Welcome to AV news e-xtra Issue 18

Welcome to this autumnal issue of e-xtra. The AV Group AGM has just taken place, and in addition to the existing committee members who all retained their positions, I'm delighted to welcome three new committee members – Malcolm Imhoff FRPS, Mike Pill ARPS, and Adrian Battersby ARPS. All three will bring a wealth of talent and experience to the committee and will be tremendous assets in the year ahead.

Much was discussed at the AGM, not least the need to recruit a new editor for AV News from October 2024 when Alastair stands down, and a new Director for the International AV Festival to take over from Edgar for the 2025 event. If you would like more information about either role please get in touch!

Concerns were also expressed about the current AV Distinction process being held 'in camera' within the Film and Video category. We have been in discussions with both the RPS President and the Distinctions Manager about the re-introduction of a stand-alone AV Distinction, and will continue to do so. At the moment the existing process is unlikely to be reviewed until 2025.

The next event in the AV Calendar is the Great Northern AV Festival and New Horizons competition in North Wales, and (Covid permitting…) I hope to see many of you there!

Ian Bateman

FRPS MPAGB AV-EFIAP APAGB

Chair of the RPS AV Group Committee

Message from AV News e-xtra Editor

With the Autumn round of Audio Visual Events well underway, there have been lots of competitions, talks and events worthy of a short report in AV News e-xtra before the publication of the next AV News Journal due in December 2023.

There is lots more to look forward to such as the results of the AV Makers South Africa themed competition due out in November and the Great Northern AV Competition which takes place at the beginning of December. Look out for another AV News e-xtra in December.

East Anglian Federation Audio Visual Trophy - my experience.

Ian Johnson LRPS writes

On 14 October2023 I entered and attended the East Anglian Federation Audio Visual Trophy for the first time. The Competition was held at Foxton Village Hall just outside Cambridge, and this served as an excellent venue both in terms of location and facilities.

In total 41 sequences had been entered, which given the maximum time, and therefore the default time of each sequence, was 12 minutes, made the undertaking an all-day event; heaven for any AV enthusiast. The subject matter of the sequences were as varied as from the end of the garden, to the end of the world – or to the other side of it at least. Dick Williams was a master as a "master of ceremonies" Keith Leedham made all things technical run without a hitch – or if there was a hitch, Keith sorted it out without anyone noticing.

One could not leave the event without being inspired – I certainly was. However, there were a couple of negatives for me in my mind in respect of the Competition.

The first was the age of the competitors – and I certainly don't mean that in any disrespectable way and apologies unreservedly if it reads like this. At 61 years old I was one of the youngest, if not the youngest person in attendance! We all, as Camera Club members, as a Federation, as an alliance and as ambassadors of photography, must spread the word of the wonders of Audio Visual to our younger members, friends and acquaintances. Let's be honest, the amount of rubbish on our TV screens these days should only inspire us to go and do better ourselves.

The banks of projectors that once existed have now been replaced with computer software which can produce a sequence in an evening rather than taking months. Maybe not a successful one admittedly, however, the magic of a successful transition is only matched by the excitement of "pressing the button" at the right time.

The second negative was the lack of feedback on the sequences – other than getting a medal if you had a really good one. Difficult I know given the time constraints, however, too long, too short, bad sound, bad voiceover would give the "novices" like me, some much needed help.

Did the judges get it right? Of course not. The sequences on Chernobyl 'The Abandoned City', Myanmar 'A Troubled Country' and 'MoPop' were my personal top three. Am I going to enter next year? Bet your bottom dollar I will. I have already thought of a title to my follow-up sequence on the windmills of Holland – " A Return from Edam". Might win the humour section at least.

