

# AMMPT - Southern Region Inc.

434 Clarendon Street

South Melbourne 3205



## The Australian Museum of Motion Picture and Television Inc. *Preserving the technical heritage of Australia's pre-digital motion-picture and allied industries*

### TIME TO REVIVE THE 'MEDIA MUSEUM' CONCEPT

After the disruption of the last two-and-a-half years of the Covid19 virus pandemic, we hope you have survived comfortably and can help to reset AMMPT on its ambitious course.

Despite the apparent quietness there has been some activity. The museum collection continues to grow, but we are hampered by the lack of facilities and space – both for storage and display. These are serious limitations, and we need to break through this barrier. There is still great promise if we can overcome current difficulties.

*To learn how you can be part of this expansion see Pages 6, 7, and 8 ...*



### 'LAWRENCE CRANE' GETS NEW LEASE OF LIFE

In early 2021 the museum (through Malcolm Richards at CameraQuip) was approached by the producers of the new "ELVIS" movie, then in pre-production.

They had identified many archival sources of information relating to Elvis's early career. Some of these showed televised performances of a concert in front of a crowd of USA sailors at a naval base, including the broadcast equipment used. Clearly seen are images of a television camera mounted on a Research Council Crane. The production office needed one of these cranes as a working prop. They are very sophisticated items of equipment, and several had been imported into Australia, notably the one held by this museum.

An arrangement was made for the hire of our crane, which involved extracting it from storage and freighting it to Brisbane for shooting re-enactments of early Elvis concerts. As part of the arrangement the production company had some servicing done to bring the crane up to 'operational' condition, and it was given a coat of paint to hide the scars of decades of use.

It was gone for more than one year, which relieved the pressure on Malcolm's storage space, until the crane was returned.

*See Page 2 for more details ...*

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Thursday 1st December 2022 7:30pm 110 Grey Street, EAST MELBOURNE

Please join this meeting and help push this project forward

You are invited to our delayed AGM on Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> December

**SPECIAL FEATURE:** The meeting will commence with an informal 'Show-and-Tell' session in which we display and discuss some of the items of equipment from the pre-digital era that is the main interest of this museum.

**Bruce McNaughton** will show his VistVision camera, and answer questions about its development and use. Besides being a Cinematographer, Producer and Director, Bruce is one of the great technical innovators of the Melbourne film industry.

**Richard Berryman** will also bring some items of TV and Video equipment from his collection, and answer questions about their use and significance. This will be a rare opportunity to see some unique items covering both film and TV.

There will then be an informal general discussion about the possibilities and prospects for the 'Media Museum' concept, prior to the formalities of the AGM.

We will then elect a new committee to guide us forward. To be eligible to vote for the election of the committee you must be a financial member. Please help by joining or renewing your membership prior to the AGM. We will also accept membership applications on the night, but it slows the meeting when we are dealing with numerous renewals.

## Out of storage, into the limelight

The request for the 'Lawrence Crane' from the production office of "ELVIS -the movie" was welcome, but not without its problems.

A requirement of its hire to the "ELVIS" movie production was that it had to appear operational. Because it was only needed as a static prop the remote-control box and cable were not included in the package. The seat needed repair; and it had to appear in smarter condition, so a new coat of paint was needed.



*Loading is easier with a tilt-tray truck*

A dilemma in museum collections is the conflict between restoration to as-new condition, and the choice of leaving the item as-acquired – with the patina of its life-time of use and wear. The movie production's art department only sprayed a superficial coat of similar paint over the original shabby surfaces, in addition to repairing the seat; so its worn condition can be restored if necessary in future.

The Research Council crane is one of the most difficult items in the museum's collection, but also one of the most unique. Its pedigree is impressive, having been used on the David Lean picture "Lawrence of Arabia" in the early 1960's. A majority of location shooting for that movie was in Morocco. In more recent times, occasional service or repair requirements produced reports that desert sand had been removed from internal cavities during repairs.

