

CILECT NEWS

July 2008

N°46

COMING SOON...

3 — 8 NOVEMBER

CONGRESS 2008

BEIJING FILM ACADEMY



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CILECT CONGRESS 2008

BEIJING 北京

FACT SHEET

- The biennial CILECT Congress will be held Monday 3 to Saturday 8 November 2008 in Beijing at the invitation of the Beijing Film Academy.
- You should plan to arrive on Sunday 2 and leave on Sunday 9 November, unless you **want to take part in an excursion to Xi'An (9-12 November)** or wish to attend the International Student Film Festival organized by the Beijing Film Academy (9-15 November).
- The Congress is divided in two main parts: the Conference and the General Assembly.
- The Conference consists of 7 Panels on teaching issues, followed by Q&A. Participants in the panels are CILECT member schools delegates.
- The General Assembly addresses the business of CILECT: reports, policy, activities past and future, elections.
- One day is reserved for meetings of the regional associations of CILECT and a presentation of highlights of the Chinese film diversity.
- Another day is reserved for an excursion, which will most likely be to the Great Wall.
- Films from the Nominees and Winners of the CILECT Prize competitions for 2007 and 2008 will be shown in the evenings.
- Time has been set aside in the section « Contributed Papers » for participants who want to make a presentation.

THE CONFERENCE

The Conference will take place on the first two days of the Congress.

There will be seven Conference sessions, each one dedicated to a different theme, with a different panel.

Panels will be consists of representatives from CILECT schools with a moderator and be followed by Q&A.

The Seven Themes

1. **How do we teach new formats**
Moderator: Caterina d'Amico
 Schools: UBA, Buenos Aires; Beijing Film Academy; USC, Los Angeles
2. **New Approaches to Documentary**
 Moderator: Henry Breitrose
 Schools: Stanford University; La Fémis, Paris; CCC, Mexico City.
2. **New ways of distributing audiovisual content**
 Moderator: Nenad Puhovski
 Schools: ADU, Zagreb; American University; Boston; DIMA, Anseong.
2. **Writer-Director or Writer+Director?**
 Moderator: Stanislav Semerdjiev
 Schools: JSFS, Jerusalem, other schools to be confirmed
2. **Animation - Reconciling the students' desires with the demands of the market**
 Moderator: Victor Valbuena
 Schools: VGIK, Moscow; SIDM Nanyang Polytechnic, Singapore; NAFTI, Accra
2. **Bridge Programmes**
 Moderator: Don Zirpola
 Schools: LMU, Los Angeles, UC, Buenos Aires; CSC, Mexico City
2. **Approaches to TV Curricula**
 Moderator: Maria Dora Mourão
 Schools: USP; Sao Paulo; CUC Beijing, NTA, Jos

Contributed Papers

We have scheduled time for a Contributed Papers section on the last day of the Congress.

Papers should be on one of the seven themes of the conference, keeping in mind that CILECT is an association of schools whose primary emphases are practical, rather than critical or theoretical.

The Contributed Papers Committee will review full texts or extended abstracts of proposed contributions.

We will require full texts of the papers that have been accepted by the end of September, so that they may be printed in the Congress programme, and read by the delegates when they arrive. Our intention is for the sessions to focus on discussion and interaction, rather than formal presentation.

Henry Breitrose will be in charge of the Contributed Papers sessions.

Please communicate with him directly at hbreit@stanford.edu

Deadline for receiving full texts or extended abstracts: 31st August.



CILECT CONGRESS
3-8 November 08
国际影视院校联合会会议
2008年11月3-8号
北京电影学院
Beijing Film Academy
北京

Time	MONDAY 3	TUESDAY 4	WEDNESDAY 5	THURSDAY 6	FRIDAY 7	SATURDAY 8
09.00-10.30	Presentation of the Hosts Walk Through Programme	Conference 4 Writer/Director or Writer+Director	General Assembly 1 Reports Biennium 08-08 Q&A Approval of Reports Admission of New Members	Excursion	Regions	General Assembly 5 Summary of Updated Projects Vote on New Projects
10.30-11.00	Break	Break	Break		Break	Break
11.00-12.30	Conference 1 New Ways of Distributing Audiovisual Content	Conference 5 Animation Reconciling Students' Desires with the Demands of the Market	General Assembly 2 CILECT Prize Award Candidates for Election Executive Council – Q&A Election of Executive	Regions	Regions	Contributed Papers
12.30-14.00	Lunch	Lunch	Break	Excursion	Lunch	Lunch
14.00-15.30	Conference 2 New Approaches to Documentary	Conference 6 Bridge Programmes	General Assembly 3 Rivers Project Report Q&A Approval of Report		中国 China Cultural Diversity	中国 China Cultural Diversity
15.30-16.00	Break	Break	Break	Excursion	Break	Break
16.00-17.30	Conference 3 How Do We Teach New Formats	Conference 7 Approaches to TV Curricula	General Assembly 4 New Projects Bazaar		中国 China Cultural Diversity	中国 China Cultural Diversity
18.00	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner			Closing Dinner
	Screenings CILECT Prize Nominees and Winners 2007 and 2008	Screenings CILECT Prize Nominees and Winners 2007 and 2008	Screenings CILECT Prize Nominees and Winners 2007 and 2008			

北京

ACCOMMODATION



All participants will be accommodated in the **Friendship Hotel**.

<http://www.bjfriendshiphotel.com/en/> (English)

<http://www.bjfriendshiphotel.com/cn/index.html> (Chinese)

“The **Friendship Hotel of Beijing** is one of the largest garden-style hotels in Asia. Located in the heart of ZhongGuanCun Hi-Tech Zone, the Friendship Hotel neighbors many world famous tourist sites and universities such as Tsinghua and Peking Universities, and the Summer Palace.

It covers a total area of 335,000 square meters of land in the capital city, of which 200,000 square meters are landscaped in the traditional Chinese garden style.

The Friendship Hotel of Beijing represents classic Chinese architectural elegance and presents most pleasurable views. There are more than 1,757 guestrooms, apartments and office rooms, 28 restaurants and banquet halls of different styles, and capable of catering for 2,600 guests at the same time.

In addition 40 conference rooms and function halls of different sizes are capable of hosting national and international conferences ranging from 10 to 1,000 attendees.”

Participants will be able to choose between two room categories: 4-star and 5-star.



Beijing



REGISTRATION FEES

There are three types of registration fees/rates:

- Subsidized
- Unsubsidized (full)
- Accompanying Persons

Which rate do I have to pay?

- **Full member** schools can send two delegates at the subsidized rate. Additional delegates pay the full rate.
- **Partners, Candidate members** can send one delegate at the subsidized rate. Additional delegates pay the full rate.
- **Honorary members** pay the subsidized rate
- **Corresponding members** pay the full rate
- **Accompanying persons** sharing room with delegate or observer and not attending the Congress are charged a special rate.

To qualify for the subsidized rate members must have paid their membership fee up to and including 2008.

The fee includes

- Accommodation from Sunday 2 November (arrival day) to Sunday 9 November (departure day)
- Breakfasts 3-9 November
- Lunches 3-8 November (not for accompanying persons)
- Receptions and sponsored events
- Transfers from airport to hotel on 2 and 3 November and from hotel to airport on 9 November
- Transfers from hotel to Beijing Film Academy and back (not for accompanying persons)
- Attendance of the Congress, Congress documents (not for accompanying persons)



Rates

5 Star Room (Building 1)

- Subsidized Rate: €1,000
- Full Rate: €1,600
- Accompanying Person: €200

4 Star Room (Building 4)

- Subsidized Rate: €600
- Full Rate: €1,100
- Accompanying Person: €100

Beijing

XI'AN TOUR

THE TERRACOTTA WARRIORS

The Beijing Film Academy is planning to arrange a tour to Xi'An after the Congress from November 9th to 12th, 2008.



For travel information about Xi'an:

www.travelchinaguide.com/cityguides/xian.htm

Beijing

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Revision of Statutes and Rules

The Executive Council will present the following amendments to the statutes and rules.

Terms of Office for the Executive Council

Under the current statutes there is no limitation to the number of years the President and Vice-Presidents can serve as long as they break for one term after serving two consecutive terms.

The amendments propose to limit the terms of office as follows:

- No member on the Executive shall serve more than three terms (12 years)
- There shall be a gap of minimum one term (four years) following a period of two consecutive terms of office (eight years).
- This provision does not apply for Vice Presidents and Representatives of regional associations who run for President (amendment suggested by GEECT).

Regional Associations on the Executive

- The regional associations will send their designated representative on the Executive Council, not necessarily the chair.

This change is proposed in order to streamline their term of office with those of the President and Vice-Presidents.

Admission of Corresponding Members

- Corresponding members will be admitted directly by the Executive, no ratification by the General Assembly will be required.

Cleaning up of articles

- Textual cleaning up required when provisions are repeated with different formulations in the rules and the statutes, removal of ambiguities/contradictions .

The General Assembly can accept, amend or reject the pre-circulated amendments.

Full members can propose amendments to the proposal of the Executive .

Amendments must be sent to the Secretariat six weeks before the General Assembly (i.e. not later than 15 September 08) to be forwarded to the membership four weeks before the General Assembly (i.e. not later than 2 October 08).

No further amendments can be presented in Beijing except for textual modifications.

Election of Executive Council Members

Three Executive positions – President, Vice-President for Finance and Fundraising, Vice-President for Publications and Research – will be up for election at the General Assembly.

Candidacies for these positions need to be received by 15 September 08 at the latest. No candidacies will be accepted after that date.

Candidates for election are requested to *email* the Secretariat (secretariat@cilect.org) a “Candidate Package” with

- Their Photograph (jpeg format)
- CV with their history in CILECT and experience relevant to the position for which they are applying
- Letter of intent with programme for the next biennium
- Statement of support from the school

Job Descriptions

The President

The President is the Chief Executive of the organisation, who exerts leadership by articulating the vision of the organisation.

The president presides over the meetings of the Executive Council and conveys the consensus of the Executive Council relating to projects and other activities of the organisation to the membership at the Congress, the General Assembly, and whenever necessary.

The president presents the collective views of the Executive Council on issues relating to the CILECT membership and the Regional Associations, and represents the views of CILECT to the wider public.

The Vice-President for Publication and Research

The Vice-President for Publication and Research is responsible for initiating and coordinating the reporting to the membership about the work of project committees, standing committees, regional projects and individual initiatives, so that the full CILECT membership may benefit from their work.

Dissemination falls into three broad categories: a newsletter, the publication of teaching materials, and the reporting of events and activities.

The VP for Publication and Research is also charged with working with the membership and relevant consultants to determine and prioritise needs for research among CILECT schools, and to initiate research to address these priorities.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The Vice-President for Finance and Fundraising

The Vice-President for Finance and Fundraising has overall responsibility for formulating the CILECT budget and supervising income and expenditure.

The Vice-President for Finance is responsible for initiating general fundraising activities and coordinating the raising of funds to help support specific projects and activities.

The Vice-President for Finance is also charged with making necessary adjustments to budget between meetings of the Executive Council, and providing annual and biennial reports as specified in the Statutes.

Refund of costs incurred by travelling to Executive Meetings

The President and Vice-Presidents will be refunded of costs incurred by travelling to Executive meetings when these costs are in excess of €2,500 per biennium.



Call for Project Proposals

The General Assembly will discuss the range of programme activities that would most benefit the Association in the next biennium.

