The Newsletter of the Association of Motion Picture Sound

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NEW SUSTAINING MEMBERS

AMPS are very pleased to welcome three new Sustaining Members to. Sound Station, the Twickenham-based sales and hire equipment company; Mind The Sound, a north west London post production facility; and Fostex, the Japanese audio equipment manufacturer.

We are particularly pleased to have Fostex on board as it gives us closer links to a major supplier of equipment to our industry, and also because they are the first non-UK based AMPS Sustaining Member.

We thank all three for their support.

SOUND STATION
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Tel: 020 8607 8760 Fax: 0208 607 8965
URL: www.editstation.com
Email: mail@soundstation.co.uk

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URL: www.fostex.co.jp and www.fostexdvd.net

MIND THE SOUND
199 Queens Crescent, London NW5 4DS
Tel: 0207 482 5414 Fax: 0207 482 5414
URL: www.mindthesound.com
Email: info@mindthesound.com

AKAI PROFESSIONAL
www.akaipro.com

AMS NEVE
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ANVIL POST PRODUCTION
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AUDIO DEVELOPMENTS
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AUDIO Ltd
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DB POST
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DE LANE LEA SOUND CENTRE
www.delanelea.com

DOLBY
www.dolby.com

DSP Ltd
www.teddington.co.uk

DTS
www.dtsonlinc.com

FELTECH ELECTRONICS
www.feltech.co.uk

FUTURE POST
www.futurefilmgroup.com

GEARBOX
www.gearbox.com

MIND THE SOUND
Www.mindthesound.com

NAGRA
www.nagra.com

PINEWOOD STUDIOS
www.pinewood-studios.co.uk

RG MEDIA
www.rgml.co.uk

RICHMOND FILM SERVICES

RPS DATA PRODUCTS (UK)
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RYCOTE
www.rycote.com

SENNHEISER
www.sennheiser.co.uk

SHEPPERTON STUDIOS
www.sheppertonstudios.co.uk

SOLID STATE LOGIC
www.solid-state-logic.com

SONY BROADCAST & PROFESSIONAL UK
www.pro.sony-europe.com

SONY CINEMA PRODUCTS
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www.twickenhamfilmstudios.com

AMPS EGM & AGM 2002 REPORT
10th March, Pinewood Studios

Quite how we seem to be so consistently good with the weather for AGM days is a puzzle but there the sun was again. And for this very reason we had swapped the venues in use at Pinewood - the exhibiting Sustaining Members had asked if there was somewhere with less direct sunlight so that LCD screens, monitors and projected images could be seen. So the EGM and AGM were rearranged for the Gatsby Suite.

A well attended meeting heard AMPS Chairman, Tim Blackham, open the EGM with an explanation of the reason for it being called - a proposal to make changes to the AMPS Constitution.

Resolution 1 was a lengthy proposal and the Chairman passed to Peter Musgrave, the principle architect behind the changes to run through them, the details already having been circulated by post. He started by covering amendments to the Aims & Objects of AMPS and the need to widen the scope of membership slightly to reflect changes in the industry so that AMPS would be able to accept, as full members, people whose work was crucial to sound but didn't fall directly under any of the existing membership requirements.

Rule 5 was then examined with the intention of correcting some of the long standing anomalies in length of experience prior to full membership such that it was more equal.

Rule 8 made some changes to Council representation covering the new membership grades, and raised the quorate levels of AMPS meetings to 30.

He then outlined Resolution 2, a proposal to modify the way the Association was described within the constitution as encompassing 'sound and image technology' to reflect the changes made under Resolution 1.

Discussion was then thrown open to the floor. John Ireland requested Peter to explain the reasoning behind changes to the scope of AMPS membership because he was concerned that these changes suggested diluting the focus of AMPS and that the existing constitution already was worded to allow for a broader interpretation anyway.

There was lengthy discussion on all these matters with several members expressing doubts, viewing the proposals as a move in the wrong direction. John Wolstenholme was concerned about the working 'sound and image' proposing a change to 'sound in conjunction with image'.

Several Council members spoke to say that many of the concerns being expressed were shared by Council members when this discussion first started 18 months ago and that perhaps the Council were at fault in not keeping the membership more informed of the way their thinking was going.

Points, both for and against, were aired for over an hour prior to voting, including considerations for amendments or even delaying the vote. A vote was taken on John Wolstenholme 's amendment but was narrowly defeated. A vote on the original proposal for Resolution 1 was then taken and passed by a single vote, the Chairman not casting his vote. Discussion on Resolution 2, the change of Association description within the constitution continued. Peter Musgrave proposed an amendment from the floor to change the name of the Association to be the Association of Motion Picture and Sound. Many contributions from the members showed concern about change in the initials of the Association, and a suggestion form Graham Hartstone that a change in the name at this stage would be premature and the amendments under Resolution 1 should be watched to see if their impact on AMPS membership justifies a name change at a later date.

A vote was taken on Peter Musgrave's amendment and was reject with just three votes in favour. A vote on Resolution 2 was then taken and passed easily. The AGM was then started over an hour late and run through at high speed to bring the day back on schedule. The Minutes of the 2001 AGM were accepted with no matters arising.

The meeting them heard reports from the Chairman, Treasurer and Membership Secretary all of which will be published in full shortly. The Chairman paid tribute to the Council members retiring - Richard Daniel and Peter Musgrave after outlining the Associations activities over the last year. The Treasurer reported on the income and major expenditure of the Association and the fact that there will not be any increase in subs this year.

Two AMPS Fellowships were awarded - Peter Musgrave was asked to report on his presentation to Les Hodgson who had been unable to attend the AGM due to ill health. Much to Peter's surprise, the Chairman then asked Hugh Strain to read a citation which turned out to be a Fellowship for Peter Musgrave for long term service to AMPS. An almost speechless Peter, completely unaware of this, then thanked the membership for this award.

The Sustaining Members Show got under way at the close of the AGM with a buffet being served a few minutes later.

Attending members were able to see equipment and information from Akai Professional (with new software products), Audio Developments, Audio Ltd, Richmond Film, Nagra (with the new Nagra V), RPS Data Products, RG Media, DB Post, and new member Sound Station who had a sizable presentation with projection, Pro Tools systems and Fostex DV4O DVDRAM recorders. Patrick Heigham had also put together a display of merchandise, information and a video display for the Hear Dogs For The Deaf Charity. The day finished around 3pm with the view that this had been another successful event, but the morning's Extraordinary General Meeting and the discussions within it had to be considered in the future.

(Photos of the events can be found on pages 8-9) KSA

A TOUGH LOCATION

John Rodda tells of working on the Channel 4 mini series *Shackleton*

I don't like boats. They wobble about in all sorts of odd directions when you least want or expect it. But, having said that, once in a while a job comes up which you know will be a complete corker to work on. A couple of years ago it was Longitude which we all knew was a cracking book and would translate into a fascinating film. So you pop down to Sainsbury's, fill a basket with ginger biscuits and Kwells and off you go. Even Charles Sturndge, the Director, felt seasick when we were filming the sequences on board ships, so what on Earth possessed him to write a script about Shackleton? We couldn't refuse. Orin (Beaton, the Boom Operator) and I thought that it would turn into an epic and we weren't going to be disappointed. So we popped down to Sainsbury's.