Overleaf: Pictures from the event so well led by Dick Williams

The East Anglian Federation Audio-Visual Trophy 2023
Judged by
Richard Brown FRPS, FIPF, FACI(M), EFIAP, APAGB
& Vic Hainsworth ARPS, DPAGB, APAGB
Results

1st Place: PAGB Gold Medal: EAF A/V Trophy: Keith Leedham 'Home From Home'

2nd Place: PAGB Silver Medal: Colin Harrison 'Bodie'

3rd Place: PAGB Bronze Medal & Popular Vote: PAGB Ribbon:

                                                Philip Smithies 'Going Underground'

Best Creative: PAGB Ribbon: Derrick Holliday 'MoPop'

Best Dissolve: PAGB Ribbon: Brian Harvey 'A Time To Reflect'

Best Sound: PAGB Ribbon: Malcolm & Jenny Gee 'Flowing Fortunes'

Best Humour: PAGB Ribbon: Malcolm Imhoff 'In Search of Lucy'

Best Photography: PAGB Ribbon: Sheila Haycox 'A Troubled Country'

Vic Hainsworth Award: PAGB Ribbon: Martin Leech 'A Magical Walk'

Highly Commended: Malcolm Imhoff 'Island of the Dead'
                                              Colin Birch 'Garden Birds'
                                              Heather Clarke 'Wide Skies'
                                              Chris Ward & Dick Williams 'The Abandoned City'
                                               Robin Davy 'Havana City'
                                              Colin Birch 'A Day in the Wild'

AV is aLIVE and well in the Midlands

Malcolm Imhoff writes

The Midlands AV Day was held last October at Smethwick Photographic Society's Clubroom and organised by Alastair Taylor with his usual efficiency. Smethwick is a well-appointed venue, but Alastair decided that we should take all our own gear, my HD projector and Alastair's superb active speakers. This made for a lovely intimate and informal atmosphere where we all felt comfortable in joining in with the discussions and repartee.

We started with the usual attenders' sequences, five of them, and all received very friendly and constructive comments and suggestions on how they might try different approaches and techniques in order to achieve the aims of the authors.

This session was followed by "A Blast from the Past", a selection of award-winning AVs from the RPS Archive. We the audience were invited to choose from the list that Alastair had selected, and I was so pleased that two of them were my Number 1 and Number 2 favourite AVs of all time, "Portrait of the Author" by Colin Balls, Ian Laing and Walter Jones, and "Sarah" by Peter Coles and Sheilagh Peel. We saw another classic from Peter, "Jill is Still". I sincerely hope that this will be a regular fixture in future Midlands AV Days.

That would be a hard act to follow by anybody, but Dave Cooke entertained us wonderfully with his two Black Country AVs, "Ow am yo gooin'" and "The Good Old Days", which had many of us old-timers laughing as we were reminded of all the heavy AV equipment we had to cart around, the satisfaction we got from editing reel to reel tape, the physical pleasure we enjoyed using a hand control to make our AVs, and the dismay we experienced when somebody dropped their slide magazine spilling all the transparencies on the floor! It was a very personal presentation by Dave which was very well received.

AV is aLIVE and well in the Midlands continued ...

After lunch I gave a presentation delving into the details of my AV "Queen of the Hills" looking at where the idea came from, how I selected, organised and processed the photographs, the recording of the voiceover, and the mixing of the sound track.

After that there was a lively (robust?) discussion on the Photo Harmony genre of AV, expertly led by Alan Tyrer who had selected a number of "Photo Harmony" AVs as illustrations. Time constraints meant that we had to skip through these, and personally I would have preferred to see fewer AVs in their entirety. We agreed that the original aims for creating a Photo Harmony genre have not been met, and in AV competitions there does seem to be a movement away from Photo Harmony, the definition of which nobody seems to agree upon, toward the old Music, Poetry and Song category which many people find much simpler and clearer to understand. Maybe we should call it "Photo Harmony, Music, Poetry and Song"?

Alastair took us behind the scenes of his highly successful AV "For Peace and Democracy" which took 15 years to make and has gained a FIAP acceptance in every Salon it has been entered.

We just had time before adjourning to the pub to enjoy two more "Blasts from the Past", one from Richard Brown, "And Never Cackled", and one from Howard Bagshaw "Menin Road".

It was billed as a Midlands AV Day, but we also had attenders from outside the region, from the North of England, Devon, Lincolnshire, and Wales, all AV enthusiasts who value the experience of seeing Audio Visual presentations live, on the big screen, with quality sound, and, most importantly, in the company of AV friends where we can feel the reaction and share the enjoyment of Real AV. Everybody agreed the day was a great success, a most enjoyable day, and we fervently hope it will become a regular fixture in the AV Calendar.

