn't actually mention 35mm, but...

Gifted with supernormal powers, opponents pursue each other up walls, across roofs, over water and through tree tops with astounding ease and grace. When push comes to shove, however, the speed and power of their hands and feet is breathtaking. In reality, the actors are more dancers than fighters, working under the guidance of Yuen Woo-Ping, the world-famous martial arts

choreographer also responsible for the fight scenes in *The Matrix*. If you think you've seen it all with Bruce Lee or Jackie Chan, et al, think again.

To the best of my knowledge all post-production was done in America. At the London Film Festival screening, co-writer and exec producer James Schamus told of the first few deliveries of rushes to reach him in the US; how they were all close-ups of super-fast foot movements and seemingly impossible to make any sense of. From the sound point of view the job was equally challenging - this was no ordinary footsteps job! Apart from the general flow of the film and clarity of the narrative, the excellence of the picture editing in the fight scenes is hard to overstate. All the details of the strikes, blocks and impacts are shown clearly with wondrous fluidity. Of equal importance and equally impressive is the sound element, especially when you consider the circumstances (discussed later) under which it was created. The results were never overcooked, always fluid and convincing without cartoonish overkill. Away from the fight scenes the sound design element is also strong but subtle (within the context of a martial arts movie) working alongside a strikingly eclectic music track to great affect. As the fabled sword of Wudan Master, Li Mu Bai, is drawn

from its scabbard; as the menacing forces of dark magic quicken; as the two combatants fly though the treetops and as the overblown, grizzly-faced warlord sets himself up for another effortless humiliation by one of our pure-hearted heroes, the laying and mixing never miss a beat.

Although the

crew was largely Chinese, Ang flew out American Production Mixer, Drew Kunin, to handle acquisition. In the event a great deal of the original sound was replaced. This was not due to poor recording but rather because main characters Michelle Yeoh and Chow Yun-Fat, not being natural Mandarin speakers, found it very difficult to produce Mandarin accents to Ang's satisfaction. Well over half of their dialogues were replaced, with the ADR editors working painstakingly under the guidance of interpreters, Betty Tang and Jean Tsein. Indeed Ang often cut together syllables from production sound and one or more loops to create a single word. From the sound editor's point of view, the results were often far worse than the original, but Ang was



listening with different ears. Another main character, the desert bandit/lover, also had all of his dialogue replaced for different reasons: the Chinese government would not allow his Tibetan accent in the film, and so his voice was completely replaced by that of another actor. Similarly, solo cellist, Yo-Yo Ma, was banned from entering China due to his musical involvement with the feature *Seven Years In Tibet* and was forced to record his parts in New York. From his recordings a MIDI tempo map was derived to provide a click track against which the rest of the orchestra could record in China. Not ideal.

Though clearly a team effort, responsibility for sound post production fell to supervising Sound Editor, Eugene Gearty. Eugene told me how the budget for the film and its audio post had originally been quite modest and so he went ahead and laid up and premixed the effects and Foley for the entire film in just four days. He figured he'd done a pretty good job for an action/fight movie within the time allowed, with all the punches and whooshes in the right places as you'd expect. Lee, however, was not impressed. In a move that set the tone for the rest of the sound post, Ang then spent the next two days with Eugene carefully going through his premixes, generating a new list of requirements and agreeing a new budget for a further six days effects work. The results were then similarly discussed and refined, with the process carrying on into the final mix as a 32-track premix on Akai DD8s, with all the individual components available on demand in the theatre from an AudioVision (the original editing format). Still looking for perfection, Ang continued to add new effects at this stage and even at the viewing of the print master, he was still asking Eugene to find extra sounds to spot in!

Except for occasional dialogue, all fight scenes started mute. The creation and choice of each effect was not taken lightly, with Eugene and Foley editor Jen Ralston initially dedicating a weekend to wild recordings of every kind of impact he could think of, from body parts to different woods and metals. This formed a starting point for his on-going sound design. He then went through the film with Foley engineer, George Lara, and c5's in-house Foley

artist, Marko Castanzo (himself coincidentally a martial artist), firstly putting on footsteps, then body movements and on and on as Ang refined his layers with his exacting ear for detail: the birds in the background had to be from the correct area of China for any given scene; a strike from a dry bamboo was not to be substituted for that of a green bamboo (recorded specially in the forests of China and Fed Ex'd over as a Pro Tools file); the sound

of an arm being grabbed was different from that of a leg, the whoosh of silk unlike cotton and a fist to the throat unlike a kick to the solar plexus or a knee in the charlies. You'd want to think twice before volunteering for the post of assistant Foley artist on that session, eh? For budgetary reasons most of the impacts for the fights were all Eugene's own work and the sounds of general destruction for the big fight scenes (such as the epic brawl in the tea house) were taken from his existing database created on other projects. All vocal sound for the fights was also looped using the original actors.

