

# SEFM *Lockdown*

Issue 3

Welcome to issue 3 of [SEFM Lockdown](#).

Well, lockdown progresses and evolves. I think we have reached the stage of *phoney* freedom. We can now go out and about a bit more, but are we ready to? I have not been further than Sainsburys and the local garden centre. I've still got at least half a tank of fuel in the car, having filled up the day before lockdown.



Hopefully, by the time you read this, I will have been back to Beeleigh Mill to do some filming with Ken and Graham. We should be the only ones on site and will be able to follow the distancing guidelines, although we won't be able to meet for breakfast first.

I would like to thank our contributors for their articles and our readers for their feedback.

Geoff Partridge - Editor

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# The Ramblings of a Movie-maker

By Don Mouatt

## Part 3

About 40 years ago club mate Paul Mercer who I had met at a film show by our club in the old Southend Library asked me if I would help out on a documentary about the Fire Brigade's Red Watch stationed at Mountdale Gardens Leigh. I was only too happy to oblige and my role was to capture the sound on an external microphone linked to the camcorder. We spent a considerable time filming training and all the other activities of the Watch. On one occasion I positioned the microphone at the end of a hose in order to capture the sound as the water was turned on and jetted out. I only just managed to get the mic. and myself out of the way in time but got what was required. We also occasionally rode on the fire engine when they were carrying out routine procedures. However we could not do that in the event of a real fire but would have to make our own way there. In this connection we had an arrangement whereby the control centre at Chelmsford would contact Paul in the event of a fire. On one evening when we were filming at the station a call was received of a fire near a block of flats. The brigade hastened there and we followed a few minutes behind. When we arrived we found that there was a small fire in a large concrete rubbish container housed in the grounds of the flats. Apparently this was quite a common occurrence as yobos used to set the waste alight. The brigade did not attempt to extinguish the fire until we arrived and were ready to film. We did so but it was all a bit of a damp squib and Paul and I agreed that it was not worth having it in the film. However some time later Paul was contacted of a serious fire and although obviously he could not get in the way he was allowed to film from a suitable nearby position and got some good footage. I was not present for some reason or other. Upon conclusion of filming Paul and I donated a crate of beer to the Watch.

The film was very good and informative but the credit was entirely due to Paul who conceived the idea, made all the arrangements and did the filming and editing. Prior to this his work was OK but not anywhere up to the same standard. Paul, who worked for what was then Customs and Excise joined their film unit a year or so later and still works four days a week with them as well as doing independent professional stuff in his spare time. On a few occasions I have seen some of his work on TV. There was also an amusing occasion whilst he was acting as a sound recorder holding a mic. with a large muffler when the dog tried to grab it. Hopefully when we can all resume our meetings I will suggest to the committee that we invite him as a guest to show some of his commercial work. He has done a presentation at the club a few years ago.

Following the making of the Red Watch film Paul began professionally filming weddings

and he invited me to join him as a second cameraman. As a prelude to the actual wedding one of us would visit the Bride's house to film her getting ready etc. whilst the other would be at the church capturing scenes of the guests arriving etc. On one occasion whilst I was filming at the house I noticed that the Bride's mother was knocking back two or three glasses of wine. I filmed this. Having completed a sequence of events I made my way back to the church to join Paul in filming the service and later the reception. At the latter both of us filmed the mother still at the wine and its effect on her,. It was all rather hilarious but discretion was the better part of valour and it did not appear in the finished film. Paul did the editing but that was a consensual sensible decision.

As a back up to filming services we set up a separate tape recorder and mic. near the altar and on one occasion this was a blessing because for some reason or other the audio recorded by the cine camera was unsatisfactory. Luckily Paul was able to save the day by lip syncing the tape recording.

I did about half a dozen weddings with Paul but got a bit bored and stopped. However one of us and I cannot remember which thought it would be a good idea if we could make a documentary about

Southend Airport. At that time it was being used principally by Air UK. However we realised that filming would be rather expensive and decided that if we could first make and sell a film about the dangers faced by children whilst on the beach or bathing in the sea we might make enough money to buy sufficient film stock. If my memory is correct Chris Taylor had earlier contemplated doing a film about this but did not pursue it. We persuaded the Foreshore Department of Southend Council to commission us to make a film which could be shown to schools and also provide a second hand cine projector. They agreed a sum which would give us the revenue for the anticipated airport film.

Filming went ahead as planned and we asked Chris to do the commentary. Again Paul did the filming and myself the sound. We had one nasty moment where the sequence was about not “crying Wolf”. A boy was to be in the water and he pretends he is drowning. A man then goes to save him and the boy then stands up and starts laughing. The boy subsequently does a repeat but this time the onlooker ignores him and the boy who is not fooling about drowns. For the sequence we got in touch with a Shoebury Swimming club who agreed to provide a coach and a boy swimmer. We met up on a windy dull day with a bit of a swell on the water and suggested that we postpone the filming but the participants were quite willing to carry on. The boy’s brief for the second occasion was to swim a few yards underwater until he was out of camera range. When it came to filming that scene the boy disappeared as scheduled but did not reappear after ten yards or so. There was no boat present and the we got so worried about the length of disappearance that the coach ran down towards the water to try and make a rescue. Just before he got there the boy reappeared having swum under water for much longer than was anticipated.

I was not present at the final unscripted end of the film, being away on holiday but Paul learnt that Duncan Goodhew was visiting what was then the Warrior Square swimming pool and he ask him if the would sum up the dangers involved. Duncan readily agreed with Chris being the interviewer. Apparently Duncan carried if off without the need for any retake.

Further reminiscences will hopefully follow in Part 4

# Filming the Festiniog

## Still Waiting to be Edited

By Geoff Partridge

In 1987 I spent my summer holiday filming the Festiniog Railway in North Wales. The railway had celebrated its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary the previous year.

