



The Australian Museum of Motion Picture Technology (Inc.)

NEWSLETTER

Edition Nineteen

February 2009

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Social impact of digital cinema in small communities

A REPORT FROM BRITAIN SIGNALS DIFFICULT TIMES AHEAD FOR AUSTRALIAN RURAL AND SMALL TOWN INDEPENDENT CINEMAS

In October 2008, an article on the internet started alarm bells ringing. We all knew it was coming but the stark realities of how it would affect traditional cinema patrons and **film** exhibitors has taken time to sink in. AMMPT has decided to reproduce the story as it highlights the impending redundancy of existing technology and the need to preserve examples of what may soon become fading memories for future generations

"Last picture show for the small cinemas that cannot afford £50m ticket to future"

Ben Hoyle, Arts Reporter. The Times, UK

Cinema-going is under threat in many towns and rural areas, with almost half of Britain's venues facing possible closure in the next five years.

The cost of the switchover from celluloid film to digital technology will mean the survival of the fittest, imperilling local cinemas that lack the financial muscle of the multiplexes. The UK Film Council estimates that it would cost more than £50 million for the vulnerable cinemas to convert to digital. Hollywood is impatient for the transition because it will cut distribution costs and help to combat piracy.

The pace is about to be stepped up. This month the three largest American chains signed a deal to convert all their cinemas to digital. At present, canisters of 35mm film are delivered to projection rooms, and what can be screened is limited by how many physical copies of a film are in the country. Digital "prints" are easier to transport and will eventually be sent over the internet. They can also be encrypted to thwart pirates.

Advocates of digital cinema maintain that consumers will benefit, citing 3D blockbusters that will only be viewable with digital technology, and that lower costs will allow cinemas to screen a wider range of films — for example, to show arthouse repertoire where it has a small following. Nevertheless, according to Peter Buckingham at the film council, only big multiplexes and a few arthouses, mostly in London, are certain to buy the digital projectors and servers required.

These cinemas are responsible for three quarters of screens and 85 per cent of the box office. That leaves 400 cinemas, many of them small independents, arthouses, temporary town hall cinemas, and mobile cinemas in remote areas. Some will find a way to finance the switch, Mr Buckingham says, but "300 are in serious danger of closing because they won't be able to afford digital, and if they haven't got digital they aren't going to have anything to show in five years' time".

Mr Buckingham, who is overseeing the switchover, has been unable to persuade the chains to share their economies of scale with small operators: "They want it to be Darwinian" he said. The council believes that a united front is the only way to bring the cost of implementing the new technology below £60,000 per screen. If the big chains cut their own deals, as happened in the US, the future for the rest of the field is bleak. "I don't know what Plan B is — there is no public money available~" Mr Buckingham believes that the future of the 300 vulnerable cinemas could be sealed in the next few months because the chains are under pressure to show that they will be able to screen the 3D films soon to come out of Hollywood.

Phil Clapp, of the Cinema Exhibitors Association, said: "I don't share Pete's pessimism. I have more faith that the industry will recognise the value of maintaining cinema-going in small towns and rural areas. But it will be a tough ask for a significant number."

Password on website

Our newsletter has been, and will continue to be available to members on our website. However this will be the last edition that is not password protected. In future, financial members will be issued with a current password on request to the Webmaster, Paul Trimboli on 9349 5059.

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Christmas presents

The last screening for 2008 at the Cygnet cinema, *High Society*, proved to be the best patronised yet, with several thousand dollars being raised throughout the year to fund AMMPT's objectives.



The regular raffle was boosted with a massive Christmas hamper and eight other prizes. The Treasurer Peter Foyster almost ran out of tickets as he extracted any loose change from patrons in the foyer.



MC for many of the screenings, member Terry Spence drew the winning tickets,

with the main prize going to member Peter Goodall and his wife Gail.

After the screening, members adjourned to the tavern across from the cinema to have lunch and socialise – something that needs to be more frequent in the future.