These may be projects of general benefit to the entire organisation, or regional or inter-regional initiatives representing priorities of importance to a significant minority of the membership or to the structure of the Association.

These Projects should be of such a scope as to be completed within a two-year period.

The General Assembly will select up to four Projects to receive support from the Association.

Proposals for Projects can be sent by any full member in good standing to the Secretariat (secretariat@cilect.org).

They must be received six weeks prior to the General Assembly (15 September 08).

The proposal should provide:

- a general description of the activity
- the duration of the activity (not to exceed two years)
- a list of the member schools directly involved in organising the activity (not less than three) which shall constitute the basis of the Committee for management of the project
- an estimate of the potential benefit of the results of the activity
- an estimate of the technical, financial and personnel resources available:
- a total budget and financial plan;
- a breakdown of the financial and administrative assistance required from the Association
- methodology for evaluating results
- proposals for publication or other distribution of the results



Congress Website:
www.cilect2008.com

Beijing

The Norwegian Film School celebrates its tenth anniversary

At the end of March 08, the Norwegian Film School celebrated its tenth anniversary with a week-long series of events culminating in a grand party in the School's main studio. The School's founding Dean, Malte Wadman reflects on the decade, and how far his vision for the School has been achieved since its doors opened to students in 1998.

Looking back

I think we had

ambitious aims – to establish a national school for Norway's young film makers, to build a professional level of craft training based on the creative art of telling powerful and relevant stories, and to produce graduates capable of leading the national film industry towards a new renaissance.

Aims are one thing, achieving them is another matter. As the final night party began, I found myself preoccupied less with the outward trappings of success – awards, retrospective screenings, and global status – than with the real test of effective education, the confidence and courage of the many graduates who had already passed through the School into the wider world.

Did the creative family we built up in Lillehammer really make a difference? There was no time for introspection. The answer stood before me as I entered the studio which had been transformed in fantastic style by the production design students. All the 82 students currently at the School were there with the staff including many from the past. So were invited guests, friends from the town and the industry sharing our Big Night. It was a real pleasure to see them there. But there was also another heart-warming realisation – more than a third of the crowd were past students. More than ninety graduates representing every intake over the past decade had taken time out from busy schedules and paid their own costs to come back to the School for this reunion.

Since its first intake graduated in December 2000, 143 students have gone out from Lillehammer. The fact that ninety of them came back that night,

drawn by gratitude and loyalty to the School, answered my question. As in many folk tales, the stroke of midnight meant that most of the staff disappeared. This was appropriate, as the night belonged to the young. Rumour has it that the party spread out to different parts of the town, and some hardy souls were spotted somewhat subdued around ten o'clock the next morning.

The party was the closing event of the celebrations. Earlier in the week, there was a series of master classes presented by well-known teachers from the European scene – Dick Ross, Larry Sieger, Valdis Oscarsdotter and Nik Powell. And there were official celebrations including a visit from the State Secretary from the Ministry of Culture. In his speech he acknowledged the immense importance of the School for the revitalisation of Norwegian film over the past decade. This praise was echoed by representatives of local, regional and national institutions at a formal lunch where the international visitors included a colleague representing CILECT.

It was pointed out that Norwegian films now take more than 25% of the box office profits; a sharp contrast to ten years ago



Malte Wadman, Founder Director of the Norwegian Film School

Lillehammer

when the national cinema productions were considered boring and uninteresting.

Another event was student-led. It was a round table discussion between former and present students, moderated by Kalle Lochen, a national film critic and commissioning editor. **Again there was much praise, which I'd like to believe was sincere, and inevitably, suggestions for improving the work of the School. But I was particularly encouraged by the contribution of the former students directed to the current intake, best summed up as: "Stop moaning and use the unique opportunities you've been given when you were accepted as students..." That was music to my ears.**

Sound the trumpets

Of course I spent a lot of time making speeches. I considered the appropriate subject was our record over our first ten years.

Inevitably, the track record and achievements of our graduate

The producing department echoes this "strike rate". Since 2000, seven out of 24 have been producing feature films. Several others have been working as commissioning editors on national or Nordic institutions including Norwegian Film Development and the Nordic Film and TV Fund.

Five cinematographers out of 24 graduates have already worked as DoPs on feature films. Most of the others have been shooting feature-length documentaries, TV drama and short films. One graduate has become a director of documentaries.

Five editors have already been editing feature films. Most of them have credits on several films. Five graduates have started The Dream Suite, a very popular post-production house,



directing students arouses the most interest. Out of 24 would-be directors who have passed through the school since 2001, nine have already made their debut feature films and some have made as many as three features, spanning genres from art films to blockbusters. Other graduates have not been inactive either, making TV-dramas, documentaries and television soaps. This is impressive by the standards of any school globally, although there is one negative element. Of the nine graduates already making features, only two are women. **That is depressing because the School's policy is always to have a gender balance around 50:50.**

The scriptwriting department also has 24 graduates. Five of them have written feature films, and ten others have written for television. Two other scriptwriters are working as commissioning editors.

and two others have become directors of short films.

Women have a more impressive employment rate in the field of sound technicians. Three are amongst the five graduates employed at the most prestigious dubbing studios in Oslo. Two other graduates are making a good living as freelance sound designers, and almost all the others are also working in film – apart from one who has become a dentist.

The production design department is new, and will not have graduates until later this year. Even so, two of the four present intake have already been employed on feature productions.

Malte Wadman, NFS, Norway

The Olympic Legacy

Appropriately for an Olympic year, I can answer a frequently asked question. Why was School sited in Lillehammer? It is a matter of history. Discussions with the film industry and the trade unions about establishing a national film school for Norway dragged on for thirty-five years.

There was no satisfactory outcome until Norway and Lillehammer were awarded the Winter Olympics in 1994. As part of the infrastructure for the Games, an impressive radio and television centre was built.

And after all the competitors had left with their medals and bruises, a question remained. **What to do with the journalists' centre?** I would like to claim I sent messages to all the powerful decision makers: **"Have building stop. Will educate stop"**. But that would not be entirely truthful. However, as I stood amongst so many talented young people at our party, trying to avoid any excessive display of pride, I felt justified in recalling the Olympic motto: **It's not the winning, but the taking part.**

Malte Wadman

April 2008.



Dick Ross's Masterclass at the 10th Anniversary of the NFS

THE SEVEN SENSES OF THE STORY-TELLER

It is hard to believe that it is ten years since my first visit to the fledgling Norwegian Film School, and since my first workshop with students here.

Since then, films from this school have been screened at festivals around the world, winning awards and honours and even **more impressively, fulfilling Malte Wadman's vision of a renaissance for Norwegian cinema.**

I don't think any other school in Europe has achieved such a high percentage of graduates entering the industry as fully-fledged filmmakers straight from school.

To give you something to think about – I am not going to talk about film making – or at least as little as possible. But I am going to talk about what lies at the heart of every good film.

To make sure we are all starting on the right path together, I want you to think about why you have come here to study.

There are a number of possible answers to that question.

- * You are here to learn the craft of directing, producing, using a camera, recording sound, editing and so on. To discover the many skills that combine in the business of filmmaking.
- * You want to become qualified to enter the industry in some specialization like those I have mentioned.
- * You have loved film ever since you saw Star Wars or Indiana Jones – which most people of your generation think marked the beginning of real cinema.
- * You love the idea of being given many millions of dollars or Euros to make your own movie.
- * You love the idea of hundreds of actors and crafts people all waiting to dance to the tune you call as a director.
- * You love the idea of going to premieres and film festivals and walking on red carpets and collecting gold statuettes.
- * You want to be part of that world of filmmakers, living and breathing the world of stars and bars.
- * Then there might be one or two of you who might answer: I have very strong feelings about something and I want to tell the world about it – and film is the greatest medium to reach millions with my message.
- * And finally the penny might drop – as we say – and you are able to strip away all the baggage of craft and form and function to reach the ultimate reality, and **simply say: It's a great way to tell a story, and I think I might have some great stories to tell.**

Let's be honest. It has been only a few months since most/all of you heard that you had been accepted for a place on this course. Immediately you received the news, your mother phoned her friends and said: "My son (or my daughter) is going to be a film maker."

You tell your girl or boyfriend: "I am a film maker."

And you rush out to buy the right clothes, the dark glasses, the cool sweater that will provide a **great backcloth for the director's viewfinder you'll wear around your neck. You buy an iPhone and you practise signing autographs and even maybe draft your acceptance speech for your first Oscar ceremony.**

Don't worry, everyone more or less does the same thing.

Now all that is over.

For the next year or two, the real test of your talent will be your ability to tell a good, **original story. And that is why I'm here** -- to suggest some ways of how to go about it.

GREAT STORIES GROW FROM GOOD IDEAS.

So together, we will track down just how to recognize good ideas which you all have in abundance, but which you probably do not recognize.

The natural habitat of original ideas lies deep within you.

As we pursue these ideas, we will, at the same time, mark the trail so that you can return to it easily and with confidence.

Confidence is fine, humility is better. Arrogance means certain death for a would-be story teller.

Samson Raphaelson, who wrote the Jazz **Singer which became the world's first talking**



Dick Ross, NFS, Norway

picture, taught a class at the University of Illinois in 1948. It must have been a wonderful experience for all the students who took part. Early on, he told them:

“I personally don’t care for the kind of art that leaves an audience baffled. For the first half of my life I thought it was my fault when I couldn’t figure out a story by some other writer. Now I think it is the author’s fault...”

I agree with him.

Obscurity is a cardinal sin. It is also pretentious, embarrassing and arrogant.

Of course, many young film makers fresh out of their colleges with the ink on their degree certificates still wet, believe that they have a sacred duty to display the rapier quality of their intellect.

Raphaelson had a warning for them too: He said: “A good writer need not be a wise man, any more than a wise man is necessarily a writer...”

What he meant was that we should not tell stories to demonstrate how clever we are. If we do that, we are always likely to fail to communicate with an audience.

And remember, without an audience, a story has no reason for existence.

Here, it is sufficient to stress that I believe that storytelling can be learned. Everyone has stories locked away inside. They merely need to be released and shared. Remember – everyone is seduced by a good story, well told.

Fifty years ago, a great British socialist and politician, Nye Bevan said: **“The human race wants only three things – sex, drugs and fairy stories.”**

That is a fairly ruthless and cynical observation, but half a century later, I guess there is some truth in it.

This is a better way of putting it:

Bushman Xhabbo, a leader of the Kalahari people in Africa, **once told author and traveller, Laurens van der Post: “A story is like the wind. It may come from a far-off place, but we feel it.”**

In order to release stories that will travel like the wind, a would-be storyteller has to exercise certain faculties we all have, but which we rarely appreciate.

THE FORCES THAT SHAPE ORIGINAL STORIES

So let us get on our examination of the forces that shape original ideas.

Very often a would-be writer or filmmaker says to me: **“I know all about the structure of a screenplay, but when I write, it always turns out to be a pastiche of other films I’ve seen. I am a victim of the subconscious cliché. I have great difficulty in thinking up a good, original story.”**

Well, sitting in front of a blank screen waiting for a good story to jump up and hit you on the nose is never going to happen.

Writing a good story begins a long time before you start to put pen to paper, or fingers on the keyboard.

Writing is the easy part. Good stories write themselves. The best way to get to the essence of a good story is by telling it

out loud. Good stories have a sort of emotional music that is best judged when it is heard.

So that is going to be our approach. Storytelling -- not story writing. If you can TELL a good story, you can write a great script, and a great script can mean a great film. But first you must find a story you want to *tell*.