Clearly, a huge amount of work has gone into every aspect of this very successful film and, all things considered, the final sound mix is excellent. My thanks to Eugene for taking the time to talk to me and congratulations to him on being awarded Taiwan's equivalent of the Academy Award, the Golden Horse, for best sound. He has also been nominated for a BAFTA. So if you do make it over to Blighty for the ceremony, Eugene, and fancy a warm English beer, do get in touch.

JIM BETTERDIGE

WINNER 4 BAFTAs
10 ACADEMY AWARD[®] NOMINATIONS



**CROUCHING TIGER,
HIDDEN DRAGON**
AN ANG LEE FILM
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“★★★★★
THE MOST
BEAUTIFUL
FILM
YOU ARE
LIKELY TO
SEE THIS
YEAR.”

ED POTTON
THE TIMES

Production Sound: *Andrew Paul Kunin*
Supervising Sound Editor: *Eugene Gearty*
ReRecording Mixers: *Reilly Steele,*
Robert Fernandez

DoP: *Peter Pau*
Mixed at Sound One Corporation, New York.

Post script: The film was recognised at the recent awards ceremonies, collecting 12 BAFTA nominations and winning for Direction, Music, Costume Design and Film Not In English Language; while at the Oscars, it received 10 nominations and won for Cinematography, Art Direction, Music Score and Best Foreign Language Film.



THE BECTU HISTORY PROJECT

by Roy Fowler, its founder.

Noting the explosion of interest in recent years in personal minutiae one can believe that History is a subject whose time has truly come, especially for that sub-section known as Oral. Worldwide uncounted numbers on a multiplicity of machines are beavering away at capturing for better or worse the testaments of living witnesses. What began as the ACTT History Project (but transformed into the BECTU History Project after the regrettable disappearance of the film and television technicians trade union) was unwittingly an early entrant into this fascinating field.

It began in 1986, the spark being a not abstemious lunch with an old friend. As is an invariable habit of production old-timers we were exchanging (and topping), over a couple of bottles of the house rouge, our respective anecdotes of the best of times, the worst of times. My experience of the film and television industries here and in the US even then went back over forty years and later that luncheon day, sipping a bicarbonate, it struck me how very sad it was that so much telling history was disappearing along with those who had lived it.

There's not much that's predictable about film and television (unless it's disaster) and in their ever-changing history the very times have been mirrored. So I wrote an article for the Union journal pleading that incinerators alone should not receive those vibrant memories and that we should do something about it; and we did. A small group, mostly retired technicians and production people, got together, devised a loose but responsible structure, chipped in and raised some modest cash, acquired some quality recording kit, optimistically bought a few hundred blank audio cassettes, and taught ourselves Oral History. We were soon in business; our first interviewee was veteran cinematographer Eric Cross, now 99. In

November this year we fast approach and shall celebrate our five hundredth interview, which is to be Richard Attenborough in conversation with Sidney Samuelson.

The diversity of the archive is impressive. Probably all the major disciplines within our industries have been covered, some of course better than others, just as individual interviews vary hugely in length and quality. Some of the recordings have turned out to be important historical documents, including those of the now departed. Sound has been well represented, not least because Bob Allen - an early recruit to the Project - assiduously promotes its importance.

We are still recording primarily on C90 cassettes, mainly for reasons of portability and inconspicuousness, but an eye is kept on developing technologies and we accept that our future is digital. The Project was presented with a DV camera which allows an occasional video dimension but opinions vary about its historical usefulness in any wide application.

Our master tapes go to the National Film & Television Archive for permanent preservation in controlled conditions. A protection copy is struck and used for subsequent dubs, one of which always goes to the British Film Institute Library to be available for research purposes. Over the years the Project's material has given assistance to a large number of diverse undertakings - histories, articles and essays, biographies, theses and dissertations, even novels, and of course many radio and television programmes. Since the committee members were, for the most part, themselves active industry members whose experience in some cases goes back to the twenties they also are repositories of unique specialised information freely provided upon request.

The Committee (and the operation) is, in the best sense of the word, amateur. It comprises volunteers whose dedication is to gathering and preserving an informal history of the industries in which they spent their lives, not always with due reward or recognition of their contributions. They meet once a month to discuss a varying agenda and decisions are made on a wholly democratic basis. The primary purpose, of course, is extending the archive but all kinds of peripheral and interesting matters present themselves to be dealt with and the meetings have become an enjoyable social occasion.