It is obvious word-of-mouth and regular promotion on the Seniors' radio station 90.5 FM has contributed to the steadily increasing audience, as well as the distribution of programme leaflets to libraries and to a limited number of retirement villages. Film screening coordinator George Robinson wants to hear from members who could assist him in the distribution of flyers to the dozens of retirement villages yet to be contacted with details of our 2009 programme. George's phone number is 9458 4227.

Museums – a cultural shock

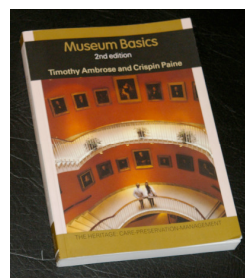
Yippee - let's start a museum!! This is generally the initial response with many groups of enthusiasts when someone decides they should preserve their interest for the enjoyment of future generations. It is not too long before the reality of what is proposed hits home, once the disciplines and procedures of setting up and operating a successful community museum are realised. It is not long before the enthusiasm wanes and some tyre-kickers fall by the wayside, leaving a small core of dedicated individuals with a massive task ahead.

Many of us remember museums as musty old places where you were dragged along to look at crumbling old dinosaur or whale bones, moth eaten bird specimens and similar inanimate and uninteresting offerings. "Don't Touch" signs were everywhere. Today a visit to the mainstream and professionally staffed exhibitions will reveal just how times have changed. Interactive displays encourage the public to become involved and participate in the learning experience. No longer is it acceptable to dump what some might consider an interesting or unique piece of technology or other object on display unless it's provenance (the story behind the object) has some influence on the education or enjoyment of those experiencing it.

To appreciate the many facets of setting up and running a volunteer based community museum, AMMPT members have been enrolling over the past three years in part time courses in museum studies at local universities. These have been arranged by Museums Australia and the Museums Assistance Programme, based in Perth. These organisations are represented or have counterparts in all States and are an invaluable source of knowledge and encouragement to those who wish to involve themselves in museum activities.

Already members have enrolled in three 2009 courses, *Preventative Conservation*, *Collecting and Documentation*, and *Conservation: Photographs*.

The fees to attend have been provided by Lotterywest and organised by Museums Australia. Details of all the courses on offer were circulated to members in December. As there may still be vacancies in course modules later in the year, contact secretary Brenda Collins for more details.



For those who prefer quite solo study, AMMPT has a number of manuals and books on museums. A recent donation by member Ron Frank of ***Museum Basics*** further adds to our knowledge and is available for members to study. Contact the President

if you wish to improve your understanding of the mysterious world of museums.

TV Exhibition team formed

A special project team headed by Ken McKay and Derric Wright, including Richard Rennie, Terry Spence and the President have now put the wheels in motion for our major promotional event this year. An exhibition commemorating those involved in the local television industry during the past fifty years is planned from **September 14th till January 31st 2010**. It will be held at the Fremantle History Museum, Finnerty St. Fremantle. The building is also known as the Old Asylum or Fremantle Arts centre. Some have the impertinence to suggest an asylum is an appropriate place to showcase those who shed sweat and blood in the pioneering days of the industry.

The task of identifying and where possible, locating those remaining who worked for the various channels over five decades was the first challenge faced. This was made easier by the addition of a TV Web page on our website. A "Roll Call" has been set up where existing information can be checked and omissions rectified. To date the response has been overwhelming, to the point where we have recorded the names of nearly 500 ex and current employees of ABC TV alone. However the team realise that most have left the industry and have re-located to abodes far and wide, with many not on the internet or have media coverage in their area.

Discussions have taken place with the four local TV stations, Screenwest and the Fremantle City Council relating to support for the project, as well as industry related crafts and guilds being advised. A budget has been prepared which is designed to permit a professional presentation, while at the same time, tapping the vast range of voluntary expertise available within our membership.



A considerable amount of photographic material collected for the 2006 exhibition will be included in the display which will also feature a lot of new material sourced from individuals and from the TV stations' archives. A limited amount of old equipment will be on display, mainly due to space restrictions at the venue.

