

Cine

The Journal of Edinburgh
Cine & Video Society
23a Fettes Row, Edinburgh,
EH3 6RH

Chat

January 2012



75 Years of E.C.V.S. Pages 8 - 9

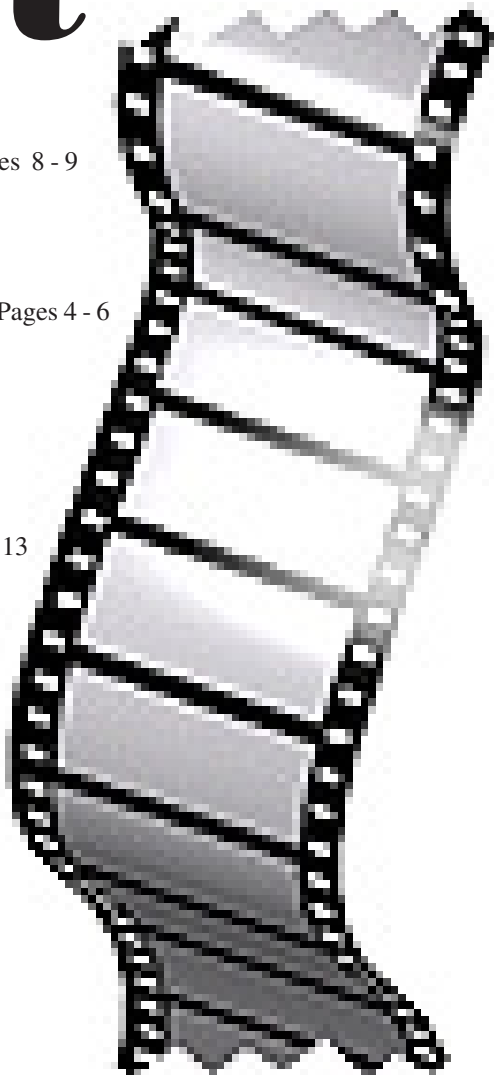
*John Clark discovers the little-known
backgrounds of some famous faces in...*

The Need to Know... Pages 4 - 6

End of the Reel Page 7

VHS vs DVD? Pages 10 - 11

Sean sings the blues Pages 12 - 13



About ECVS

Some things you might like to know if you are new to Edinburgh Cine and Video Society

The Waverley Cine Society which became Edinburgh Cine Society was founded in 1936, and is the oldest amateur movie-making society in Scotland. The Society has occupied premises in Fettes Row, in the New Town of Edinburgh since its inception. The society met in rented rooms until 1938, at which time, for £500, it purchased both the ground floor and the basement of number 23, Fettes Row to become the only Cine club in Scotland to own its own meeting rooms.

Escalating maintenance costs over the years forced the society to sell the ground floor of the building in 1975, and move downstairs to its existing clubrooms in the basement, which the society still owns. The clubrooms consist of a kitchen, toilets, and four main meeting rooms, one of which is fitted out with cinema seats for viewing video and cine films projected onto the large screen from the clubs video and cine projectors. The other rooms are used as a lounge and two multi-use studios or instructional areas, with video equipment and computer editing facilities installed.

CLUBROOMS

23A Fettes Row, Edinburgh, EH3 6RH
Website: <http://www.ecvs.co.uk>

E.C.V.S. is a Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee
Reg. in Scotland No. SC227261
Scottish Charity No. SC009670



EDITOR:

Alan Brown
23A Fettes Row, Edinburgh EH3 6RH
Email: alan@broon.co.uk

To whom all communications in connection with Cine Chat should be sent. Alternatively, members may leave notes in the Cine Chat Post Box, which will be available in the ECVS clubrooms at all times.

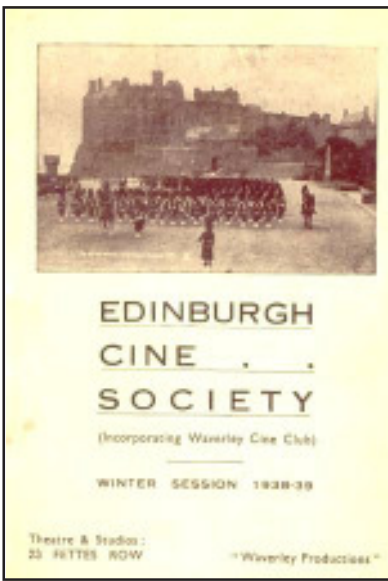
POLICY COMMITMENT:

To publish informative and entertaining articles, features, news, comments and opinion about movie making in general and ECVS and its members in particular. Never to cause intentional offence, but not to be afraid of occasional controversy. To publish members letters, comments, rights of reply, and submitted articles, as accurately as possible and to correct in the first available edition, any errors or omissions which may have inadvertently occurred in previous editions. COST: Free to members of ECVS unless and until the Committee decide otherwise.

