

# Cine Chat

October 2014

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



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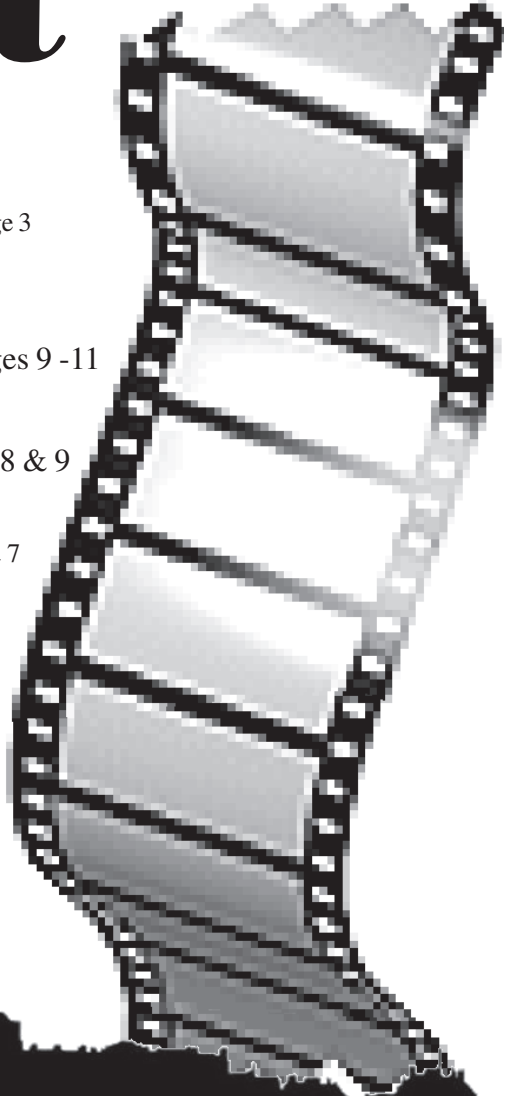
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<http://www.ecvs.co.uk>

## 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>

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## About CINE CHAT

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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 2014 - 2015**

**President:**

Stewart Emm

**Vice-President:**

Peter Dick

**Past President:**

Peter Wilson

**Secretary:**

Alasdair Bryson

**Treasurer:**

Vic Young

**Subscriptions:**

Brian Whinnell

# THE PRESIDENT WRITES...



I hope you all have enjoyed a great summer and are looking forward to the start of the new session on the 2nd October. Our first evening will be an open evening to members, guests and visitors, with a glass of wine or soft drink to welcome you in. The new committee, although small (in number!), has been very active over the summer months preparing for the new session. Your copy of the new programme is enclosed with this Cine Chat.

I attended one of Peter Wilson's excellent Friday evening shows and half way into the film it stopped, we then had a 15min refreshment break and the viewing recommenced. This seemed a good way to run the evening, as I don't know about you, but after sitting for three-quarters of an hour, in our rather compact cinema seats, my legs needed a stretch. We hope to carry this split meeting arrangement for the Thursday evening programme and also start on time at 7.30pm.

In June Kay Foubister, Scottish Screen Archive; Bob Bell and myself were interviewed by another Bob, Bob Dickson, from the BBC Radio 1 Culture Show. I don't know how many of you caught the show but it was triggered off by an article in the May's NLS Newsletter about a team at the Scottish Screen Archive recently uploading 12 new films from Edinburgh Cine & Video Society.

In the interview Kay Foubister stressed the importance in the Society's work being held in the national screen archive, as she believes it's important that non-professional film material should be preserved for future generations. Bob was interviewed about his Robert Louis Stevenson project, what he gets out of film making and why he enjoyed being a member of the ECVS rather than ploughing the furrow of the solitary independent film maker. The interview ended on a cautionary note about the future, due to dwindling numbers of the film making clubs across Scotland and their valuable contribution to the archive.

In his answer to 'ploughing the solitary furrow', I think Bob got it right, that it was better to have a group of like-minded people to assist in production and give constructive feedback to help improve on your own production. So my message for the start of the new season is that you should be encouraging all potential film makers, of all ages, to join the ECVS rather than 'plough a solitary furrow' on their own.