The obstacles we were going to have to overcome snapped into sharp focus during the first six weeks of the shoot while we were working on the main UK locations and our first stint on the stages at Shepperton. People would keep popping down from the Production Office to ask for our shoe sizes, equipment lists or for an estimate on the number and weight of the boxes we would be taking. Obviously, we knew it could get extremely cold, so I started posting messages on the AMPS and lBS message boards to draw on the knowledge and experience of those who had already worked in such hostile environments. I also spoke to manufacturers about the optimum battery technology. It has to be said that the e-mail forums we have these days are an invaluable resource when you're embarking on something totally different, like a shoot on moving ice floes, in freezing conditions, miles from solid ground and this was no exception.

I'd already decided to record on Deva, sending DVD rushes back to the UK every three or four days. Along with Cameo, my digital mixer, this package makes all the track routing, headphone feeds and music playback a complete breeze. I would also want to have enough hard disk space to keep each day's rushes for two weeks before i'd have to delete a thing. Plenty of time to be sure that our tracks had made it safely back to UK, so I called up the Zaxcom dealer to order another 20 Gigabyte drive - enough for an extra five day's sound rushes. I know there are plenty of sceptics who wouldn't completely trust my system and there's no shortage of editors and audio post-production houses who aren't convinced that the benefits of recording non-linear on location are worth the perceived hassle or can be carried over into the post-production chain.

Luckily there are a few intrepid pioneers who realise there are better ways to do things and that we can make use of new technology to improve our working lives. Two hours of rushes into an audio workstation in around 8 minutes. The whole thing is gathering momentum, obstacles are being overcome with new formats and equipment and the big manufacturers (like Fostex with the DV-40, Nagra and even Aaton it would seem) are getting on the bandwagon. Oops, sorry to bang on!

By now, answers were starting to come in from my newsgroup enquiries. Rechargeable Lithium Ion is the most efficient choice by far, but is hugely expensive if you're looking at a draw of 30 to 35 amp hours at 12 volts over the course of your day. They can explode if they're charged from below freezing too, so maybe they're not such a good idea. NiCds and NiMH suffer too much from loss of capacity in extremely cold temperatures, but good old lead acids are cheap, reliable and really hard to beat. Russians start their cars with them in awfully cold weather by putting their headlights on for a few minutes. The battery drain warms the cells and increases the output considerably, so I ordered a spare 'Big One' from Jim McAllister at Black Box Video. This would give me around 48 amp hours, more than enough for a long day.

We were going to be using cordless booms as usual. I have total confidence in my Audio Ltd RMS2020s and they would give us exactly the flexibility needed on a fast moving TV drama shoot. No cables to get locked into the rapidly refreezing slush (as the Sparks discovered later) and so I ordered up a good supply of Lithium 9 volt batteries for my radio mics. They're over double the price and capacity of alkalines, but suffer very little from output loss in the cold and so therefore it's money well spent. Zaxcom had contacted me with recommendations on the use of Deva and Cameo in the Arctic. They said Cameo would function normally come what may, but Deva would require a 10 minute warm up - power on, but without hard disk activity (le recording or playback) if used below -10 degrees centigrade. Because the only moving part (the hard disk) is hermetically sealed, condensation isn't an issue.

All the usual concerns with salt water getting at the gear applied on this trip, so plenty of large polythene bags and Kimwipes were requested on our stores list. Obviously, it's not just the equipment that we had to take special care of. The Production Office bought each of us a complete range of Arctic kit in the brightest orange they could find and arranged a day of Arctic familiarisation to be conducted by our support team, Poles Apart, whose job it was going to be to make sure each of us came back in one piece. Larry, the drawling Louisiana Mormon ran through the basics. "The sea temperature will be around minus eight degrees Celsius so we have important personal safety rules: Rule 1: Don't fall in the water. Rule 2: Don't fall in the water. Rule 3: Don't fall in the water." That's all I remember.

Oh yes, I forgot to mention, I was getting married on the Saturday before we set off for Iceland to start our six week Iceland and Greenland trip, so that was the honeymoon out of the window. Not too popular at home when I mentioned it, I can tell you. Sally (my wife-to-be) had organised a boom pole guard of honour - I thought I might die of embarrassment when I saw it, but I have to admit that it was a really neat touch to the day, made all the more special with the white wind-jammers kindly loaned by Vivienne at Rycote. I think that was about it. It was now mid-May, time to put my hard-disk recorder where my mouth is and head off into the wild white yonder.

Our first few days in Iceland were spent on day trips out on Kaskelot which had been refitted and dressed to look as much as possible like Shackleton's ship Endurance. These first days were a bit like sea-trials not only for the ship, but for all of us too. There was a lot of heavy rain, Kwells and ginger biscuits aplenty

were consumed by many as the heavy seas pitched and rolled our round-bottomed ship. Off our stern we even had a couple of safety boats shadowing us while we were shooting - just in case. Almost anything is better than working below decks if you're prone to sea sickness - even getting wet, another of my pet hates! My trolley is a fairly small affair so I was able to tie it off to something solid on deck and protect the whole thing from the pouring rain with those thick, four-foot square polythene bags like the ones the camera boys always carry. We had cut some portholes into the bags so I could still get to the mixer, but the protection remained pretty effective.

On our last night back in Reykjavik, I was setting up to burn my DVD before we set off for Greenland. I hadn't done the usual trick of starting to backup during the last hour of the day because I didn't want to risk the DVD drive getting a drenching with salt water on deck. I soon realised everything was not working as it should. Deva wasn't recognising the DVD drive and wouldn't start the 'mirror' process. Lots of switching off and back on, rebooting and all the rest got us nowhere. At last, we spotted a bent pin on the 60 way SCSI connector and a bit of attention with a small screwdriver meant we were back in business but not without half-an-hour's cursing and gnashing of teeth. Since then, I've had the socket replaced and mirroring always passes off without a hitch, but it was definitely a salutary lesson.

Next morning, we exchanged the comfort of our hotels for the spartan, 4 men-to-a-berth Polar Bird, an ice strengthened container ship, which we would call 'home' for the next five and a half weeks. Orin, Mitch Low (my assistant) and I shoehorned ourselves into our cabin and we rapidly realised that only one of us could unpack at a time. So, I went off below decks to find the container we were going to be using as a workshop, for equipment cleaning and storage, battery charging and drying out our Arctic gear.

Polar Bird is a pretty big ship. She operates as a supply vessel to the various Antarctic expeditions and is powered by one enormous engine, which runs everything on board. The crew told us that it hadn't been turned off in seven years. They just alter the pitch of the propeller blades from the bridge when they want to go forward, backward or stop. For icebreaking work, the front is shaped in such a way that she can steam into an ice floe. At this point, the bow is forced up by her momentum and comes crashing down on the ice which, hopefully, splits apart. She had been loaded in Harwich a few days earlier with all our shipping containers filled with the essentials for such an ambitious trip: Camera, Lighting, Grips, Special Effects and an undisclosed quantity of alcoholic beverages. We even had a Jet Ranger helicopter, a couple of Snow Cats and Skidoos in the hold as well as more traditional sledges to carry lighter equipment like our sound gear across the ice.

