

# SEFM *Lockdown*

*Issue 5*

Welcome to issue 5 of [SEFM Lockdown](#).

So another month of lockdown has passed. I vaguely remember that we used to meet at a school in Rayleigh!

One of the things I learnt while in the Army serving in Northern Ireland was to vary the route you took travelling between various locations so that your movements were not predictable.



I now have a number of routes for getting to Sainsburys based on this philosophy so it should be harder the virus to zap me.

As the pandemic continues to have an impact worldwide, more camera manufacturers seem to be making it possible to use video cameras, DSLRs and mirror-less cameras as webcams using USB connections rather than the more expensive HDMI to USB converters. The term to search for is *tethering*.

In my article *Over the top?* This month I cover how I provide my webcam feed into Zoom and also my reasons for doing so.

Geoff Partridge - Editor

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# The Ramblings of a Movie-maker

By Don Mouatt

## Part 5

The film making partnership of Paul Mercer and myself came to an end when he left the club in the late 1980s. The films which we produced between us had all been entered in what was generally termed as "The Ten Best" competition which always had a very large number of entries. We were generally happy as our entries had attained decent gradings. During that period amateur film making was probably at its peak. At one stage our club alone had just over 100 members, although not all of them attended each club evening. In fact there was one member during that period who only turned up at the A.G.M. and his sole contribution seemed to be making points of order and nothing constructive. He was a pain in the arse and I never understood why he remained a member for several years.

Earlier Chris Taylor had acquired a number of very old films about Southend, which he had worked on and in one case at least was liable to catch fire, a situation which he had rectified. The club committee thought that perhaps we could get these shown at the Cliffs Pavilion and help club funds. At that time our financial position was not as good as it is today. I was club chairman at the time and Paul was, if I remember correctly, the technical officer. Anyway the two of us negotiated a very good deal with the Cliffs Pavilion whereby they retained the revenue from the first 400 seats sold and we went fifty-fifty with the remainder. The Cliffs had and still have had a seating capacity of 1.657 and we were lucky because the show was a sell out and some people had to be turned away. We netted over £700. Chris operated the projector. Seeing that quite a number of people had not been able to see the show we arranged a repeat performance, some time later. Not surprisingly although a reasonable number of people turned up it was nowhere near the

previous level. I can't remember whether we made any money out of the second running.

During the 90s and possibly the late 80s the club occasionally hired a coach for an outing with Kirbys. One such excursion in or around 1995 was to Stratford-upon-Avon and the members were encouraged to take their camcorders (Video having now arrived) and make a film about the place. I thought that there could possibly be a lot of similar films showing features of the place and I wanted to do something a bit different. But what? I got talking to another club member, a Norman Webb who had similar thoughts. Norman then got hold a book which debunked many of the myths about William Shakespeare and we thought that would be a good basis for a film. I therefore wrote to the author, explained what we were about and got permission to use his material as an outline for our film. Norman and myself worked out a shooting script which included a shot of a bust of Shakespeare on the wall of the church located in the grounds where he was buried. I wrote to the vicar seeking permission to film inside the church. He wanted £100 which was ridiculous. So I replied along the lines that we were not MGM or some similar outfit and offered an alternative £5. The vicar agreed.

The day arrived and it was wet at times. The basis of our film was to have a person who had written a book debunking some claims about Shakespeare and another, allegedly a Professor who took the opposite view. We used three club members as actors including the late George Daniels who had also taken part in a humorous film made by Paul Mercer and myself. Our Shakespeare film got a very respectable grading in the IAC International Film and Video Festival competition. I also sent a copy to the author mentioned above but never got a reply. Perhaps he didn't think much of it or was too annoyed to respond.

Norman and I subsequently went on to make another successful video about a butter sculptor who he had seen and approached at a festival at Highclere Castle, the location for Downton Abbey and the country seat of the Earl of Carnarvon. The butter sculptor, John Blaney, who had appeared with Larry Grayson on one of his TV shows was very co-operative and agreed to be filmed making a swan at the National Dairy Museum in Berkshire. John had also made a

sculptor for the late Queen Mother,

I obtained a lot of information from John as to how he came to be a sculptor (if that word exists) and his subsequent career and sent him a script as to what he might say. He would be explaining his career and lots of other information whilst he was working on the swan.. We also arranged to film him as he would be doing a similar task making roses at a further festival at Highclere Castle.

