



Storyboard

The newsletter for SOUTH ESSEX FILM MAKERS



Well here we are, another season draws to a close. So what has changed this season and how is that going to effect what we do next season. Firstly we changed our name, launched a new website and had a hard rethink about where we were going. How effective that has all been really depends on what your expectations were at the outset. If you thought by changing the name from **Westcliff Film & Video Club** to South Essex Film Makers we would suddenly be swamped by young enthusiastic film makers eager to learn, make and show their films you were either naively optimistic or deluded. Let us be honest here, Westcliff as a club had over the last ten years or so attracted a dozen or so new (regular) members and was losing members by natural wastage (for want of a better phrase) at a higher rate than new members joined, how it was named made no difference.

The demographic of the club had shown a definite swing to the older age group. The increase of the average age attending was really more a result of loyal members getting older than of new members being older when they joined. Since we have changed our name the membership issue hasn't changed either way, there are no fewer members and we have had a couple of new members join. It is what we do as a club/group/society or whatever we want to call ourselves that makes the difference not what combination of words we use to describe ourselves. They say actions speak louder than words, well if we want to expand, grow and succeed (even survive) we need to do what our new name suggests we do.....Make Films.

Looking at the presentation of awards for the last year proves that we as a whole (myself included) we are not making anywhere near as many films as we were, say five years ago. Why? There are probably as many reasons (excuses) as there are members. Try these for possible reasons NOT to make a film of some sort: Too busy, work/home/lifestyle/family commitments, other interests or activities, lack of an idea / ideas, lack of knowledge, waiting for the latest bit of kit/software that will make it all possible, can't be bothered. They are just a few of the reasons/excuses not to make something, I know this for a fact, because I myself have used all of them. The fact of the matter is if you/we really wanted to do something we would.

So how does all of this tie in with the new name and the future for us as film makers? Well what I have observed over the course of this season is that most actually do like to get their cameras out and film stuff. Looking back at the projects evenings were we planned, shot and edited in groups over the course of a few weeks, what a success. We ended up with three really good films in which about 90% of the club got involved. We then had a band in to be filmed, it was like a forest of tripods that evening with about twenty cameras on the go. So we all like to film, is the problem that many are not really sure what to film? If so, more projects could be the answer. I know from my own personal experience that to become more creative you have to get out there and start doing stuff. By getting out and making even little thirty second films regardless of the subject, but just going through the process of making something acts like a creative lubricant. Getting the brain into film making mode sometimes needs a jump start.

Last summer I produced CD's with music on for people to go out and make a short film to. We had a really good response from that idea and it resulted in one of the best returns in finished films submitted to the viewing evening we have had for some time. What I can't understand is why there were so many entries made when the supplied selection of music tracks I had chosen and the response was that everyone involved really liked the idea but to date no other similar films have been made and shown? Surly everyone has a collection of their own favourite music at home, so would it be too difficult to choose a track and interoperate it in pictures? Yet the most common reason I hear for not making a film is the lack of an idea, look in your CD rack.

I think next season we need to be looking at raising our aim a bit and start working on some more group projects but with a bit more ambition. We can of course still continue with smaller project that give quicker results but to establish ourselves back at or near the top of the amateur film making tree we need to start looking at far more challenging projects also. To encourage new members and to keep the members we have we need to keep it fresh and to make it all a bit more challenging, if we don't we will just fade to black.

So let us all make a pledge, to go out over the summer break and make at least two films, it doesn't matter on what subject or what duration but try to make the very best little films you can, don't just to use some old footage or photos you have already and cobble that together that's just plain lazy, go out and make something from scratch. Experiment, try something different, if you usually only ever make the same type of film have a go at another subject or style. If you have never made a film, why? Have a go now. If you fail miserably, does it matter, NO. It's the starting that is important and from there you might fire up those brain cells that are in rest mode and surprise yourself, and us. I am looking forward to the new season and hope we can all get involved in the very thing that brings us together every Monday, **Film Making**.

Sorry this hasn't really been a newsletter this month, more of an analytical ramble by me. But hey! I enjoyed it

Nigel Woodham