Contacts with external bodies are extensive and rewarding. We have relationships with several universities foremost among which is Exeter whose School Of English and American Studies houses the Bill Douglas Centre for the History of Cinema & Popular Culture. I am especially proud to be on its Board of Management and a Member of the University Court. After a lifetime in film I finally feel respectable! The BFI (or, rather, these

days, the bfi), BAFTA, BUFVC, NFTVA, the Directors Guild, the Krasna-Kraus Foundation, the CTBF (for which we are making a film), the CTV Veterans, all have links to our activities.

Personal interests of committee members have often led to extracurricular events - screenings, observing anniversaries, seminars, and the like. In January at BAFTA, for instance, under the Project's auspices, Kevin Brownlow gave an illustrated account of the film restorations he and his associates have undertaken over the last twenty years. The Century of Cinema year in 1995 was of especial interest to us and we were instrumental in furthering memorial plaques to several neglected industry pioneers.

For the past fifteen years the History Project has pursued a fairly simple, clear-cut course and - somewhat to our surprise for, like Topsy, it just grew - has developed into a national resource as the most extensive and comprehensive archive in its field. That being so the time has come necessarily to reformulate. Of pressing need is for the recordings to be transcribed. This is a costly project and only one fifth or so of the tapes have yet been transferred to paper, mostly by labour of love. Thoughts inevitably turn to the Heritage Lottery Fund and very carefully an application is in preparation for a grant which over a phased period, should ultimately have the archive on-line and on CD-ROM not only for research but for educational and *public* access purposes. Such an ambitious undertaking would require professional supervision and take us into a new and seriously funded era - but the personal friendly, dedicated nature of our individual contributions will continue.

New and younger blood, gruesome as that sounds, is not only welcome, it is essential if the Project is to continue and thrive. There are lacunae in our gatherings from the past but we also recognise that, with the awesome speed of electronic media development, new areas are opening up - such as Interactivity - which must also be covered.

The History Project was an unlikely baby that unexpectedly has thrived beautifully. Its committee is open by invitation to anyone seriously interested in contributing to its activities. If that's you and you would like to know more please contact us through Bob Allen at AMPS or via the Project's honorary secretary at rickharley@hotmail.com

ROY FOWLER

PIONEERS OF ELECTRONICS DIE

The recent deaths of William Hewlett (87) and Alexander (Al) Gross (82) may cause no flood of tears from today's generation of mobile phone and PC users but both played important roles in the invention and development of the equipment they now take for granted.



WILLIAM HEWLETT
1914 - 2001

In 1938 William Hewlett, an electrical engineer, along with a David Packard, set up a small electronics company in Palo Alto, California. Hewlett-Packard became one of America's largest electronics firms.

Their first big break came when Disney Studios asked them for eight audio oscillators in connection with the production of *Fantasia*. The company went on to develop many of the key technological innovations of the past 60 years including electronic calculators and the first PCs.

With an initial investment of \$538, they created the first 'Silicon Valley' company and last year Hewlett-Packard and its satellites had a combined revenue of over \$5.5 billion. David Packard predeceased Hewlett in 1996.



Gross, with walkie-talkie built in 1938

ALEXANDER GROSS
1918 - 2000

In 1938, Al Gross made the first hand held, two-way radio transceiver that became known as his 'Walkie-Talkie', a name which became as commonly used as 'fridge', Hoover, or 'movies'.

During World War II, working for US Strategic Services, he designed a ground to air radio system with a range of 30 miles that was used by allied agents in enemy territory to send their reports to overhead allied aircraft.

After the war he formed the Citizens Radio Corporation and successfully lobbied the US Government to establish a personal radio licence spectrum, the Citizen's Band.

In 1947 Gross developed printed circuitry with miniaturised components for his radio devices and laid the ground work for the cellular phone industry. The personal pager and cordless phone soon followed. Many of his patents were sold to Motorola.

The secret technology behind the ground-to-air system he developed for the Strategic Services was eventually declassified in 1976 leading the way to the cellular explosion that transformed global communications.

THE POST (SYNCH) BAG

Dear Editor

Concerning the article *It Will Record - a Tribute To The Nagra* which seems to have led to a somewhat irrelevant letter, concluding with a rather insulting comment concerning part of the article written by our AMPS hard working editor.

Bob is absolutely right in saying that it most certainly was the policy of at least one studio in the late 1940s/early 1950s to post synch all dialogue recorded on location as a matter of course. I know that was the policy of the Rank Organisation at Pinewood at that time because I was offered a job with the post synch unit which was responsible for that job of post synch all location dialogue as soon as it reached the studio. I gratefully declined the offer which seemed to be one of the most boring occupations imaginable.