It is something that Paul Schrader has written about in his excellent book **“Schrader on Schrader”**. He contends:

“Screenwriting isn’t really writing: its part of the oral tradition and it has a lot more to do with the day your uncle went hunting and the dog went crazy and the bird got away than it has to do with literature.”

“One of the indispensable ways of judging whether an idea will work as a film story is oral presentation -- you have to tell your story to someone.”

“When you first get an idea, maybe its five minutes long. Then the more you tell it, the more you elaborate on it and the longer it grows.”

“Screenwriting isn’t really writing: its part of the oral tradition and it has a lot more to do with the day your uncle went hunting and the dog went crazy and the bird got away than it has to do with literature.”

Paul Schrader

“When the story gets to be about 45 minutes long and its still holding your listener’s attention, so

that if you walk out of the room they’ll follow you to ask what happens next, then you know you have something that will probably work on the screen. Its a good way to weed out the **ideas that aren’t going to work...”**

Advice doesn’t come better than that.

David Mamet shares a similar view. He wrote:

“It’s important simply to tell the story... The movie, finally, is much closer to simple story-telling than to writing a play for the theatre. If you listen to the way people tell stories, you will hear that they tell them cinematically. They jump from one thing to the next, and the story is moved along by the juxtaposition of images – which is to say, the *cut*.

“People say: “I’m standing on the corner. It’s a foggy day. A bunch of people are running around crazy. Might have been the full moon. All of a sudden a car comes up and the guy next to me says...”

“If you think about it, that’s a shot list:

(1) a guy standing on the corner;

(2) shot of fog;

(3) a full moon shining above;

(4) a man says: ‘People get wackey this time of the year’;

(5) a car approaching.

This is good film making, to juxtapose images. Now you are following the story. What, you wonder, is going to happen next”.

What Mamet shows by his example is that we talk a sort of shot list when we *tell* a story. We are already doing most of the hard work of scriptwriting *before* we begin actually writing our story.

Storytelling goes right back to the emergence of Man as a thinking, communicating being.

I have often wondered how those stories -- told by firelight in the caves and shelters of Neolithic times would sound today. Certainly their cave paintings are full of action, tension and

excitement...the essential components of any good story even today. They also suggest that their stories were based on experience.. And that gives us clear clues about why we have a compulsion to tell stories :

To share a unique experience..

To make sense of our known world.

To explain the unknown.

To identify what we see as the mysteries of our universe.

Those artist/narrators were our forefathers -- and it is their stories and all the others that have followed for thousands of years that bind us all together. Because, as I said, like all humans, we are seduced by a good story well told.

Nye Bevan who I quote a moment ago would often say: **"This is my truth -- now tell me your truth."**

Most of us have great difficulty telling the truth -- the real, secret truths locked away behind the facade that we have selected as the self we present to the world...

We are, after all, only offering an image. The truth is another matter.

By that, I mean we should always use the truth as a starting point. It gives a sort of compelling reality to our stories.... but who is to know, or even care, when you embroider or add bits that come from other sources, from other experiences or memories to make your story more powerful.

In other words, don't let the truth stand in the way of a good story...

We all know that bad films have been made from good scripts —**but no good films have been made from lousy scripts... and of course, that's a matter of story telling.**

Any of you who have been to a film festival know that this is true. You can see it demonstrated every time. In the applause given at the end of any film which presented a good, original premise, and told it well, right to the end.

But there are other comments you hear in the foyer -- **"It looked wonderful, but there wasn't much of a story..."**

"It was great, but it just tailed off into nothing, as if the film maker did not really know what the story was.."

[So what are the essential skills or abilities that we all have that need to be tuned up for storytelling?](#)

I call them our "senses". There are seven – each of them feeding and strengthening our powers of narrative. Let us now identify them and demonstrate how they are used to create great stories.

The first is **MEMORY** -- that wonderful, erratic, false filing cabinet of past incidents we have experienced or been told -- and without which we have no points of reference to our own past existence.

Luis Buñuel knew all about that. In his wonderful autobiography **"My Last Breath" he wrote:**

"Memory may be omnipotent and indispensable, but it is also terribly fragile. The menace is everywhere, not only from its traditional enemy, forgetfulness, but from false memories, like my often repeated story about Paul Nizan's wedding in the 1930's.

"The Church of St Germain des Pres, where he was married, is crystal clear in my mind's eye. I can see the congregation, myself amongst them, the altar, the priest -- even Jean-Paul Sartre, the best man.

And then suddenly, one day last year, I said to myself -- but that's impossible! Nizan, a militant Marxist, and his wife, who came from a family of agnostics, would never have been married in a church! It was categorically unthinkable. Did I make it up? Confuse it with other weddings? Did I graft a church I know well onto a story that someone told me? Even today I have no idea what the truth is, or what I did with it.

"Our imagination, and our dreams, are forever invading our memories; and we end up transforming our lies into truths. Of course, fantasy and reality are equally personal, and equally felt, so their confusion is a matter of only relative importance."

That recollection should be a great comfort to us all.

We all know that a lot of our fondest memories and anecdotes that we claim to remember have only the slenderest links with the truth.

However, our own version of the truth is a good starting point. The problem for young storytellers is that many of them find it awkward and embarrassing to talk about their memories. At first they are self-conscious and nervous, afraid of making idiots of themselves. They tend to feel that little bits of their life are of no interest to anyone else. But who is to know, or even care, when you embroider or add bits that come from other sources, from other experiences or memories, to make your story more powerful.

The key part that memory plays in our creativity has always fascinated writers.

Klaus Mann wrote: "We cannot rely on our memory - yet there is no reality except the one **that we carry in our minds.**" **"Every single moment that we live through owes its meaning to the moments that have passed before it. Present and future would be meaningless if the path of the past was deleted from our consciousness."**

"Between us and "nothingness" stands our ability to remember. Yet it is a very problematic and fragile barrier."

What do we remember? How much of it?

"After which principles does our spirit keep track of certain impressions while it lets others slip into the depths of the unconscious?"

Elizabeth Bowen echoes this observation: **"We remember things just the way we like. If we did not allow ourselves to add a few lies to it, I do not know how anyone could ever bear the past.**

"Thank God, that apart from the actual moment when something happens, there is never anything like the naked truth. Even ten minutes later we have already started to cover things with some kind of crust."

Dick Ross, NFS, Norway

Of course, not everyone has a good memory. And in order to retain our memory at its fullest power, we have to exercise it.

When I was younger, I knew a woman who was as old as the century. She was born in 1900. At the time of our friendship, she was around my age now. She was an exceptional woman, trained as a doctor at a time when few women entered that profession. Her career had been distinguished, then came retirement. She decided to re-read all the great works of English literature, and liked nothing better than a vigorous dialogue about pure language. Her memory was amazing, far better than my own. One day, I asked her how she kept her astonishing power of recall.

“Like anything else,” she said, “its a matter of exercise. Use it, or lose it.”

I was intrigued. “How do you exercise your memory?”

“Its simple. When I wake in the morning, I stretch out in bed, then I wiggle my toes. If my joints ache, I’m happy. It means I didn’t die in the night. The dead feel no pain. That deals with the body. Then I turn to my memory. If one’s memory doesn’t work, one night as well be dead. So I say to myself, ‘what were you doing on July 18th 1924?’

“Then, although I really want a cup of tea, I don’t get out of bed until I have worked out what I was doing on that particular day.”

Frankly, I didn’t believe her. But she explained her system.

“It is easy for me. I was 24. July the 18th was one week before my mother’s birthday. I did not have much money in those days, so I always made my gift myself. I am almost certain that it was an embroidered evening bag that year. So I would have been working hard to finish it on time. Then in the evening, I was taken out walking by Charlie. We first met in June 1924, and I remember we spent every evening together for months. Now where did we go? I lived in North London, and our favourite place was Lyons Corner tea house at the Angel. It had a blue ceiling painted with white clouds and little gold stars. It was very romantic...”

Her voice faded as she re-lived the memory.

Can you remember what you were doing on, say, July 6th 1994? Go on, try!

Of course, the usual way is to get close enough to speak with conviction, but it is hard to be exact until that date happened to be your twelfth birthday, or the day you broke your leg – or even two days after Independence Day. But it will teach you to enter the world of your own past, and to create a moment we can all share.

There is another, related exercise. Ask a colleague to make a random list of twenty objects – for example, a black button, a small wooden box, a ripe peach, a pocketknife, a pair of shoes, the pattern of ice crystals on a window pane – and see if you can remember anything triggered by such simple catalysts.

What are other such triggers of memory?

old photographs, smells, colours, snatches of music half-heard, the smell of food cooking, and so on.

Try to search your memory for images of your favourite toy, your first night away from home, your first pair of grown-up shoes.

Can you remember who was the most frightening person in your neighbourhood when you were a child? Your first day at school? **Can you remember your teacher’s name, the dry smell in the class room, your coat peg?**

These are all ways you can unlock the closed rooms of your memory. There are treasures inside.

You should also consider the process of using memory as source material for establishing and sustaining human relationships. One way to learn about this is to consider the relationship between you and your grandparents.

Why do these two generations get on so well together?

I suggest that it is because grandparents have grown tired of playing social games. Their grandchildren have not yet learned the rules. So they can be anarchists together. Many young writers and directors have first demonstrated their talent with grandpa stories.

Here is another exercise: try describing a grandparent who died before you were born. Your ability to do so will surprise you. It shows how we learn and accept a version of reality from our parents.

I tried this exercise when I was teaching in New York. Many of my students were Jewish, so we heard harrowing tales of grandparents lost in the Holocaust. One student, from Japan, waited until the end of the class before she offered her portrait of her long-dead grandfather.

“My grandpa had a beautiful smile.”

Ah.. That’s nice. So you saw photographs of him?”

“No. No photographs. They were all destroyed at Hiroshima.”

At this point I decided never to try this exercise again.

“So your mother told you he had a beautiful smile?”

“No.”

This was hard work -- like pulling teeth.

“So how do you know that he had a beautiful smile?”

“My grandma. She gave me his false teeth. I can hold them in my hand and see for myself that he had a beautiful smile.”

I told her: “Mitsu, your grandpa will live forever...”

Gradually, by talking to others about such subjects from memories, you will find there are so many common elements in experience that such stories take on a universal quality. **As you add detail, so the structure of each “story” gradually improves.**

Always remember, the secret lies in the detail.

Frank Daniel, the master teacher of screenwriting, said you can make films that are national, local, or exotic in the material they present, but the *emotion* of the characters had better be universal... and that means humane.

“It would be great if every human being on earth could identify with the emotions of your characters and the situations in which you place them.

“If you know something about them, you could, for example make a film about Eskimos, but their emotions must be universal. Their reactions should be caused by physiological

and psychological reasons that happen to every human being. **That is what makes them universal."**

I have my own story of those people. You probably know that it is not politically correct to speak of Eskimos anymore in the United States. They must be called Native Americans. Here, we settle for Inuits.

When I was working in New York, I was sent a story written by a Native American living in Anchorage in Alaska. He was considering applying to the film school. He sent me six short stories to read. I was delighted, because in the interests of student diversity, I was alarmingly short of Native American applicants. At first I thought they were six copies of the same story because each was exactly one-and-a-half pages long. Even the division into paragraphs was identical.

This is one of his stories: Grandpa.

He was a full-blooded Eskimo. Old now, too old to live in the old ways, he lived with my mother and father in our centrally heated apartment in the city. He never turned on the heat in his room. He said it was unnatural. But he supposed that now we were all a mixed race, we had thin blood.