The filming of the sculpture of a swan had to be done in one day and on occasions we had an audience watching as the Museum was open to visitors. John had a chest freezer on the platform where he was being filmed and every so often he had to place the swan in it to prevent the butter from melting. What Norman and myself found rather amazing that prior to each take, where he was to also be talking, he would take a brief look at the script and almost without exception deliver his information first time. There were very few retakes. With filming at the museum having been completed I took the tapes home for examination. To my horror I found that they were poorly lit and were not acceptable. It was entirely our fault as we had not taken a monitor with us. Shamefacedly I contacted John who was quite happy for us to film the whole Dairy Museum section again. Likewise the Museum were very co-operative.

Lesson learnt, we repeated the whole affair again and John was likewise very good. On this occasion we had lots of light, several thousand watts and of course the monitor. There was however, almost a disaster. After we had been filming for some time I noticed that part of one of our lights was touching one of the fairly low beams in the ceiling and the wood was smouldering. I hastily moved the light, put some spittle on my finger and rubbed it over and extinguished the smouldering beam. The burn barely noticed and I must admit that we got away with it. I doubt whether anyone ever looked up there anyway and would need to have been fairly close to see the damage.

When we filmed at Highclere Castle John who had been sculpturing roses on the previous occasion and was doing so on this one said that a little girl had approached him and thinking the roses were real bent down to smell them. We decided to reproduce that in the film

and managed to get a little girl to do so on this occasion.

We entered the film in the IAC International competition hoping to get a gold star but had to settle for a silver. Still could have done a lot worse. There was one judge however, and it is just possible that this resulted in a mark down whose main comments centred upon a metal plate which was on a shelf immediately behind John's head. It was not intrusive and if he had nothing better to say then perhaps he should not have been a judge.

I still send and receive Christmas cards with John but don't know whether he ever found a replacement for his work. He was looking for one when we were together principally to keep the craft going.

I never made any more films with Norman because some time later he left the club apparently because he did not get on with the then present chairman. Norman could be a little moody at times if he did not get his own way. Unfortunately like many other compatriots in the club he died a few years ago.

When I was involved in the above two films I had in fact retired a few years previous. At that time my wife would not fly. She was not scared of flying itself but did not like the idea of there being a lot of space between her and whatever was below. She did not like being on a high bridge for instance. Therefore the only way we could get to see other parts of the world was to go cruising. We did this at least once a year, sometimes more and I took video on each occasion. I think for several years one of my cruise films would, probably to the dismay of members, feature in the holiday/travelogue club competition. Just a few months before she died in 2016 she did, entirely of her own choosing, decide to fly on a holiday to Jersey and subsequently was ready to do limited length journeys afterwards. Sadly this was not to be.

After I retired in 1987 thanks to the late Peter Davison I was commissioned to write articles for Camcorder each month. I ran out of ideas after about a year and a half. So I ceased. It was a good earner, 9p a word plus £15 for the first photograph and £10 each for subsequent ones. My first article comprised of around 3,200 words but thereafter I was limited to 1,600. I don't think there is any connection but not too long after I filmed "Take the blue Plane" with

Paul Mercer Air UK moved to Norwich and a year or so after I quit writing for Camcorder User they packed up. Was I at fault. I like to kid myself no.

Since then most of my filming has been done whilst travelling to many places in the world and instead of cruises club members have had to put up with travelogue after travelogue. I have done a few other things but with a couple of exceptions always as a loner. In fact I no longer have the desire to become part of a film making team because I don't want to be tied down. I like to suit myself. During Covid I have been catching upon some of large amount of unedited material that I have. I still have more to do. So beware!

If I am asked, and it has yet to happen, what film has given me the most pleasure in making then without doubt it is an AV of the life of my wife. Technically there has been better stuff but I found that it gave me great comfort and helped me to get over the shock. I still view it on occasions. It helped at the making and still does so as I relive the good things that we had together.