# A JOKE TOO FAR?

*Behind the Scenes on What a Mess 2,  
by Alan Brown*

Having been ‘in planning’ for almost a decade (the vast majority of that time spent avoiding actually getting started filming), the script for my latest film ‘What a Mess 2: Attic of the Clones’ went through a lot of changes. One of the more interesting of these was the decision that as the original film had contained some silly special effects – ropey props and various blue-screen/split screen effects, any sequel should also stay true to genre and contain a lot of experimental effects as well – a throwaway comment that perhaps it would be a good joke to cram all the special effects in the first minute, and then make the rest of the film more mundane took root, and eventually became an idea to have a massive over-the-top one minute introduction, with as many special effects as we could fit in, and then reveal that it’s all irrelevant as our main character is simply watching it all on the TV, which he then switches off!

And so began probably the most work-intensive 1-minute of footage that I’ve ever



made – just for that initial ‘joke’.

I decided that although this was to be a largely irrelevant sequence, it should have some connection to the film, so the ‘giant monster running amok’ idea from the first film was re-used, this time the monster isn’t a giant clone, it’s a plasticine Godzilla-type giant lizard – with four arms! Due to the fact that the monster was green, I decided to ‘blue-screen’ using an orange screen, on the basis that this would probably create the biggest contrast between background and foreground – in hindsight, this may not have been such a good idea, as I found the orange background was more difficult to ‘key out’ than a traditional blue or green screen, and edges are less forgiving, as the orange doesn’t blend in well to any background you might choose to use (in my shots blue sky or green trees).

At this point I also selected the music which would be used for the sequence – this was important because I wanted the sequence to end at the climactic end of the music, and with animation, you don’t want to spend hours animating more sequences than you will actually use. Having chosen a suitable 1-minute sequence of music from [AudioNetwork.com](http://AudioNetwork.com) (See the March 2014 Issue of Cine Chat for a review of that music resource), I knew exactly how much footage would be required.

Stop-frame animation (Using Stop Motion Pro) was used for the monster, a slow and painstaking task, hampered by

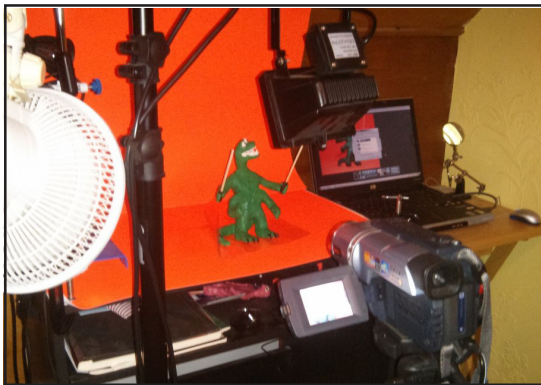
the fact that the plasticine does tend to melt under the 250W halogen lights I use. Short of spending a lot more on cooler lights, this is unavoidable, as with a couple of seconds of footage for an hours work, using the ever-changing natural light isn't an option. Instead, judicious use of a desk fan, and regular 'cool-down breaks' were the solution to the melting monster problem.

Having created the required stop-frame sequences, I went on-location to capture the required background shots. I already knew the types of shots required, as I'd taken a series of stills photos on a previous visit to the location. Taking the background footage was relatively straightforward, the only complication was waiting for all the dog-walkers and ramblers to get out of the shot in some of the longer shots of the tower.

The next step was to superimpose the chromakeyed animation footage onto the background – due to limitations with my animation setup, the animation was in standard definition 4:3 aspect ratio, while the background footage was all high definition 16:9. This wasn't much of a problem, as I had to use 'picture-in-picture' to resize the animation footage to scale it to the background (and to move it around on the background). There's still a noticeable image quality difference between the foreground and background shots though.

A major issue at this point was the use of a background tracking shot – I wanted to pan slowly up the tower, from the monsters feet to it's head at the start of the film. I'd thought that this would be relatively easy – just film the panning shot on the background, a similar pan on the animated monster, and then alter the speeds to match. Unfortunately it didn't turn out to be as easy as that – the monsters feet need to be on the ground at the start of

the pan, and it's head needs to be at the top of the tower at the end – adjusting the speed of either clip is restricted as you don't want to see the monsters feet lift off the ground as the camera pans up. I animated this sequence twice to try to get it right, but in the final version you can still see the monster appear to float up momentarily as the cam-



era pans up – lesson learnt – don't try to move the background on chromakey shots, as the movement is next to impossible to match with the foreground!

The rocket was rendered in 3D Studio Max. The software has the capability to render 3D objects directly onto video footage, but the learning curve was too intimidating for me. Instead I rendered the 3D rocket shots against a plain blue background and chromakeyed them onto my background footage in the same way as I had the animation sequences.