Photographs received will be catalogued by our Photographic Curator, John Porter, enabling selection of appropriate material for this and future projects. Copyright and similar legal matters are also being addressed. Appropriate information and images will be made available to the State Archives. Contact John on 9256 3397 if you have any photos or memorabilia which may be suitable for the display.

*Veteran TV presenters, L-R
Jenny Seaton
John Barnett
David Hawkes
Russell Goodrick
and
Gary Carvolth
pose for a
press photo to
publicise the
event*



There will be a strong nostalgia theme running through the exhibition, with several of the original "on air" presenters and entertainers indicating they would like to lend a hand and possibly be available at times to meet their old loyal fans. Arrangements are being discussed with the stations for promotional coverage of the exhibition and possibly having some of their current presenters attending at special times. The vast difference between the original "hands-on" approach of all facets of operation and the predominantly computer controlled programming of today will be graphically demonstrated. The demise of live to air variety shows and the advances in news gathering equipment will also be highlighted. Various other ideas and options are currently being considered to maximize publicity for the display during these times.

The exhibition will cover two periods of school holidays when crowds are normally expected at the Museum, as well as embracing seniors' Week and the Fremantle festival. A roster of members who are prepared to spend a few hours at the display interacting with the public and promoting AMMPT's objectives will soon be compiled. If you are available to assist in this manner, Ken or Derric would like to hear from you.

*Photographic Curator
John Porter
with display panels he
made for the
Cygnat Cinema shop
window.*

*John will be
collating
photos
received for the TV
exhibition and
will work with
Richard Ashton to
ensure
accuracy of
captions.*



In this edition we begin the first of a series of articles by Queensland AMMPT Member Kev Franzi. Over the years Kev has penned many stories based on his accumulated expertise and experiences in the moving image industry for the Brisbane based magazine *Photo Trader*. We have selected those items pertaining to our area of interest and have permission to reproduce them, which if not passed on to those who still work in the industry, will be lost forever.

Kev Franzi is a professional Documentary Filmmaker and Photojournalist with over 60 years experience.



Starting at Herschell's Films (Melbourne) in 1945, he was privileged to work with some of Australia's pioneer Filmmakers. Then he spent several years with the

D.O.I./Commonwealth Film Unit (now Film Australia). With the introduction of television, Kev moved into the production of TV Commercials. In 1966 he became Chief Film Editor on the pioneer Australian Television series "Homicide". Many other television series followed, then he became Director/Editor in Crawford's Documentary Division.

In 1970 he joined Cameracraft Films in Brisbane and specialised in Government training and promotional films. Later he was appointed to the Queensland Education Department as a Film Producer-Director. For 9 years he ran Photo Workshops for TAFE, then private classes at his Kenilworth Photo School. In 1990, with his wife Jen, he established and operated the Kenilworth Movie Museum where he wrote, produced and presented his unique seminars on Australian Cinema History using his Australian Cinema Heritage Collection. Kev is a Consultant to the Queensland Museum on matters cinematic and continues to be an active Photojournalist, writing and illustrating feature magazine articles on Australian Cinema History and has now become an avid Video Filmmaker. His latest enterprise is a teaching programme, *"Journeys in Time - The Recorders Project"*.

"BOYS AND THEIR TOYS"

By Kev Franzi

What is it about "boys and their toys" or men and their machines? Old machines seem to have the greatest attraction - steam engines, vintage cars and aeroplanes, motor bikes, guns and pistols, ships and telescopes, cameras and projectors. They all have a legion of passionate enthusiasts collecting, restoring, and arguing about which model had the best features. In my day, Marilyn Munro usually topped the list, but Ingrid Bergman was more my speed!

ahhh. yes Where were we? Machines - yes.