Whilst I may well supply further articles for the club online newspaper this one marks the end of this particular series. I will get my thinking cap on and hope that it gives me inspiration.

## Next Issue

I am always interested in articles from new authors, even if it is only half a page.

Share with others how you got started in film making. Which aspect of film making are you primarily interested - e.g. camera work, script writing, directing, etc.

**The deadline for the next newsletter is  
October 23<sup>rd</sup> 2020.**

David White has provided another article, this time from Annabel Nugent of the Independent, with the permission of the author.

## Change your toon: How adult animation grew up

By Annabel Nugent



We are living in the golden age of adult animation. Or so everyone says. The splashy phrase was first bandied about in 2017 by publications who pointed towards the never ending run of *The Simpsons* and to the small but rabid fanbase growing around Adult Swim's *Rick and Morty* as evidence that adult-targeted cartoons were on track for astronomical success.



Three years later and there's little doubt we're living the prophecy as far as American cartoons are concerned. As streaming wars rage on, Netflix, Amazon and others like them are throwing millions of dollars

into a format that had up until recently been relegated to three-hour blocks on a network's graveyard shift.

This month, the critically lauded FX series Archer released its 11th season. Just last week Netflix offloaded its latest offering, the puerile gym-teacher saga Hoops, with spy-comedy Q-Force set to follow close behind. We live in a time where a cartoon about a talking bronco – that'll be BoJack Horseman – is spoken about in the same breath as iconic cult comedies Peep Show and Veep. But how did we arrive at this so-called golden age? And what comes after?

While producing cartoons for audiences over the age of 12 isn't a novel concept, it is a relatively recent one. In the Nineties, The Simpsons paved the way for cartoons' entry into mainstream primetime television and earned the format its place among people past puberty. But although Matt Groening's beloved toon dabbled in cheeky innuendos and some adult themes, it's a far cry from the kind of bawdy jokes and vulgar humour we associate with adult animation today.



Provided by The Independent Beavis and Butt-Head lost in the desert during their big screen debut (Touchstone/Kobal/Rex/Shutterstock)

For evidence of that kind, enter the ludicrously lewd Beavis and Butt-Head, which grunted its way onto MTV in 1993. The show's crude humour and cheap animation style fleshed out a lot of the more risqué tropes that Groening's sitcom never quite broached. The end of the decade saw networks pull the trigger on adult animation to release seminal cartoons including King of the Hill and South Park, whose success encouraged a string of new shows. Family Guy was a standout, its dysfunctional family setup spearheaded by Peter Griffin, a dad and husband so lousy he made Homer look like a saint.

For the most part, this first generation of truly adults-only cartoons (Family Guy, South Park, King of the Hill, American Dad) featured some variation on their yellow predecessors: lazy fathers, overworked mothers and trouble-making kids engage in a series of hijinks that are neatly tied up at the end of 22-minutes. Storylines were born in sexual comments, slapstick humour, staid silences with prolonged punchlines stretched to the point of absurdity and then pointlessness (see the multiple fight scenes between Peter and a human-sized chicken across Family Guy's 18 seasons). But the shape of it was so well defined and reproduced so prolifically that the format's mould was all but set in sharpie: adult animation became shorthand for a raunchy comedy featuring toilet gags and non-PC humour.



© Provided by The Independent image

The most recent iteration of adult animations, however, offers viewers something that lasts longer than the bad taste of an offensive punchline. When Rick and Morty debuted on Adult Swim in 2013, there was nothing to suggest it would be any different. The basic story is this: Rick Sanchez is an old-school mad scientist (Doctor Who if he was an a\*\*hole, constantly drunk and crossed with

Malcolm Tucker) who drags his grandson, a worrywart named Morty, across the multiverse on intergalactic adventures. The show sounded funny, but it also sounded just like any other adult cartoon sent out on TV's conveyor belt.

But something unexpected happened. While I wept with laughter, despite myself, at its fart jokes and pitch-black humour, I also marvelled at Rick and Morty's surreal alternate universe and inimitable ways of storytelling. Stranger still was the show's fluency in emotions, with some episodes leaving me sad for its doodled protagonists long after the credits rolled.