That afternoon we were setting off from Reykjavik for the Denmark Straits - known to be one of the roughest and most unpredictable stretches of the North Atlantic you could find. As luck had it, we were to enjoy the smoothest crossing in living memory so lashing all our gear to immovable objects proved to be a wise but unnecessary precaution. So far, so good. The ice is nothing if not unpredictable.

Within 30 hours we were on the edge of the Greenland continental shelf, around fifty miles from land. We began to pass occasional small ice floes, growlers (smaller lumps of ice floating just under the surface) and some pretty big icebergs. Then, directly ahead, there it was. The pack ice we'd been told to expect, but a much wider and thicker band stretching out farther from the coast than anyone had thought likely at this time of year.

Our plan had been to steam on into the tiny fishing town of Ammasilik, and work pretty close to some level of civilisation, but this was going to prove impossible. Sure, Polar Bird could probably smash her way through to the coast in a couple days, but it would be suicide for the Kaskelot and her crew, who would quickly find themselves trapped in the ice and gradually carried South with the currents. Worse still, she could be crushed like Shackleton's Endurance.

Kaskelot had been built for ice work in 1948, round bottomed, of double skinned green oak to work as a supply vessel to the South East Greenland ports, but hadn't been here in nearly fifty years. It was going to become a little piece of history to see her steam back into the harbour she had once visited regularly, but sadly not to be. Instead, we now had to make a new plan. Of course, we needed to shoot, but where? We'd constantly been told that moving ice floes were too dangerous for us, but now we had little choice.

We spent our first few days on the ice edge, shooting Shackleton's escape from the Antarctic coast, our Zodiac semi-rigid inflatables drifting between the truly serene floes as we followed the progress of the heroes' three lifeboats being rowed into the Atlantic in search of safety. Plenty of opportunities for sync sound whenever we were far enough away from the throb of the Polar Bird's engine - which simply could not be switched off!

Here, I was using Deva in mobile mode using the internal mixer to record an 'open' mic and three radio channel mix whilst our Norwegian captain was constantly doing his best to keep Polar Bird facing toward us so that her noisiest exhausts and vents radiated away from 'the set'. Throughout this period we were lying off the ice-edge venturing into the looser spread floes to shoot. Kaskelot was expected to arrive at any time now. When she did, our next big push would be to shoot Shackleton and his crew's first sighting of pack-ice in the Weddell Sea and their gradual realisation that they would not be able to sail anywhere near as close to the South Pole as they had hoped, adding at least 300 miles to their overland journey across the Continent. Daylight lasts nearly twenty-four hours a day at around 64 degrees north during this time of year. There's a three or four hour period of dusk followed by the sun rising again. It was during this 'magic hour' when word came around that Kaskelot had been spotted coming over the horizon so out we all trooped to see the magnificent sight of the three-masted barque steaming towards us.

Kaskelot's time with us was limited and we had plenty of scenes to shoot. We started next morning with a series of helicopter shots as she sailed along the ice edge, followed by a precarious transfer of actors, crew and equipment by Zodiac from Polar Bird. All I could safely take with me to Kaskelot was my mobile kit: Deva, 3 Audio RMS 2020s and my Sanken CS-3 with a spare transmitter so that I could provide courtesy headphone feeds. It would have been far too risky to try to transfer the trolley between ships, but it does no harm to go back to my documentary roots

◄ *The sound crew - (left to right), Orin Beaton, John Rodda, Mitch Low*

(continued from page 5)

from time to time. There's an eerie calm to the sea when you get amongst the ice floes. There's a silence broken only by the sound of small (and sometimes larger) floes breaking apart. The swell is lazy, damped by the giant slabs of ice floating on the surface. Unfortunately, this didn't mean that Kaskelot sat steady in the water. She'd roll like a pig at times and it seemed even more so when we were huddled below decks which had been cleared of all but cast and camera for wide shots and helicopter passes. The sun was glorious and we saw it often, but the horizontal rain and biting wind was vicious and we were all glad of our special Arctic gear. We enjoyed temperatures, which reached fifteen degrees Celsius, but endured winds and rain which reminded us of the hostility of environment as the mercury, dropped to minus ten within minutes.

◄ *The Rycote guard of honour*

◄ *Sound rig on the sledge with Polar Bird in background*

At last, it was time for Kaskelot to leave us. Most of the crew waved goodbye to her from the *Polar Bird* deck just as we had welcomed her a week or so earlier. Ice floe work proved to be pretty safe considering all that had been said. Some floes are around 25 kilometres long and seem to be extremely thick and solid. The technique adopted involved *Polar Bird* coming alongside a decent sized, stable floe. A couple of the intrepid Norwegian crew (who think nothing of it) then jump onto the icy snow surface and drill down with a spiral Archimedes' screw on the end of a two-stroke engine. Then, they drop a steel girder into it, attach the mooring rope and use the ship's winches to draw us closer to the floe. This went rather well, providing a safe platform onto which the Art Department could start building replicas of Shackleton's various camps.

Unfortunately, safety being at the front of all our minds, venturing across the ice too far from *Polar Bird* was pretty much out of the question. This meant we had the added challenge of recording usable dialogue tracks never further than two hundred yards from a very big boat on which the engine simply could not be switched off!

I am still amazed at how well it worked. Yes, we used a lot of radios, but we also shot scene after scene on open microphones alone. A particular favourite is the Sanken CS-3, shotgun style reach, but the length and weight of a Sennheiser 416 so it's pretty popular with the Boom Operator too. Disaster finally struck when we had been shooting on the floes for nearly three weeks. We had broken for lunch and nearly the whole cast and crew was on board *Polar Bird.* The ice floe we had been filming on only half an hour earlier had split in two and it was at least two or three hours before all the equipment, sets and props had been safely brought back on board. 'Icy calm' being the order of the day, we simply drew in our mooring ropes and began sailing further north in search of colder water and more stable floes where we could repeat the whole process again. I always find my radio mic range pretty good and often found here that we had no need to get my trolley onto the ice in order to record good sound.

To my eternal shame but great comfort, I found on three or four days that I was able to dangle my receiver aerials out of a window in our shared top deck Portacabin and pick-up a full, clean signal even with all the ship's radio and radar gear in use. In my defence I should make it crystal clear that I still made regular trips onto the ice to check that Orin and Mitch were okay - particularly when the hot soup or chocolate bars were brought out! Whenever we ventured farther onto a floe, we'd have to ratchet strap my trolley on the sledge, which had been prepared for us back in England. An open topped plywood box fixed to it was filled with our extra sound gear as well as spare jackets, hats and mittens. Whenever we needed to move there was ample opportunity to share the experience of Shackleton's men as we struggled to push and drag the whole thing a few hundred yards. This was hummocky ice and we had to start the sledge off (the hard bit) and then keep it moving to our destination.

