

Oscar Film Unit

The Film Society Guide

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Oscar Film Unit: The Film Society Guide
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1 Introduction

1.1 Intentions

The object of this guide is to collate in one document all the information necessary to run a season of films, together with some ideas and suggestions that have been working well in recent years, in case they fall into disuse and are forgotten.

1.2 Execution

This guide has been kept to simple formatting so that, when information becomes inaccurate or obsolete, it will be possible to provide a new section without having to rewrite the entire document, even without the original source document on computer.

1.3 About The Authors

Well, I guess it is my prerogative to say something about myself and the committee I represent... As an undergraduate student on a four-year MEng course (no placement year) I was and am in a unique position to have some input on OFU over an unbroken four-year period. In 1998 I was elected to the post of Chairman, where I was able to put the brakes on the rapid decline of the society; I also took over as webmaster of the OFU website and completely rewrote it, giving it a distinctive "chocolate and wine" colour scheme (OK, OK - it's brown and red). The following semester I additionally took on the job of Film Booking Officer, as the membership of the society was dwindling alarmingly.

At the beginning of 1999, after several false starts, OFU finally gained an excellent new committee, with long-time member and postgrad Andy Gale taking on the role of Chairman (having previously been Secretary); Ben Price returned from placement to become Secretary (having once been Treasurer); and I moved to the post of Treasurer. Having such an experienced team helped the society immeasurably, and despite the membership of the society continuing to fall, morale is on a high. More importantly, and thanks in no small part to Andy's energetic leadership and brilliant ideas, audience figures are rising in leaps and bounds.

1.4 Omissions

There is no guide to film making in this document, primarily because at the time of writing, we had only just taken possession of our camera for the first time. The 16mm, 8mm and Super-8 cameras are to be covered by a separate manual by Andy Gale.

2 History

2.1 Early History

Sadly, very little is known about the early history of OFU. This is due to the continual turnover of staff, and inadequate record-keeping.

Fortunately, we have two fantastic sources of information on the early days of the society. One is that some ex-members are still in contact with the University through the Alumni Office, and indeed, some ex-members still meet weekly at The King's Head in proper OFU tradition. The second and most important source is the collection of films made by OFU in years gone by. As OFU's very name suggests, it was not founded first and foremost to project films, but to make them. Many have survived in near-perfect condition, especially Rag 67 and Rag 69. The latter is fascinating for its depiction of Guildford town thirty years ago, but the former is even more interesting, since it shows the University of Surrey in its old home in Battersea. This must be at the time that the University was starting its move to Guildford, since there was only a brief changeover period between the name change (from Battersea College) and the move.

From these and other films, we see that OFU once had (at least) two Bolex 16mm film cameras. We also know that OFU predates the University (and hence the Union).

The films also feature footage of the Manor House at Godalming - formerly student accommodation for the University, and apparently a popular location for movies such as "Enter The Newt" and others.

The current OFU lion logo was designed in 1972 or thereabouts by Gail Edwards, who was the sister of the then treasurer, Colin. Although the lion has come to be called Oscar, ancient legend has it that the original name of OFU comes from the name of a bird that the members of the society stole in days gone by...

Sometime after the original logo was designed, it underwent a change that removed the ribbons and leaves and, frankly, it was pants... which is why in 1998 we deleted all copies of that version and returned to the original one.

At some point in the 70s, OFU was using LT-D as its venue; this is shown by a season ticket from the time. However, it has been in LT-G for a good many years now, as evidenced by the fume extractors for the dual-projector system mounted on the ceiling of G-box. There are also dual 415 volt power supplies.

2.2 Recent History

It is a shame that proper records have not been kept that enable us to track purchasing and other decisions made by past committees. However, here is a good place to start keeping proper records.

The dual projectors were replaced by a single clean-burning 16mm Favorit projector. The current projector was purchased in 1990. All uses of the projector since have been logged, and performance logs also exist for this entire period. The current projector is a Fumeo 16mm 1000W Xenon Arc Projector Model 9345. It cost £7,347.35, which included a zoom lens and - fortunately for us in 1998 - a spare lamp which, at £320, would have been impossible for us to purchase at the time. Also included were two 6,000ft spools which cost a whopping £150 each, excluding VAT.

According to the documentation in the Chairman's file, there was initially some dispute over who was going to purchase the projector. The University had already decided it wanted a new one, and so had OFU. The then Union President, Adam Jones, quite smugly claimed in August 1989 that, "Due to gentle persuasion from your Union", the University would be buying the projector outright and would allow OFU to use it at £10.00 a film. OFU then complained that it thought £10.00 was unreasonable and declined the offer. The University replied that it was going to buy the thing anyway, only this way, OFU would not be allowed to use it. By October of that year, the situation had completely turned on its head: OFU were now planning to buy the projector outright and rent it back to AVA (now called AVS) whenever required. What happened next is unclear but by December, OFU had sensibly decided to meet half the capital cost of the projector, and AVA the other half.