I had camped in near Porthmadog a couple of years earlier and knew the area reasonably well. On the earlier visit I had most of my evening meals at the Tregwylan Hotel, a five minute walk from the camp site. It was a family run hotel and relatively inexpensive. In fact on the Friday night I booked into the hotel for the weekend, returning to my tent on the Monday. The hotel was run by Fal and David Edwards. When I phoned to book a room for the 10 days I of my 1987 holiday, David said, "You're the chap from Chelmsford". He still remembered when I went back in 1998.

I spent the first couple of days researching the route from Porthmadog to Festiniog, a distance of 13 miles, climbing over 700 feet. I studied the timetable to work out what times I needed to be at the various stations and halts along the route.

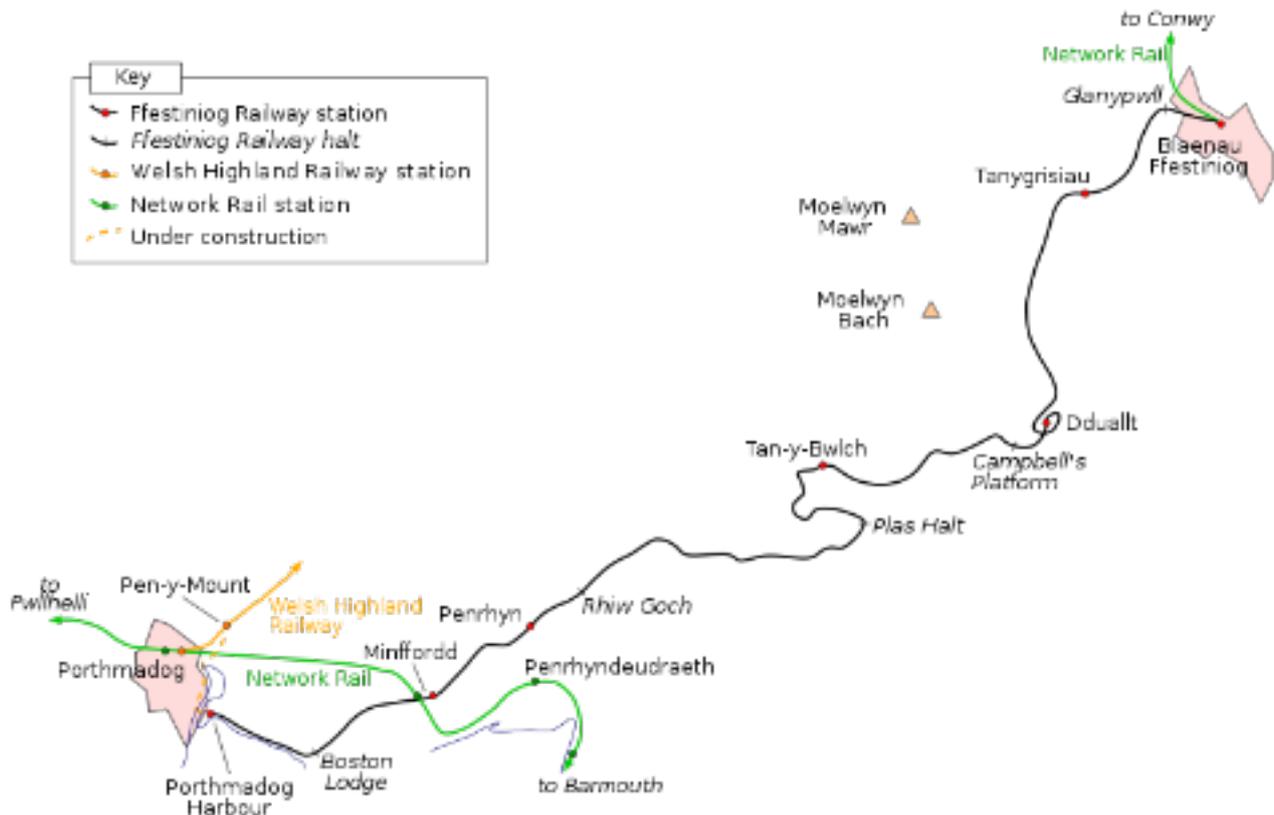
My camera at the time was a professional SVHS camera, with full size tapes. My memory is a bit poor on some things, but it was either a JVC or Panasonic. And it was heavy. I used a professional Manfrotto tripod with a heavy duty fluid head.

I had adapted and foam lined a backpack for carrying the camera, plus rations.

My first day of filming was a trip from Porthmadog to Blaenau Ffestiniog and back, filming from the window for most of the trip on the outward journey. (It is interesting that the railway name plate have Festiniog but the place name seems to be Ffestiniog).

The other days were spent travelling by car to the various stations by car and then filming trains arriving and leaving, with people getting on and off.

The weather was, on the whole, good. Although the day I went to film a train going over the road bridge at Tan-y-Bwlch, it rained most of



the day and I stood holding an umbrella over the camera while I waited for the train to pass. I was nice and dry as I had very good waterproof jacket and trousers.



One of the stations on the route is not easily accessible by road, and at the time I was there, the station was closed. This was Dduallt. At this point the railway was rerouted, due to the building of a reservoir. To gain height, the track loops over itself before continuing at a higher level above the reservoir.

It was a section that I really wanted to include, so I parked up in a lay-by on the main road. With the camera in my backpack, and carrying the tripod, I slogged the 3/4 mile up the hillside to the station and got my shots, although I did have a fair wait for the train. Going downhill was not much easier with the weight of the equipment.

So at the end of the holiday, I got home and viewed the footage. I then noticed something that I had not seen on my 6inch portable TV. Every so often, and enough to be a distraction, there was a glitch in the image. This was going to be difficult to edit out, even using the professional editing suite that I had. So I didn't edit the footage.

Given what I now know about film making, I probably didn't have a large enough selection of shots to make a good film from the material. I hadn't heard about b-roll at that time.