My brother and I worked in the fish-canning factory down near the quay. My brother was seventeen, two years younger than me. He hated the way Grandpa was always telling us that we were growing weak; that we couldn't survive a minute in the snow. We might push fish into cans, but what did we know about fishing?

In his heyday, he'd take his kayak out into the bay with his line. He'd plaited the line from seal hair -- or was it walrus? He'd carved five hooks from whalebone. Out there in the bay, he'd bait the hooks and lower the line into the water. After only a minute, he'd pull it up and there'd be five fish; one on each hook. Five fish every time.

We were working side by side. I was gutting, my brother slicing heads and tails. We could do twenty a minute, maybe going for thirty.

My brother suddenly said: "He couldn't get five every time. There's not that many fish in the bay."

It showed he was thinking about it. I said: "Let's try."

We waited until we had a day off. It was near Thanksgiving and getting cold. I got the kayak. He got the line. He just took it off the wall in Grandpa's room: the famous line with its five white hooks.

We paddled way out into the bay. Then my brother baited the hooks and dropped the line over the side. We counted to sixty slowly, then pulled the line in. There they were. Five silver fish flapping.

We looked at each other. The old bastard was right.

Then my brother said: "I can't see the sky."

He meant that he couldn't see the horizon. The sea was flat and grey. So was the sky. The whole world seemed to be made of the same sheet of beaten metal.

I remembered Grandpa talking about that. It meant that a storm was coming.

To make my brother lose his fear, I showed him how to roll the kayak onto its side. Then we could look along the sea to where the sky began. It was a darker line above the sea that just rose and fell as if it was asleep and breathing gently.

We swung upright. I reminded him that Grandpa said when the sea looked like that it meant a storm was coming.

We wound the magic line carefully and laid it in a figure-8 on the front of the kayak. Then we turned to paddle home.

It was so still, and suddenly very cold. So cold, our lungs hurt when we breathed. Between the dipping of the paddles, we could hear a faint crackling sound like stars.

We had come further than we needed to. The harbour was a long way off. Then we heard the crackling, splintering sound come nearer. It was not the sound of stars, but of ice, so thin it broke as we pushed the kayak forward.

I urged my brother to paddle faster. Soon we had to beat at the ice with our paddles. The kayak started to ride up on it. It became too thick to smash. But it was too thin to walk on.

My brother looked at me. I was older. I should know what to do. But I worked in a canning factory, I was not an old fisherman. I sat quietly for a moment. Then I reminded him:

"Grandpa used to tell us.... don't you remember? When winter comes, Death steals silently from the shore."

When I read that little story, I wanted to find a scholarship to enable the author to study screenwriting. I might have succeeded, but it would have been no use. The young man could not face the move from his homeland to New York. I hope he continued writing. He has an intuitive understanding of one of the most important principles of story telling. Keep it short, and to the point.

In simple language and short direct sentences, he evokes the grim onset of winter when the sea freezes from the shore. At the same time he touches the difficult clash of cultures between the old, traditional values and the new world.

I think we also get enough clues to paint our own picture of the three protagonists. The brother, young and headstrong, spending his days beheading fish, chafing at the restraints of his job and family. His older brother, who seems quieter, more reflective, more comfortable with his life. But he, too, is ready for adventure. And the grandfather, carrying thousands of years of memory, wanting his knowledge and wisdom to live on; issuing challenges to the manhood looming for his grandsons. Challenges he can no longer fulfil himself, and which, in the end, will claim their lives.

These are the huge themes.

The real talent of this story, at least for me, is that I can see it...smell it... feel it.

When you start to give your memory a good workout, it is as if a floodgate opens. The more you remember – the more you will remember. And it is a process that once begun, cannot be stopped.

The second of the storyteller's senses that you must recognise and develop is **EXPERIENCE**.

When experience is combined with a sharpened memory, it emerges into our consciousness as a rather more substantial story than the mere fragments of the past that memory alone provides.

Memory and experience are the two elements that combine to form our true, entirely personal imagination. I am not writing about fantasy. For the purposes of this thesis, I would define fantasy as the recreation in language of a private dream world. Its rules are not those of a world based on reality. They can be adjusted to create their own logic that is largely self-contained. Fantasy must be convincing, but not necessarily believable.

I use the word "imagination" to describe the process of assembling diverse components from memory and experience to form a new entity – be it a character or an environment, or a relationship that conforms to our own perception of reality.

I once needed to create a character who had a strange way of walking. He was supposed to be fifteen years old. I remembered an aunt of mine who has very small feet. She was very vain, and wore even smaller shoes. She suffered for her vanity. I borrowed her walk for my character. The shoes fitted perfectly!

Don't be fooled by those who say that young people have little to say because they haven't lived a full life. In fact, I believe exactly the reverse.

I believe that some of the most profound truths of humanity have already been learned by the time we are ten years old. Betrayal, guilt, love, death, disappointment, the sense of magic in a new day, the thrill of a new place, the ability to dream and so on.

These are imposed or bequeathed by others on us as we grow up. Somebody once said that the first time we experience each of these emotions, it is like a little death. Part of our innocence is corrupted or changed forever.

A younger person is closer to these "little deaths" than a mature adult, so the nerve endings haven't quite healed. The scars are still raw. This is why so many successful student films deal with such issues.

It is an old but wise cliché – write about what you know. Sadly, too many emerging storytellers hide behind second hand emotions and rather tired story-lines, unable to acknowledge the rich weave of their own, unique knowledge of the human condition.

We should all be concerned with the significance of our own experiences, but we should also be able to shape and adjust the claims of such truths to a new sequence and a new logic that is created by our sense and talent as storytellers. Most experiences in real life are rather open-ended or merely fade away without any conclusion in the bright light of another, newer experience. Stories, on the other hand, need a conclusion that is satisfactory for their audience.

If you find yourself still unconvinced by the potency of your own life experiences, you had better take a pause and go out and get a life. Usually the failure to appreciate elements of **one's own experiences as illustrating potentially universal truths** is because the emotions they arouse are profound, honest and even painful. We deny such experiences rather than to confront them and use them.

The third "sense" of the storyteller is closely linked to memory and experience. It is **OBSERVATION** – the ability to see and recall places, settings and the way people behave in their environment. This sense is closely linked to physical relationships – the external behaviour of people, particularly in a relationship to those around them. Nowadays, this is called "body language" – but it involves more than exercises in amateur psychology.

Every storyteller has to create a universe for his or her story. And, as noted earlier, the more detail you can supply, the more convincing your story will be.

These details provide the necessary images for a writer to create a vivid and convincing picture of the world, in the right scale and perspective that will become the setting of his or her story. Everything fits seamlessly.

John Franklin, winner of two Pulitzer Prizes, has written a little book called "Writing for Story." In it, he says:

"The world is chock full of stories, and, as a writer, you must learn to spot them, instantly and without effort. You must be constantly on the lookout for them, keeping your mind's eye peeled as you sit in class, ride the bus, stand in cafeteria lines, and every other moment as you proceed through life."

"Seeing stories is like any other skill. It requires effort and patience. This ability to spot stories comes easily to some people. If you are not one of them, here is an additional trick. Look for action."

"Whenever you see someone do something – anything – ask yourself: "Why did he do that? What was his motive?"

And to Franklin's questions, I would add another question,

which for a writer, is perhaps the most useful of all. Learn to ask constantly: "What if...? What if he merely walked away? What if the

car brakes failed? What if he gave that homeless man \$100?

Here is another useful exercise, best practiced on a café terrace. Simply select a passer-by and try to take note of every possible detail of their physical appearance. Learn to do it quickly, and without writing notes. Rely on your memory. Make notes only when you return home. See if you can create a strong and original character. Then imagine a situation where that character might reasonably find him or herself. How would they behave? What if the situation was not one with which they were familiar. How would they react?

It is important to do more than *look*. You have to learn to *see* – to understand, and that means you are able to make sense of the world around you.

The fourth sense is the ability to **HEAR**. Again, it is a matter of developing your capacity to *listen* first, and then to

If you find yourself still unconvinced by the potency of your own life experiences, you had better take a pause and go out and get a life.

D.R.

make some judgments about the potential *meaning* of what you have heard.

If you cannot hear, or you do not bother to remember what you hear, you cannot use the natural rhythm and cadence of human speech to create simple and powerful dialogue.

It is essential to get exactly the right “music” that comes out of people’s mouths as they struggle to communicate their feelings and responses one to another. Language that is inappropriate to a character or situation destroys credibility.

When you exercise and develop this sense, you will quickly learn how to select only those unique and dazzling exchanges that serve your story well.

This requires a certain amount of ruthless pruning to get at the essence of dialogue – **what has been called “creative economy.”**

Richard Walter, master teacher from UCLA, has an excellent example.

In *Escape from Alcatraz*, a prison psychologist inquires of the protagonist,

portrayed by Clint Eastwood: “What was your childhood like?”

Eastwood’s reply: “Short.”

With a single word, says Walter, he tells us more of his hard knocks upbringing, his deprived, disadvantaged, loveless roots, than page after page of speeches about rough times, this crazy cock-eyed world, the grim and gritty neighbourhood where he was raised. And of course, his terse reply fits his character perfectly.

So-called “real” or reported talking is the assassin of any story. There is a huge difference between how we normally talk and dialogue.

Towards the end of his career Scott Fitzgerald was a very sad character. His wife was in a very expensive psychiatric hospital; his daughter was in another similar institution - that is to say, an expensive finishing school in Switzerland. Scott Fitzgerald himself was a lush with few resources of talent left to support three very expensive outgoings. In desperation he wrote scripts. He wrote one for Jack Warner. In return Jack Warner agreed to pay hospital and school bills and provide enough Bourbon (or was it Scotch?) to keep Scotty under the influence for a few weeks.

Thus inspired, Scott Fitzgerald wrote his screenplay. He sent it to Jack Warner who didn’t like it. Warner re-wrote it in 36 hours, using a team of stenographers working in relays. When Scott Fitzgerald read the final version he wrote this letter to Jack Warner:

“Dear Jack,

All my life I have listened to the sounds of my own people and of my own time. I know nothing else, but at least I know it well. How could you throw me away in this fashion?

Yours,

F. Scott Fitzgerald.

The fifth sense for the storyteller is what we call **A GOOD NOSE FOR A GREAT STORY**. It is very rare for a good

story to leap up from nowhere and hit you in the eye – or the ear. But you can usually smell one, or part of one, when it is around. Then it is up to you to take it, and shape it, and adapt it to your purpose. Wherever possible try to preserve the element of the original story that attracted you to it in the first place.

Of course, this sense of “smelling” the presence of a potentially good story is closely linked to the ability to HEAR.

Other people’s stories are fair game, unless of course, they have already written them down. Then you cannot touch them for copyright reasons. But there is no copyright on a dinner table conversation. Learn to listen, and file away in your memory the stories you hear. Even if you do not use them in their entirety, a

d e t a i l
w i l l
c o m e
b a c k
j u s t
w h e n
y o u
n e e d
i t.

F. Scott Fitzgerald

A very fine short film called “The Lunch Date” directed by Adam Davidson had just such a genesis.

Adam was a guest at a dinner party in Los Angeles, and joined in the laughter after someone told that urban legend set in a railway cafeteria. Later, when he recalled the story, he realised he could re-shape it to make a serious comment about subconscious racism. He created a masterpiece that won an Oscar and a **Palme d’Or at Cannes.**

Sometimes, we get only clues to a possible story – and at the oddest times.

