Film is Digital

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Practice Research

- HEFCE Promising Researcher Fellowship July-Dec 2006
- 3 minute promo
- Panavision, Technicolor and Kodak
- Curzon Community Cinema, Clevedon
- Shot on HDV Sony Z1
- Edited on Standard Definition DV PAL
Themes

- Cacophony of conflicting voices (Blight, John Smith, 1994-6)
- Engulfment of Hollywood cinema (John Williams score, Raiders of the Lost Arc)
- Emotion, nostalgia, sentimentality
- Exploring “structures of feeling” (Raymond Williams)
- The “work of production” - revealing the craft behind the film production process (Kodak, Tacita Dean, 2007)
- Cinema cultures and viewing practices (Pearl and Dean “Asteroid” ident)
Key Interviews

• Jeff Allen, Panavision
• Lionel Runkel, Technicolor
• Clive Ogden, Kodak
• Maurice Thornton, Film Projectionist
• Jon Webber, ex-Manager, Curzon Community Cinema, Clevedon

• Also Aardman Animations
No Industry Standard

• Stock - Format Wars
  – 100yrs of film vs “broken chain” of video and digital formats, HDCam, HDTV, Hard Disk recording, etc.
  – “Digital Film” a misnomer

• Cameras – Built-in Obsolescence
  – Sony F23, Sony F35
    ([http://www.sony.co.uk/biz/view/ShowProduct.action?product=F35&pageType=Benefits&imageType=Main&category=HDseries](http://www.sony.co.uk/biz/view/ShowProduct.action?product=F35&pageType=Benefits&imageType=Main&category=HDseries))
  – Thomson Viper
  – Arri D-20
  – REDOne ([www.red.com](http://www.red.com)) – claimed to be 6K in 2006, now prototyping 5K “early 2009”
  – Progressive / interlaced
  – CCD / CMOS chips
Digital Film Language

• Oldspeak
  – Genesis Sony camera in 35mm body
  – Technicolor’s “Digital Printer Light” maintains DOP’s control of look and feel of the film
  – Kodak’s “Display Manager” and “Look Manager” Systems

• Newspeak
  – Digitographer – Digital Imaging Technician
  – Speed Racer, Wachowski Bros (http://speedracerthemovie.warnerbros.com/)
  – 0s and 1s instead of rushes or “dailies”
  – Sohonet (http://speedracerthemovie.warnerbros.com/)
Pipelines and Workflows

• Postproduction, Special Effects & Sound
  – Already digital, neg cut & optical fx thing of the past
  – Off-line / on-line
  – “Digital Intermediate” as opposed to cutting neg and intermediate prints….
  – Grading – digital filters drawing on film terminology: “bleach bypass” chemical process
“Digital Decay”

• 10,000 word article
• Commissioned for *Moving Image* the journal of the Association of Moving Image Archivists
• Exploring the impact of digital projection, the threat of end of 35mm film stock on archiving and preservation
• Work in progress....
Outputs

• **Distribution**
  – 35mm film prints / digital distribution different business models
  – Hard disk distribution
  – Satellite distribution
  – Godfrey Cheshire’s argument about cinema becoming television
    [http://www.picturehouses.co.uk/metropolitan_opera](http://www.picturehouses.co.uk/metropolitan_opera)
    [http://www.cinegames.es/english.html](http://www.cinegames.es/english.html)

• **Exhibition**
  – 35mm vs Digital projection
  – Psychology of perception
  – pixels vs molecules
  – UK Film Council’s Digital Screen Initiative
  – Standardising at 2-4K
  – Economics of Scale
“If you don’t preserve it, it’s gone forever”

• Archive
  – Preservation / restoration / reconstruction

• Access
  – Commercial vs public

• Future Proofing
  – Nitrate, acetate, polyester, video, digital
  – Triple dye transfer
  – Digital Betacam
  – HDCAM-SR
  – No stable digital archiving format
What is driving the technology?

• Market Forces
  – Built in obsolescence, multinational corporations, different business models

VS

• Aesthetics
  – Resolution, 2K, 4K, 6K, gain / grain, different tools in the palette, “horses for courses”, do you want a Mini or a Rolls?
What’s new?

• Technological determinism
• Paradigms of techophilia and technophobia
• The radical potential of new technology is absorbed by the dominant culture (Brian Winston, Jon Dovey)
• What is different is the sheer pace of technological change
• We are living in an upgrade culture
• Obsolescent knowledge - “obsoledge” (Alvin and Heidi Toffler)
Academic Contexts

"film and video have, despite claims to the contrary, merged" (Holly Willis 2005: 3)

"Post-medium condition" (Rosalind Kraus 1999)

"postcomputer cinema" in which "computer media redefine the very identity of cinema" (Lev Manovich 2001: 249, 293)

• “Cinema is dead, long live Cinema” (Peter Greenaway)
Practice Research

• How to take research forward as practice?
• Ambitions for feature-length documentary focused more on the ‘creatives’ - directors and DOPs
• Curzon Community Cinema’s 100th anniversary in 2012 - documenting this
• Shorter forms - 3-Minute Wonders
• Blog / web / wiki to disseminate work in progress.