Next, the special effects were added. For this I used 'FXHome Effects Lab Pro' – outdated software by today's standards, but still quite effective. The software has a variety of effects, some better than others. For most, it's a case of marking the area of the effect on a

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# Meet The Committee 2014 - 2015



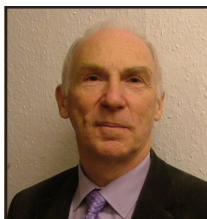
**Stewart Emm**  
**President**

Stewart has been a member of ECVS for several years. Stewart does a lot of work publicising the club and encouraging potential new members to join. As this years President, Stewart is heavily involved in this years programme, and has some great evenings planned!



**Peter Dick**  
**Vice President**

As well as being actively involved in the running of the club, Peter is also a prolific winner of awards and has a keen interest in photography as well as film making. Peter can often be found in the projection box, as one of our regular projectionists.



**Vic Young**  
**Treasurer**

As Treasurer, Vic maintains an iron grip on the purse strings and the finances of ECVS. A keen diver, Vic is our resident authority on underwater filming techniques and is also involved in various club films and projects.



**Alasdair Bryson**  
**Secretary**

Alasdair has been a member of ECVS for several years, this year he continues in the role of ECVS Club Secretary. As such Alasdair does an excellent job of minuting all the committee meetings and undertaking all the club correspondence.



**Brian Whitnell**  
**Membership Secretary**

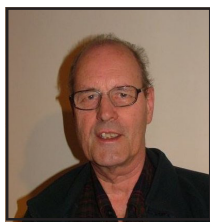
Brian has been an active film maker for many years, previously being a member of the White Rose (Thirsk) Camcorder Club . Brian is the Club Membership Secretary, and is therefore the man to go to with all your subscription fees!



**Peter Wilson**  
**Past President**

Peter is widely considered one of the leading movie buffs, historians, collectors and presenters of cinema in E.C.V.S. He's also the clubs Past President and promises a great selection of evenings on Friday nights!

# Meet The Committee 2014 - 2015



**Jim Closs**  
**Committee Member**

Jim prefers making documentaries but sometimes has a go at one-minute videos which he sees as a real challenge. As a keen hillwalker he also combines both hobbies by making occasional mountaineering videos. Jim is also on this years Programme Committee, and has some exciting evenings planned!



**Hugh Trevor**  
**Committee Member**

Hugh has been a member of ECVS for about 13 years, including 7 years as our club secretary. Hugh enjoys making travel films and documentaries.

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*..continued from page 5*

frame of footage, then moving forward a few frames and specifying the new location of the effect – the software fills in the frames in between. This probably works really well for natural movement – e.g. the swinging of a lightsabre, where the path of the swing can be extrapolated by the software – however, when a plasticine animated monster ‘swings’ a lightsabre – it turns out the movement path is anything but smooth and predictable! As the software made such a poor job of trying to extrapolate movement of the animated monster, any effects linked to the monster (lightsabres, smoke, fireballs, lasers) had to be inserted frame-by-frame. Effects which weren’t linked to the monster’s movement – burning grass/tower, rocket smoke etc. were much simpler to add, as there was no movement, or the movement was predictable.

The most complex shot of this sequence was of the two soldiers requesting the missile be fired – this consists of a background layer, a animated monster layer, a special effects layer, and a chroma-keyed layer of

the soldiers on top of that.

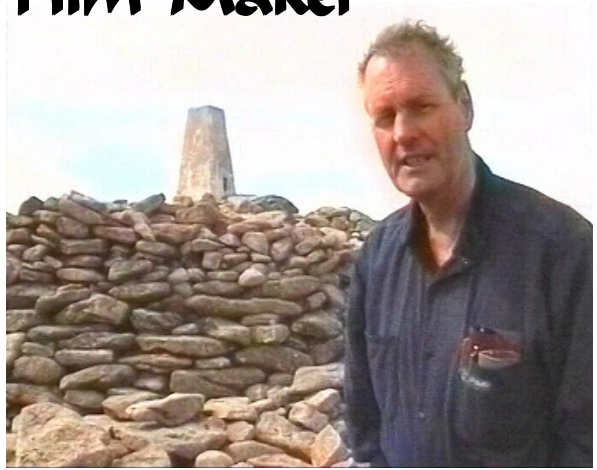


The final result provides, I hope, an eye-catching introduction to the film, I’m a great fan of stop-frame animation, and particularly like the idea of merging it with live-action footage, perhaps I’ll try it again in the future – on the other hand, having spent weeks creating a 1-minute introductory sequence, I already felt like I’d created a film before we even started on the main production, so I perhaps next time I’ll think twice when someone suggests “Hey, wouldn’t it be great if that monster had four arms, lightsabres and LASER BEAMS COMING OUT HIS EYES?!”