There is a useful story about the writer Raymond Carver. He once described waking up in the morning with an odd phrase running **around his head. “He was vacuuming when the telephone rang....”**

Carver said it was like having a half-remembered tune which you cannot help trying to whistle or sing. It hung around all morning. It began to drive him mad. Then he began to really think about it. Why was he vacuuming? Who was telephoning him? Did they know he was vacuuming? Did he answer the telephone? What happened then?

Carver said that when he finally accepted the catalyst, it became one of his most effective short stories – **and one that simply “wrote itself.”**

Personally, I have always thought that Guy de Maupassant, Honoré de Balzac, Somerset Maugham, Christopher Isherwood, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald and many other great writers were first and foremost good listeners and good reporters. Their talent was in the way they used the material they found.

Dick Ross, NFS, Norway

Other people's stories are also fair game...

Learn to listen, and file away the stories you've heard. Even if you don't use them all, a detail will come back to you when you need it...

The sixth asset you must all have is **COURAGE** — the ability to look at yourself not only as a creative writer or filmmaker, but as a human being — flawed, foolish, wonderful... and to live with what you see... and to use it without shame, embarrassment or remorse.

You are your own essential ingredient as a creative artist. It is simply not possible to write a fresh, original story that does not contain revelations about yourself. You are a participant in all your own creations.

Now all six elements I have described are just common sense. Of course we all have these components in some measure... its just that they are often underdeveloped, or under-valued — even unrecognized. You must bring each into play every time you contemplate creating a story.

I began my list with two key components — memory and experience. They are the essential ingredients of imagination.

Jean Claude Carrière says that imagination is like any other muscle in the body — it must be exercised.

He also said: "I shall probably die with some of my best stories untold."

He might be right. He is certainly right about exercising the imagination — and that means doing press-ups with memory and experience. As I said, the more you try to remember, the more you will remember. It is like opening a flood-gate...

But remember, imagination means taking parts of truth, even if they are half remembered, or even false, and blending them into a logical whole.

We writers tidy-up the real world.... we re-order all the components to suit ourselves. That was what Buñuel meant. There is a relevant anecdote about Henry James, the American who taught people on the other side of the Atlantic how to be Europeans.

He had a very impressive arrival into high society in London. He found himself at an extremely formal dinner party. With the best of them, he sipped sherry, shook hands with an endless number of people who gave the impression of having forgotten him immediately. Then, at a given moment, his hostess hissed to him that he should offer his arm to Lady X, his partner for dinner. He escorted her to the table and made polite conversation to her as soup was served. At one point the lady sitting on his left suddenly said apropos of nothing: **"That's the trouble with life, isn't it." Not certain whether it was a question or a statement, Henry James said politely: "I beg your pardon?"**

She said again: "That's the trouble with life.... It never knows when to stop."

It sounds like a fairly trite thing to say, but Henry James found it so challenging it provided the catalyst for his classic book on literary criticism. He realised that the woman was right, but that any storyteller had a divine power - to shorten life, to compress it, to tidy it, and to put the full stop.

The full stop. Ah yes, that's the problem. Knowing when to stop.

This is a good excuse to give you another example — this time from Flannery O'Connor, the wonderful writer especially of short stories, from America's Deep South. She wrote:

"A short story should be long in depth and should give us an experience of meaning."

"I have an aunt who thinks that nothing happens in a story unless someone gets married or shot at the end of it."

"I wrote a story about a tramp who marries an old woman's idiot daughter in order to acquire the old woman's automobile. After the marriage, he takes the daughter off on a wedding trip in the automobile and abandons her in an eating-place and drives on by himself. Now that is a complete story. There is nothing more relating to the mystery of that man's personality that could be shown through that particular dramatisation. But I've never been able to convince my aunt that it's a complete story. She wants to know what happened to the idiot daughter after that."

"Not long ago that story was adapted for a television play, and the adapter, knowing his business, had the tramp have a change of heart and go back and pick up the idiot daughter, and the two of them ride away, grinning madly. My aunt believes that the story is complete at last, but I have other sentiments."

In real life we cannot know what happens next — to any of us. But in a good story we want to know what happens next. We must know where the story is going to next. Each moment must rely for its existence on a convincing reason already present in the narrative.

So stories should contain only relevant material....

But think of how many films you have seen that failed because they lacked what I call *inner logic*. Or those films that might have had a logic, but it was too obscure for the audience. Or those films with a logic that had one vital component missing. Or of all those many films that were deeply flawed because they came to no conclusion that followed inner logic.

Then there are the films that have absolutely no feeling for an audience at all.... and no wish to offer the audience anything other than a set a challenges to personal comprehension.

I said earlier that stories are created to be told in some form or other. That means that stories are meant to be consumed by an audience....

So it is useful to consider some of the criteria we — as consumers — look for. As teachers, we are in the first rank of **the students' "audience"**. **We should be very clear about our expectations.**

Well, for a start --

We want to be involved -- in a moment of enchantment, or excitement, or of meaningful information.

We want to make an emotional commitment to a sequence of events outside our lives.

We all want to know the same things: What happens next? In other words, the continuity of action.

What's to win? What is the final prize or victory?

What are the stakes? That is to say, the risks, the dangers, the possible sacrifices.

Who wins? And how is he or she changed?

In a good story we can ask those questions, and hopefully get a worthwhile answer.

A storyteller does not exist in isolation.

If you are, let us say, an itinerant story-teller in India, sitting under a tree, with your audience sitting in a semi-circle around you, telling maybe the same old legend, you have to watch how you tell it.

The audience has expectations, not only of the content, but of the way you deliver it. Your eyes wander over the crowd. Here and there are listeners with a glazed expression, or an occasional yawn of boredom...

You pick up speed, you re-time your pauses, you select better adjectives.. You reach out to win back your audience...

Now the filmmaker cannot see his or her audience. They will be hundreds, even thousands of miles away, cloaked by the dark in an anonymous cinema... But the filmmaker must *know* his audience... You and me, and, hopefully, millions of others out there.

Remember what I said earlier, quoting Frank Daniel: "You can make films that are national, local, or exotic.. whatever, in the material they present, but the *emotion* of the characters have better be universal... and that means humane".

So far, I have talked more about storytelling than short film writing specifically.

I always do that. I guess its because I believe that the problems with so many short films are really the problems of storytelling. As I said at the beginning, getting it onto paper, in a script format is easy.

The most important trick is to keep your stories simple. Remember that the aim is to make a deep impression, which, in the final analysis, will be either one of sadness or one of happiness.

That is enough. That is all.

And of course, remember that writers rarely know what their story is really about until they have finished writing it. By that I mean the theme... the underlying lesson we as an audience take away to think about. As teachers we often push students too early into facing such questions.

I used to have a student — the best I ever knew— who, when **asked what his film was about, would say: "I dunno. I think its about eleven minutes."**

But when he had finished post production, he had that rare **ability to sit back and say; "Hey. I just said something about the nature of revenge... I have just said something about the nature of evil.. and I've said it in a fresh way. I have re-worked my attitude to the universal question about the way we learn to be guilty.... and so on."**

But in the end, the most important of the senses to nurture is the seventh -- the quality of **GENEROSITY**. By generosity I mean the desire to give the audience something worthwhile to think about.

Films made by intelligent people do not give neat answers, nor offer solutions to life's mysteries. They ask questions which have a resonance in our own personal experience.

If the film is successful, there is something left at the end. It resides in memory. The story may be complete, but there are questions raised...and left unanswered. For a time, sitting back there in the dark, we have forged a union with a character. We have shared an experience. For the story- teller, and his or her characters, the action and reaction went one way.

Later, we, the audience, reflect on how we would have acted. That is how we are forced to think about the truths of human psychology that the narrative demonstrated.

But giving the audience something to think about should be clear and precise.

The one thing the audience does not want to **think, as they file out, is: "What the hell was that about?"**

I've quoted Frank Daniel earlier. He wrote about this shortly before he died a few years ago:

"You can be as sophisticated as you want, so long as you are understood. To communicate does not mean to say something. To communicate means to be understood. You can talk for hours, but if you are not understood, you haven't said anything. The same thing is true with film. There are images on the screen, but they were not a movie. A movie only happens within each member of the audience."

He went on to say:

"American film makers *want* to be understood. Very often it seems that Europeans do not care... or maybe, care less. Frequently, of course, they are not understood in their own country either. They are artists who make art, so why should they care whether they are understood or not?"

Story-telling means having a sensitivity to whom you are telling it.

There is a 4,000 year old Chinese proverb that says: Tell me and I will forget. Show me and I may remember. Involve me and I will understand.

There is a quote I like which comes from the Movie Business Book, by Jason Squires.

It is my favourite statement about the movies.

"At its simplest, film is the shuffling of light images to win hearts in dark rooms... In no other business does the public "use" the product and then take away with them merely the memory of it...It in truest sense, it is an industry based on dreams..."

I have reminded you about a lot of simple questions today. Here is a final story which should help you remember the importance of posing questions.

It is the story of the death of Gertrude Stein. It is probably apocryphal.

Gertrude Stein lived for decades with Alice B. Toklas. Eventually, after a lifetime of self-publicity, creating mini causes celebres, and, one must say, a small corpus of enduring prose, Gertrude contracted cancer. Loath to leave the world she professed to hate so much, she battled against terminal illness. However, the dreadful disease corroded her body, but not her spirit. She was moved to a

hospital where, a mere skeleton, she fought her last battle against the ultimate critic. Ever faithful, her companion whom she dearly loved — and whom she daily berated with her acid tongue — Alice B. joined her to await the inevitable.

Late one night a member of the nursing staff awoke Alice to tell her that Gertrude had only minutes to live. She was conscious and she had asked to see Alice. Alice wrapped herself in a shawl and hurried along the corridor. As she did so, she thought that she had one last service to perform. Above all else, Gertrude would want to be remembered for one of those memorable quotes that seem to fall so easily from the lips of dying immortals. She approached the hospital bed where, bird-like, the frail Gertrude lay.

Alice said to her: " Gertrude, you and I have lived together for forty years. We have never had any secrets from each other. This is no time to start. You have only a few minutes of life left, so tell me, what is the answer ?"

Eyes burning like coals, Gertrude made one last great effort. She reared up from the pillow, and said: "For Christ's sake, woman, what is the question?"

She then fell back dead.

Thank you.

© Dick Ross



* * *

CILECT Prize 2007

And the winner is...

Leon Prudovsky, Tel Aviv
University

Leon Prudovsky, director of *Dark Night*, winner of the Second Annual CILECT Prize for the best student film produced in a CILECT school during the previous school year, is a graduate of the film program at Tel Aviv University. He was born in St.Petersburg, Russia, and immigrated to Israel with his family in 1991, at age 13. He was drafted into the military, and after three years of obligatory military service, he enrolled in Tel Aviv University.

About the idea for the film, he writes, "My mother is a medical doctor and she has been working in a small medical center in an Israeli Arab village called Kfar Qasem for the past 15 years. About five years ago. I made a short documentary about this medical center. The theme was communication and miscommunication among the five workers: my mother, who is obviously a Russian Jew and speaks Russian and Hebrew, A Bedouin secretary who speaks Hebrew and Arabic, an Italian nurse who married an Arab and moved to Israel and speaks Arabic and Italian, an Israeli doctor who studied in Italy and speaks the language and a Jordanian doctor who also had married an Israeli Arab and came to live in Israel.