I know the exact moment I fell in love with a motion picture camera. I had just turned 14. It was my third week at Herschell's Films in East Melbourne, when an old Cameraman introduced me to the camera he was cleaning on the tea room table. (I know now it was a 35mm Debie Parvo.) Pointing to the aperture plate he explained that the world's finest precision engineering was needed to project that little picture - less than an inch wide - up on to a screen 40 feet across. And that same fine precision was needed to capture 24 "rock steady" pictures every second - "Wow!" He explained the need for the world's finest optical design and precision manufacture in the form of a Carl Zeiss lens - "the finest lens money can buy" to get needle sharp pictures 40 feet across from that tiny image. "Wow" That was the moment 64 years ago that my passion began.

Layer upon layer of wonder has been added since that first encounter. I learned about the film stock and the amazing accuracy of the perforations - mass produced in multi-millions of feet every year, the wonder of the Technicolor process - of superb optical sound recording and reproduction systems - of animation and time lapse photography - of ultra slow motion filmed at 10,000, 20,000, 30,000 frames per second - "Wow - Is that possible?" And that's just on the technical side.

As a teenager I began to discover the true magic of motion pictures. Its totally unlimited scope in story telling - in time, space and distance - using the finest acting talent in the world. And it all begins with that motion picture camera .

In the hands of brilliantly talented filmmakers, it has captured what must be the world's greatest entertainment; its role in spreading knowledge and understanding is vital, and it can capture stories that inspire millions. What a great experience - that moment in a film that "sends us crashing through the ceiling" - a moment we remember for a lifetime.

My working collection of motion picture cameras, projectors, sound recorders, editing gear, printers, etc. illustrates over a century of development and achievement in the Industry. The story behind each piece is my tribute to a small group of brilliant people who designed and built these amazing machines - Pioneers like Edison and Dickson, George Eastman, the Lumiere Brothers, Albert Howell, Eugene Lauste, Lee DeForrest, and many others.

As we move into the age of Digital technology, a new group of brilliant people is creating even more exciting tools to entertain, inform and inspire us. The "Wow" factor is very much alive and well. I'm sure there will be passionate collectors of Digital technology, but somehow a little plastic computer that takes moving pictures on a 128 gb memory card, doesn't have quite the same character as my Bell and Howell 2709.

Kev Franzi

Fellowship winner

Richard Ashton, AMMPT Librarian and Researcher, was pleased to be notified he has been accepted for a NFSA Research Fellowship. This includes the provision of living accommodation on site in Canberra, dedicated research and study areas and access to all departments pertinent to his research project. These Fellowship grants were advertised in the last edition of our Newsletter and were available to all AMMPT Members to apply. Richard will travel to Canberra in November and spend a month at the NFSA which will enable him to further his research. The aim of this project is to document the history of two little-remembered Australian companies involved in the manufacture of projection and sound reproduction. Cummings & Wilson were projector manufacturers from 1922 and Raycophone Ltd manufactured sound reproduction projector heads from 1929

Richard has already written extensively on his research findings on C&W and has limited publication of his initial efforts. The depth of material available in Canberra will allow him to explore hitherto obscure passages in the C&W and Raycophone story and establish contacts with other researchers who may have travelled a similar path. It is known that some collectors managed to interview the company principals many years ago but are reluctant to make the material publicly available. This is possibly due to the experience of having earlier research efforts plagiarised by others and used for their personal gain. It is unfortunate that this may result in otherwise unique information being taken to the grave instead of future generations being given the gift of knowledge of our industry pioneers.

As the culmination of Richard's work will be in the public domain with due acknowledgement of sources of the material, it is hoped those harbouring archival material relating to his area of research will make contact and collaborate with him to make it available for his project. It was intended to run excerpts from Richard's current compilation in this newsletter, but due to the extensive and detailed nature of the work, it would be impossible to do it justice within the limited confines of this publication. Eventually Richard intends to publish complete works of his project including in digital form.