ECVS OFFICIALS 2011 - 2012

President:	Hugh Trevor
Vice-President:	Jim Closs
Past President:	Peter Dick
Secretary:	Alasdair Bryson
Treasurer:	Vic Young
Subscriptions:	Alan Brown

EDITORS COLUMN



Welcome to the January 2012 edition of Cine-Chat! The 2011-2012 season marks 75 years since the inception of our society, so I've marked the occasion with a brief look at a few of the interesting documents we have in the archives from years gone by. The review is on the centre pages, but if you would like to know more about the history of the club, please speak to one of the Committee Members regarding availability of copies of the booklet produced by Dr Norman Speirs, or the film produced on our 70th Anniversary by Norman and Bob Bell.

Maintaining our nostalgic inclination this issue, we have a very interesting article by John Clark, who sheds some light on the sides of some famous faces of which you may not have been previously aware.

Jim Closs is also feeling nostalgic with a look back at the joys of VHS tapes (perhaps through rose-tinted spectacles?), while Peter Dick tolls a bell of doom for all tape-based storage. Sean Groat brings us bang up to date with his review of our recent blue-screen (chromakey) evening, where we attempted to transform brave volunteer, Stewart Emm, into a headless ghost for Hallowe'en.

We also have news of the forthcoming competition closing dates, so please get your entries in in plenty of time!

Last but not least, please have a go at our Caption Competition on the back page! We've a (very small) mystery prize for the best caption, and it's open to all Cine-Chat readers, whether they are members of ECVS or not. Good Luck!

ADVERSE WEATHER CANCELS MEETING (AGAIN)

The recent extreme winds forced us to cancel the scheduled ECVS evening on 8th December 2011, after Police advice to avoid any unnecessary travel. The scheduled evening was to have been 'Practical Sound' with Bob Bell, however we will attempt to reschedule this evening at a later date, to be advised.

One of the lessons learnt from this, and the bad weather last year, was the need for an easy way to contact all society members at short notice to advise of last-minute cancellations. We currently post notifications on

the front page of the society website (www.ecvs.co.uk) as quickly as possible, and would also like to send out an email to all members, and make a phone call to members who don't have email.

This was the reason for collecting contact details for all members last year, but if you would like to be notified of last minute cancellations, and have not yet given your contact details, please send them to the Membership secretary at: alan@broon.co.uk or leave a note in the clubrooms for me, thanks.

THE NEED TO KNOW

By John L Clark

In the last issue of Cine Chat I mentioned my interest in the backgrounds of leading actors. I have since been asked why I have an interest in actors who starred in films of the thirties, forties and fifties. The answer is that it was a schoolboy hobby which started during Saturday morning visits to the Gaumont British junior, film club at the New Victoria cinema. I had begun to wonder how the people on screen managed to become actors, as acting wasn't exactly a job that appeared in the newspaper vacancy columns. Later, when I discovered some actors had distinguished careers out with the studio, that was where my interest focused as it allowed me to see them in an entirely different light. After all, when you see an actor on screen he is playing the part of someone else; therefore you don't learn a single thing about him as a person. A few examples might help to show why I often find an actor of more interest than his character.

First, I should explain that I have long tended to see actors as belonging to one of three groups: 'full-time', 'part-time' or 'others'; others being those who have taken time-out to pursue different careers or retired from acting. We are all probably familiar with some of the 'others' from more recent times, among them Ronald Reagan, who was governor of California then president of the United States: Arnold Schwarzenegger, who was Governor of California: Clint Eastwood, who was Mayor of Carmel in California and Shirley Temple who represented the USA on various international bodies and was US ambassador to the former Czechoslovakia.



Col. Stewart being awarded the [Croix de guerre](#) with palm by Lt. Gen. Henri Valin, Chief of Staff of the French Air Force, for his role in the liberation of France.