Somehow, the five managed to communicate and become involved in many funny and touching situations. The film gave me the idea to write a script about people who don't share the same language, but somehow manage to understand each other. I began to look for a good situation in which to put them, and at that moment there was a big military operation in the West Bank, and one of my friends who returned from there told me about how he had to capture an Arab family for one night."

Leon initial script was not approved for production, and he **was asked to revise it. He writes "I didn't like that, but now I am sure it was a very good decision. It helped me in many ways, and eventually, when I did get the green-light, I had a much better script."**

One of the more difficult problems was casting. The script called for a Russian-born actor of military age, but none was available, so he had to change the script make the character an immigrant who came to Israel when he was 5 years old, which explains his Israeli accent, when he speaks Russian. The actor, Pini Tavger is actually a son of Russian immi-

(Continued on page 32)

NEW TECHNOLOGIES UPDATE

Some time ago I discussed with members the Cilect Executive Council my contribution at the next Congress and suggested that, in addition to the report on new ways of distribution of A/V content, I will also prepare one on the issue of Tapeless HD technologies.

The fact that HDV was probably the last new tape format in history of video technology is being recently strongly emphasized by the arrival of some new gears manufactured by Sony.

It is, of course true, that Panasonic with its P2 technology and some other manufacturers have been going in this direction for some time, but when major market player, and Sony surely is one, brings a couple of completely new products into the market in less that six months, one can conclude with confidence that this is what is awaiting us in the future.

Nenad Puhovski, Chair NT Committee

SONY PMW-EX1 XDCAM



Sony's all-new XDCAM EX solid-state camcorder was first seen at NAB show in Las Vegas where it was the most talked about product at the show.

The XDCAM EX features two card slots for the very latest ExpressCard technology cards which is more robust, more reliable, much faster, and available in much higher capacities than its predecessor. As a storage type made by lots of different manufacturers it is inexpensive.



Sony's XDCAM EX records to cards that are available in 8, 16, and 32GB capacities and above. Unlike alternative solid-state offerings the EX series will achieve 2.5 minutes per gigabyte at full HQ quality 35Mbps HD or 3.5 minutes per gigabyte at

25Mbps constant bitrates. Two 16GB cards record around 90 minutes of the highest quality 35Mbps footage variable bitrate or 115 minutes at 25Mbps constant bitrate. These figures can be doubled if you use 32GB cards.

The camcorder is switchable between 1080/60i and 720/60P, and capable of recording at 1080/50i/30P/25P/24P and 720/50P.

The EX1 uses 3x1/2 inch "Exmor" CMOS sensors with a full raster 1920x1080 resolution. In a move that is sure to please many people the camera also records a full 1920x1080 picture too instead of subsampling to 1440x1080 (as well as being able to record in 1440 mode for compatibility with existing XDCAM HD hardware). This of course means that the EX1's recording codec is higher in resolution than its bigger brothers from the XDCAM HD line!



The XDCAM EX camcorder features a fully manual lens with the same degree of control afforded on full size shoulder mounted cameras. Sony decide to employ Fujinon to design the lens that features a fully manual iris ring, focus barrel with end stops for infinity and macro, and zoom markings allowing critical control over the picture. The lens also features industry standard gearing which means that it is ready to accept professional follow focus units and functions, an industry first for a camera of this type..

The PMW-EX1 camcorder records 1920 x 1080 HD images using the “MPEG-2 Long GOP” codec, which conforms to the MPEG-2 MP@HL compression. This highly efficient “MPEG-2 Long GOP” codec - that is also adopted in the XDCAM HD and HDV 1080i series of products - enables users to record high-quality HD video and audio over a long period of time by efficiently compressing the data.

The PMW-EX1 camcorder offers a choice of bit rates – either 35 Mb/s (HQ mode) or 25 Mb/s (SP mode) - depending on the desired picture quality and recording time. HQ mode supports both 1920 x 1080 and 1280 x 720 resolutions. SP mode supports 1440 x 1080 resolution at 25 Mb/s, which provides compatibility with HDV 1080i products. Footage recorded in SP mode can be seamlessly integrated into HDV-compatible editing systems by connecting the camcorder via the i.LINK (HDV) interface. It can also be recorded on XDCAM HD’s optical disc through the use of the supplied Clip Browser software

		HQ Mode	SP Mode
Video Codec	Compression	MPEG-2 Long GOP MPEG-2 MP@HL	MPEG-2 Long GOP MPEG-2 MP@H14
	Sampling	4:2:0	4:2:0
	Bit Rate	35 Mb/s VBR	25 Mb/s CBR
Image Resolution		1920 x 1080 1280 x 720	1440 x 1080

With the PMW-EX1 camcorder, recordings are made as data files in the “MP4” format, which is widely used in a number of recent electronic portable devices and has been standardised by ISO. The file-based recording allows material to be handled with great flexibility in a commonly-available IT-based environment for copying, transferring, sharing and archiving.



All these operations are accomplished lossless without any “re-digitising” process required. File-based data copying allows lossless dubbing of AV content, which can be performed easily on a PC. The file-based recording system also allows for material to be viewed directly on a PC - simply by inserting the SxS PRO memory card into the ExpressCard slot on a PC, or by linking a PC to the XDCAM EX unit via a USB connection. This works in just the same way as a PC reads files on an internal or external drive.

The PMW-EX1 also offers a Slow & Quick Motion function - commonly known as over-cranking and under-cranking. It can capture images at frame rates selectable from 1 fps to 60 fps in 720P mode and from 1 fps to 30 fps in 1080P mode, in increments of 1 fps. For example, when viewed at 23.98P, images captured at 60 fps will appear 2.5 times slower than normal.

Conversely, images captured at 4 fps will appear six times faster than normal.

Slow Motion Mechanism



With the Slow & Quick Motion function of this camcorder, images are recorded natively with no padded frames and at full resolution. The quality of the slow and fast motion images obtained is extremely high and incomparable to those created in the editing process. In addition, these slow- and quick-motion images can be played back immediately after shooting, without using any converters or processing on non-linear editing systems.

The Clip Browser software for the PMW-EX1 is a simple-to-use PC application software that allows users to easily browse and copy video clips recorded by the camcorder to other devices such as hard disk drives. The Clip Browser software is compatible with both Windows-based PCs and Macintosh computers.

The PMW-EX1 is also equipped with large, easy-to-view, colour LCD screen with a high resolution of 1920 x 480 pixels, SDI (HD or SD) out connector, Optical Image Stabiliser, AF & MF Assist, Depth-of-field Indicator, selectable Peaking function, Interval Recording Function, Frame Recording Function (suitable for animation), etc.

The price? Starting at \$ 7,000!



SONY HVR-Z7U & HVR-S270U



Sony HVR-Z7U

Sony recently also unveiled two new professional HDV camcorders, the HVR-Z7U and the HVR-S270U. Both models offer interchangeable lenses, and the option to dual-record HDV/DVCAM/DV files to tape and **CompactFlash cards**. The camcorders are expected to ship in February 2008.

The new camcorders will feature three 1/3-inch ClearVID CMOS sensors, enhanced by Sony's "Exmor technology," to reduced noise and improve low light performance.



Sony HVR-S270U

Other key features shared between the HVR-Z7U and the HVR-S270U include a wide angle 12x zoom made by Zeiss, optical image stabilization, a 1/3-inch bayonet mount for additional lenses. They also offers an adapter for the use of Sony's α - series of SLR cameras. Recording modes include native progressive 1080p, 24p, 30p in HDV recording, as well as 1080i. Cameras also feature 25p HDV native progressive recording modes in such a way that the CMOS Sensor system and EIP create true 1080p images, which can then be recorded as progressive signals in HDV format. The camcorders can automatically down-convert from HD to SD through FireWire or SD outputs.

There are some key differences between models that (at least partially) justifies the significant price gap. The lower-priced HVR-Z7U is a smaller body, and not shoulder-mounted. As such, the EVF is located on the rear of the body. The HVR-Z7U includes an HDMI output for full-HD digital display.

The HVR-S270U has a much larger, shoulder-mounted body, leaving room for more external controls. The left side features a monochrome LCD display of recording time, audio levels, and battery life. In addition to MiniDV cassettes, the HVR-S270U accepts standard-size cassettes, extending recording time from 63 minutes to 4.5 hours. While the HVR-S270U has no HDMI, it does offer the more pro-friendly SD/HD-SDI connection, supporting embedded audio and timecode.



New memory card unit, HVR -MRC1 features a single Compact Flash (CF) card slot and connects to the camcorders via a multi-pin dock. Power comes from the camcorder's main battery. The unit also has a FireWire connection for transfer to other devices. The recording times on an 8 and 16 GB CompactFlash card in HDV, DVCAM and DV format are approximately 36 and 72 minutes, respectively.



Best Kept Technical Secrets, A GEECT Conference hosted by NFTA, Amsterdam *September 5 & 6 followed by IBC September 7 –11, 2007*

Where have all the Steenbecks gone?

Fifty – two delegates from GEECT and CILECT schools (heads of school, technical staff and film teachers) were guests of the Netherlands Film and Television Academy (NFTA) in Amsterdam to discuss each school's 'Best Kept Technical Secrets'.

It was clear to every delegate that there has been a great revolution in the last ten years in how we make and deliver films. As Doug Shannon from the National Film and Television School in England (NFTS) joked, 'Ten years ago we edited film on Steenbecks and the only things digital were the editor's fingers.' In the meantime, the industry has gone digital (certainly after origination) and is dealing with the complexities of using digital intermediates, HD, 2K and 4K digital origination, post-production, sound design and digital-cinema projection.

The big question for all of us was how to research and get **the most appropriate equipment with our schools' limited educational budgets.** We were all keen to cooperate and **hear each other's secrets.** And the question most frequently asked was about data management: 'What's your workflow and is it effective?' Some of us even hoped for bigger secrets (scandals really) but schools getting into bed with manufacturers like Sony, Arri, The Red One, P+S Technik, Avid or Apple seemed boringly like smart management rather than acts of passion.

Involving the schools' engineers and technicians in conferences is not usual at CILECT events. It certainly should be done more frequently. The technical speakers had prepared their presentations carefully and were able to describe complex technical processes in clear and understandable terms. Any delegate who feared being drowned in techno-jargon about colour space or bit depth were humorously pulled **along by the witty and lively moderator, the NFTS' Head Nik Powell.** He demonstrated what Fellini had always believed, **that you don't have to be able to service a car to be a good driver.** Nik kept reminding us that there is a range of excellent options open to film schools, from film through

DV to digital cinematography, which gives emerging filmmakers experience and knowledge regardless of budget.

A fantastic bonus to 'Best Kept Technical Secrets' was that IBC (International Broadcasting Conference) was in town. So after the presentations and discussions, there were eleven halls to explore at the RAI Centre, filled with more than a **thousand manufacturer's stands showing their latest products,** as well as lectures, workshops and master classes to attend. Delegates kept meeting up at IBC, sharing observations, as we got our hands on all kinds of new cameras and equipment. I kept thinking of Jack Lemon in the all-woman band in *Some Like It Hot*, salivating: '... I used to have a dream - I was locked up in this pastry shop overnight ... Boston cream pie and cherry tarts.' 'Listen Stupe,' Tony Curtis cuts in, 'No butter and no pastry. We're on a diet!' That brings us nicely back to education and the conference.