Mitch, being by far the biggest, tended to find himself harnessed to the front while Orin and I did our best to keep up, guiding and pushing from behind as we swore and shouted helpful instructions to him. More than once, one of us ended up with a boot full of water as we lost our footing and plunged a leg into a melting ice pool. With the ice work over, it was time for *Polar Bird* to do her stuff. We spent that night being jolted and shaken about in our bunks as she smashed her way through the ice pack and on towards harbour in Ammasilik. Next morning, we awoke to find ourselves edging our way into port - even our mobile phones worked here so we were able to call our families for a near normal conversation for the first time in four weeks. Inmarsat and Iridium phones are okay in an emergency, but are not the way to have a normal, relaxed and reassuring conversation with a loved-one. The delay makes it frustrating at best. At worst you avoid it altogether. I spent quite a bit of my spare time setting up and maintaining an e-mail system so that cast and crew could send and receive messages via Inmarsat, which proved to be a pretty fast and efficient way of exchanging valuable news and gossip with our families at home. For most of the unit, the sight of land was going to be a short-lived treat.

There was accommodation for only twenty people here and no possibility of taking a full unit up by helicopters for the mountain shoot. Once again, I was going to be working 'over-the-shoulder' so my small kit and overnight gear was packed and taken ashore while Mitch planned how best to spread himself out in the matchbox cabin which Orin and I were leaving him for the return trip to Iceland. It was a fair trade we were going to be getting proper beds in our own rooms - luxury!

Ammasilik is a tiny shanty town on the south east coast with a pretty major alcohol problem. We've all seen it before. The native peoples, in this case 'Inuit' are dispossessed in their own country and Greenland is no exception. The sequences we shot here were to cover Shackleton's overland trip across South Georgia when he realised they could only land on the wrong side of the island and would have to cross unexplored and unmapped mountains 12,000 feet above them with nothing more than a spirit stove, powdered milk and the carpenter's adze instead of ice axes.

The low cloud ruled out our use of helicopters for the first few days. Instead, we had to content ourselves with a pick-up truck and shoot scenes of the return to the same whaling station Shackleton had left 18 months earlier along with some very tight shots of stumbles across the tiny patches of remaining snow.

With just three days to go before we had to leave Greenland, meeting the rest of the crew in Iceland for our final leg of the journey home, the cloud lifted enough to begin helicopter operations.

Orin and I soon found ourselves looking down through clear blue skies and across the most beautiful glaciers to the clouds and coastline below us. Out came our stills cameras for a few of those magical shots, which can make it feel like such a privilege to go to work.

We arrived back in England late on a Friday night and the rain was waiting at Luton to greet us. Come Monday we'd be back at Shepperton Studios on 'H' Stage, which no one has ever described as "sound friendly" but then, we're used to that aren't we?

Oh, we do love an adventure!

JOHN RODDA AMPS

AMPS EGM & AGM 2002

THE TOP TABLE: (L - R) Treasurer Lionel Strutt, Chairman Tim Blackham, Secretary Peter Hodges, and Admin Secretary Brian Hickin

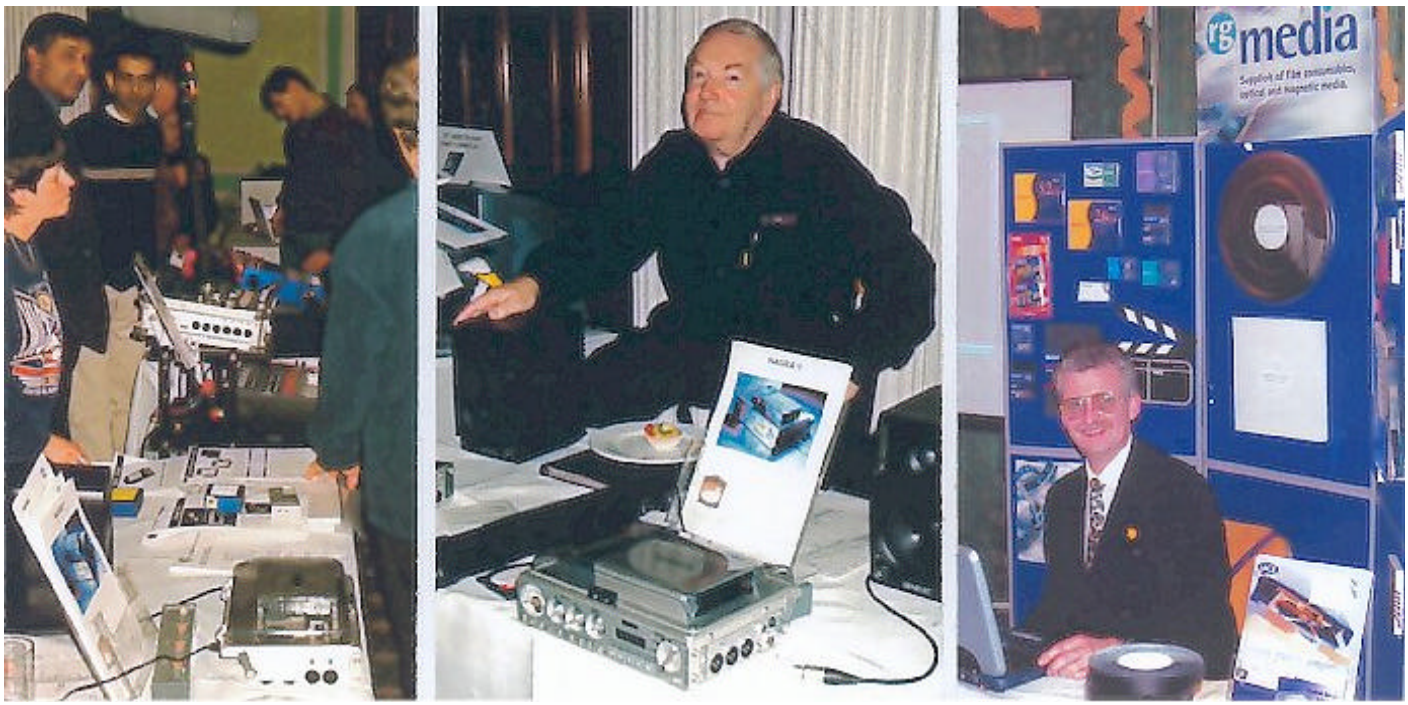
A GOOD ATTENDANCE - in the Pinewood Gatsby Suite

Peter Musgrave takes members through changes in the constitution

PICTURES BY SIMON BISHOP & KSA

& THE SUSTAINING MEMBERS SHOW

Some of the exhibitors caught on film - RPS Data Products (top left), RU Media (mid right), Nagra UK (centre), Richmond Film (bottom left), Audio Ltd and Audio Developments (bottom right)



ANOTHER TOUGH LOCATION

Stuart Moser tells of filming the BBC TV Series *Rockface* In Hi Def

Rockface is a six episode drama about a mountain rescue team set in the Highlands of Scotland, made by Union Pictures for BBC Television in the UK, and Columbia Tristar in the USA. The decision to shoot on HD was taken by Columbia who are committed to the High Definition medium. The BBC says that HD broadcasting is many years away, but they are eager to use this new medium for acquisition, the picture quality being a vast improvement on any video system currently available. The shoot was for a four month period, starting in July, and ending in November 2001 using HDW900 cameras.