# The Ageing Film Maker

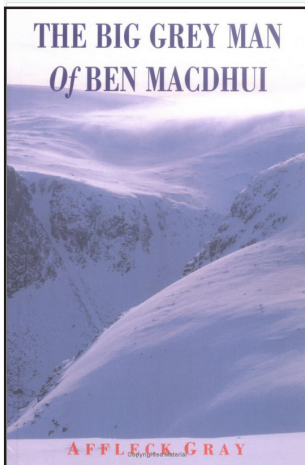
By Jim Closs

I think most of us amateurs will have films we made in the past and were quite proud of at the time but when we look back on them with several years of hindsight and compare them with what we could achieve with today's technology, we think "I'd like to have another go at that project."



*Jim at MacDhui Summit*

When I was young - well, in my 60s - I made a film about the well known Scottish mountain ghost - The Grey Man of Ben MacDhui - almost by accident. I was on the Programme Committee in 1998 and topics for Members 5 Minute Videos for the year ahead were in demand. The programme committee is always looking for suggested titles and I, foolishly, suggested "Scottish Ghosts". I had inherited a book with that title and felt sure there must be something in there for the basis of a film. When I read the book there were many fantastical stories of fairies, goblins, devils, kelpies and the like but nothing you could turn into a film. But with the programme printed and this title being my suggestion, I was committed. I had to find something.



*The Big Grey Man of Ben  
MacDhui  
Affleck Gray  
ISBN-10: 1874744203*

By chance a friend gave me a Xmas present of a book by an Aberdeenshire journalist, Affleck Gray, which detailed the legend of the Grey Man mountain ghost. Being a hillwalker, I found the story fascinating and could see how it could be made into a short film. The Grey Man is supposed to be a giant ghost who haunts the summit of Ben MacDhui in the Cairngorm mountains. He isn't seen but is usually heard by his giant footsteps, like crunches in the snow, following menacingly behind hillwalkers making their way off the hill in misty conditions. Not just ordinary hillwalkers but eminent scientists have been so scared by this phenomenon that they have run for their lives to get off the mountain.

In the film, I planned to turn to the camera and say "And this is the summit of Ben MacDhui". Hollywood would probably have created a studio background for that but I knew that every hillwalker in Scotland would instantly spot a fake - so my 'to camera' quote had to be on the real



summit. This involved three hours driving from Edinburgh to Aviemore and then seven hours walking up to and back down from the summit of Ben MacDhui, followed by three more hours driving back to Edinburgh. I had to do this three times over so it was not quite what you would expect for a “5 Minute” video - and that didn’t include the editing!



That project was completed in 1999 and in the SVHS format of the day so much of the footage is grainy and very poor quality by today’s standards, though it did get a ‘Silver’ award in the IAC’s annual competition in 2000. I have often thought I would like to re-visit the project with my new HD cameras and another 15 years experience of film making but never got round to it. What brought it to mind was hearing recently that an American company has sent a team from LA California to film the Grey Man and other Scottish ghosts but can’t be bothered trailing all the way up to the summit of Ben MacDhui for the real thing. Can’t wait to see the premiere!

I would love to go back and do this project again but now at 78 and with recent replacement knee surgery I can’t quite see myself striding up on to Ben MacDhui in the way I used to when I made the original film, so maybe the Grey Man will be safe from my camera. But in a year’s time when the knee has recovered ..... ?????

## Lighting Masterclass

*By Stewart Emm*

In our programme the month of January 2014 will be about lighting and how to get the best images from your own lighting kit and the lighting equipment that the club has available. In preparation, this article gives an overview of the basics of lighting your productions.

### Lighting

If there’s anything that all levels of filmmakers have issues with it’s lighting. Even although most of us can create a basic three-point lighting set-up with a key, fill, and backlight, to set up lighting for more dramatic scenes is often more complex and equipment intensive. Even although we are members of a filmmaking club, we have a mixed bag of lighting kit, some old, some new and some DIY. (An

existing lighting kit audit would assist in determining what additional lighting kit we need). So how can we effectively light a scene, to create the wanted dramatic effect, with a minimal budget and equipment?