Presentations

After admiring the facilities and layout of the NFTA studios, Tore Maritvold from the Norwegian Film School (NFS) **kicked off the conference by calling for GEECT to 'create an arena for discussing technical matters between engineers, teachers and students both inside each school and between schools in GEECT.'** He proposed five technical themes for review: 1 digital cinema; 2 HD cinematography and workflow; 3 looking at the close association between film and digital imagery; 4 routing with fibre or copper; and 5 storing and archiving. Tore (Tore.Maritvold@hil.no) and Marc Tiemissen from NFTA (M.Tiermissen@ahk.nl) are already setting up a technical database between the schools which will allow colleagues to see what solutions other institutions are developing.

Tore also organised an interesting seminar at IBC with P+S Technik who demonstrated their SL-2K Digital Cinema Camera, which is available at a bargain price compared to other industry leaders (The Viper, Dalsa, and F-23, etc.). Tore and his colleagues have been so impressed with the camera, that the Norwegian school has bought one! (The first CILECT school with a Digital Cinema Camera?) After this seminar we discovered an industry secret: P+S Technik are working on a 2K digital back for the Arri SR film camera. So

Amsterdam

don't start giving those Arri kits to museums quite yet.

On the film or digital camera front Jon Houchin, chief engineer from the NFTS, gave an excellent overview of the advantages and disadvantages of film or digital origination. He reviewed the ten main digital cinematography cameras (the Arri D-20, The Dalsa, The Panavision Genesis, The Red One, The SL-2k, The Sony F23, The Thompson Viper and the Vision Research Phantom) and talked about some of the recent advances in the design and quality of the image. However, he did worry that to buy a digital cinematography camera kit at the moment would be a major investment that might not survive the current speed of technical obsolescence. He had no doubt that digital cinematography is a major part of the future and schools and students should get as much experience as possible through industry support from manufacturers and rental companies. At the NFTS they planned to continue to shoot most final productions on film and to post-produce digitally. Given the situation at the NFTS, he felt that buying a film scanner would represent a good investment for the future.

Ben Zijlstra from the NFTA gave an interesting perspective on how they record and design soundtracks to serve the content of the film. He was enthusiastic about the new sound possibilities being offered by digital cinema projection. The limited and compressed sound quality that we are used to in traditional theatres is fast disappearing. At the Academy they had a wide range of microphones and taught a variety of techniques both for fiction and for documentary. All sound is recorded digitally, generally at 48 KHz and 24 bit and, throughout the sound processing, editing and dubbing, the quality of that sound (realistic or non-realistic) was lossless and was only altered for artistic reasons. He showed us part of a film directed by Frank Scheffer called *Conducting Mahler*, which illustrated the power and artistic contribution of a successful soundtrack. Ben had recorded the original sound for *Conducting Mahler*, which underlined that we were getting – no listening to – a master class.

Wim van Slooten from a Dutch production company called Filmmore discussed their postproduction workflow. It was interesting to hear how a small company with limited resources had designed an offline/online system which works in DV resolution but online to an HD output. With film origination it was a similar approach: film is scanned on an old BTS Quadra telecine and then after editing is rescanned on an Arriscan, by means of the EDL, at 2K,4K or 6K. This shows that there are many worthwhile solutions to ending up with quality production. With the new digital postproduction workflows you have more choice than ever, but the road is full of pitfalls and you should be crystal clear about the workflow before you start shooting.

The conference ended with an answer to the big question, 'What's your workflow and is it effective?' Doug Shannon from the NFTS explained: 'We never say "you can't do that" and we try to be as adaptable and innovative to reach the students' aspirations and expectations as much as possible. But we are also realistic.' He added that the video productions used the standard video workflow but the advance productions tended to be originated on film and then continued to a Digital Intermediate (DI) process. The main problem for the school is they don't own a quality film scanner and depend on out-of-house scanning facilities. Once scanned, the files were usually DPX, 10-bit, 4:4:4 Cineon calibrated Log and almost 2K resolution (1920x1080). The server storage at the NFTS is up to 20 TB. Local storage is between 3 and 8 TB. This approach is a cost-effective simulation of industry standard workflows and the results are of a high quality. The school gets much help and support from industry partners and friends and their policy obviously works as the magazine *Broadcast* lists the NFTS as the 18th best equipped postproduction facility in the UK. So we ended with a vital secret for getting the highest possible quality at the lowest possible cost – beg, borrow and ask for favours.

The conference was important and stimulating and the delegates expressed much gratitude for the careful and inspired planning by Marieke Schoenmakers, Hanneke Bloemendal, Marc Tiemissen, Kris Dekkers and others from the NFTA in cooperation with Tore Maritvold from the NFS and Nik Powell and Jon Houchin from the NFTS.

Having shared the technical secrets, NFTA team also transported the delegates to an evening of *gezelligheid* by means of a canal trip to distinctive Lloyd Hotel for drinks and dinner. It was a wonderful evening of friendship without secrets. **What's *gezelligheid* then? It's a Dutch state of being and a secret to be revealed at another conference, or you'll just have to travel to Amsterdam to find it.**

Joost Hunningher
CILECT Standing Committee for New Technologies

Joost Hunningher, UK

NEW MEMBER SCHOOLS

SCHOOL OF TECHNOLOGY FOR THE ARTS

SINGAPORE

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The School of Technology for the Arts (STA) at Republic Polytechnic was established in January 2005. It is one of six schools and five centres offering tertiary level, three-year diploma courses in various disciplines at Republic Polytechnic, the fifth and newest polytechnic in Singapore. Republic Polytechnic was founded in 2002.

The School of Technology for the Arts is designed to nurture and produce graduates who possess both creative imagination and technological expertise, and who will contribute to the building of Singapore creative industries. Its curricula venture far beyond technical education. The main focus of its curricular programmes is creativity with a capital C.

The School diplomas in the following courses:

- * Diploma in New Media (3-year course)
- * Diploma in Sonic Arts (3-year course)
- * Diploma in Technology and art Management (3-year course)
- * Diploma in Game Design (3-year course)
- * Diploma in Design for Interactivity (3-year course)

These courses have been approved by the Ministry of Education of Singapore, and have also been endorsed by the Media Development Authority, Ministry of Information, Communication and the Arts; the Economic Development Board; and the Ministry of Manpower.

Students applying to these programs are mainly secondary school graduates from Singapore schools with "O" level certificates. Graduates of relevant courses from the Institute

of Technical Education are also admitted to the School of Technology for the Arts. Graduates from foreign secondary schools are also admitted provided they meet the equivalent standards of Singapore secondary schools prescribed by the Ministry of Education.

Students apply for admission to the School of Technology for the Arts through the Joint Admissions Exercise administered by the Ministry of Education, and are admitted on the basis of their "best five" results in relevant subjects in the GCE "O" level examinations, These subjects include English Language, Mathematics, Literature, Humanities, Art and Technology, Geography, History, and Commercial Studies. Students applying through the Direct Admission Exercise may be asked to present a portfolio of creative works and attend an interview.

Curriculum

The three-year Diploma in New Media (DNM) is the curriculum most relevant to STA's CILECT membership. It has two specializations: Art & Design, and Media & Entertainment.

DNM has an annual intake of 120 - 125 students.

The first year of the course is a common curriculum for all

students of Republic Polytechnic. It is a General Education programme that includes subjects in English, Mathematics, Science, Creativity and Thinking Skills, and Social Sciences.

The second and third year programmes are taken in the School of Technology for the Arts, and focus on content development and technical training in new media areas. The second year programme includes the following subjects:

Creative Concepts	Story Writing
Digital Media Arts	Character Design
History of the Arts	Production Practicum
Arts Criticism and Analysis	Expression of Form

The third year curriculum includes, for the art & Design majors:

Design Studio	Sequential Art & Design
Design in Motion	New Media Installation

and for the Media & Entertainment majors:

Studio Production	Advertising Concepts
Short Media Production	Interactive Entertainment.

All second and third year students must also take industry-relevant modules like Creative Media Enterprise, Professional (Industry) Profiling, and Creative Engagement. In addition, they take elective subjects which may be chosen from other diploma courses within the School of Technology for the Arts or from other Schools or Centres within the Polytechnic.

For example, Diploma in New Media students may take the following subjects as electives from the Diploma in Technology and Art Management course: Principles of Scenography, Scenic and Costume Design, Lighting Design, or Stage Technologies. Or Sound Design and Synthesis Techniques from the Diploma in Sonic Arts curriculum. Or Interactive Sound and Image Authoring from the Design for Interactivity pro-

gram.

All third year students are required to produce two final year projects. These projects may include a video documentary, a digital fiction film, a video game, an interactive film with multiple plots / endings, a multimedia installation, a music video, an animation or video clip for mobile phones, an advertising commercial, or architectural designs and models for **sets, costumes for film, TV or stage productions, etc...**

These final year projects are assessed by a panel of at least three staff members, including an adjunct staff from the industry.

In addition, students are encouraged to work on industry or community projects that will enable them to put into practice what they have learned in the classroom. An example of such projects is a video documentary on the aftermath of the tsunami in a village in India, part of an overseas service learning project initiated by a group of Republic Polytechnic students.

Students are also encouraged to participate actively in student interest groups. Film and video students generally join The Film Factory, a student group that initiates film screenings, and participation in local film festivals. Last April, The Film Factory co-organized the Asian film screenings for the 21st Singapore International Film Festival. The screenings were **held at the Experimental Theatre of the polytechnic's Cultural Centre.**

Facilities and Equipment

The School of Technology for the Arts has a multi-million-dollar state-of-the art, full HD production facility that includes a physical TV production studio, a virtual studio, and various editing suites equipped with the latest hardware /



Singapore

software for audio and video production and post-production purposes. The School has 8 studio cameras (3 Panasonic and 5 Sony), 40 camcorders, and 20 other portable video cameras, 50 Canon digital SLR cameras, and assorted accessories and lighting equipment. It has two computer laboratories each equipped with 25 Mac and PC computers, respectively. STA also has an arts and crafts room for the design and production of model set designs, props and costumes.

Each STA student is required to have a laptop computer that the school equips with the necessary software needed for their various content development and production classes.

STA students also have access to the 1000-seat theatre, 400-seat recital studio, 100-seat black box theatre, recording studio and rehearsal rooms of the Cultural Centre of Republic Polytechnic. These are used for practical classes in sound design, set design, lighting design, and performance management. The 400-seat studio theatre and the black box are often used for film seminars and film festival screenings. The Republic Cultural Centre was designed by Marki and Associates from Japan, and its acoustics designed by specialists who worked on the Sydney Opera House and the Walt Disney theatre in Los Angeles.

Likewise, STA students have access to several campus galleries and exhibition spaces for their art installations, graphic arts exhibitions, multimedia productions, etc

Faculty and Staff

The teaching faculty of the School, of Technology for the Arts are drawn from both academia and the industry. They must have at least a relevant undergraduate degree from local or recognized overseas universities, plus several years of industry experience, to be allowed to teach in the Polytechnic. Prior to being appointed as academic staff of Republic Polytechnic, they must attend a mandatory one-week intensive course on Problem-Based Learning, the principal pedagogical philosophy used in teaching-learning at the Polytechnic.

STA has 43 full-time staff, including faculty members and administrative/technical staff. There are also 12 part-time / adjunct faculty in the School. Staff holding administrative positions are on permanent, tenure-track posts; majority of the others are on three-year contracts.

(Continued from page 24)

grants, and while he speaks Russian, he has an Israeli accent.