What I did learn was that I didn't really have the upper body strength to use the camera comfortably. It was a shoulder held camera, when not on a tripod, and the weight used to restrict the blood flow to my arms. Although the problem with the glitch was eventually solved, a poor solder joint, I became disillusioned with the camera and replaced it with a Canon Hi8 camera.

The Festiniog footage has been transferred to MiniDV tape and then captured digitally, but one thing actually stops me editing it - I don't speak Welsh and can't pronounce the place names.

When I went back in 1998, I walked the length of the railway from Blaenau Ffestiniog to Porthmadog, most of it in pouring rain. I didn't have any camera with me that day, not even a still camera.

Since then the Welsh Highland Railway, from Porthmadog to Caernarfon has been rebuilt and at some point I would like to go back and film both railways.

# Bad Drivers

By John Ford

No, this has nothing to do with road rage or speeding during lockdown. It is all about Operating System drivers, the little bits of computer code that are provided by the software writers to make things like printers, graphics cards or audio hardware to function properly and the source of many frustrating hours for many PC users. One of the benefits of Windows machines but also a non-benefit is the variety of hardware that is available to put together a computer. Apple is renowned for being very stable because the overall specification and choice of components is rigidly controlled by Apple and software writers have less complexity to deal with.

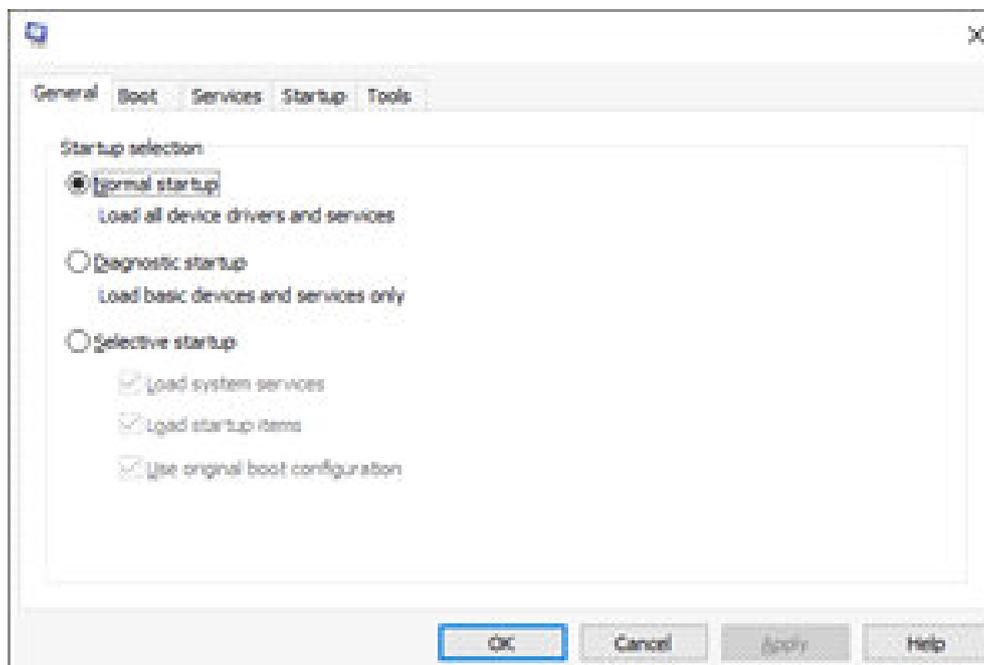
Recently I decided it was time to build a new Windows PC. My existing one was about twelve or more years old and was only capable of RAM expansion to twenty-four gigabytes. A massive amount when it was built but becoming increasing on the lean side for some of today's software programs.

This time I chose to venture into the AMD realm and picked a Ryzen 9 3950X CPU coupled with an ASUS ROG STRIX X570-E gaming motherboard. No, I do not play games but these boards, approved by the Republic of Gaming (ROG) have a lot of bells and whistles onboard which can be beneficial when used for video editing, especially as we move into 4K and later maybe 8K video. This board is the very latest level and the X570 onboard chip is the first of its kind to handle the latest protocols for high speed data transfer between certain SSD's. I also filled the board to maximum with 128GB of RAM.

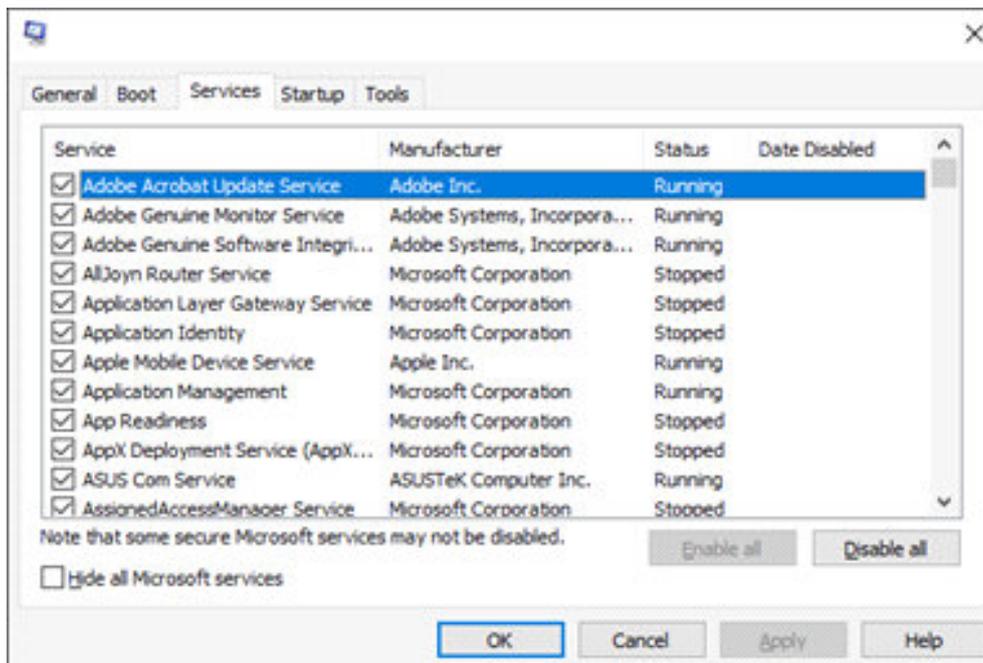
Everything went together well and was up and running very quickly with my old hard drive cloned to the new 1TB SSD. All well and good. Recently, BorisFX, a well known company that provides high cost plug-in software for use in editing suites and special effects software released a standalone free version of Particle Illusion. This software can be used to create a vast number of special effects including, for example, fog, fire, fireworks and screen imagery. For the simple task