Some time later, the old rewind table was replaced with the current Fumeo model, with the lethal controls that are located behind the moving film. The old manual rewind table was disassembled to make more space in G-box; however, it has now been reconstructed and is already proving useful for handling the small reels involved with film making and editing.

In late 1999, OFU purchased a Bolex 16mm camera in the hope of going back to OFU's successful roots. We were also given one 8mm and one Super-8 camera, as well as an 8mm projector, which were surplus to requirements of one of the university departments. We hope that the results are around in 30 years when film-buff students - who are not even due to be born for another ten years - get curious about their history...

In May 2000, the Students' Union held an awards evening for societies and amenities at the university. OFU won the "Surrey Award For Culture", and Andy G. won a special "Lifetime Achievement Award" for his service over many years to OFU and the PGA.

3 Structure

3.1 The OFU committee

The society is run by (usually six) elected committee members.

3.1.1 Elections

In accordance with Union regulations, which are subject to constant change, the elections must be attended by a member of Societies Executive. The actual date of the AGM or EGM at which elections take place must be communicated to the Union some time in advance, and must be advertised in Bare Facts and elsewhere for at least two weeks before the date.

OFU usually holds its AGM on the Tuesday of the third week of the second semester. However, this may change, for example, if there are not enough candidates for all the committee positions.

3.1.2 Positions

Very often, the elected positions are nominal only. For example, the Union insists upon a Chairman (or President), a Treasurer and a Secretary; but more accurate terms for the jobs that each of these must do would be Manager, Cashier and Dogsboddy respectively.

OFU's remaining three committee positions are usually filled by a Publicity Officer, a Film Booking Officer, and a Refreshments Officer. However, there are other positions available, such as Librarian, who might be more useful to have on the committee.

3.1.3 Commitment

At the AGM or other election, three of the committee members will be chosen as signatories on the account held in the Union. These three must provide a photograph for identification purposes, and sign a document to say that they will be personally liable for any deficit due to reckless spending. Additionally, the signatories are personally responsible for ensuring that the society is represented on the relevant Union committees (see section 4.2.4)

3.2 Job Descriptions

These are all mostly quite arbitrary, but will serve to ensure that all jobs are covered.

3.2.1 Chairperson

To prepare an agenda and chair each weekly GM; most importantly, to select projectionists and stewards for all of that week's films.

To be available as a first point of contact for members of the society, and members of the University and public at large, for information and assistance.

To also be the main liaison between the society and the Union / University for matters concerned with the running of the society.

To delegate and ensure that all tasks are completed necessary to running the season.

To oversee projectionists.

To oversee all use of equipment.

To be ultimately responsible for any misconduct or malpractice by the society in general.

3.2.2 Treasurer

To prepare a budget and inventory at the end of the second semester.

To ensure that all money - including door takings and money spent - is accounted for, particularly petty cash.

To regularly remove excess cash stored in G-box and take it to the Union cashier.

To oversee stewards.

To oversee all items of equipment on the inventory (as opposed to overseeing its correct use, which is the responsibility of the Chairperson).

3.2.3 Secretary

To take Minutes for all meetings, and produce and circulate copies before the next meeting.
To write, along with the publicity officer, reviews for Bare Facts and ensure that they are inserted in every issue.
To act as a second port of call for assistance when the Chairperson is unavailable.

3.2.4 Publicity Officer

To plan, prepare and distribute season publicity, with assistance from members of the society.
To liaise with other societies who might be interested in using OFU's services.

Publicity is very much up to the imagination of the people concerned, but some pointers are given in section 4.2.

3.2.5 Refreshments Officer

To purchase the tea, coffee, sugar, biscuits and milk required for Arts Cinema showings, claiming the money back from the Treasurer.
To prepare or, on a weekly basis, delegate the preparation of, the Arts Cinema refreshments.
To purchase the snacks and drinks to be sold at OFU showings.
To set price levels on these products, in order to be competitive and make a profit.
To monitor stock levels and purchase new stock when necessary.

3.2.6 Film Booking Officer

To plan, in consultation with members of the society, the seasons of films for OFU and for the University Arts Cinema.
To book them and arrange suitable alternatives when the first choices are unavailable.
To be the principal liaison between the society and the distributors.

Full details on how to book films are to be found in section 4.1.

3.2.7 Librarian

To ensure that the film has arrived in good time for each showing.
To collect the film at the Union Reception and deliver it to G-box.
To contact the courier (Filmbank films only) to arrange collection.
To return the film to Union Reception after the showing.