From the moment I was on board as Production Mixer, two things were made clear, which simplified the sound acquisition considerably. First, and most importantly, both sets of producers wanted the sound recorded separately from the camera on DAT; and secondly, the shoot was to be at 25 frames not 24. I have to say that I breathed a sigh of relief at both these decisions, and to be absolutely honest, they meant that soundwise the shoot was without problems concerning the new medium.

Untypical for a TV drama, there was a preparation period, very necessary for the camera department, but less so for me, to enable everyone concerned with the camera to not only test the various bits and pieces needed to turn the camera from a 'camcorder' into a powerful cinematography tool, but also for the camera team to learn the idiosyncrasies, and there are many, of this camera. There is a large menu option, for both picture and sound which is *vital* to understand and expedite before using the camera in earnest. The set up is finalised in a card which can be personalised to a particular DOP, or to a broadcasting organisation. From the sound point of view, the menu settings were mainly irrelevant, as only guide quality sound was required off the camera. in the event, the camera audio track was never used, the sound from the DAT tapes being always used without the need to refer to the guide track. Had the sound been required to be recorded on the camera, it would have been essential to have had time to go through the menu to ensure that what was being sent to the camera was being recorded in the same way. After learning at a very early stage in my training days, rather a long time ago, that it was essential that the recording device didn't alter the sound signal in any way, Sony seem hell bent on letting you do just the opposite. So to anyone using this camera as the sound recorder BEWARE!

I used a very short part of the preparation period set aside for the camera department to check that I would indeed be recording a guide track on track one, and more important, that the time code synchronisation would in fact work. Because of the nature of the signal, it is not possible to merely take the HD timecode out of the camera, and lock it to the DAT machine. The simplest (and proven almost 100% reliable) method was to run the camera on record run, and to record free-run timecode derived from the DAT machine on the second audio track of the camera. At this point it is worth while reminding readers that this drama was to be filmed up mountains where not only was reliability of the system essential, but also that during the course of the working day, it would not always be possible to have instant access to the camera, as very often it and the operator were placed in impossible positions. I use HHB PDR 1000 TC recorders with mastersync, and had originally intcndcd to sync an Ambient Lockit box to the HHB which would then provide the T/C reference from the DAT onto one audio track on the camera. However because more than one camera was to be used, and the fact that I have two HHB Portadats, Alan Cridford of First Sense (Ambient's UK distributor) recommended that to avoid having to re Lock the Lockit boxes every few hours, if an additional Lockit box was used as the external timecode source on the DAT recorder, all the Lockit boxes could be tuned to remain in lock all day.

So at the beginning of each day, time of day was set on the HHB, as many Lockit boxes as were needed were then locked to the DAT machine with internal T/C running, and one was fed to the T/C input on the recorder which was switched to external T/C on the front panel. Now the DAT machine's timecode is being generated by a Lockit box. A BNC to 3 pin XLR is required for this.The camera Lockit output was fed into the second audio track and recorded at about -20dB. Another BNC to XLR is required here. This system worked perfectly, apart from the day when I forgot to switch over on the DAT recorder, which cost me a bottle of wine to the Assistant Editor!

After the first two episodes of filming (there were six) the second camera remained largely redundant. I was eager to assess whether this system would actually work, and so a short test was made during the preparation period to check that what I was sending the camera on a radio link for guide track, and the timecode from the Lockit box were actually being recorded. It was then that I discovered the first sound problem with the camera. This was supplied by Panavision, who have made modifications, one being to remove any headphone monitoring output, the only audio out being the five pin XLR socket at the back of the camera, requiring an umbilical to one's mixer. So some sort of headphone amplifier which can be connected to the five pin XLR is a must for quick and easy checking. I believe that this situation only exists with these modified Panavision cameras and not to the standard Sony HDW900 camcorders.

The test proved fine, and at the same time I was able to meet the technical 'high-ups' from both the BBC and Columbia together with all the producers and the editor, to agree on how the shoot would be carried out. This was a major advantage, and I went home happy that everybody concerned with the production knew and understood how the production sound would be presented. If only all productions did the same.

It was also fortunate that the cutting room was to be on location. This meant that I could be on hand if there were any problems and the editors soon became good drinking partners. The cutting room was set up with an Avid, and a rack of recorders and players which enabled not only rushes to be synced up on the Avid automatically, but also VHS copies to be made at the same time. Since the days of pic syncs and Steenbecks are a distant memory, modern cutting rooms seem to me to be a disaster waiting to happen. However, on this occasion, I was impressed with the

THE SOUND CREW

Foreground left to right: STUART MOSER and DAVID McMILLAN

THE RUCKSACK SOUND KIT

WHO'D BE AN ACTOR?

level of automation and the fact that there were relatively few disasters.

They would play my master DAT tapes on a Sony player, wizardry automatically locking the timecode from the DAT to the code on the audio track on the HD tape, a cloned DAT was made at the same time; the picture and sound were recorded onto DV cam; half a dozen VHS recorders were run up for rushes viewing; the whole thing bunged into Avid, and presto, an early night for the editors. The only time consuming aspect was if the timecode on the DAT tape and the camera track didn't match. This happened only twice in four months; once when I put my hand up to forgetting to throw the mt/ext switch on the DAT recorder, and once when something went wrong with the equipment in the cutting room. So the argument that separate sound costs time in syncing up is just ballyhoo.

The four month shoot took place around Fort William in the West Highlands. Not only is it a pain for accessibility (a parcel courier would take two days longer than normal to deliver) but it happens to be the wettest area in Great Britain. So keeping the equipment dry, and if you didn't, getting it replaced, is a nightmare. Being only too aware of the hazards of moisture in the works, I chose to put the equipment that would be used up the mountain in a waterproof backpack that I found in a fishing shop.

Most of the exterior locations were inaccessible by vehicles, even four wheel drive ones, so every single item had to be manhandled. The company provided porters for this purpose, usually experienced climbers used to carrying heavy items, and often members of the real mountain rescue team. But the amount of gear and the associated weight of it determined a careful choice of what to actually carry up the mountain to undertake a day's work without problems. Battery power was obviously a major consideration and for the camera dept quite serious as the camera eats batteries, along with the monitor.

I opted for a reliable source of power at the expense of weight; a 24aH lead acid battery that would keep the DAT recorder powered up all day. Before the first day's shooting, I was apprehensive about how the mountaineers would feel about carrying this lump of weight around, however, when I realised how many batteries of the same size were needed by the camera, strangely enough, there were more than enough volunteers to hump the sound equipment. In fact, after a few days, I felt justified in taking up a second lead acid battery, to guarantee the radio mic receivers and mixer would keep running without any problems, but also to stretch out my stock of dry cells.

My normal 'on-the-shoulder' equipment consists of an HHB Portadat, an Audio Developments AD 261 four channel mixer, and two Micron radio receivers with diversity units, all housed in a KT systems protective shoulder bag. This is about all the average person wants to carry for any length of time, together with batteries to power it all. But when all this was put into the backpack, carrying it on the back was no problem to the experts. There was ample room in the backpack, so spare cables, stock, dry cells plus the headphone amplifier, and plenty of Mars Bars, all found a space. Two further radio mic channels with their associated diversity unit were also carried in the backpack, but not permanently connected to the mixer.