of signing up to their site the software, as well as about 2500 different particle designs, can be downloaded, installed and used. I did this but when trying to open the software for the first time I was greeted with a white screen and the dreaded message "Not Responding". My first course of action was to sign up to the BorisFX Forum and check if this has been seen before by any other users and whether there were any solutions. One of the side effects when asking for help on Forums is that you get some very helpful people who really have not experienced the problem but want to be helpful, so the suggestions come thick and fast. All of which I had already tried and mentioned in my post. It looked as though it was going to be all down to me. Next step was to boot the PC in "Safe Mode" and see what happens. Safe Mode performed exactly as normal mode, so a deeper dive was necessary. It is possible to boot Windows with limited services (as they are called) which are often generically called drivers.

The next step is to try a different Boot Mode. This required starting the Run command from the Start button (Right click on the start button and choose Run). Type msconfig into the box and after pressing return a window opens with three basic choices.

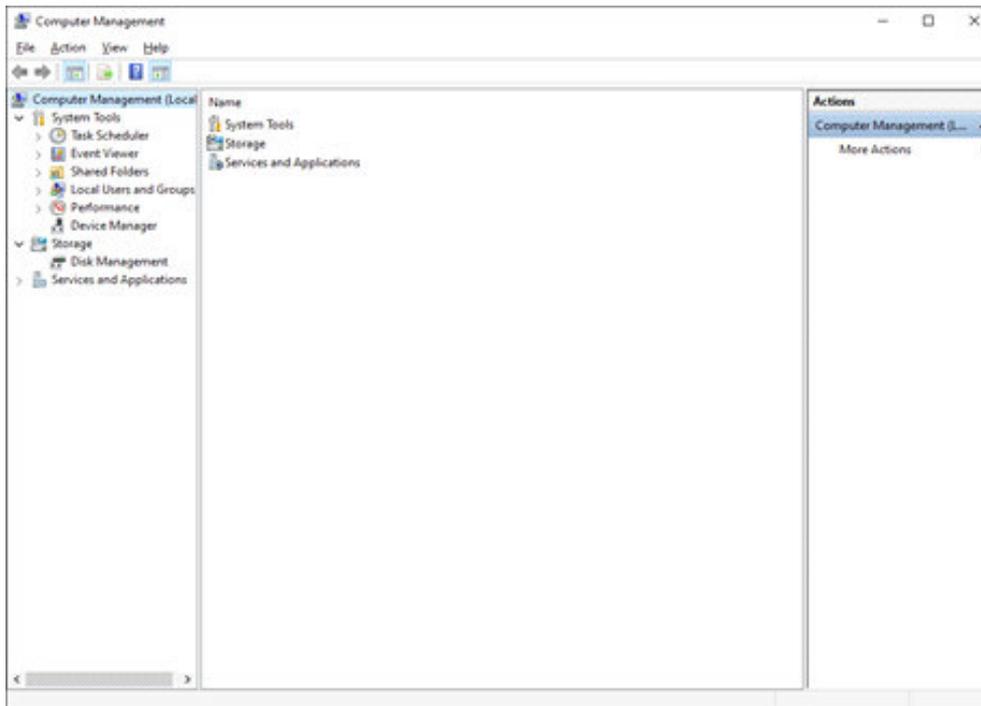


I chose "Selective startup" and then the Services Tab at the top of the menu. This takes you to another window which displays all of the services that are running in the background while the PC is operating. These can be Enabled or Disabled all together or singly.

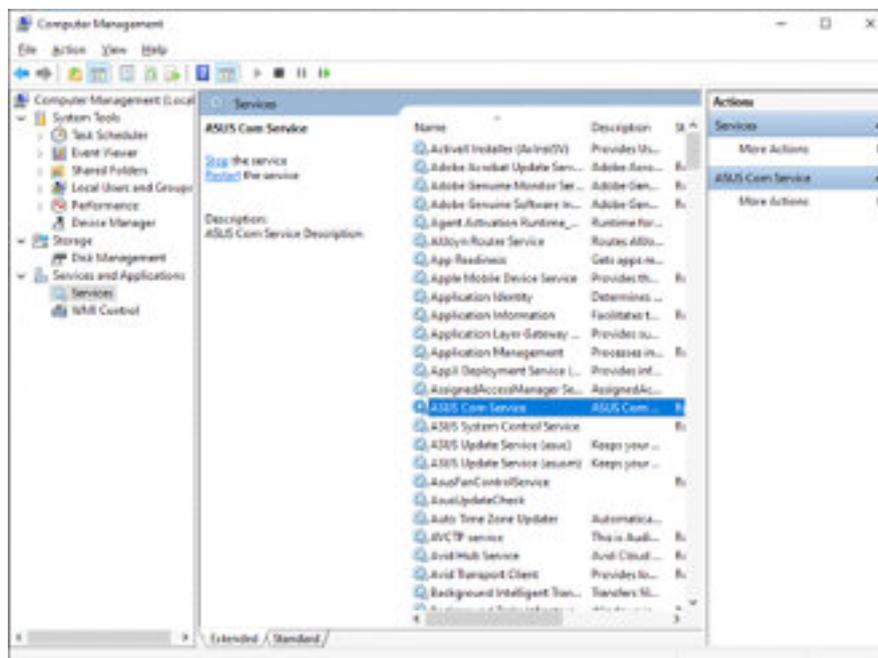


I slowly worked my way through the list looking for items that were not associated with known pieces of software. Basically, anything that did not have a known manufacturers name like Microsoft I switched off. I then returned to the General screen and re-booted the PC. This time the Particle Illusion software opened up correctly. Now to narrow down which one of the unknown services was the culprit.