Turn the clock further back, to 1939 and one of the biggest stars of the twentieth century. Cinema goers at the time could never have guessed that, James Stewart, the reticent young hero in the western *Destry Rides Again*, playing opposite Marlene Dietrich, would emerge three years later as a real life reticent hero. As a qualified pilot he took time-out in 1941 to join the US army air force and in wartime Britain his real-life role was as Lieutenant-Colonel James Stewart, skilled at leading

B-24 Liberator bomber raids, deep into Germany. This was a time when some actors were fighting the war, on-film; Stewart was fighting it on-the-battlefield. When the war in Europe ended he moved on to the conflict in the Pacific. One of WW2 understated heroes he returned to acting after the war,

but continued his air force connection and eventually retired as a Brigadier-General after 27 years service with the air force reserve.

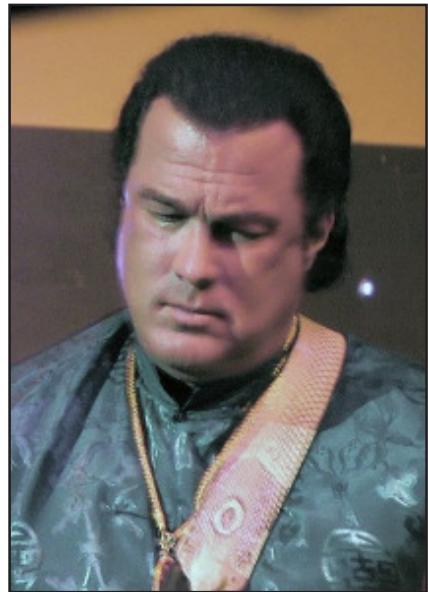


Robert Montgomery – 1939

Years ago a senior colleague gave a short speech at his retirement function in which he reminisced about memorable events during his 40 years of service. One event was memorable for me, as he told of an occasion during the second, world war when he had made his weekly visit to the cinema. The film he saw had Robert Montgomery, another big star of the twentieth century, in the lead. Little did my colleague realise, as he sat being entertained by Montgomery, that just over a week later he would again be entertained by Montgomery. This time to coffee and cookies as Montgomery, who had taken time-out from acting, played out his real-life role as a US navy Lieutenant in the combined operations unit just across the Forth at Pitreavie Castle. It was there over coffee they discussed the need to upgrade his communications system at the Castle. (Montgomery served with distinction in the Pacific on motor torpedo boats and later as a Lieutenant-Commander aboard a US destroyer at the 'D-day'

landings). He was described as charismatic and inspirational. My colleague was not a person given to exaggeration.

The term full time actor is self evident, but how would I define a part-time actor, you might ask? Well, it could be someone with a 'day job' away from the studio. In more recent times such an actor is martial arts expert Steven Seagal, who for more than twenty years has been an unpublicised, reserve police officer; latterly deputy chief sheriff in Jefferson Parish, Louisiana. On our ranking I think that equates to about deputy chief constable.



Steven Seagal – 2007

My retired colleague would no doubt have agreed that coincidence is a surprising event. I could tell of how I met Trevor Howard on Princes Street (friendly) and Kenneth More at the Trossachs (boring), but my most interesting meeting was with another actor. I was in my late teens and on a 48 hours pass in London with a fellow aircraftsman. Unknown to us at the time, we were looking into the same music shop-

window as Finlay Currie. Having overheard us talking about a harmonica, which my friend was thinking of buying, Currie had identified my accent and place of origin, as voice conscious actors often can.



Finlay Currie – Circa 1960

I glanced in his direction he smiled to me and opened a brief conversation with the words, “You’re from Edinburgh, then”. As he spoke I recognised his deep resonant voice almost before I recognised his face. As the conversation progressed I was a bit overawed by his confident manner: he mentioned he didn’t know much about mouth organs, but was a dab hand with church organs. We talked in general for a minute or two, during which time I became bold enough to say I had enjoyed his performance in *Great Expectations*, which I had seen a couple of years earlier. (However, I wasn’t bold enough to tell him he had almost given me heart-failure when his evil character appeared from behind a tombstone). He thanked me and as we parted on entering the music shop, he said in the vernacular, “I’m just a Soothside laddie, ye ken”. That comment brought me back to earth and I wondered how many Edinburgh cinema goers would have known of this. [Years later when I read his obituary, it claimed that he had been born in the New Town. I haven’t been able to reconcile this with his parting comment all those years ago.]