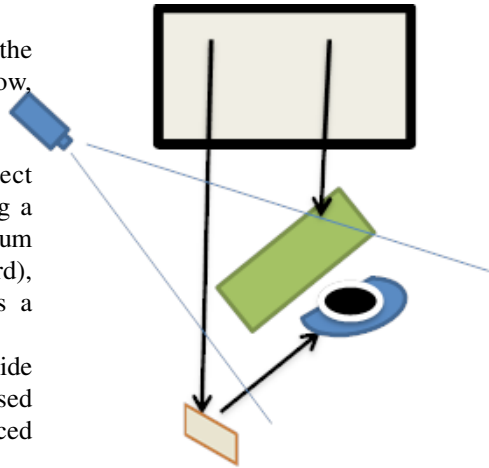
Let’s start where we have only the use of a single lamp and the possible solutions to provide lighting for the scene you need to film.

## Daylight

If you are lighting an interior, where the sunlight is coming through a window, you have several choices.

You can light the subject with direct daylight (as the key light) and using a metal foil faced reflector board (aluminium baking foil over a square of hardboard), to provide reflected daylight as a backlight. (fig.1)

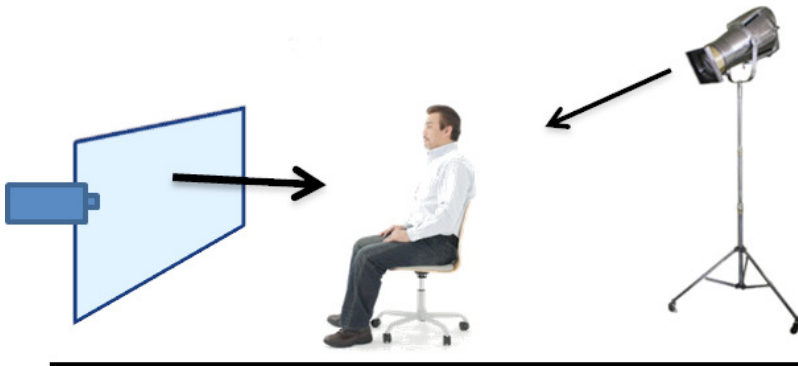
The metal foil faced reflector will provide a strong reflected light, to get a diffused illumination of you subject a white faced board to reflect the daylight will do.



*Figure 1 Direct daylight with single reflector*

A variation of this set up is to cut out the reflector and use a single lamp as a back

light. (Fig .2) It will require a blue gel over it to give it the colour correction required for daylight. (We will cover this subject in a future edition of Cine Chat)



*Figure 2 Direct daylight with single light (backlight)*

## Portable Lights

There are basically three types of portable lights; a small one attached to the camera, a hand-held or one supported on a light-stand. What they all have in common is they either use a power feed from the camera or use a battery power source.

The on-camera light, 100-300 watts, is used to give 'Eye-lights' to reflect in the



*Fig 3 Halogen on-camera/hand held light*

eyes and give them a sparkle. The lamp may have a dimmer control and/or be fitted with a diffuser to adjust the light intensity to soften the effect. The battery power lights have limited duration of around 30 minutes and this varies with use. This type of lighting has now gone out of fashion as it had several drawbacks. It had limited reach and only illuminated people close to the camera, it was often reflected in glasses and dazzled /over lit people.



*Fig 4 LED on-camera/hand held light*

Usually the on-camera light can be used as a hand held one. The older halogen lamp type has now been replaced with the LED type. The LED lights benefit over the former from cool running and lower power consumption and provide a more diffused source of light.

### **Limit Your Light Sources**

You can quickly adapt to mixed lighting situations; tungsten, daylight, fluorescent and LED, but your camera has a much more difficult time. Fluorescent lights often cause a greenish cast, tungsten makes things orange; daylight can colour your scene blue if you are in the shade or next to an open window. How do you deal with this? Best solution is to use your camera's white balance adjusted for the dominate light source. If indoors with a strong daylight source and bright fluorescent overhead, the either turn off the fluorescents and white balance for daylight or shade the windows and adjust for the overhead lighting.

### **Backlighting**

Sometimes there is no option, but to shoot an indoors scene with strong daylight (backlight)

that causes everything in the foreground to turn dark if you are using the camera's automatic metering system. It is measuring the bright sky or sunlight streaming in the window. If you have no alternatives to re-locate your subject(s) then you can:

- Use a reflector or lights to add illumination to the subject
- Switch off your auto-metering and lock your exposure on your subjects so that they don't silhouette in the backlit situation.

Reflectors and lights are helpful in backlit situations when you want to add light to the subject to offset the strong background light source. Best practice is to avoid them if you can, if you can't, use the best solution for the situation you want to capture.

Today's video cameras, when compared to their older predecessors, can operate in relatively low light levels. However lighting is about control and knowing how to create beautiful, well-lit images.

## ***Next Issue***

The next issue of CineChat is (tentatively) scheduled for January 2015, 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 12th December 2014**