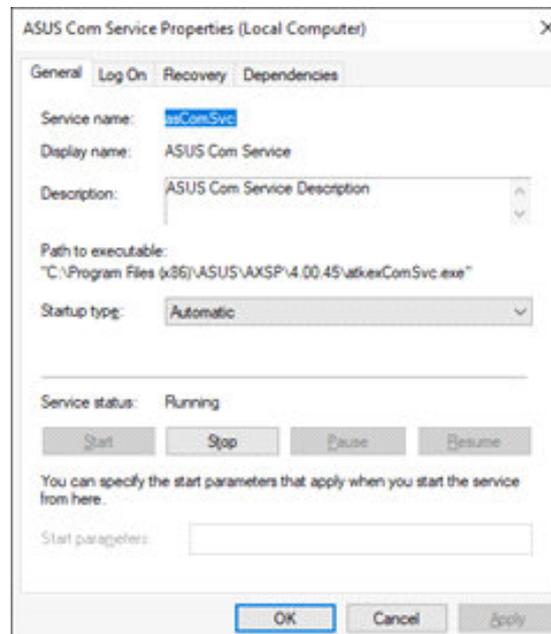
This was a process of elimination switching on services one at a time until the software failed to load. The culprit was something called Nahimic Services. A search on google gave me all I needed to know. Some thought it was Malware but the ROG Gaming site had the answer. Nahimic Services is an audio driver that ships with Sonic Studio 3 and Sonic Radar both supplied by ASUS on a DVD with the motherboard. It would appear from many of the postings that Nahimic Services cause no end of trouble and the general opinion is to uninstall the Sonic software and delete the service. Uninstalling the sonic Software was easy but when checking, the service was still there. Now I could have just left it disabled but I prefer a clean machine especially as it is a new build. The only way was to get into the deep workings of Windows 10. This was a job for the Computer Management software located at the end of the menu listings.



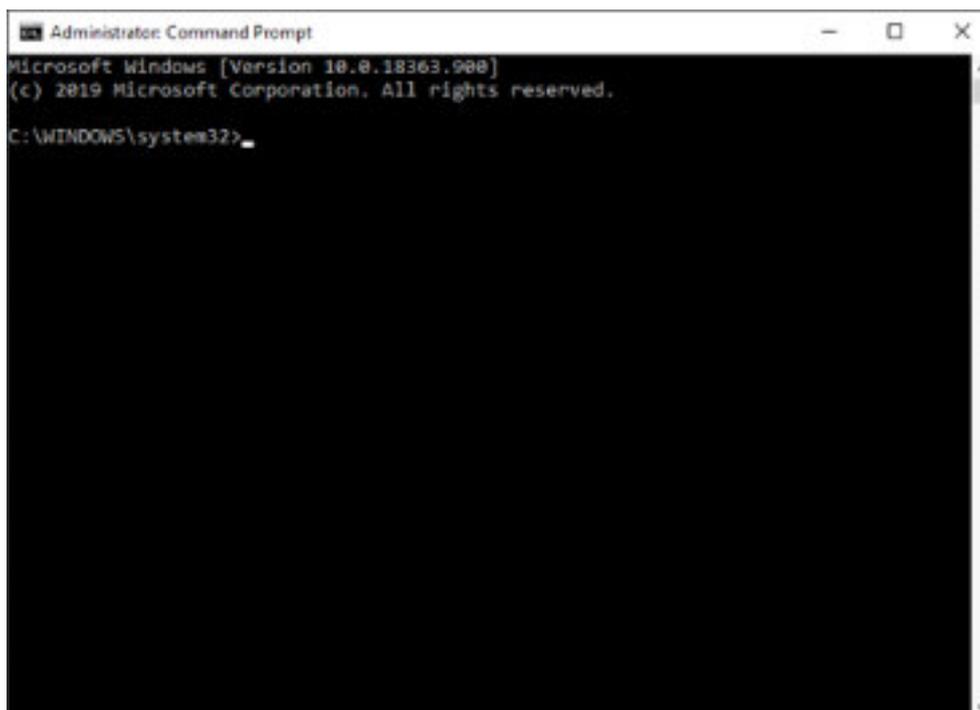
From the main screen I chose Services and Applications in the second column followed by Services on the next screen. This results in a long list of all the services that we saw back with the mscoflg software. All that was needed now was to scroll down the list until I came to the listing for Nahimic Services. Now comes the tricky bit. Double Click on the service which pops up another box.



What we are after is the Services name shown at the top of the box. This is a short form of the longer name and will be used to delete the service. In the example I have highlighted ASUS Com Service which the computer knows as asComSvc



Highlighting this name, we press Ctrl C to copy it and open up a Command Window (right click on the start button and choose Command Prompt (Run as Administrator) from the menu.