At some time during the 1960's it found a new home, at Senior Films in St Kilda. It apparently saw service on the location shooting at Phillip Island for "Ryan's Daughter" (another David Lean film); but we are finding it difficult to confirm when and why it was sent half-way around the world to Melbourne.

Its recent history is hazy. At some time it left

the Pakington Street studio of Senior Films (which had become Crawford-Senior) and was then housed in the York Street Studio in South Melbourne. In a later transfer from Cambridge Films it was then in the care of Key Lighting, who acquired the York Street Studio complex.



*The 'Lawrence Crane' was brought out of storage as a key prop for the farewell to the Senior Films studio on its final closure*

Along the way it saw occasional use, mostly on commercial productions, and sometimes on location shoots. Its use could only be justified on expensive productions with expanded budgets. These jobs always required extra crew to manage the complexity and difficulty of transport and use.

An essential difference is that this crane is designed to operate with freedom on studio floors; whereas more recent camera cranes designed for location use run on tracks which can be laid on uneven ground.

The Research Council Crane is a remarkably sophisticated piece of design and manufacture. Although deceptively small, in operation its reach is impressive, and at full height gives a surprisingly useful high-angle perspective. It weighs around two tons, and so presents many problems in transport and use. In the past, if it ever left the studio it would usually have been on a tandem trailer; but in recent times the tilt-tray tow truck is a much safer and more suitable means of transport. In use it requires a strong, hard, flat and level floor; so on location this needed construction before the crane could be used.

When acquired by this museum it was kept at Malcolm Richards' original Cameraquip premises in South Melbourne. With the passage of time and business rationalisation, eventually it was necessary for those premises to be emptied. Malcolm





*Safely chained down for a long journey*

found temporary (12 month) storage, and the entire contents of the original building were emptied and sorted. Saved items were transferred to the temporary storage facility, including the 'Lawrence Crane'. This whole removal job occupied two or three weeks, and was a serious logistical exercise – including tilt-tray truck hire for the crane. Having acquired a new permanent facility, twelve months later Malcolm had to repeat the whole process to empty the temporary storage facility and transfer its contents to the permanent base – including hire of a tilt-tray truck to move the Research Council Crane. There are many other items in the AMMPT collection that required removal into temporary storage, and subsequently into Cameraquip's permanent storage.

These were major disruptive events, equivalent to (or perhaps worse than) moving house. The difficulties and costs of long-term storage and these removals has been borne by Malcolm Richards.

It must be emphasised that through all of these events, including the previous decade, most of the museum's received collection has been stored by Malcolm at Cameraquip. This has been an inconvenience and financial cost to him and his business, but he endures the burden because of his belief in the necessity of preserving the technologies of the motion-picture and television industries. We owe Malcolm a debt of gratitude at least, for his continuing practical and financial support.



*Nearly ready for transport to Gold Coast Studios*

We are also greatly indebted to Key Lighting for their thoughtfulness and generosity in consigning such a significant item of film history to our care, when it became surplus to their requirements. Thankyou Ian, Ingrid, Colin and crew. If not for their consideration it could have gone to scrap and been melted down. The public can now see glimpses of the 'Lawrence Crane' in a working environment, as a static prop in "ELVIS the movie".

## Regional TV Australia - Web Project

*Regional TV Australia* is a website dedicated to the TV Stations outside the five major Capital Cities in Australia. We are interested in the history of Regional TV, mainly in the pre-Aggregation era, but also in the current operations of the major Regional TV networks. The project started as the 'Regional TV' YouTube channel in April 2008, where I set up a list of "favourites" from the many regional clips posted by members of YouTube.

This project is run by Michael Costello of Echuca, with help from Wayne Collyer from Shepparton. Wayne worked for GMV6 for decades. Michael enjoyed watching the independent Regional TV Stations BCV 8 and GMV 6 while on holidays near Echuca. 4 years ago, he moved to Echuca from Mel-

bourne. He really misses the local content that used to set these stations apart before the Aggregation process took it all away in the early 1990s.