AI and AV

A talk by Mark Allen MPAGB/AV to Leeds Audio Visual Group & Wilmslow Audio Visual Group on 20 October 2023

The talk was focused on how it is done and did not discuss the morality of it all. It all started in 1950 with Alan Turing. However, it was the Dartmouth Conference in 1956 that is regarded as the birthplace of AI as a formal field of study.

AI has been around us for many years. In the past, it was called given different names. 'Computer Programming', 'Deep Learning', or 'Machine Learning', but what those weasel words meant, back in the day, was simply that computers could do things a million times faster than we, mere HU-MANS, can.

In 1978 at the school chess club, we had three grades, which we called 'Advanced', 'Master' and 'Grand Master'. OH, the egos of teenagers. But, only 3 years later, in 1981, the world had moved on. The Sinclair ZX81 was there, with a program called 1K ZX Chess. As a school 'GrandMaster', I tried it and it beat me every time. It beat me easily, every single time.

But 1K ZX Chess was only 627 BYTES in code. Your Mobile phone probably has 4GB. That's 4 million bytes.

Why am I mentioning this? Because this is where it all started, with computers and lines of code. As the programming languages improved, and the processors to compute the code got faster and faster, deep learning, the machine learning, just got better and better. Now known as AI, things are changing on almost a weekly basis.

Let's look at how AI can help us.

Ideas and research

How to take a mere idea or concept and use AI to produce a short story, screenplay, poem—you name it, AI can help

Poe AI Portal: https://poe.com/

How to take what is produced and improve it, polish it, make it more informative, more relaxed, more interesting, shorter, longer - again you name it, AI can help

Grammarly: https://app.grammarly.com/

There are also apps and extensions that are worth Installing. How to use what is produced as a starting point and make the script your own. For example Word with Grammarly plug-in and Poe AI Portal are both useful.

Using AI to produce natural-sounding narration, that is so good, most folks will not realise it is not real

How to get AI to read your script as a narration

Eleven Labs https://elevenlabs.io/speech-synthesis

How to trick AI into pronouncing place names correctly. You need to spell the incorrectly pronounced words phonetically.

https://www.dictionary.com/e/phonetic-spelling/

Do it one word at a time, not within the whole script, to stop wasting credits. You need to register under a new email to get more credits at https://temp-mail.org/

How to polish the track with a Master Track AI

PTE | Audio | Export Soundtrack as a file, captures everything

Submit a new sound file to https://www.bandlab.com/mastering (BandlabMastering) for free.

In my opinion 'Universal' is best, or play with the other styles and download.

In PTE save as a new version. Delete all sound and add a new sound file.

AI and Photos

How to improve your photos using AI that only adjusts the pixels, does not add anything in or takes anything out, it just adjusts

Mark demonstrated ON1 Photo RAW Auto AI. (https://www.on1.com/products/photo-raw/) Almost all modern post processing software will do this, Photoshop, Affinity, Elements, Topaz Photo AI, the list is endless. RAW How to improve your photos using AI that removes distractions, by analysing the pixels around the object and replacing them with pixels from the same image.

How to use AI to swap in a new sky, using your bank of sky images

Mark demonstrated ON1 Photo RAW, Perfect Eraser

How to use AI to cut out a section from one of your images and add it to another image

Mark mentioned how almost modern software can select the subject and extract or remove background. He mentioned even his phone cab do this. He demonstrated how this can be used in PTE AV Studio to bring the subject forward, whilst moving the background backwards.