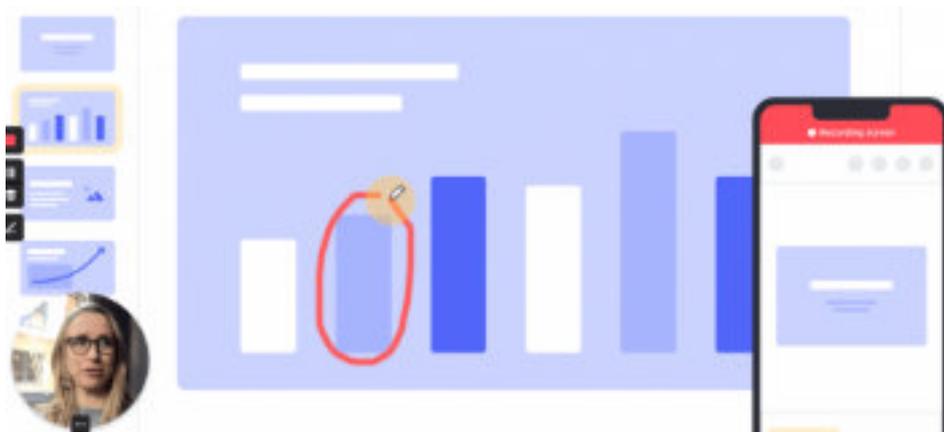


In my example type `sc delete asComSvc` after the cursor and press return. The service has now been successfully deleted and the PC will now boot in normal mode and work correctly. This process however is not for the faint hearted and should be undertaken very carefully as errors are difficult to correct.

# Another ...oom

By Geoff Partridge

Most of us are now familiar with Zoom Meetings, but I recently came across another ...oom. It's a screen capture program - Loom. With Loom, you can capture your screen, voice, and face and instantly share your video in less time than it would take to type an email.



This software captures the recording session to a server on the web, where you can do a limited amount of editing, but you can download the recording for use elsewhere, e.g. Upload to YouTube or play on your PC or tablet.

If you want to demonstrate something in a program to friends or family, you could use Loom to record your actions and then share the link to the recording.

It could also be used to prepare a demo to share with club members

if you are not happy doing this live, such as in a zoom meeting. The part I like is that you can include your web camera as picture in picture, and you can move this around the frame on-the-fly. I think this personalises the recording.

The basic version is free, so no cost if you want to try it out.

# To B or not to b

By Graham Gardener

One of the discussions that emanated from our lockdown project was the topic of bitrates. So I have put together this short summary but although I believe the information to be accurate, don't take it as gospel.

Many people misunderstand the difference between Byte (B) and bit (b) but as there are eight bits to every Byte, it's important to understand how each is used and how it affects your understanding of the topic it applies to.

Byte - This term is used when referencing capacity or size. For example a file maybe 20MB in size or a USB stick may have a capacity of 32MB.

Bit – This term is normally used for transmission speeds and would normally be supplemented with 'per second', for example 15Mbps. It's probably used to identify your broadband speed, which weans if you believe you have a 20M download speed, unless you can qualify if that's 20MB or 20Mb, you might find its eight times slower than you thought! This also applies to steaming services like YouTube and Vimeo etc. You can find a link to YouTubes guidance on bitrates [here](https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/1722171?hl=en-GB).

<https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/1722171?hl=en-GB>

The bit is also used to specify data rates, after all this is a form of transmission. This is the topic that came up in our project. I will not cover how to select the best bitrate for any given subject as that is a completely separate subject but like most decisions we face in film

making, the first question you should ask is who is your target audience, and the second question is how are they going to view it. In general terms, a higher bitrate means more data and bigger files. If your target audience is YouTube via a smart phone, there is little point in having a massive bitrate as it may not stream smoothly over that medium or on that device. However, if you want to view your production on a nice 4K TV or have it projected on the big screen, you may want as much detail as possible.

Manufacturers confuse the issue even further. For example, my Panasonic G7 shows one of the bitrate options in the menu system as 20M. Now, does that mean 20MB or 20Mb? When I looked in the manual, it does confirm that this is 20Mbps so what it thought was 20MB is actually 2.5MB per second! (20/8)

My own practice is to film at a fairly high bitrate but to produce a preview file of the finished programme with low settings because it renders quickly with a relatively small file size. This allows me to preview the film then when I'm happy with the results, I set my render queue to make 4 or 5 versions at different bitrates so that I can see what works on the medium it's intended for.

**Editors Comment** - Terrestrial TV in the UK is broadcast through 6 multiplexes. Each Multiplex carries several channels. Each multiplex, for standard definition TV, has the ability to pass a total of 26Mbits per seconds. This is shared between the channels on the multiplex and includes TV, Radio and Text services. TV uses a variable bitrate, with an average of 3 to 4Mbits per second ). The bitrate at any given time is determined, on-the-fly, by algorithms that analyse the video stream as it is transmitted to ensure that the total does not exceed 26Mbits per second.

# How and Why I Started Making Films

By Graham Gardener

I've often been asked how and why I started making films, well actually I have never been asked but I thought I would tell you anyway.

I have always had an interest in photography, not seriously but as a way of recording personal events like holidays etc. At the time that Sony introduced its Hi8 format I was running a small business with my brother. We never holidayed at the same time and as I perceived video would only be used for holidays, my brother and I shared the cost of a Sony 8mm video camera. It quickly became evident that this was a hobby that had far more potential, so I began investigating how I could improve my movies so they could be screened, showing just the sections I wanted viewers to see. Today we would call that basic editing but 40 years ago, I just called it 'my holiday without the naff bits'.

It wasn't long before I realised that I wanted more use of the camera and as I had concluded that S-VHS had a bigger choice of affordable equipment for editing, particularly from Panasonic, I relinquished my share in the Sony and purchased my first S-VHS camera, the JVC GR-S707, which became a favourite among amateur film makers and our club.



Acquainted with my new toy, I began to look for a subject. It presented itself when my neighbour was offered the opportunity to become the resident custodian of the Dutch Cottage on Crown Hill in Raleigh. It was not the most enthralling film, but for a first attempt,



I was quite pleased with the result. As a very new member of the Westcliff Film and Video Club (as it was called at the time) I sat anxiously waiting my turn to have my film previewed at a members film night only to be thwarted by the lack of time for it to be screened. If you have not seen the film, [a very short excerpt is availability here](#). I make no apology for the quality and production values as it was 29 years ago

and my very first attempt at a documentary.