In addition to posting YouTube videos, we also produce original interviews for the project. Wayne Collyer has interviewed Brian Smith, who started in TV at GMV 6, as well as some further interviews with former GMV 6 staff at their 50th Anniversary Reunion. We have also interviewed Bruce Roberts of WIN TV, and Martin Johnson contributed a fully produced segment for the project. We are always interested in doing more interviews for the project. If you are interested, please contact Michael Costello –  
Email:- [michcos@optusnet.com.au](mailto:michcos@optusnet.com.au)

## Recent Acquisitions

AMMPT Southern Region is the grateful recipient of some interesting pieces of equipment from the estate of Chris Morgan ACS. Chris died in April 2020, at the start of the Covid19 pandemic (not Covid-related). As his health declined he had been rationalising his equipment and archives, and had allocated some major items to the AMMPT Media Museum.

So this museum has been bequeathed a 16mm B&W printer, a Frezzolini 16mm camera, and Chris's last Sony SP Betacam; amongst a few other lesser items.

Chris Morgan started in the Melbourne film industry in the mid 1960s at Victorian Film Laboratories; then worked as an Assistant Cameraman at Crawford Productions, and then freelance as he gained more experience. He then worked at Senior Films until the late 1960s when he moved to Hobart to assume the role of Lighting Cameraman at the Department of Film Production. Chris remained on staff for the next 15 years, until the DoFP was re-structured and finally privatised, when he again went freelance. Keeping his home near Hobart, he moved to Sydney to find work, and remained there for a number of years before returning to Tasmania. Throughout his career he accumulated lots of equipment related to his work, so his collection is representative of the evolution of motion-picture technologies through the era of film and analogue video. He always was fascinated by the possibilities of new scientific and technological advances, and how they could be applied to film production.



The most intriguing item in Chris's collection is the Seiki 16mm contact printer. It is not the most exotic or sophisticated piece of laboratory equipment, but is complete and in remarkably fine condition. Unfortunately Chris died before it was possible to ask him of its origins. With his earlier laboratory experience it is not surprising that it ended in his possession, but the mystery of its earlier life and how he acquired it may remain unresolved. It had pride-of-place in the hall near the front door of his home, a permanent reminder of the origins of his illustrious career.

### Serious Challenges

Although not a large piece of equipment the Seiki printer presented several major problems in moving it out of Chris's home. This was tackled in May 2021.

The first task was the construction of a transport crate on the deck outside his front door. This is one metre above ground, and 3 metres from a small gate and fence. For compactness it was necessary to partially dismantle the printer; partly for balance, and partly to minimise the crate size. Despite its appearance it is a heavy item, estimated at about a quarter of a tonne. There is a lot of cast iron in its base and frame.

With the crate built on the deck, the next stage was to build ramps either side of the door sill. The printer was then released and gently positioned on the internal ramp to enable it to be moved out of the house. This was a delicate task, and required considerable restraint. If it escaped it would run off the deck and into the garden.



*Still under control*

When safely on the deck it had to be transferred from its temporary platform into the crate, when its screw-down feet were re-engaged to secure it in position. Its ancillary items were then fitted inside. Finally the crate was closed and sealed.

The next challenge was to pick up the crate and move it to a container on the other side of the house. This required the services of a transport contractor.





*The most difficult and risky task completed*

In anticipation of ultimate re-assembly, the dismantling process was photographed and documented. The connections on a box at the rear of the printer; between numerous components, switches and motors; are often identical to one-another. The arms and spool-drive motors are also identical with each other. Hopefully headaches and confusion will be avoided when it is re-assembled and can tell a part of the story of the importance of the film-processing laboratories.

The museum needs a permanent home, so that such beautiful items of such fine precision and specific use can be satisfactorily displayed for all to enjoy.