Full details on the librarian's duties are to be found in section 5.6.

3.2.8 Projectionists

Although not a committee position, projectionists have a designated area of responsibility covering an individual film showing.

Projectionists, who must be qualified, have received training that includes how to manage a film showing, and what to do in an emergency.

The following areas are the responsibility of the projectionist:

- To collect the keys to G-box and Tapestore from the AVS Prep Room on the last working day before the showing.
- To arrive in good time to spool up the film.
- To oversee the team of stewards in preparing the theatre for the showing.
- To run a test screening to ensure that the film and projector are both in good order.
- To oversee the team of stewards in dealing with guests.
- To enter the number of guests in the Projectionists' Log as soon as possible after the start of the film.
- To remain by the projector during the entire performance (a contractual obligation with both of OFU's distributors).
- To ensure that the film is despoiled correctly and repackaged ready for return, with the return label fixed on the box.
- To ensure that the stewards have correctly restored the theatre to its normal state.
- To enter all details in the Projector Log, and oil the projector if necessary.
- To fill in an Arts Cinema form, if relevant.
- To ensure all equipment is unplugged and covered up.
- To ensure that all cupboards, G-box and Tapestore are locked, and to return the keys to AVS.
- To telephone security at the end of the showing (ext. 2002) to let them know that the theatre is empty.

In the event of emergency:

- To cut the power to all OFU equipment.
- To ensure that a steward has called security on internal extension 3333.
- To ensure that, after all guests have been evacuated, the stewards also safely leave the building.
- To take the Projectionists' Log to the assembly point (the amphitheatre area) and count the number of guests, and to report that the theatre was correctly evacuated to a member of security.

N.B. Technically, although it has never been put to the test, the projectionist's word is final, which means that for a given performance, the projectionist "outranks" committee members on all matters. (Also technically, if the worst came to the worst, the committee have the power to replace the projectionist if he / she is acting irresponsibly).

Full details on how to use all of the projection equipment are given in section 6. A complete rundown of a typical performance is to be found in section 5.

3.2.9 Stewards

A full description of stewards' duties appears in section 5. However, there are particular areas of responsibility for the stewards. These should not have to be performed or checked by the projectionist, who is likely to have other things on his / her mind:

- To ensure that the theatre is in a suitable state of cleanliness before and after the film showing.
- To ensure that the fire exit through LT-H is clear of all obstacles, including desks and chairs, and to return desks and chairs after the showing if they are moved.
- To lock the front doors before admitting guests, but to ensure that they are unlocked at the start of the film showing.
- To fill in the Stewards' Log, and hence verify that all money taken on the door is accounted for.

In the event of an emergency:

- To ensure that security are notified (ext. 3333). Do not dial 999.
- To evacuate guests via the three emergency exits, and ensure that guests assemble in the amphitheatre area.
- To report to the projectionist and assist wherever possible.

4 Running A Season From Start To Finish

4.1 Booking The Season

Some time towards the end of the previous season, the Film Booking Officer should start to collect suggestions from the society members for films to book. The FBO needs to know *what* films, *how many* he is to book (and on what dates), *how many showings* each film needs to be booked for, and what *format* the committee thinks is most suitable.

4.1.1 What films?

Generally, the society must aim for a broad mix of films to appeal to everybody. It is the job of the FBO to ensure that films of a particular genre are spread through the season, and to identify any key dates (e.g. Halloween, Valentine's Day) for which a relevant film could be booked.

Arts Films can again be themed, or several short films shown as a single programme. These films do not have to have such a broad appeal. The OFU definition of an Arts film is: any film which deserves to be seen on a big screen, whether it is because it is so unusual or just very well made, yet has not had a wide cinema release due to its lack of commercial viability. This covers foreign language films (both contemporary and classic), independent films, and old classics that deserve a showing. It is often a good idea to include one well-known film in a semester programme, just to get people interested in the Arts Cinema.

4.1.2 How many?

The society must book only as many films as it can afford. This will usually be around ten in the autumn, and seven or eight in the spring, with possibly none at all after the Easter vacation because of the exam load on the staff and the prospective punters.

It makes sense to start the season in Week Three, when the Freshers arrive, and to continue without a break for ten weeks. In the second semester, the season should start soon, but not too early, as time must be left for advertising and ticket sales.

The Arts Office will usually state approximately how many films they want for a particular season. Again, it is common sense to time them to be interspersed with OFU films.

Do not forget that films which are stated as costing £90 per showing do not include delivery, insurance, or VAT. Confirmations from the distributors also do not include VAT.

4.1.3 How many showings?

This is a matter for the committee to decide. As recently as 1997, the society could afford to show the OFU film three times - at 5.00pm and 8.00pm on Sunday, and at 8.00pm on Monday. Currently, a single Sunday evening performance is enough. Arts films always get a single showing on Wednesday evenings. However, in Autumn 1999 the Arts Committee were debating an increase to two showings, in order to attract more members of university staff to the films.