Forever old looking, grizzled Andy Clyde was the supporting actor to many a cowboy lead, he was often shot before the end of the film. At Christmas 1948, on an occasion when I switched on the family radio, the programme consisted of Christmas messages broadcast home from expats across the world. One of the messages was from Andy Clyde to the people of Blairgowrie, his first message home in about 30 years. I wondered how many people in Blairgowrie would have known that he was a native of the town.



Andy Clyde – Circa 1955

Most of the actors mentioned here have disappeared into the pages of history; their names will mean little or nothing to today’s declining number of cinema goers. So, in that context I suppose you could argue that all of this, and more that I could add, is useless information, though for me it’s of interest as history is something that I have the need to know. I am also aware there are other ECVS members who are interested in one form or another of cinema history, and who have much more knowledge on their subject than I have on mine. (An interesting example is Stewart Emm’s work on *Edinburgh Cinema History*).

Perhaps my small contribution here might encourage others to share their knowledge through the pages of *Cine Chat*.

End of the Reel



by Peter Dick

Is this the end of the reel, or should I say, the end of the cassette? The cassette as a container for magnetic tape has been with us for years. In our field I am referring to the consumer video cassette formats. It started when Philips introduced cassette based video recording for consumers. This was followed by VHS and Betamax. These were all analogue formats and all employed rotating head technology. This technology involved complex and precise engineering which was expensive to produce. The quality was acceptable but not outstanding. The tapes themselves became relatively inexpensive due to the high volumes of production. Manufacturers found ways of miniaturising the transport and a new generation of self contained video cameras was created. In order to keep the size down small cassettes evolved. The picture quality was no better than the larger home models. The big improvement when the recording process switched to digital. This picture quality that was subjectively similar to that of broadcasts.

The switch to digital allowed the tapes to be edited and copied without the losses that plagued analogue. High definition capabilities were then developed for the consumer market. This employed the same transport mechanism as the standard definition models. As a high definition picture has several times the information than standard definition picture new compression techniques were needed to fit HD onto the same tape. HDV (High Definition Video) was created which employed newer compression methods including compressing the horizontal component of the image to 1440 pixels instead of the native 1920. Further compression was achieved by using compressed audio instead of uncompressed PCM (Pulse Code Modulation - audio in digital form). HDV

is an evolutionary dead end and is unlikely to be developed further. DV is also unlikely to receive further development and consumer tape formats are being rapidly being consigned to history.

This leads one to think about longer term storage and archiving. This is a problem that has always existed and is unlikely to go away. Existing tapes will need to be transcribed to other formats before the capability to successfully play them is lost. If a tape has recorded in LP mode (long play) it is particularly susceptible to errors as its recording tolerances are most demanding on the media and will be the first to give trouble at playback. The big question is what is going to be the best storage medium? Recordable optical discs do not have any form of proven reliability record. Solid state memory is only guaranteed for about ten years retention. Hard discs, as used by computers, have good capacity and performance. They can store a lot of material but need to have several copies saved on different drives to be reliable. Hard discs tend to fail without much warning and all the data is lost. Think of the saying 'All the eggs in one basket'. No doubt future technologies will appear and time to transfer will be back again.

It is time to seriously think about transcribing tapes to hard discs before it becomes expensive. Once in digital form there is no loss of quality with future copies provided that no digital errors occur.

SHEEP DOG TRIALS
EDINBURGH AMATEURS TO
MAKE FILM

The Waverley Amateur Cine Club are to make a documentary film of the sheep dog trials to be held at Braidsburn Valley to-morrow afternoon in aid of the Lord Provost's Benevolent Fund. It is probable that this film and several others which the club have made within the last two years recording local civic and historical events will be screened in aid of charities in which the Lord Provost is interested. The sheep dog trials will also be featured in the club's monthly news reel.