Old time film show

Arrangements are being made to run an old time picture show – Charlie Chaplin, Laurel & Hardy, etc in conjunction with local radio station Capital Community Radio 90.5FM, as a promotional tool for both organisations. The station which predominantly programmes for a growing audience of Seniors, has been very supportive with promotion of our regular screenings at the Cygnet. The screening, originally conceived as a free outdoor picnic atmosphere community event is being coordinated by Tony Smith and Graham Lacey. It will possibly be held in March or April. Members available to assist should contact Tony or Graham on 9271 5668 or 9275 6559.

Coming Events

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 4th 7.30 pm

Film evening and equipment inspection at MG CAR CLUBROOMS 112 HARDY ROAD BAYSWATER

A programme dripping with nostalgia!

Ian Stimson will show his **Simplex** portable, recently imported from America. He will also demonstrate his early model **Holmes** projector as well as describing the history of both machines.

Also, the President will bring in the recently donated old projector which was thought to be a Simplex, as featured in the last edition. There is some concern that, because of its progressive modification by successive owners, it may indeed be from another manufacturer. It will be an opportunity for members to have a closer look and do their own research.

Tony Smith has selected 3 titles from the State Film Library which will be screened on real 16mm film – remember that! They include;

"Lumiere Programme" – an 8 minute B&W silent production, being the first film shown in public in London in 1895.

"How Talkies Talk" – a historic 10 minute film made in 1930 showing how sound is (or used to be) put on film.

"Ships that flew" – a 50 minute production, while not about film or television, is an acclaimed documentary about the Sunderland Flying Boats which flew from Sydney to all parts of the world and also had a distinguished service record in WW2. While the print has succumbed to the Eastmancolor magenta curse, the fine music sound track adds to the enjoyment of the great visuals.

Tea and coffee will be served with, wine and ale available for a nominal contribution.

Future film & equipment evenings are planned for **April 1st** and **June 3rd**.

Note: The Treasurer and Secretary will be in attendance to receive annual subscriptions and to sign up new members.

oooooooooooooooo

SATURDAY MARCH 7th 9.00 am **IMAX 3D Demonstration** **at HOYTS CAROUSEL, CANNINGTON**

This event has been facilitated by Paul Colreavy and Gary Watson of Hoyts, with the approval of the Imax Corporation, Ken Robbins of Macrosphere and Entertainment services. Restrictions have been placed on the visit, limiting entry to financial members only, and photography in the bio box area.

See article on the installation on the following page.

The third dimension

Over recent years the cinema industry has endured dwindling patronage, due in part to print piracy and the early release of popular titles on DVD's or a lesser extent on videos which can be played on large home theatre electronic screens. The most recent weapon in the film exhibitor's armoury is again the presentation of three dimensional images – 3D, as members inspected at the GU installation at Innaloo last year.

The latest move in this direction is the entry of the IMAX Corporation onto the 3D stage, with the roll-out of new installations in key capital city locations just before Christmas. The site chosen for Perth was the Hoyts Carousel complex at Cannington. IMAX installations are handled by Brisbane based Entertainment Services who are responsible for looking after all their equipment in the South Pacific area. Consultancy on the work is provided by industry veteran Ken Robbins of Macrosphere.



Ken Robbins and local Imax technician Eric Crew roll in the twin projectors ready for positioning for critical alignment on the screen.

Unlike the stop-start affair with previous attempts to stir public interest in 3D, today the high intensity electronic projectors overcome the need to constantly reconfigure or adjust the standard 35mm machines as required by some earlier systems every time a new 3D title emerged, which was usually unpredictable. The specially designed silvered and deeply curved screen coupled with a huge sound system recreates the IMAX experience previously only enjoyed with conventional 70mm rolling loop systems



Eric starts to install the sound and electronic control modules in the central server rack

Entering the auditorium, the audience is confronted with unusual décor – the principal color is black, with beige seating. The exception being a cluster of seats in the first three rows at the front and to the side of the auditorium. These are covered brilliant red.

The reason for this apparent strange seating arrangement is that the red colour denotes those



seats which should not be used when a 3D film is being shown –the stereoscopic effect will not be fully obvious.