Over the years I've made around 40 videos, mainly documentaries and the odd few sketches and although I've been involved in a couple of dramas, my contribution to their success has been very minimal. From my archive of videos a few stand out, not particularly for their technical merit, but because of their fond memories. During the 90's the club asked Jerry Beadle to become its patron and a few club members were given the opportunity to visit his home and film an interview, which we used to front one of our club showreels. During filming he was presented with a compilation of films to illustrate our work, amongst which were a collection of spoof adverts. Jeremy was so enthralled by them that he contacted his producer, and came up with the idea of a new show called Beadles Hotshots. When the pilot aired, 90% of the content came from our club, which included Hapeeness, a spoof on the hamlet cigar adverts. My wife Geraldine, Roy Presswell, John Eaton and I made three films in the Hamlet series and I don't think I have laughed so much since!! So for that reason alone, they hold fond memories for me. [It's only a minute long so you can see it here](#)



A very close school friend of mine had moved to Cornwall in the 70's and had fancied himself as a writer, one of his potential subjects was a lighthouse keeper who was due to retire in 1993. When he mentioned this to me, I could see the potential for a documentary. Not being local and long before the mass use of the Internet,

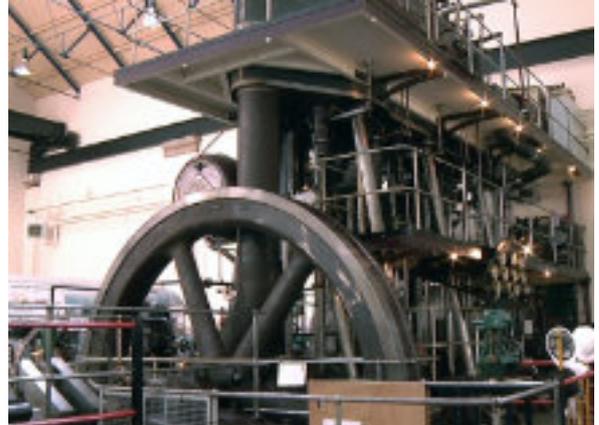


research was going to be difficult but my friends agreed to make all the arrangements and carried out the research so all Geraldine and I needed to do, was to turn up with a van full of kit. However, a lot more 'arrangements' had been made than we had anticipated. So in space of four days we filmed a practice drill for a cliff top rescue, a lifeboat exercise, air and sea rescue as well as the commander of the Royal Navy Air Station Culdrose, a presenter from Radio Cowell, an author, a water diviner, climbed to the top of the Tamar Bridge as well as our filming our Lighthouse

Keeper. It was absolutely exhausting; but we did get three reasonable films from the material. [You can see a compilation of clips here](#)

My friend never did finish his book!

I went off the boil a little bit in the early 2000's but the discovery of the Museum of Power rekindled my interest. This resulted in Ken and I making a short documentary about the restoration of their enormous steam powered pump that delivered water from Maldon to Southend. The Museum is located on the River Chelmer and unbeknown to us at the time, it was a stones throw away from Beeleigh Abbey and Beeleigh Mill. Once we had cottoned on to its potential for a film, Ken, Geoff, John and I started researching and filming in May 2015



The unfortunate inconvenience of a serious heart attack and 18 month later, a heart transplant, delayed my involvement in the project for some time but the rest of the crew carried on filming, leaving me with hours of footage to sort through - Thanks guys! The restoration is going to take some years before it reaches completion so it hasn't really slowed us down (No more than Covid-19). It has certainly been my most ambitious and interesting project to date. The target

is to make seven films in the series but who knows what the future will bring! Most of you will have seen the [film about the steam pump but for those who haven't, an excerpt is available here.](#)

# A 'Repair Shop' state of mind

– that's my way with my hobby these days,  
says Chris Taylor

At almost 75, there's no secret about that, I do tend to take a much more laid-back attitude to my hobby these days. Gone are the days of getting the Viagra effect at the sight of a new bright shiny camera with an astronomically big n to the power of 94 megapixel chip, or a new piece of software which will animate a gnat's nuts on the moon. Sorry, but now I'm more of a 'Repair Shop' sort of guy.



That's one of my favourite programmes. I enjoy it much more than 'Click', which is full of gadgets for geeks. Many of them resulting from a designer who knew how to create it, rather than there being someone who actually wanted one.

The Repair Shop is a treasure chest of craftsmen and women giving life to the best of the past. I love it!

But they don't always get it right. On a recent show an old boy turned up with a cine projector and his treasured family films. The brilliant clock repair man, who I admire

enormously, didn't know much about the 'Eumig P8M Imperial' though. I've got one in the loft somewhere, along with a few other

projectors that Mo needn't know about, and over the years I've used these machines ...well...you know.

He managed to take the back off and change the drive belt OK, but oh dear, he hadn't even got to the L-plate stage when it came to showing a film. First of all, he didn't know what a significant part of the projector actually was. As he spoke about the gate – the bit of the projector where the light illuminates the film, while what we saw was a mechanism on the back of the machine. This was the 'Imperial' part of the name. It was a sound synchroniser mechanism which allowed a reel-to-reel tape recorder to control the projector speed and offer sync (sort of) sound. I don't think anyone at the repair shop knew what that was.

But the real 'clang' was that the 'fault' he was trying to fix, wasn't a fault at all. He just had the film laced wrongly so the picture 'jumped' badly, and there he was running the film back and forth and probably damaging the film. Horrifying! There are loops formed above and below the gate to absorb the intermittent motion of the film as it is advanced frame-by-frame. He hadn't formed the lower loop, so the film was pulled tight and running it this way risked scratching and chewing-up the old boy's precious film.

The fault was, finally, according to the expert, attributed to a bit of fluff in the gate. Bo...cks!

So, I enjoy making films about old places and things (and people), and bring them back to life on-screen. A sort of 'repair shop of images' These are for people who want to know about the history of their surroundings and go to a museum or to a talk to find out about it. As you might expect a lot of their interest is in the 'video' showing there, or for them to take away. A video which has a lot of old film and photos in it: images and memories of the past. Most visitors to the museum don't know, or care if the picture they are watching is hi-def, lo-def, 8K, 4K or low-band VHS for that matter! They want to see lots of those images, not talking heads or inept interviewers, so hi-def nose pimples aren't an issue either.