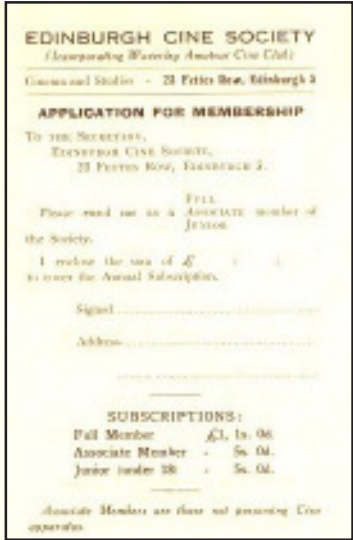
The first known reference to the society in print (13th May 1937)

75 Years of Film-making with E.C.V.S

1936. King George V died, succeeded to the throne by his son, Edward VIII for his brief eleven-month reign. The Hoover Dam was completed, after five years of construction. *Gone with the Wind* was first published, and the first *Butlins* Holiday camp opened in Skegness. But despite the enormity of these events, it is a less publicised, but many would say, equally important event that we concern ourselves within these pages - The *Waverley Cine Society* was formed! Regular readers will know that the Waverley Cine Society soon changed it's name to Edinburgh Cine Society, later becoming the Edinburgh Cine and Video Society we know today.

Of course there have been many pivotal moments over the 75 years of the society's existence, which I couldn't hope to do justice to in these pages, however I'd like to take the opportunity here to share some of the documents from the archives, that I hope Cine Chat readers might find interesting.

For those who would like to know more about the history of the club, please enquire with a committee member about the availability of the excellent booklet produced by Dr Norman Speirs on the history of the club, or the film by Norman and Bob Bell.



Membership cost £1 1s 0d in 1938



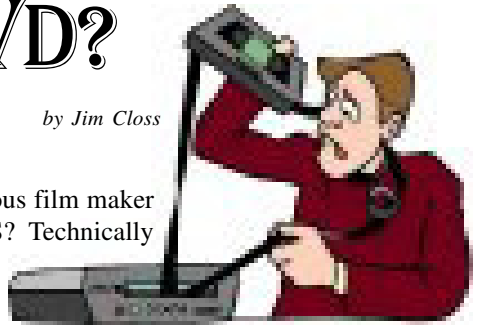
War-time society syllabus, giving instructions on what to do in the event of an air raid.



The Edinburgh Cine Society, comfortably seated in their private cinema, view some of their own efforts with a critical eye.

VHS VS DVD?

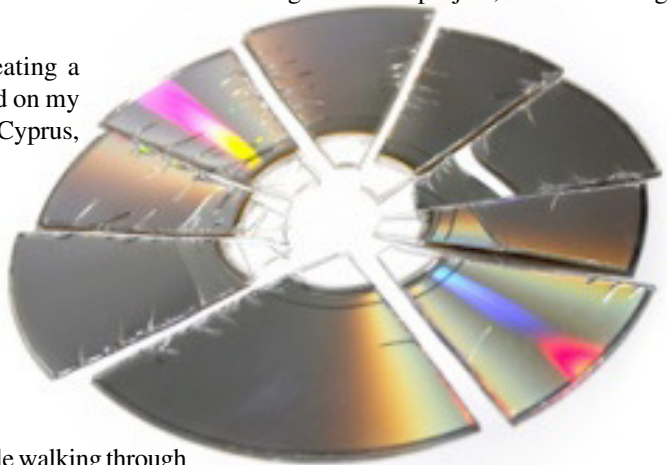
by Jim Closs



A rhetorical question? Surely no serious film maker would want to go back to the days of VHS? Technically “Video Home System” by JVC, this became known as “Very Horrible System” - and deservedly so. Among the competing formats of the day this was the lowest common denominator. But it did have two features which made it so widely acceptable - simplicity and reliability. You might not be entirely satisfied with the image quality of the VHS copy of your cherished video project but at least you knew that when your masterpiece was finished, all you had to do was to say “Export to Tape” - and you would soon have a copy that you could show almost anywhere in the world - and be fairly sure that it would play on a TV screen or projector - pretty well as you intended. It worked!