When these photos were taken during fit-out, huge aluminum trusses were being erected behind the curtains to hang the massive speaker arrays, and to also to mount and tension the screen.

Right: Ken Robbins alongside one of the many speaker arrays suspended around the audience.



Details of the operation will be explained to Members when they visit the site in March. In the meantime, Richard Ashton has discovered some great websites on the IMAX 3D system and also Cinemeccanica. Contact Richard on 9367 5967 for the details.

Cinemaweb update

Information is now being collected to update our Cinemaweb site. It is now some time since the last changes were made, with some cinemas closing down and others being multiplexed etc. Also there is new information being received suggesting small corrections and additions should be made. Members are requested to have a look at the site and go through as many listings as they can. Any need for change should be conveyed to Hedley Sims who is preparing the new information. Also photographs of old cinemas are required for our collection, as below.



Biograph Operators and Assistants gather to farewell Western Electric Engineer Mr. R. Deritt after the successful installation of sound equipment at the Prince of Wales Theatre, Murray St. Perth for the premiere of "The Jazz Singer"

Copy stand donation

With the increasing emergence of photos and other memorabilia, especially in relation to the TV exhibition later this year, the role of our Photographic Curator, John Porter will be of increasing importance.

John, who recently retired from a long and distinguished career as a professional photographer and cinematographer, will be in charge of receiving, documenting and storing all donated and AMMPT originated still photographic material. To facilitate reproduction of nominated images, professional equipment is essential.



Integral to the process is a high quality copy stand. Fortunately we have recently been donated this necessary and expensive piece of equipment. It was included amongst other equipment donated by member Ron Frank and his sons who now run Camera Electronic, the sales and service

company who sponsor the printing costs of our newsletters. The scope of their operation and facilities offered is always featured on our back page.

The Photographic Curator is responsible for the initial receipt of donated materials, archival reproduction and storage as necessary, and entering into a central database, in conjunction with our registrar Clive Woodward who will integrate images of our collection or related provenance into the Mosaic cataloguing system.

John's role is also to try to locate copyright holders if possible, and to take measures that this diversely interpreted law is not intentionally infringed. Documentation to protect our position will also be created after consultation with other mainstream museums. He will have control over what and how images in our database can be used in any AMMPT exhibition, publication or other means of public exhibition.

The Photographic Curator will also eventually be responsible for all film and video materials donated to, or produced by AMMPT, with similar responsibilities as to the use of the material. Any member requiring use of visual material for specific projects from our data base should first receive clearance from John.

New Members

The President and Committee welcome;
**Ross Bryant, Max Bostock, Ian Wilson,
Myra Robinson, Agnes Foyster, Kevin and
Norma Coombe.**

Discounts available

LIGHT BULBS

Arrangements have been made for AMMPT members to receive discounts on the purchase of all specialised light bulbs from any of the LAMP REPLACEMENTS stores in O'Connor, Balcatta, Melbourne and Brisbane. Product range from high power xenons to a wide range of sound exciter lamps and every other type of specialised light bulb imaginable. They also stock gaffer tape and Lee filters for those special colour lighting effects.

All that is required to get the discount is to present a current (2009) Membership card at the time of purchase. Lamp Replacement have the widest range of light bulbs in Australia and also stock many of the old incandescent projection lamps.

FILM REELS & CANS ETC.

What is not generally known, AMMPT President Daryl Binning has been the Western Australian agent for TUSCAN for nearly 40 years, maintaining local stocks of 35mm, 16mm & 8mm film reels, cans and cores, including microfilm reels and cassettes.

Over the past couple of decades, demand for this product has fallen dramatically, however Daryl still carries a full range, but not in the previous large quantities. The only product with any regular movement is microfilm products to the Battye library and the special vented film cans for archival 16mm & 35mm storage.

A very generous discount is available to AMMPT members on all new Tuscan products, as well as some second-hand items which are available for an even better deal – a donation to AMMPT.



AMMPT Contact details:

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and

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