Unfortunately a tele-handler was not available (non-existent?), so a crane truck was ordered. This was complete over-kill, but all that could be arranged at short notice in unfamiliar territory. With difficult access via a steep gravel driveway and a hairpin bend, there was some anxiety about this operation.

Eventually the crate was lifted off the deck, transported a distance of about 50 metres, and finally manoeuvred into position in the container.

So now the Seiki printer sits in its crate in a shipping container, awaiting transport to the mainland - whenever that can be arranged, and when there is a place to receive it into temporary storage. This will become urgent in coming months.

### **Annual General Meeting - Thursday 1st December 2022 - 7:30 pm**

Please notify us if you intend to participate in the AGM, so that we can send you reports and Financial Statement etc. before the meeting date.

*If you want to join the meeting via Zoom, the link will be sent prior to the meeting*

Contacts :

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Jack Endacott : (0491) 127-269

e-mail : [ammpt@cameraquip.com.au](mailto:ammpt@cameraquip.com.au)

AMMPT - Southern Region Inc. 434 Clarendon Street, SOUTH MELBOURNE 3205

**PLEASE PASS THIS INVITATION ON TO SOMEONE WHO MAY BE INTERESTED**

Contributions for the next edition of this Newsletter are welcome.

If you have some ideas about the possibilities for the museum's future, please consider writing and sending them for inclusion in edition 3.

Exchanges of bright ideas in these pages may stimulate debate and reveal unexpected opportunities. Perhaps you can provide an article about a particular phase of pre-digital technology, or a profile of a particular item or class of equipment. Other people may also be interested in your obsession.

## Challenges Ahead

The nature of our collection is that many items are either large, heavy, awkward, or all three. Many items have been stored by Malcolm Richards, at his expense, and some have been moved several times in recent years.

Some items have been promised to the museum but are still in the possession of the donors (their owners). Until we obtain our own premises we cannot take possession of the pieces that have been promised to our care, nor can we properly maintain those that we already have.

Ideally we should also be saving / collecting equipment and paraphernalia from the earlier eras of all sectors of our industries, not just the studio/location gear used on shooting days. This would include items from production offices, audio recording and mixing, continuity, animation, etc. Most of these fields have changed dramatically since the digital revolution, and their earlier technologies also need to be preserved. This increases the importance of finding a suitable home for our collection. We need to allow space to grow beyond our current size.

## What we need

1. A building on permanent or long-term lease that is secure, and will allow us to safely store and manage our collection.

The capacity to create displays of our equipment in addition to storage and maintenance would be ideal, but realistically we will accept a storage-only facility as an interim measure, hoping that it will lead to more suitable premises.

2. A source/sources of funding that will enable us to take on the real-estate challenges we face now, and enable future growth to set up a real museum.

3. A Committee that will provide energy and enthusiasm to work together to turn a nice idea into practical reality.

4. Active members who can contribute ideas, manage Zoom conference meetings, watch for opportunities, and / or pitch-in to help maintain and move the equipment when needed.

## FINANCES

With the low level of activity in recent years, the Museum's finances have been mostly static.

The most significant item in the AMMPT S-R account is the John Bowring bequest, the sad result of John's unexpected death several years ago. The museum gratefully received a donation from his estate of \$4,000.

We regard this as a significant capital contribution to the museum, and have assiduously kept it intact for future major developments. We have avoided depletion of this sum in any way. It would be too easy for this to be frittered away on minor and insignificant items of little consequence. Some minor expenses have been borne personally.

We want John Bowring's generous contribution to be available when we are sure that it will be used for a major advance, when its expenditure can be justified. Such an occasion may be when we need to sign a lease for a storage facility. We need some people who are adept at raising finance, from either government funding programmes or corporate sources.

## Possibilities ...1.

The recent use of the 'Lawrence Crane' on "ELVIS - the movie" highlights the on-going potential of this museum to provide working props for film and video productions.