Leon found an Israeli officer quickly, and he already had the Russian-Muslim woman in mind, but finding an Arab man was complicated. Not many Arab actors were willing to make **a Israeli movie about Palestinians**. “**They would like to make non-political films, so this role wasn't very attractive to them. I had enough money from the film fund to pay the actors, which made things easier, and eventually, I was very happy with Johnny Arbid.**”

Leon is currently in pre-production on his first feature, a romantic drama about a taxi driver who falls in love with his son's piano teacher. **He is also working on a feature script which he describes as “about a man and a woman who get stuck on the different sides of an Israeli-Palestinian border, and their attempt to find each other in the absurd reality of the Middle East.”**



NEW MEMBER SCHOOLS

LATC – LATIN AMERICAN TRAINING CENTER

RIO DE JANEIRO

LATC is a regional media training and educational center, located in Rio de Janeiro, and focused on the new generation of audiovisual content producers in Latin America, based on new technology business models and digital rights management concepts.

In addition to hosting and organizing workshops, seminars and short-term courses on filmmaking, it also offers seminars in intellectual property rights protection. It combines and balances new digital media applications with intellectual property rights protection issues.

Since LATC is not a school it has no single curriculum. Instead, workshop and seminars are custom tailored to fit the needs of a specific audience, either professionals or students. The design of each workshop or seminar considers the aims of partner institutions, both public and private-sector, and especially universities with film and/or communication courses. However, the workshops or seminars contain hands-on and practical content designed to complement, rather than repeat subjects offered by formal film and/or communication courses.

Since 1992, Steve Solot, current President of LATC, organized over 20 workshops, seminars and training courses in his capacity as Senior VP for MPA Latin American Operations, for professionals, students, government officials and filmmakers. An illustrative list includes:

- Legal Concepts: Production/Commercialization of Audiovisual Works, S. Paulo 2006
- Feature Film Production Workshop, Lab and Competition, Bogotá 2006
- The Life of a Feature Film in 2 Days, São Paulo 2005
- Film Production Seminar for Professional Producers, Mexico City 2004
- MPA-SGAE-EGEDA Screenwriting Workshop and Competition, Madrid 2004
- Seminar for Film Students of Rio Grande do Sul State, Gramado Brazil, 2004
- Mercosur Workshop for Professional Producers, Porto Alegre, Brazil, 2003
- Multidisciplinary Workshop for Film Students, São Paulo, November, 2002
- Latin American Project Development Workshop, Miami 2002

- Multidisciplinary Workshop for Film Students, Rio de Janeiro, 2002
- Professional Mexican Film Makers Workshop, Mexico City, 2001
- Multidisciplinary Cinema Workshops; São Paulo and Buenos Aires, 2000

The next LATC event will be JORNADA LATC: ASPECTOS LEGAIS DA PRODUÇÃO E DISTRIBUIÇÃO AUDIOVISUAL - SEMINÁRIO, OFICINAS E MESA REDONDA, August 13-16 in Rio de Janeiro. It consists of a two-day seminar on Legal Aspects of Production and Distribution of Audiovisual Content in Brazil and the US Independent film market, 4 workshops on specific legal themes, and one round-table debate. The event is hosted by the Brazilian Audiovisual Institute (IBAV), organized by LATC and co-sponsored by the Dannemann Siemsen Law Firm, with support by the US Consulate General of Rio de Janeiro, the FAC – Fórum do Audiovisual e do Cinema, and the Latin American Regional Office of the Motion Picture Association (MPA).

LATC seminars and workshop are co-sponsored by local institutions in each country, which provide necessary infrastructure, including classrooms, auditoriums, simultaneous translation for foreign guest professors and speakers (when required), and appropriate audiovisual equipment such as projectors, screening rooms, digital displays, etc. Participants of LATC seminars and **workshops receive a packet of written “didactic” material** corresponding to the corresponding topics covered. This material is prepared by each professor or speaker under contract with LATC.

LATC does not maintain a permanent group of professors. Instead professors and speakers are selected according to the specific objective of each seminar or workshop. LATC builds on the group of professors, lecturers and professionals employed in previous workshops, courses, and seminars, organized by Steve Solot since 1992 under the MPA Film Production and Screenwriting Workshop program, including the following:

LATC builds on co-sponsors and partner institutions which have supported previous workshops, seminars and courses as part of the MPA Film Production and

BOOK REVIEW

Len McLure reviews two books on documentary by Alan Rosenthal

Writing, Directing, and Producing Documentary Films and Videos, 4th edition. Alan Rosenthal, Southern Illinois University Press, 2002.

“I have always distrusted how-to books” is how Alan Rosenthal opens the preface to his *first* edition of *Writing, Directing and Producing Documentary Films and Videos*. Now in its fourth edition in twelve years, he writes in his new introduction that he thought he could take a rest after the third edition and revisit the topic ten years later, but new technologies and new approaches to the documentary, such as hybrid forms and the Web, have prompted him to update his work.

First, let’s be clear about what this book is *not*. It is not about how to focus and figure f-stops. It is not about three-point lighting or how to place your microphones. It is not a manual on how to set up your computer to use Avid or Final Cut Pro. There are plenty of books that cover these topics very well, not to mention the instruction manuals that come with equipment. What Rosenthal provides in *Producing Documentary* (pardon the abbreviation – my only complaint is that the title is too long), is what the filmmaker goes through mentally as he or she conceives, researches, funds, writes, organizes, shoots, edits, and gets an audience for what we call documentary films. To bring this reality to the fore, Rosenthal draws upon his many years of experience making documentaries for PBS, the BBC, Israeli TV and the others, plus his in-depth discussions with many other practitioners of the craft.

It is not the easy-to-teach technical parts of filmmaking but the more difficult aspects that Rosenthal lays out before us. **Such as those nebulous things called approach and style.** “Style is as important in documentary as in love, and it may be straightforward, comic, experimental, elaborate, fantastic – whatever you want,” writes Rosenthal. **Then he follows with several examples of films that succeeded (or didn’t) due to their chosen styles.** He decries the straightjacket that (particularly American) TV networks puts on documentarians, forcing them to produce news-style docs with disembodied narrators. He relates how producer Arthur Barron encountered difficulties with CBS in the making of *The Berkeley Rebels*, which originally included comical sequences of students in weird situations quoting facts memorized for exams, and a dog that could talk. These were excised by the CBS executives. In another example, **the BBC was more receptive to Brian Hill’s *Feltham Sings*,** an inside look at a juvenile detention center in which lyricist Simon Armitage takes interviews and turns them into rap, which the subjects of the film sing. It worked beautifully.

Too many people think that the most important part of making documentaries is going out and shooting them. But it

isn’t until page 193 that Rosenthal brings us to a discussion of how to actually go out and shoot a documentary. The “On Location” chapter is only nine pages long. Not an oversight. For those of us who make documentaries, we know that often the shortest part is the filming. There are long months – even years – of preparation. Then after the filming comes the lengthy task of putting it all together in the editing room. And Rosenthal has much to say about this. Conceptualizing. Organizing the material. Pacing and rhythm. And the all-important relationship between director and editor. All this replete with examples from real documentary films and detailed discussions with their makers.

So much in documentary depends upon writing. Writing your initial idea. Writing the treatment. Writing the complete proposal. Writing the script. Writing and shaping the film all the way through the final editing. **That’s why Rosenthal puts a chapter “Writing the Final Narration”** after the chapter on editing. His dissection of the narration of *City of Gold*, plus his analyses of James Burkes’s *Connections* and his own *The Gates of Time*, may seem overly-detailed to some, but they are as necessary to the filmmaker as the study of human anatomy is for the artist.

Though not a technical manual, *Producing Documentary* delves deeply into the nuts-and-bolts of making documentaries. From how to get your film funded, to how to work out a budget, to how to get your film distributed. Included are chapters on historical documentaries, docudramas, and industrial films. **There’s even a special chapter devoted to how to make your first film.**

As both a maker and teacher of films, I would like to propose an unorthodox way of making the best use of *Producing Documentary*. Make it required reading for students in Documentary Production 101 *before* they have a chance to touch the camera. So that by the time they do figure out the correct f-stop, they will have a much better idea of what to film and how to film it. However you decide to use it, *Writing, Directing, and Producing Documentary Films and Videos* should be required reading for anyone entering — or already in — the field of documentaries.

BOOK REVIEW

New Challenges for Documentary, 2nd edition, Alan Rosenthal and John Corner, editors. Manchester University Press, 2005.

Imagine that you were able to take a year off to trot the globe and visit with some of the top documentary filmmakers around the world. On the way you could also visit some of the most prominent commentators on the documentary. Each one of them would be willing to sit down and discuss with you at length their innermost thoughts on making documentary films and the role of the documentary in society. — **Okay, just say you didn't have the time or the thousands of dollars for airfare and hotels. The next best thing would be to have in your hands a complete collection of the best of these interviews conducted by others. What you'd have would be the newly revised second edition of *New Challenges for Documentary*.**

Whether you're a working documentary filmmaker, or an astute observer, or starting out as a student of film, there is much in *New Challenges* that will stimulate, enlighten, and make you think about documentaries in ways you've never thought about them before. The editors have drawn together in one volume an eclectic selection of essays on the documentary that covers nearly the entire history of the form, up to the present moment. From the practical advice given in Rosenthal's "Staying Alive", to Fred Friendly's minute-by-minute account of Edward R. Murrow's blasting of Joe McCarthy in 1954, to the historically important interview with Peter Watkins on how he navigated the corridors at the BBC to get *The War Game* completed (and its aftermath), to a series of thought-provoking essays on the ethics of the documentary, to the revelations of Michael Moore's sleights-of-hand in *Bowling for Columbine*, this is a book you'll find hard to put down. Then long after you've put it down, you'll be going back to read the best parts over again.

New Challenges is not a how-to book on documentary filmmaking, yet it's a goldmine of information that will fill the arsenal of practitioners of the craft. Nor could you call it a scholarly tome on the more esoteric issues surrounding the documentary (though it includes some of that). It can best be described as a feast for thought for those who think deeply about the role of documentary films in society. There is an essay by John Corner on how music ought or ought not to be used in documentaries. There is an analysis of the use of narration and how it affects credibility and the art of storytelling. There is a section of essays on the many aspects of the historical documentary. Also a selection of essays that shine much new light on the docudrama.

It's seldom that a work of nonfiction will put you on the edge of your seat. But no fiction thriller ever written will make chills go up and down your spine more than Dennis O'Rourke's real-life account of how he found Habiba on the street in Kabul and nearly got killed for it. Habiba and her husband, both of them made amputees by land mines, became the subjects of his *Landmines – A Love Story*. **What's even more intriguing is to hear O'Rourke, in this rare interview by Tracey Spring, explaining in minute detail how he conceives of his films, how he goes about making them, and how he stays alive financially. It would be impossible to go any deeper than this into the mind of a filmmaker.**

Unlike many other books on the documentary, editors (and contributors) Rosenthal and Corner have come to the table with no particular agenda. The only agenda they seem to have is to provide the reader with valuable insights into the world of documentary filmmaking, and to provoke us all to think more critically about what it's all about. **They have carefully selected the best writing and discussions on the documentary from across the spectrum and across the globe. It's a smorgasbord of delectable morsels, some heavy, none too-light, salty or sweet according to your likes, but all very rich. Once you taste it, I guarantee you'll be back for more.**

For seven years, Len McClure was Head of Cinematography at the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, and now works as a documentary cameraman, for National Geographic, The Discovery Channel, and others, as well as lecturing on documentary film making.

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