How to use AI to include moving elements from a single image

PhotoVibrance https://photovibrance.io/

How to use AI to create a 3D effect from a single image

LeiaPixConverter https://convert.leiapix.com/animation

How to use Generative Fill and Generative Expand

Photoshop and PS Elements 2024

https://blog.adobe.com/en/publish/2023/10/19/introducing-adobe-photoshopelements-premiere-elements-2024

AI Text to image using various websites for free, for example

Leonardo, https://app.leonardo.ai/ai-generations

Bing Image Creator, that uses the latest DallE3 https://www.bing.com/images/create?FORM=GDPGLP

Ideogram https://ideogram.ai/t/trending

Custom Fonts filled with grass or trees or whatever you want

Adobe Firefly 2 beta (You need to register with Adobe) https://firefly.adobe.com/

Mark mentioned the importance of using an appropriate font and one that worked with the colours on the image. He demonstrated how two example fonts could be included in PTE AV Studio

AI can help, but may I suggest that it should be considered as just another tool in your toolbox? I simply wanted to demonstrate what AI tools are out there. I wanted to divert the talk about AI from text to image, generative fill, generative expand, and all that, to include the other, perhaps more interesting aspects, that are not often discussed. Like, how to generate ideas and carry out research. How to use AI to narrate and how to use AI to create a Studio Mastering, of all the sound.

At the end of the talk, and over Zoom, both Shelia and Linda made and important point, that I felt was lost in the discussion - as these things often are over Zoom. It was about the production. You can have wonderful script, narration, music, sound effects – but they all need to be brought together in the 'production'. Another commented, "I have all the right notes, but not necessarily in the right order". I could not agree more.

In Mark's opinion, the best way to improve your audio visuals is to seek help from someone you respect. No Artificial Intelligence, a real person. Listen carefully, take it on the chin.

Irish Photographic Federation

40th NATIONAL AUDIO-VISUAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Held on Saturday 21 October 2023: Results

Kieran O'Loughlin Memorial Trophy

All Human Beings   *Mark Allen (Catchlight Camera Club)*

Best 1st Time Entrant

Devenish Island   *Jacinta Mc Aree-Murphy (Carrickmacross C.C)*

Best Sound

The Galway Lady Who Had Great Vision   *Rita Nolan (Celbridge CC)*

Best Script

The Transformer   *Liam Haines   (Offshoot PS)*

Best Photography

A Grand Day Out   *Michael Linehan (Celbridge CC)*

Audience Vote

The Transformer   *Liam Haines   (Offshoot PS)*

Irish Photographic Federation
3rd OPEN PHOTO HARMONY AV COMPETITION

Best Photo Harmony

Hebridean Dream   Stephen Lee (Dorchester CC)

Best Irish Photo Harmony

Trá Bhréige Bay Donegal   Raymond Hughes
                                                 (Merville & Newtownabbey P.S)

Minor Awards Open Photo Harmony

2nd Place	Briar Rose	Martin Fry (Cheltenham C C)
3rd Place	Music in Space	John Hodgson
		AV Club of South Australia

Highly Commended

| | Old Bottles | John Arseniou |
| | | AV Makers South Africa Highly |

Commended

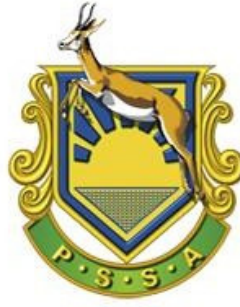| | Floral Fascination | Peter Thomas |
		Photographic Society of South Africa
	The Beauty of Wilderness	Malcolm Imhoff (EMAVG)
	City Views	Jill K. Bunting (Wilmlsow AV Group)

Audience Vote

| | Hebridean Dream | Stephen Lee   (Dorchester CC) |

6th PORT ELIZABETH CAMERA CLUB INTERNATIONAL

AUDIO VISUAL FESTIVAL 2024

All Audio Visual enthusiasts worldwide are cordially invited to enter the 6th Port Elizabeth Camera Club International Audio Visual Festival

Closing on Thursday 21 March 2024.

ENQUIRIES:

FESTIVAL DIRECTOR: ROEL VAN OUDHEUSDEN

Mobile: +27 82 739 7679
Email: roelvanoza@gmail.com

SALON TREASURER: ANETTE REIMERS

Mobile: +27 81 577 9028
Email: pecameraclub.pp@gmail.com

Entries to be sent to: peccav2022@gmail.com

FESTIVAL TIMETABLE:

21 March 2024:   Entries close
1-15 April 2024:   Judging
21 April 2024 :   Results emailed
29 April 2024 :   Public show
07 May 2024 :   Awards posted