Malcolm Richards says that he occasionally has enquiries from production companies seeking the use of pieces of film equipment for props in their productions. Sometimes the requests are generic, but sometimes they are for specific types of gear. Generally Malcolm can supply the equipment from his own collection, but sometimes supplements the order with items from the AMMPT collection that is stored at his premises.

Although these requests justify the keeping of the old technologies, it is disappointing that we as a museum cannot take advantage of these opportunities that offer such promise for exposure and revenue.

If we had our collection under one roof we could have an impressive catalogue available, and (in combination with Malcolm's personal collection) easily meet many of these requests. This could provide an occasional modest revenue stream for the museum.



### How you can help

If you like the idea of preserving the technologies of our pre-digital industries, then please consider how you can help.

#### We need :

1. People who can seek funding or sponsorship from the corporate sector, and from government funding sources; to enable us to break through our current stalemate.
2. People who can put time into searching the real-estate market for suitable premises (either permanent or short-term) to house, service and display our collection. We need to balance the immediate need for safe, workable and secure storage, with the long-term requirement of a public presence in a permanent museum building that will allow us to present our collection to the public on a full-time basis. There may be several steps along this path. It will take time and patience.
3. People who are prepared to commit time and energy to this project. We need an enthusiastic committee that can meet regularly to push this project ahead. In particular we need people with talent and initiative who can pursue enquiries on their own, in response to the Committee's needs, and report on their findings - particularly in respect of real-estate and funding.

If you think this Media Museum concept is worthwhile, then please consider: first, joining the Museum; and second, nominating yourself for a role on the Committee. We need active people who want to help.

4. People who can help promote the museum.
5. Practical people who can work on the maintenance, storage, and display of the equipment in the collection, or organise meetings via Zoom.

A membership form is included with this newsletter. Remember to join before or by the date of the AGM, in order to both vote and nominate for the Committee.

### The value of experience

When we are able to solve the real-estate stalemate and find our own premises, we will then enter a new phase of development.

We may need to seek extra items, in order to display our collection properly. For example: having many cameras will require many tripods and other supports. Editing displays may need a large number of spools etc. and lots of rolls of film.

Being able to build up complete kits of different types of equipment will mean that we can offer a range of varied displays.

This can take two forms: either our own curated presentations, or rental as props to new productions. Usually Malcolm Richards is able to satisfy requests for movie or TV props, either from his own collection or in combination with Museum collection items in storage at his premises. It is expected that AMMPT should be able to fulfil this function in its own right, when we have the practical facilities to manage our own collection.

Ordinarily every year Malcolm is invited to present static displays of old film equipment at Melbourne International Film Festival venues. There may be other similar opportunities for us to display parts of our collection to the public; and so raise both revenue and our profile.

At such events there will be needs for people with the experience of these earlier technologies to explain them to the public, hopefully receiving nominal fees for their time. These opportunities should be offered first to AMMPT members.

Such outreach will be more rewarding all-round than un-manned displays. The viewing public will enjoy a more meaningful experience and gain an understanding of the vast differences between our old technologies and the modern digital media.

### AGM Thursday 1st December 2022 at 7:30pm

110 Grey Street, EAST MELBOURNE (Unitarian Church hall)

Remember to JOIN or RENEW your membership before the AGM date, to be eligible to VOTE & Nominate for the Committee

Please let us know if you will attend, either in-person or via Zoom; it will help with planning and catering

If you can only attend via Zoom, the link will be sent prior to the meeting date

<b>Membership fees :</b>	Individual	Student	Associate	Corporate	Associate Group
	\$25	\$15	\$20	\$250	\$150

**Payment Methods :** - Direct transfer : to AMMPT Southern Region Inc.

Bank of Queensland a/c details : 123610 - 22025017 Please add your name to identify the transaction

By cheque or Postal Order : to AMMPT Southern Region Inc

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### **Current Status**

We have suffered declining membership for several years. Our committee strength has been depleted, first by the move of Michael Costello to Echuca, and then by the untimely death of Paul Dickinson - one of the most committed believers in the Media Museum concept. Three of the most active members live in country Victoria, which makes it difficult to schedule committee meetings.