As for the unnecessarily insulting comment about working on documentaries, that type of sound recordists' work can be difficult and interesting, providing some opportunities for innovative experiments with different types of microphones or equipment which would not be possible when working on expensive features, quite apart from the fact that a sound recordist working on a documentary is very much alone in every way.

PETER HANDFORD
Suffolk

Dear Editor

I have read Bob Allen's *Tribute To The Nagra* article in issue 34 of the AMPS Newsletter. This is certainly a fitting tribute if ever there was one and so well deserved.

In Bob's article, he made references to the acquisition of location sound (in the period 1950 / 1960) by the major studio sound departments and states that the policy was to record a guide track for later post synch.

This drew a sharp reply from Ken Osborne (issue 35), pointing out how hard the Sound Department at ABPC, under Tony Lumkin, worked to produce usable location sound.

The ABPC Sound Department employed some very talented people both on the floor and in post production, as did the Sound Departments of the other major studios, and I have no doubt that what Ken says is correct.

I started as a Production Runner working for Mirisch / United Artists at MGM British in 1968 and stayed there working on *Man's Fate*, the Fred Zinneman picture that was cancelled about one week before the start of shooting.

During this time I got to know several of MGM's Production Mixers and Boom Operators very well, and this I repeated when working at Shepperton and Pinewood.

The Rank Organisation did appear to post-synch all location dialogue in the Rank films of the 1950s / 1960s, certainly all the ones I can bring to mind.

If I watch on TV a British film made during the 1950s / 1960s most location dialogue appears to be post synch.

Therefore I think that Bob Allen is correct in his views, and Ken Osborne correct in his.

Yours sincerely

GORDON THOMSON (Sound Recordist)
South Ruislip

Dear Editor

À propos recent Newsletter correspondence, it may not be inappropriate to consider come not too distant history; the reason d'être for an unhealthy situation being entirely vested interests - even jobs for the boys!

It is absolutely true that Tony Lumkin was unique in his untiring efforts to use location recordings wherever possible, giving enormous encouragement to all his crews to use every possible opportunity and equipment to this end.

It is regrettably true that another major studio disgracefully exploited every situation to further the income when active production was almost at a standstill, while the post production arm of the Sound Department was the only part of the complex to be making any money.

It was a big 'put-down' to both boom operator and mixer to have a cynical and inept HoD say "...it seems to me Laddie that you have an awful lot of equipment there to try and get a few guide tracks". As the doors of the plane thudded shut, it was nice to think that we were on our way to prove him wrong. Some thousand miles further on, and somewhere along the line, nice things said from the Director - even on very rare occasions from a Producer - when one could up the adrenaline on hearing some rushes that would deserve to end up in the cinema.

Back at that studio: an even bigger put-down to see and hear that same dialogue being forced through the ADR bit, but a slight lift to know that one's friendly dubbing editor would see both the original location dialogue and the post synch would be laid up on dialogues 1 & 2. Let the highly qualified dubbing mixer decide.

So often Dialogue 2 did not get its chance, but the post synch theatre had paid off! The studios post synch dogma was an all too blatant racket that lasted all too long to keep the post synch theatre busy for no better reason than the studio's bottom line.

Again, thank you AMPS; we can say what we mean - and mean what we say.

PETER T DAVIES
Zurich

~ TRIBUTES ~

JOHN BRAMALL, Hon AMPS

Bram, as he was known to all his friends, began his sound career at the BBC during the very early forties and was subsequently involved at times in the recording of wartime speeches, being ineligible for military service due to a serious childhood ailment. After leaving the BBC he was engaged in general sound recording and worked with Edgar Vetter before joining MGM in the mid-fifties which is where I first met him.

Bram was a most capable and very versatile mixer, especially at MGM where he was involved in all aspects of recording - music, dubbing, post synching - and production mixing. Unfortunately, his overall accomplishments tended to work against him when it came to being released for location work or even production recording within the studios. However, when he was made available, he worked on the following MGM films - *The Angry Hills*, *Long Hot Summer Day*, *633 Squadron*, and the TV series *The Prisoner*, and on such prestigious productions as *Where Eagles Dare*, *Goodbye Mr Chips* and finally *Ryan's Daughter*, during which time the studio was in the process of being closed. He then successfully freelanced on both features and documentaries.

It was a great pleasure knowing Bram as he was always so cheerful and generous hearted, living life to the full especially where his love of cricket was concerned. He was able to turn out at weekends for his local club in Radlett where he lived.

On retirement, he and his wife moved to Wiveliscombe in Somerset where they enjoyed many years until last summer when Bram very sadly died. He is survived by his wife and son.