The Emmy-nominated BoJack Horseman is also a show that's applauded for its laughs as much as its howling despair. In an episode chronicling the memories of BoJack's mother, an elderly horse-woman with Alzheimer's, faces are scratched out; scenes are dipped in and out of without any semblance of order; changing colours signal bright sparks of recollection before they're overtaken by a brown fog. Animation carried the episode's emotional weight spectacularly. Undone, a cartoon from Amazon which explores the mental health struggles of a young Latina woman, is another which illustrates how these very funny shows can also break your heart.

This capacity for adult animations to be poignant is common knowledge amongst its fans. Saying Rick and Morty is really a show about nihilism is as commonplace – and annoyingly pompous – as saying BoJack Horseman is actually a show about depression. (You can't get through half a sentence criticising either before a frenzied fan tells you in all caps that you're just too stupid to understand it.) But it's true that a hallmark of all the recent acclaimed adult animations has been found in what happens when they don't aim for laughs at all. Thematically, shows like these are willing to let go of the gags in order to explore dark places that its predecessors never dared broach.

Some have done away with the jokes altogether. One of Netflix's surprise hits this year has been Midnight Gospel, an animation set over recordings of real-life podcast interviews. It follows Clancy Gilroy, a spacecaster (video podcaster in space) as he travels planets interviewing guests for his spacecast. Instead of sexist



© Provided by The Independent The bizarre escapades of the titular characters in 'Rick and Morty' have attracted a dedicated fanbase (Adult Swim)

punchlines and zany zingers, *Midnight Gospel* delivers thoughtful ruminations on grief, vegetarianism, drugs, religion, self-awareness and death – all packaged up in a cutesy cartoon. The series, which was released on 4/20 this year, holds a rating of 93 per cent on Rotten Tomatoes and has been described as “a trip for stoners and non-stoners alike”.

We're likely to see more shows like *Midnight Gospel* crop up as the format balloons beyond comedy, and with the help of affluent streaming platforms looking to capitalise on an increasingly popular style of TV. According to a recently published report on the industry, almost half of all forthcoming adult animated series belong to genres outside of comedy.

Practically too, recent cartoons have strained against the format's

perceived confines and triumphed in doing so. Creators don't have to abide by 22-minute episodes with ad breaks. They can stretch and squeeze storylines, which, clipped from their sitcom roots, can be weirder and sadder and more introspective than ever. Characters are developed. The recent tide of adult animation has also demonstrated its ability (and desire) to be rid of the form's conventions altogether: one episode of BoJack took place entirely underwater and without a word of dialogue, while the past two seasons of Archer have consisted of one long dream sequence – a conceit that would kill a live-action series before fans even had a chance to angry-tweet about it.

Success breeds success and where there's money to be made, streaming platforms will sniff it out. At Hulu, alien comedy Solar Opposites recently received a two-season order with its Nicholas Hoult-led stop motion Crossing Swords getting the go-ahead for its next season only a week after the first premiered in June; Netflix's hilarious (and sometimes stomach-turning) puberty comedy Big



© Provided by The Independent image

Mouth will mature with a ripple season renewal for series four, five and six, while viewers wait impatiently for more Midnight Gospel. Apple TV's first animated comedy Central Park debuted this summer and was well-received. Even Adult Swim's cancelled Tuca and Bertie is being given a second chance on Netflix.

Adult animation is also set to benefit from TV's renewed sense of nostalgia; classic American cartoons Ren and Stimpy, Daria, Clone High and Beavis and Butt-Head have all been picked up for reboots or spin-offs so far this year. While Netflix's international push has meant western audiences are being exposed to the format's foreign

exports, broadening its scope and growing an appetite for more of its kind. In January, Netflix signed a landmark deal to stream the entire library of legendary Japanese animator, Studio Ghibli.