There was little point in taking a spare recorder into the elements, so instead, I carried the umbilical cables to the camera which could have been used in an emergency if the DAT had failed. Happily, it performed flawlessly. The radio mic transmitters, aerials, in-ear monitors and microphones were carried in rucksacks worn by myself and my boom operator, David McMillan. Also carried was a small stool to support the backpack whilst working. This prevented the wet seeping up inside the pack as the ground was always saturated. In all, the porters only had to carry the backpack, and the two lead acid batteries; a total of three items against literally dozens of camera boxes. Two boom poles were tied to one of the rucksacks, the shorter one usually being used as an aerial mast.

All the recording on the mountain was done using a radio link between the microphone and myself. Apart from the convenience of a cableless link, this was not the place to have any accidents with people tripping over cables! Body worn mics were rarely used due to the sudden gusts of strong wind. On several occasions, the crew and actors had to lean at seemingly incredible angles to remain upright. Because of these extreme conditions, compounded by driving rain, I used my Sennheiser 816 with a Rycote Windjammer the entire time on these inhospitable locations. It really is a very good microphone for such conditions.

Another good reason not to use radio mics, was the amount of paraphanalia that the actors had to wear around their bodies and use as props, such as ropes and rucksacks which were always coming off and going back on as part of the action. The Micron UHF radio link worked perfectly the entire time as did the Sennheiser IEM's one of which fed the camera guide track. These required a change of battery every four or five hours, depending on the temperature.

A regular check of timecode and guide track was made and the camera crew were very helpful in checking the bargraph meters and the receiver battery LEDs at every camera roll change. Very often, the camera, the operator and focus puller, and David on the boom were belayed off the rock at bizarre angles to get the shots. It certainly wasn't a task for the faint hearted! Certain members of the cast were quite adept in proper climbing. Not all the climbing shots are with doubles!

One major drawback in using this camera on this particular production, was that there was only one 14 inch monitor on the set, used, naturally, by the director for most of the time, even the DOP having to elbow his way in on the odd occasion to get to see a picture. To run an ordinary monitor, the picture must be down converted, the electronics for which add another huge chunk to the back of the camera. A small LCD monitor was used, but it was fixed atop the camera for the focus puller most of the time. There were several occasions on interior sets when, using my trolley, I could have done with some sort of a picture to use as a cue. The down converter used generated an NTSC picture, rendering my own monitor useless.

Unfortunately but not surprisingly HD monitors are incredibly expensive, so it is unlikely that there will be a proliferation of pictures on your next shoot. Whenever possible on interior sets, I positioned my

trolley close to the monitor; it helps to get on with the director and script supervisor! The camera is quite noisy; it consumes a lot of power, therefore a lot of heat is generated. A cooling fan is built in to the housing, and can be somewhat controlled from the menu card. But it has a job to do and it will do it! By far the most noisy part is the drum mechanism, mainly because the seal around the cassette loading drawer is non existent. I feel undeserving however to complain about such things; consider the poor operator. It still has a black and white viewfinder, which when the camera is panned, strobes horribly.

For interiors I use mainly a Schoeps hypercardioid CCM microphone, sometimes swapping it for a Sennheiser 416, and occasionally an AKG 480 with a cardioid capsule. Some of the interior locations involved long Steadicam shots which tested the range of the radio mics to the limit. Whenever practical, I use full dipole aerials rigged on stands for additional height which usually increase the range considerably. I always pay careful attention to the receiver aerial orientation and siting. On at least one occasion, I had to use the equipment in 'on- the-shoulder' mode and pole the receiver aerials around corners as the Steadicam weaved in and out of doorways.

There were many scenes involving a Sea King air sea rescue helicopter. I recorded as much of the exterior of the aircraft in stereo as I could. There certainly shouldn't be a shortage of wildtracks of that, but as shooting progressed, I became increasingly concerned that I wouldn't get any decent tracks of the interior. A mock set of the interior had been built, with many dialogue scenes taking place inside the aircraft (obviously the writers had never been inside one - nobody actually talks above the din). However, on one particular day, I managed to get a ride in it over to Stornoway where the aircraft had to re-fuel, and recorded everything I could. Normally, I record LR stereo derived from an M-S pair of Schoeps CMC microphones, but I possess omnidirectional capsules for these mics, and decided to record the interior sounds of the helicopter with a spaced pair, believing that the out of phase components implicit in using omni capsules would enhance the matrixed surround sound. I also recorded some mountain atmos using the same system. Inevitably, there was never time to be able to capture enough wildtracks, although some of the sync tracks leave no one in doubt as to the harshness of the conditions.

As an introduction to using HD, I have to confess that it didn't interfere with my usual method of working at all. For the camera department, I feel it was a real baptism of fire. I doubt whether the operator, the focus puller or the assistant would put this camera at the top of their preference list. Until there are more lenses readily available, I doubt whether The DOP's are singing it's praises either. But there is no doubt that it will become a familiar feature on locations in the future. Providing you keep your head when everyone else is losing theirs, for the sound department, working with it should pose no problems.

STUART MOSER AMPS

CENTENARY OF GEORGE GROVE'S BIRTH - ST HELENS' FILM SOCIETY CELEBRATE

On a Saturday in December last, admirers, friends and relatives of George R Groves, the Vitaphone sound-ondisc pioneer and eminent Warner Brothers sound engineer, gathered together in one of the the large lounges of the Wheatsheaf Pub in Sutton Leach near St Helens, Merseyside, to remember his hundredth birthday.

George, who died in 1976 was born in 1901 in St Helens, and educated at Liverpool University where he gained an Honours degree in Engineering and Radio Telephony. in 1923 his application for a job with Bell Telephone Labs in New York was successful. He worked on new developments in electrical disc recording and sound-on-disc synchronisation. In 1925 he was assigned to Warner Bros to work on the production of Vitaphone sound-on-disc shorts. He recorded the musical score for Don Juan, the 1926 Warner's film which convinced the public that sound could add to their entertainment. A year later The Jazz Singer proved the point. George then went to Hollywood where, with Colonel Nathen Levison, he set up Warner Bros Sound Department. In 1957 he took over as head of sound until retiring in 1972. He was the first production mixer and the first film music mixer.

The meeting, arranged by Chris Coffey, president of the St Helens Film Society began at midday with a snack buffet and a drink or two. A video projector, large screen and stereo sound system had been set-up earlier for the DVD screening of Warner Bros My Fair Lady, one of the productions for which George received the sound Oscar as head of Warner's Sound Dept.

The show began with a screening of Stephen Wainright's documentary on the life and work of George Groves. Stephen who is in charge of the Media course at Warrington University, entitled his story 'The Quiet Little Englishman' after the name given to George by Al Jolson, who insisted that George recorded all his movies. The all too short film is an excellent production; besides information about George, it gives a splendid potted version of the coming of synchronised sound to the cinema.

Also shown was the story of the making of My Fair Lady which is on the same DVD. Those present were not surprised that there was no mention of sound. although the gaffer Frank Flanagan, was mentioned by name in the commentary.