DAVID BOWEN

MICHAEL BASSETT

Mike started his career in the Sound Department just after the war. I first had the pleasure of meeting him when I rejoined MGM at their Elstree Studios in 1956 where we remained together on the same sound crew until 1961. Unfortunately, later that same year, whilst on location in Wales, Mike subsequently lost his left eye due to a special effects mishap, but he continued working at MGM until its closure.

We met up again in the 80s and then worked together on numerous TV commercials and since our retirement remained firm friends. Mike, apart from being a most gifted sound maintenance engineer, was also a wonderfully innovative mechanical engineer, generously and freely devoting part of his retirement time to not only designing but also manufacturing individual specialised equipment for the disabled. Very sadly, Mike died in his local hospital on Sunday, January 14th. He is survived by his wife Peggy. My wife and I will miss him greatly.

DAVID BOWEN

END CREDITS 2000

CAST

JOHN ABINERI
TEX BENEKE
NICHOLAS CLAY
JOHN COLICOS
BILL DEAN
TONY DOYLE
FRANCES DRAKE
Sir DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS Jnr
RICHARD FARNSWORTH
JOANNA GARCIA
VITTORIO GASSMAN
Sir JOHN GIELGUD
CHARLES GRAY
Sir ALEC GUINNESS
GRETA GYNT
LIANE HAID
DORIS HARE
ARNOLD JOHNSON
PETER JONES
FRED KELLY
HEDDY LAMAR
FRANCIS LEDERER
NED LYNCH
WALTER MATTHAU
GARY OLSEN
HUGH PADDICK
BERNARD PRICE
Sir RALPH RICHARDSON
MICHAEL RIPPER
JASON ROBARDS
JOY SHELTON
SUSAN STEPHEN
CRAIG STEVENS
KEMAL SUNAL
NORA SWINBURNE
DAVID TOMLINSON
BILL WADDINGTON
PAUL WESSELY
LORETTA YOUNG

PRODUCTION

ANN BOREMAN
GEORGE BROWN
RON BOWIE
ANTHONY DARNBOROUGH
ROBERT DUNBAR
ROBERT FRYER
ANTHONY GILKINSON
JOAN JENKINS
TINA PETERS

DIRECTION

LEWIS ALLEN
PAUL BARTEL
JOSEPH H LEWIS
DEREK PARSONS
LIONEL ROGOSIN
ROGER VADIM

WRITING

JULIUS EPSTEIN
CARL FIODNAK
JOAN HENRY
STELLA JONCKHEERE
MERVYN MILLS
SAMUEL TAYLOR

ART DIRECTION

MAURICE CARTER
CARMEN DILLION

CONSTRUCTION

BASIL HEARN

CASTING

JENIA REISSAR

CAMERA

BERNARD HEDGES
GERRY MOSS
ORTELO MARTELLI
RORY O'SHEA
MIKE ROBERTS
RAY STURGES

SOUND

ED BERND
JOHN BRAMALL
KEN CAMERON
ERIC CHOCHAN
MIKE DENECKE
ROBERT MANGHAN Jnr
LARRY THOMPSON

CONTINUITY

JOAN DAVIS

STILLS

JOE PEARCE

MUSIC

GAYLORD CARTER
GEORGE DUNNING

EDITING

MARCEL DURHAM
RON POPE
JIM WALKER

SOUND EDITING

ROBIN CLARK
JAMES SHIELDS

ANIMATION

ARTHUR HUMBERSTONE

THE AGM PICTURES

MEMBERS LISTEN.....

- including Sandy MacRae, Jim Betteridge, Keith Spencer-Allen, Trevor Carless, Ian Richardson, Graham Hartstone, Peter Musgrave



◀ L-R: Lionel Strutt (Treasurer), Peter Hodges (out-going AMPS Chairman), Bob Allen (out-going Secretary), Brian Hickin (AMPSs Admin Secretary). Bob Allen looks more awake this year!



▶ OLD COLLEAGUES:
Mickey Hickey Hon
AMPS (left) with
Hugh Strain AMPS
Fellow (right)



L-R: Andrew Boulton,
new AMPS Council
Member; Lionel Strutt,
AMPS Treasurer; Alan
Curtis, MD of RPS UK,
an AMPS Sustaining
Member ▶

▲ ATTENTIVELY
- including Hugh Strain, John
Blunt, Colin Miller, Gordon
Thompson, Dave Stephenson,
Anthony Faust, Keith Sherry,
Dave Humpries, Brian
Simmons

Brian Hickin, AMPS
Admin Secretary
(left) talks with Colin
Miller, Sound Editor
▼ (right)