The form has also proven itself to be a port in the Covid-19 storm. While live-action productions have been forced to delay and/or adjust to pandemic conditions – EastEnders will reportedly require CGI in



© Provided by The Independent Critically lauded 'Archer' has just released its 11th season

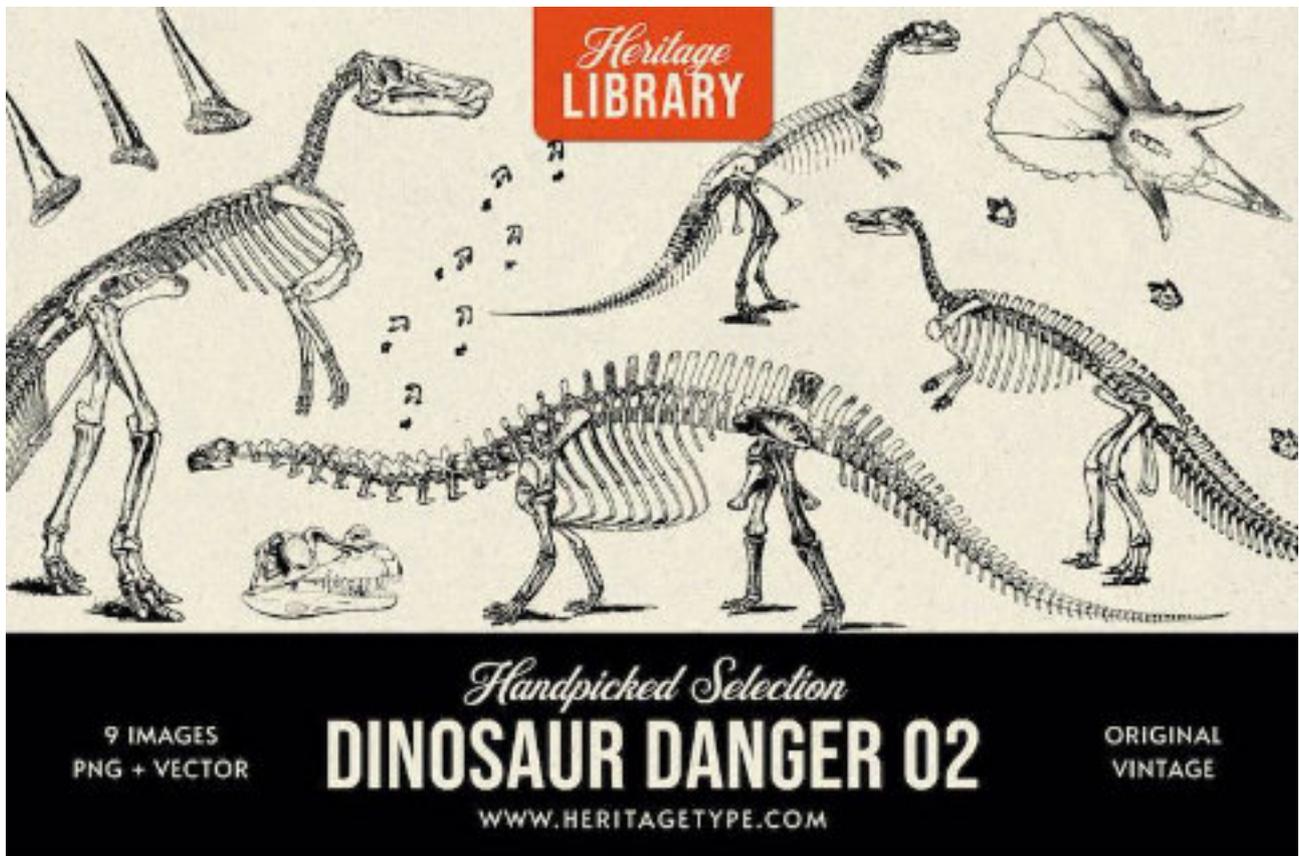
almost every shot in order to adhere to filming regulations – their doodling counterparts have been mostly unaffected. Animators and voiceover artists are able to work in isolation with relative ease. Chris McCarthy, president of the ViacomCBS group that owns Comedy Central, called cartoons “almost pandemic-proof” – which is as high a praise as any nowadays.

And so it appears that the stars have aligned for adult animation. A nostalgic audience, pandemic-proof production and the commercial success of its less conventional harbingers make for a cartoon future that will likely be as weird as it is wonderful. But although cartoons might be on their way to growing up, history suggests the fart jokes will linger.