Sound is another thing. Why is it that we must have the subtitles switched on to understand what the actor is saying in 'Line of Duty' made in 2019, when we can hear every word spoken by Cary Grant

in Hitchcock's 'To Catch a Thief' made 65 years ago? 'Line of Duty' has a soundtrack with a signal to noise ratio of maybe 45dB or more, and To Catch a thief of maybe less than 35dB. Does it matter? Does the soundtrack do what it's supposed to do, let you hear what's being said to carry the story along? Tech hasn't done film-making many favours here.

For my films, intelligibility is the thing. Who cares if the frequency response extends to 15KHz, most of the people attending the museum are lucky if they can hear much above 3K – even with their aids in! As for what the soundtrack says, well, it needs to be straightforward everyday English, free of gabbling and nicely coinciding with the visuals, so the audience can put the two together to make the thing as understandable as possible.

So that's the way I think these days. You get what it says on the tin. Heinz Beans: Good and wholesome. Sod the sesame roasted Tziki with herby chilli couscous and an African shallot roasted pig-tail jus. Whatever that lot means!

As for getting a kick out of it, I get mine when I hear an oldie say 'I loved the film, I remember when I took my Triumph Herald on one of those car ferry planes to Ostend, it brought it all back to me'. The stories that are triggered by those films are, for me, fascinating. [ talking about The Carvair featured in 'Southend Airport: The past on Screen'].

I bought myself a Lumix GH4 a couple of years ago because it was reputed to be good as a video camera as well as a still camera, and to some extent, it is. I dispatched my big Panasonic '151' video camera, which was far too bulky to lug around, to a lady and gent up north who make wedding videos, and the GH4 sat in the cupboard for a year. Such was my enthusiasm!

The GH4 shoots very good video with its big chip 'cinema and look' and differential focus is much lauded. But there are some differences which have to be taken into account. The shorter depth of field and need for more accurate focussing being one of my early frustrations. I chose a zoom lens with a 10X zoom ratio to give me as much flexibility as possible. Geoff mentioned last time the disadvantage of using a varifocal lens for video. You can't 'zoom in', focus and zoom

out' again. The focus goes to pot! Mind you, it's easy to change the way of working and, my type of shooting doesn't need a lot of zooming anyway. Does anyone's? The other point is that, by the time you put the camera on some kind of 'handle' arrangement and add a mike, it's not much less bulky than the video camera.

Cine film of Rayleigh Speedway of the 1950s makes a good basis for a then and now story especially when related by one of the riders, now in his 70s. He's only on screen for about one sentence, to be 'introduced' to the audience, and then continues 'voice over'. I hate 'photographs of people talking' as Hitchcock put it. Add to that new footage of those same bikes beautifully restored and displayed at a special event in 2019 and here is the sort of sequence I like to put together. But there is nothing special about the shooting, a camera, a tripod and a suitable mike, and away you go. But the challenge comes when all the old cine, and still pictures are put on the screen.

I am still using an old CS6 version of Adobe Premiere. It does all I want it to, and despite dipping my toes into Resolve, I simply haven't had the time or inclination to make the switch and face a steep learning curve just for the sake of it. And certainly, I wouldn't do it mid-project. One which is on-going because of participants losing family, to surgical operations and of course Covid. I know my present software well and it does all that the audience for my films, need and recognise. I have Resolve on a separate 'c' drive, but I have never even opened it. I want to finish 'Rayleigh Remembered' and see it running in the museum first.

Using old photos presents some interesting Repair Shop challenges. Restoring them in the Photoshop sense is straightforward enough, sorting out the basics of the picture to optimise the shadow and highlight detail, blemishes, sharpness etc. Then there is the issue of vertical formats dealing with those is an article in itself. Sometimes, for a bit of fun, I have colourised a picture and separated selected parts of foreground and background into layers which can be moved slowly relative to one another to create a 3D effect. But it's frivolous, and adding nothing of interest to the visitor to the Pier Museum. But seen as stills, pictures can be boring but the use of pan-and-scan and a gentle zoom can add a bit of interest.

Then there's cine film, and here the fun really starts. It's a challenge

trying to extract every little bit of picture quality out of that tiny (usually 8mm) frame. OK, doing it at home has a lot of constraints. Over the years the transfer of film to 'video' has been the subject of much debate about amateur versus professional. I have seen some very good transfers by companies offering the service, and some very expensive but awful ones.

I have come to the conclusion that, for the most part, the 'Repair Shop' approach is the way to go. Take a projector with a good lens and variable speed, a camera with manual exposure and shutter speed settings and it's possible to get very good results. The clips I use in the museum compilations are often short and to use a commercial outfit wouldn't be cost-effective anyway. Poking an automatic camera at any old picture on a screen will be horrible.

I may use two or more passes of the same clip to capture the picture at different exposure levels so that I can choose which is best when I come to the edit stage. The screen is important too, as is the minimisation of the distortion effects of the camera and projector lenses not being in line. Projectors, before today's video ones, were often tilted upwards to fill the screen and no one minded, so I have found that putting the camera below the projector with the camera pointing up a bit, and the projector pointing down a bit works well. It's best to use the projector at the longest zoom setting and a relatively small screen works best. For the screen I use matt photo grade A4 printing paper held flat on a background.

Setting the camera shutter speed to 1/25 of a second and the projector speed varied around 25fps it's possible to tweak the projector speed to reduce flicker to almost nothing. With some set-ups it has to be done at 24/5 fps, but Premiere can sort out speed variations.

There are all sorts of other 'repair shop' techniques I use to cope with the variety material which is used in the projects and what happens when it's done, but that's for another time.

So here were some thoughts for the moment, call me dinosaur if you want, but that's how it is, for me.



*That's all Folks!*

*Until  
Issue 4*