Several software generations later I have usually managed to get DVD copies of my projects to behave a bit better - until my latest project, a 39 minute documentary about the Cairngorms National Park. Shot in high definition (HDV), this opens with a slow pan across the mountains. Playing back from the timeline on to my computer’s LCD monitor, this worked perfectly well. But when playing back from a DVD copy to various LCD TVs, the pan was spoiled by excessive graininess and shimmering - a problem repeated at various points throughout the film. When you have spent over a year working hard on a project, it is frustrating,

My first attempt at creating a DVD is indelibly etched on my memory. On holiday in Cyprus, I filmed a choir singing local folk songs. Within 60 seconds of playing back the DVD version, choir and songs departed into separate universes. Audio and Video parted company. The video also gave problems. I filmed people walking through a narrow gorge. One minute they were far away down inside the gorge - but half a second later they were out! Maybe they were time travellers?



to say the least, to find that - at the final hurdle - all you can produce is a blurred and distorted version of the high definition film you thought you had created.

Fortunately, as a member of the IAC's non-linear editing (NLE) forum, I was able to make a plea for help and advice. If you are not a member, then you should join the IAC just to qualify for membership of the NLE forum - by far the best helpline for amateur film makers. My plea produced advice about settings for burning the DVD which I tried to follow - only to find the outcome was even worse! I don't blame the advice for that. What it did was to spur me to experiment with the settings for the DVD burning software, after which I found that a 'hidden' option in my software (Adobe Premiere Pro CS3) was writing a 'deinterlaced' copy - when it should have been writing an 'interlaced' copy. Do you feel any the wiser for knowing that?

This experience reminded me that the promises of high quality video from DVD come with a cost of complexity. When I try to export a cherished project to DVD I am confronted with a series of choices - *Interlaced* or *Deinterlaced*. If Interlaced -



what *Frame Order* (upper, lower, none). Then *Format* (26 options here), *Presets* (only 6 options here), *Export* (Video or Audio - or both), *Quality Level* (1-9), *Bit Rate* (Constant, Variable), *Number of Passes* (1-Pass, 2-Pass) - have you had enough?? I certainly have. I think the DVD format was designed for Hollywood - not for amateurs.

Doesn't it make you a bit nostalgic for VHS?!



Choice of the Clubs Competition 2011/2012

This years final of the Choice of the Clubs Competition will be held in the ECVS clubrooms on Thursday 23rd February. After viewing and voting has taken place, the votes from all other clubs will be counted and this years winner will be announced.

(For those unable to attend, there will be a further chance to view all the entries on Friday 24th February, however no voting will take place)

Chromakey Night Review

by Sean Groat
Photography by Bryce Morrison

On Thursday 3rd November Alan Brown and I hosted an evening of chromakey at the Edinburgh Cine and Video Society. Alan Brown opened the evening with a short video downloaded from the net showing the techniques for perfect chromakey as well as lighting tips and adverts for items that could be purchased to help budding film makers with this special effect.

The audience were then invited through to the blue screen room and treated to a demonstration where Stewart Emm graciously volunteered to be the guinea pig. With the evening being so close to Halloween Alan and I had decided to have a spooky theme to the night and we had decided to turn Stewart into a headless ghost.



To do this we dressed him up a bit and gave him a pillow in a blue pillow case to be his head and to hold under his arm. We filmed that part and then covered his real head with a blue pillow case and shot that part. The idea was to take the footage of his head and superimpose it onto the footage of his headless body, where the pillow was under his arm.



Chromakey dates back to around the 1930's (according to Wikipedia) in the form of a travelling matte and Larry Butler won an Academy Award for special effects with "The Thief of Bagdad" in 1940. Blue or green were originally chosen as background colours as they are furthest away from skin tones. Green is more commonly used after the introduction of digital cameras as the CCD chip has more green pixels on the sensor (apparently to match the human eye).

The group were shown the lighting rig I use in the blue room. I have two 500W security type halogen lamps. It is important to have two matching

light sources when doing chromakey. They should also be positioned at the same angle from the backdrop, 45 degrees is ideal. This should eliminate any shadows or worse still – any hot spots. Hot spots are areas where the light is brighter and this can really muck up a chromakey shot. In an ideal world a third light much higher than the other two lighting the backdrop would be good but in the club blue room there isn't much space and therefore I use a third halogen lamp

and bounce it off the white ceiling. This should illuminate the backdrop evenly and also light the subject, in this case Stewart.