# Illustrations and free collections.

By John Ford

Have you ever been wanted a simple illustration to add to a composition but struggled to find what you want? Try Heritage Library (<https://www.heritagetype.com/collections/free-vintage-illustrations>). The site has lots of free to download and use images on a variety of subjects. For example, if you needed a dinosaur image then try this group.



The images on the left and right demonstrate how a vector image can be enlarged while retaining smooth lines.



The editor

Or maybe you were looking for a butterfly.



The images are true vectors and can be modified in Affinity Designer or similar software.

Editor - some of the images on the site may not be vector images. Be aware of this if you venture into the paid-for sections of the site. Also look at [Shutterstock](#) (5 images for £29 - download within 1 year) and [123rf](#) (Images are priced in credits but you can pay for single images). They are paid for sites but are worth it if you seriously want some high quality images to use in your films. Both sites also do film footage but this is pricey, unless you really must have it.)

# Over the Top?

By Geoff Partridge

As a videographer I have never been keen on web cameras. As many have found, it is difficult to get a high standard of image.

I used to have a Blackmagic Intensity card in my PC that could capture the HDMI output from my video camera but when I installed a new Graphics card (GPU) and a USB 3.0 card, I had to remove it. I had planned to buy an alternative to the card as I have several tapes of film taken on my Canon HV30 and it is the easier way of capturing to the PC,

When Covid-19 struck, it was an opportune time to buy something and as mentioned in a previous newsletter, I opted for the Magewell USB HDMI Capture card (of which I now have two).

Then Zoom came along and I was able to use this new device as my webcam.

Having spent 39 years working with and maintaining computers, and having an interest in the software side of things, I have a tendency to look deeper than the fundamentals of what a software package can do.

I quickly found that you could put a virtual background to your image. I was testing this on my laptop and it worked reasonably well, but frequently I would lose a hand, or an ear, from the picture. Then I discovered the 'I have a green screen' tick box.

As those that attended my talk on green screens will know, I have a few of these. So I needed to put the green screen behind me, but how to support it. Well I had the necessary bits and pieces to construct a frame of the right size, so I did.

I now had my green screen propped up behind the settee and was ready to go. But I wasn't.

*I should perhaps mention that I am single and live on my own. I can do what I like! No nagging of how long is this going to be here, or I*

*can't see the telly. (I still could at this point).*

I needed some lighting on the green screen and on the talent, sorry, on me.

As you will know if you attended the talk on lighting, I have plenty of lights. So I chose two of the flat panel LED lights for the background, and one as the key-light on me.

So we're set to go? No, not quite. Almost put quiet there, as that is what my participation would have been.

I needed a microphone.

Yes I've got one or two, and I took them to the club for a talk on sound.

I tried a wireless lavalier microphone but this introduced a noticeable delay when I monitored it with an ear piece. So I opted for my Rode NT3 on a boom arm, above and in front of me and, just out of shot.

So I'm good to go. Well yes. I get a little bit of spill from the green screen as I'm a bit too close to it. I can't move further away from the screen as the most I can get between the camera and the green screen is 9 feet. (It's more than 2 metres so I don't have to put a mask on the camera. I think it would look silly with one anyway).



So let's go Zooming. I'm happy. I'm almost getting the results I want. I am using a lot of my equipment and techniques which would otherwise be gathering dust. So all's well that ends well.

As we progressed with our weekly Zoom meetings, I followed their Facebook page. People were talking about using Zoom with OBS. (OBS was briefly covered in an earlier newsletter.)

I downloaded the OBS software and thought it had potential to make presenting online easier. I joined the OBS Facebook page and followed the posts for a few weeks and noticed that people were making comparisons with a similar product called vMix. OBS is free but vMix isn't.

Of course I had to try vMix. The cheapest package that supported HD was about £65 and would give me everything I needed. (I don't believe you, I hear some of you say). It came with a 60 day trial of the full package

Package so I had a good chance to play with a lot of the functions, and found it easier to use and set up than OBS. I used OBS for at least one of the animation talks.