The DVD prepared from the restored version of My Fair Lady projected well and the performances of Audrey Hepburn, Rex Harrison and Wilfred Hyde-White, along with the rest of the cast, were really enjoyed by all present, almost as if being seem for the first time.

There are claims that a radio mic was used to allow Rex Harrison to do his recitative songs 'live' rather than to prerecorded playback. If this is so then 1963 is very early in the use of radio microphones. Unfortunately my friend Fran Scheid, who was the production mixer and also worked on the rerecording with Murray Spivack, is no longer available to answer and verify the questions I would like to ask. Perhaps readers of this have information on the subject. if so please let me know.

At the conclusion of the screening, the party adjourned to The Colours restaurant in St Helens centre to supp together and toast the memory of George R Groves, making a most convivial end to the celebration.

A British Film Institute plaque marks his birthplace in Duke Street, St Helens.

BOB ALLEN

SOUND AWARDS 2002 : Good showing by AMPS members - An Oscar, three BAFTA and five BAFTA nominations

THE OSCARS - 74th ACADEMY AWARDS

SOUND

AMELIE - Vincent Arnardi, Guillaume Leriche and Jean Umansky
*** BLACK HAWK DOWN - Michael Minkler, Myron Nettinga, Chris Munro AMPS**
THE LORD OF THE RINGS - Christopher Boyes, Michael Semanick, Gethin Creagh and Hammond Peek
MOULIN ROUGE - Andy Nelson, Anna Behlmer, Roger Savage and Guntis Sics
PEARL HARBOR - Kevin O'Connell, Greg P. Russell and Peter J. Devlin

SOUND EDITING

MONSTERS, INC - Gary Rydstrom and Michael Silvers)
*** PEARL HARBOR - George Watters II and Christopher Boyes**

FILM BAFTAS - BRITISH ACADEMY FILM AWARDS

SOUND

BLACK HAWK DOWN - Chris Munro AMPS/Per Hallberg/Michael Minkler/Myron Nettinga/Karen Baker
HARRY POTFER AND THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE - John Midgley/Eddy Joseph AMPS /Ray Merrin AMPS! Graham Daniel/Adam Daniel
THE LORD OF THE RINGS - David Farmer/Hammond Peek/Christopher Boyes/Gethin Creagh/Michael Semanick/Ethan Van der Ryn/Mike Hopkins
*** MOULIN ROUGE - Andy NelsonlAnna Behimer/Roger Savage/Guntis Sics/Gareth Vanderhope/Antony Gray**
SHREK - Andy Nelson/Anna Behimer/Wylie Stateman/Lon Bender

TELEVISION BAFTAS - BRITISH ACADEMY TELEVISION CRAFT AWARDS

SOUND FACTUAL

THE BLUE PLANET (BBC1) - Sound Team
*** HELL IN THE PACIFIC (C4) - Peter Eason AMPS, Craig Butters, Cliff Jones AMPS**
WALKING WiTH BEASTS (BBC1) - Kenny Clark, Jovan Ajder, Chris Burdon
WALK ON BY - STORY OF POPULAR SONG (BBC2) - Peter Davies, Paul Cowgill, Ravi Gurnam, Jane Barnett

SOUND FICTION/ENTERTAINMENT
*** CLOCKING OFF (BBC1) - Sound Team**
THE LOST WORLD (BBC 1) - Sound Team
OTHELLO (ITV 1) - Maurice Hillier, Colin Martin AMPS, Laura Lovejoy AMPS, Peter Bond AMPS
THE WAY WE LIVE NOW (BBC 1) - Sound Team

& OTHER AWARDS TO AMPS MEMBERS

To Anthony Faust - the MPSE Golden Reel Award for Best Sound Editing - Special Venue Film (IMAX) for THE HUMAN BODY

To David Stephenson - the CAS Sound award in the category 'Mini-series or Special' for his work on BAND OF BROTHERS Part 2.

To Chris Munro - the BKSTS Charles Parkhouse Award for "his contribution to the general quality standard of motion picture sound and particularly his development of the 'magless' rushes technique"

To Ken Barton - The International Wildlife Film Festival - 1st place Best Sound FX for ULTIMATE GUIDE TO SPIDERS, and joint 2nd place Best Sound FX for INVINCIBLE WOLVES

Congratulations to all winners, nominees, and the crews who worked with them

FOR SALE

Quantity of professionally-made Van Damme 'starquad' XLR microphone cables. Mostly brand new or hardly used. Approx 50ft lengths - £15.00 each. Demo model location trolley similar to new large wheel-type Urstacart - £650. Director/script suppervisor's monitoring system consisting of 1 Trantec VHF transmitter and 4 beltpack receivers - £250.00 the lot. Another system as above on different frequency but with only 2 receivers - £150.00 - Details of above from Malcolm Davies AMPS, 07973 159320

END CREDITS 2001

ACTORS
JEAN ANDERSON
BERRY BERENSON
JULIE BISHOP
PEGGY CARTWRIGHT
HELEN CHERRY
LITA CHEVRET
IMOGENE COCA
CHARLOTTE COLEMAN
BERYL COOKE
PAUL DANEMAN
TROY DONAHUE
DALE EVANS
KATHLEEN FREEMAN
RACHEL GURNEY
JACK GWILLIM
SIR NIGEL HAWTHORNE
CHRISTOPHER HEWETT
PATRICIA HILUARD
EVELYN KING
ASHOK KUMAR
JACK LEMMON
JIMMY LOGAN
NORMAN LUMSDEN
JOAN MARION
DOROTHY MCGUIRE
GARDENER MCKAY
ANTHONY MORTON
PEGGY MOUNT
NYREE DAWN PORTER
ANTHONY QUINN
DOROTHY FAY RITTER
ROBERT ROBINSON
LESLIE SANDS
SIR HARRY SECOMBE
JOAN SIMS
KIM STANLEY
ANTHONY STEEL
BEATRICE STRAIGHT
BINKLE STUART
DAME DOROTHY TUTIN

PRODUCTION
SAMUEL Z ARKOFF
VI BEBB
JULES BUCK
JOHN P HAMILTON
GEORGE HARRISON
GEORGE ALEXANDER HOWE
STANLEY KRAMER
JOHN O'SHEA

DIRECTION
BUDD BOETTICHER
MAURO BOLOGNINI
ROY BOULTING
GRIGORI CHUKHRAI
KEN HUGHES
GINO MAROTTA
GERALD MAYER
MICHAEL RICHIE
HERBERT ROSS
VERNON SEWELL
DAVID SWIFT
RALPH THOMAS

CONTINUITY
SPLINTERS DEASON
SHEILA WILSON

CAMERA
HENRI ALEKAN
PAUL BEESON
TONY BOMFORD
PAT BRENNAN
NORMAN FISHER
SUBRATA MITRA
RONNIE NOBLE
PETER SARGENT

SOUND
KEN BARKER
MICHAEL BASSETT
FRANK FAHY
TREVOR HODGKINSON
BERYL MORTIMER
RON PURVIS
GEORGE STEPHENSON
KEN WESTON

WRITERS
DAVID ANGELL
LEO MARKS
JOHN PREBBLE
MORDECAI RICHLER
ANTHONY SIIAFFER

MUSIC
LARRY ADLER
DOUGLAS LILBURN
JAY LIVINGSTON
ISAAC STERN

ART DEPARTMENT
FRANK GRAVES
JACK MAXTED
ROBERT WALKER

CONSTRUCTION
JOHN BASTIN

WARDROBE
MARY ARBUTHINOT
DIZZY DOWNES
BARBARA MATERA

MAKE-UP
HELENE BEVAN
JOHN CHAMBERS
BOB LAWRENCE

ANIMATION
PAUL BERRY
ALISON DE VERE
WILLIAM HANNA

SPECIAL FX
ALAN BRYCE

FILM LAB
ALF COOPER
FRANK LJTTLEJOHNS
DANNY O'BRIEN
CLIVE UPTON

PROJECTION
ALAN MARTIN
ERIC PALMER
PETER STROUD

DAVID JOHN

It is with great sadness that we have to announce that David John, Production Mixer and AMPS member died in March. Our condolences to his family, friends and colleagues.