Malcolm Richards, our stalwart member and patron, has had to concentrate on running his business, and so has stepped back from most committee duties. In addition to these difficulties the Covid19 pandemic imposed further restrictions from early 2020.

With reduced membership there is reduced capacity, and so less result to show for any effort. Less activity leads to further membership decline. In contrast, what is needed is more intense effort to find both funding and real-estate solutions to stagnation. With most active members not residing in Melbourne this is difficult.

In early 2020 our scheduled (delayed) AGM was cancelled within a week of its due date, by the first of the Covid lockdowns. Since then the pandemic has affected most activities and thwarted our progress.

#### **Come to the AGM to hear a detailed report of actions and possibilities.**

ALL COMMITTEE POSITIONS ARE VACANT, and we welcome anyone interested in joining and contributing to the revival of the museum's fortunes.

Committees work best with sufficient numbers of committed people who share a common purpose, and are prepared to work together to develop ideas and solutions to problems. A large committee is better than a small one, as the workload can be shared by more participants, and more participants means a greater variety of options and solutions. Every interested nominee can contribute his/her own skills, experience and expertise; so all volunteers will be welcomed.

Combined efforts always achieve more than individuals acting alone. The satisfaction of achieving a shared goal is greater than the solitary frustration of inadequate results - or failure.

#### **Please consider nominating for a committee position if you want to help.**

Remember to join before the AGM; and also indicate on the application form your willingness to help or join the committee.

#### **Current Committee**

President (Acting) :	Jack Endacott	<i>We need a President</i>
Secretary :	"	<i>We need a Secretary</i>
Treasurer :	Malcolm Richards	<i>We need a Treasurer</i>
Committee :	Michael Costello David Mc Lauchlan Wayne Collyer	<i>( We need more Committee Members )</i>

#### **Future Changes : MEMBERSHIP REVISION**

At some time very soon this organisation will need to seriously consider the matter of Membership Qualification.

Originally the AMMPT was set up by industry professionals, some retired. It was to some extent FOR industry people. Qualification for membership was determined by industry background. In some ways this favoured industry personnel. People lacking industry experience only qualified as Associate Members, with lesser status. Associate Members have no voting rights. This raises two problems :

First, since formation of the AMMPT everyone is a decade older, and sadly some of our colleagues have since 'dropped off the perch'.

Second, most of the industry personnel from the pre-digital era have not joined the Museum.

***Therefore the AMMPT membership is shrinking, and will continue to decline.***

The purpose of the AMMPT is to preserve the earlier technologies for future generations. It is certain that future generations will NOT have any experience of the pre-digital media environment. We are running out of time to pass on the essential knowledge that will enable future generations to understand the significance of the collection.

If AMMPT is to have any future, evidence shows that it cannot rely on industry professionals with experience of the pre-digital era. They are NOT supporting the Museum in numbers that will ensure its success.

***If this situation does not change, and if we do not attract other members, then the Media Museum will fail.***

There have been a few people who have shown interest in this project, who are young and have no industry experience. Our current situation has meant that we have little to offer to encourage their continued involvement. This is a shocking waste of potential, of keenly interested people who are discouraged from participating in the AMMPT project. It would be different if we had even a temporary workshop and storage facility that would enable us to get those interested involved in managing the museum's collection. Such people will be the future of the Media Museum and it is important that we foster their enthusiasm, while it is still possible to learn from the remaining industry professionals who used and understand the earlier technologies we are trying to preserve. It seems pointless to preserve this gear for our own satisfaction, when our remaining time is limited.

We must soon review our Membership Classification, and give equal status to interested applicants who do not have our professional experience. They will possess other skills that can contribute to a vibrant Media Museum - if we make some changes that encourage their participation.

Ultimately this must go to a Special General Meeting, as a Resolution for particular change proposed by the new Committee.