To get full length shots of actors in our blue room is tricky as we are not able to get far enough back from the actor. If the actor stands too close to the blue backdrop then shadows appear on the back



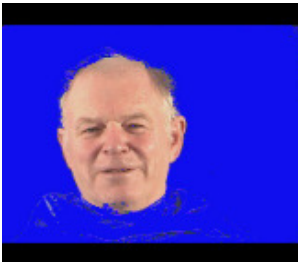
Stewart is filmed against a blue backdrop with head also covered in blue material



Stewart's head is filmed against a blue backdrop with neck covered in blue.



We key-out the blue in the editing software, leaving a transparent backdrop.



We also key-out the blue in the head shot, leaving a transparent backdrop.

drop and this is not good. I find that two or three feet from the back drop is the best distance. If the camera is fitted with a wide screen adaptor this can work but watch out for distorted images. By flipping the cameras lcd preview monitor, round through 180 degrees, to face forward you can position the camera up against the far wall and still be able to see what the camera is capturing on the monitor.

The clever part (but the easiest to do) with chromakey is done on the computer. Most if not all editing software packages will have some chromakey facility. In the Pinnacle Studio that I use I simply place the back ground footage on the time line and then place the footage with the blue background onto the overlay track. Click a few buttons and simply tell the computer to remove anything blue. This reminds me to say that your actor should not be wearing blue or anything coloured even close to blue (and I suggest missing out on white, too as it can pick up blue reflections from all the blue around about!) or that will vanish, too. The software should have control over the variance and saturation of blue to remove and in Pinnacle you can choose which ever colour you want to remove or replace. So if your actor had an orange shirt you could chromakey it to any colour you want or replace it with video.

There are many things you can do with chromakey and you are not limited to two layers – be creative, be inventive and above all – have a go!



By using multiple layers of footage, we can position the tranparent footage we have created over a static dungeon backdrop, creating our headless ghost effect.

THE PILGRIM TRUST AWARD 2012



*The coveted Pilgrim Trust Trophy, and
winners' quaich*

The Edinburgh Cine & Video Society Pilgrim Trust Award competition has been running since 1980. The theme of the competition is "Scotland" and almost any film made in Scotland or on a Scottish subject will be accepted. Entries are welcome from both ECVS members and non-members.

The Pilgrim Trust Award Competition for 2012 will be held on Thursday 29th March, 2012 at 7.30pm in the Edinburgh Cine and Video Society Clubrooms, 23a Fettes Row, Edinburgh, all are welcome to attend.

Entries are now invited for the competition and entry forms can be obtained by:

- i) Downloading an entry form from our website at ww.ecvs.co.uk
- ii) Email to emmedin@btopenworld.com
- iii) Writing to Stewart Emm, c/o Edinburgh Cine & Video Society, 23a Fettes Row, Edinburgh, EH3 6RH.

The closing date for entries is Friday 24 February 2012.

The rules of the competition are as follows:

1. Entries will only be accepted from amateur film makers or groups.
2. The film must be about Scotland or a Scottish subject, although it is not necessary that the film was made in Scotland. e.g. the achievement of a Scotsman abroad.
3. The running time of the film must not be more than 20 minutes.
4. The entrant is responsible to ensure there are no problems with copyright for visuals or sound.
5. A £6 entry fee must accompany each entry together with the return postage fee if the film is not being collected after the competition.
6. The winner will be presented with the Pilgrim Trust Rosebowl to be retained for one year. An engraved quaich (Scottish drinking cup) will also be presented, to be retained by the winner.

BUDGIE CUP COMPETITION

Entries are now being accepted for the 2012 Budgie Cup Competition! The Budgie Cup competition is open to all current ECVS members. The competition will be held on the 17th February in the ECVS club rooms, closing date for entries is the 20th of January 2012. Entries are accepted in all reasonable formats. Please contact us for details if you wish to submit entries via email. Entrants are required to submit their name and the titles of up to six (still) images entered.

Caption Competition



Taken at the recent evening on 'Underwater Filming' with Vic Young, we felt that this action shot of Bryce Morrison trying on the underwater kit would make an excellent caption competition! Please send your witty captions to the usual Cine Chat address (alan@broon.co.uk or pop them in the box in the clubrooms) and the best of them will win a mystery prize in the next issue!
(competition open to all readers, not only ECVS members)

Next Issue

The next issue of CineChat is (tentatively) scheduled for April 2012, if you have any articles, letters, advertisements for inclusion, they would be very welcome. The deadline for submission (either electronically, or in hard-copy) for the next issue is:

Friday 23rd March 2012