A full tribute will appear in the next issue of the Newsletter

MEET THE MEN FROM FOSTEX

19th March, Pinewood Studios

This was an unusual meeting in terms in that Fostex didn't have anything to show or demonstrate specifically although the D4 DAT portable DAT machine and the new DV4O DVD-RAM recorder were present. This was to be a discussion, an exchange of ideas about future directions and requirements, predominantly in the field of production sound.

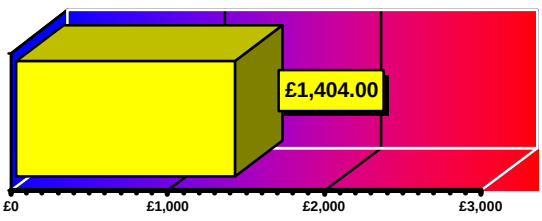
It was also an excellent opportunity to put questions directly to those at Fostex who could provide answers. Although the discussion was led by Robert Morgan-Males, a Far East-based consultant to Fostex, we also had Masaki Shimmachi from the Fostex Corporation in the US, and Motoaki Sano, official General Manager of the Engineering Dept at Fostex in Tokyo. On a more practical level Sano has been directly responsible for the design of many of the Fostex portable DAT recorders.

Fifteen AMPS members, all but two production mixers, attended with specialist areas ranging from TV Documentary to Motion picture. After an excellent buffet courtesy of Fostex, discussion ranged long and wide on all aspects of production sound and the tools needed to make it work better in the future.

Although unusual as AMPS meetings go, this event proved an excellent way of opening a dialogue with a manufacturer who was prepared to listen to real world requirements and problems. A general consensus from attending members and Fostex themselves was that this was a valuable experience and one they would like to repeat in the future.

HEARING DOGS FOR DEAF PEOPLE PROGRESS CHART

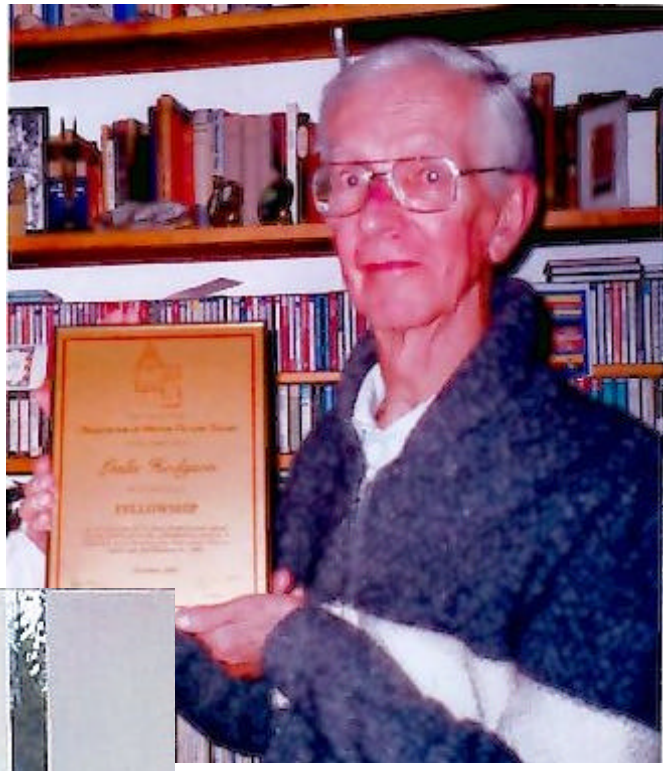
The AMPS Kennel Fund

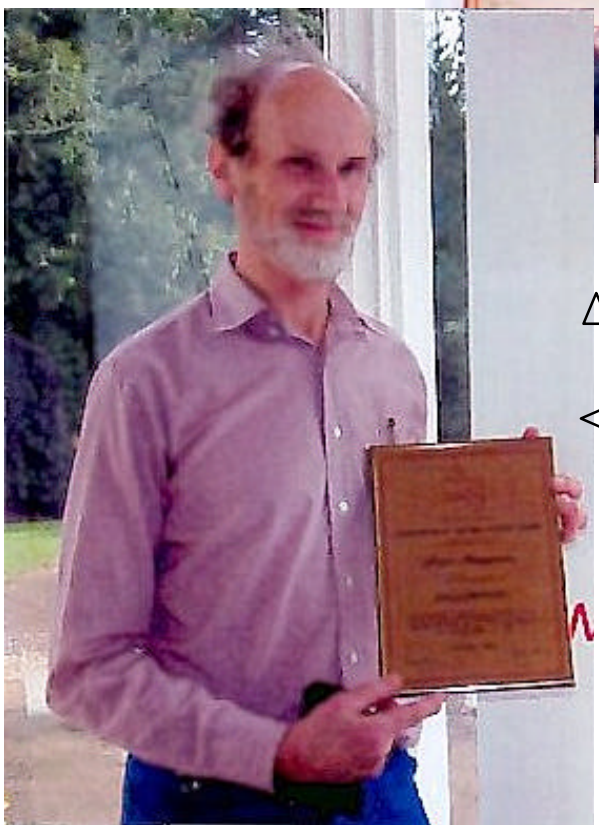


OUR NEW FELLOW MEMBERS

Fellowships were awarded earlier in the year to two long standing members for services to AMPS.

Congratulations to them both.





▲ LES HODGSON

△

◄ PETER MUSGRAVE

◁

CONTACTING AMPS BY EMAIL

Please note there have been some recent changes in 'official' AMPS email addresses.

General AMPS business and administration matters should go to Brian Hickin at the AMPS Office now at admin@amps.net. All matters concerning AMPS membership and changes in contact information should go to Membership Secretary Patrick Heigham at membership@amps.net.

Previous email addresses for Admin and Membership enquiries will still continue in use for a while but it is recommended to use the above for AMPS business, If you don't have access to Email, or simply prefer to write or phone, please continue to contact the AMPS Office as before.

So AMPS email address are now as follows:

AMPS office/general admin	-	admin@amps.net
Membership matters	-	membership@amps.net
Newsletter	-	editor@amps.net
External queries about AMPS	-	info@amps.net
AMPS helpline	-	soundadvice@amps.net
Website	-	webmaster@amps.net