I still wasn't happy with the gap between me and the green screen.

I was working across the narrow part of the room. If only I could set up the other way. But there's a two seat settee in the way, that gets virtually no use. It's too good to throw away. Mind you, the three seat settee that I normally sit on, always one end or the other but never in the middle, is getting a bit uncomfortable. Problem solved. Three seat in the bin. Table and a for Zoom meetings.

The only problem was.....I would have to put the green screen in front of the window and the light from outside messes up the evenness of my lighting on the screen. Amazon solved, blackout material arrived next day.

I now gained an extra 18 inches between me and the green screen. I've added a light over the table.

Until 2 weeks ago that was the setup I have used. Except I was feeding the camera through vMix, which is essentially a software sound and vision mixer, and then into Zoom.

At this point the only new equipment I had bought was the HDMI to USB converters, A USB to HDMI converter (which allowed me to add a third monitor on my laptop), a folding table and some cables.

I did have to buy a new monitor as one fell on the floor and didn't seem to work. I wasn't over worried about it as I got it for free. But after I got the replacement I took the faulty one apart, couldn't see any damage, so put it together again and plugged it in. Dead, nothing on the screen, zilch. But what's this, a power switch? I never knew that was there. Call yourself an engineer?, I hear some say. So monitor count plus one. Can you claim for something that you got for free on your insurance?

As a result of running a small Micro-computer group in my conservatory, I had a number of HD-ready monitors (not full HD resolution) and this allowed me to have the Participants and Chat windows open on one monitor, the live YouTube stream on another and the Zoom meeting window on my laptop. This is OK until I need to shared a screen and have several to choose from. I also have to remember to turn the sound of on YouTube to prevent feedback.

Quite a while ago a few members of South Woodham Ferrers Camera Club left, for various reasons, but continued to meet up. The group decided to put on their own exhibition with both prints and digital images. I purchased a sturdy speaker stand with a VESA mount. I have used this to mount two of my monitors, one above the other, and reduced the risk of them falling on the floor. I have my third monitor mounted on a similar stand.

Running Zoom and vMix on my laptop was pushing it a bit, to the extent that the fan was running continuously and was becoming annoying. I did find last week that sitting it on two ice packs helped but by the end of the evening there was a pool of water under it.

By this time though I had decided to move the setup onto my main PC, but I didn't want to keep taking it up and down stairs. I had also discovered the previous week that I could support at least three monitors from the graphics card. To run cables from the PC upstairs to my *studio* down stairs would require 10 metre cables (I've gone metric for a bit) And needed two additional HDMI cables, but ended up placing two orders because I clicked on 5 metre cables by mistake on the first order. I do not advise trying to run UHD resolution over this distance. I already had a USB cable that would run over this distance.

This allowed me to use the PC for the last meeting. I have also taken

an older laptop, running Windows 8.1, and I used this to connect to Zoom as my virtual brother Teddy (I occasionally sit my childhood bear in front of the camera when I am testing). By the *pin video* feature in Zoom I was able to select any of the participants in Gallery view and display them full screen. I then recorded the image even though that person was not the active speaker. I did some other jiggery pokery with the image but will cover that in the next newsletter. Part of this test was for others to use a standard background image as Zoom's virtual background. At least a couple of us found we could only do this if we had a physical green screen as our PCs were not of a recent enough spec, including mine.

vMix has the facility to overlay images and video and allows for virtual sets. You can have a number of layers in an image.

In recent Zoom meetings I have had a picture of London in the background, then an image of studio walls and windows with transparent sections to show the background through the windows. In front of that was the video from my camera, keyed to remove the green background, and in front of me an image of a studio desk.



So I have been having fun, I've been using a lot of my equipment, I've kept my brain active, I haven't gone insane (you may disagree) and to top it all - a potential to make a corroborative film based around a news studio.



Above left is input to vMix from my camera showing the green screen. Above right with the background keyed out. The black area is actually transparent when overlay-ed on another image.



I will tell you more about vMix in the next newsletter, in the meantime but I hear the build of Studio 2 calling. And you think I'm joking?



Left - a taster of things to come.