Both distributors charge a second showing at 50% of the normal performance rate, but of course transport and insurance are only charged once.

4.1.4 What format?

AVS will usually lend OFU a video projector either free or for a nominal sum, and a simple set of phono leads gives OFU the instant ability to show a wider range of films, and in stereo. Video is also easier to handle, and about one third cheaper. The disadvantage of video is that the picture quality is significantly lower than 16mm, and the brightness of the image falls off towards the edges. The image will still be a problem when Filmbank starts distributing DVDs in the near future, unless OFU or AVS purchase a better projector.

It is up to the committee, and ultimately, personal taste as to which format to choose. All the best films are still being released on 16mm, but these account for fewer than 30% of recent non-commercial releases. 16mm is probably to be favoured if the film is available in Widescreen or CinemaScope (which is not always clear when the film is booked), because video can not be zoomed so effectively.

Equally important is to decide whether to book the films for a commercial (a.k.a. theatrical) screening, or a non-commercial screening. In general, it will be the latter. The difference between the two is a tricky legal knife-edge on which OFU has been poised for some time.

A commercial screening, such as the Odeon would show, turns OFU into a cinema. The society could then legally sell tickets on the door, and instead of paying the distributor a flat rate, would be liable for a percentage (usually 35%) of the box office takings. There are two major disadvantages to a commercial screening, however. One is that it is very difficult indeed to persuade the distributors (meaning the parent distributors, such as Twentieth Century Fox or UIP) to allow a commercial screening on 16mm, because the quality would reflect badly on them, and also because they have a duty to protect the interest of their biggest customers, such as the Odeon. The second problem is that OFU would need to purchase a Cinematograph Licence from Guildford Borough Council, at an annual cost of £600 or so. The Arts Cinema holds such a licence at a specially reduced rate because of its unique nature, but unfortunately OFU could not hope for such a concession. Once covered by a Cinematograph Licence, OFU would then also be dependent on the local film licensing body, which has the power to overrule the BBFC and censor certain films. Recently, for example, the Surrey County Districts Film Licensing Joint Committee have banned "Crash", "Romance", and "Skin Flick" - all of which were passed by the BBFC.

A non-commercial screening is by far the safer option, but unfortunately does not allow the sale of tickets on the door. This is the origin of OFU's seemingly bizarre policy of asking guests to sign in before the film - they are becoming, ahem, temporary members. Frankly, this would not stand up in a court of law, but it is the best we can realistically achieve whilst remaining viable. Worse still, non-commercial screenings are not allowed to be advertised in a place where the advertisement may be seen by the general public (so hopefully, the University is OK, then), we are not allowed to have any kind of on-screen advertising (even sponsorship), and a maximum of 100 people are allowed to the film.

Despite the fact that the Arts Cinema has a licence, the difficulties in obtaining prints for commercial screening means that we habitually book the films for a non-commercial screening anyway. Anyone with a high moral code should take comfort from the fact that box office takings at the Arts films are so low that the distributors are actually financially better off from this dodgy policy.

4.1.5 Where do the films come from?

OFU uses two non-commercial distributors: Filmbank, and BFI. The latter is mainly used for Arts films, as it tends to distribute smaller, independent and foreign films. The former specialises in 16mm and video releases of Hollywood blockbuster-type films, for organisations such as schools, prisons and hotels; anywhere covered in the standard copyright blurb about home use on a normal video.

4.1.6 How do I book a season?

Start by selecting a season of films - with dates - and about two or three extra films, in case your first choices are unavailable. Both Filmbank and BFI issue catalogues with free updates. Filmbank will also fax a list of the latest 100 or so releases on request. BFI has such a huge collection available that it is usually best to ask for a specific catalogue, e.g. German films, Scope films, Avant-garde films or whatever. Both distributors also have websites, but these have not so far proved very useful.

At least six weeks before the start of the season, or earlier for the Arts films, telephone the distributor (with Filmbank ask for "bookings" or direct-dial the bookings extension, and for BFI it is best to ask for Andrew Youdell in person) and tell them that you would like to book a number of films.

For Filmbank, give the account number (**GUIUNOSC1**), specify 16mm or video (unless you have selected a mixed season) and then proceed to list the chosen films, along with their playdates. If you want to show the film more than once, do not forget to mention that fact (although, in the past, OFU has got away with paying only once for two performances on the same day). Sooner or later as you read out the list, a film will turn out to be unavailable on your chosen date. This is where you have to do some nifty thinking on the fly. Try the same film for a week that you have not already booked a film, whilst taking care not to destroy your carefully planned sequence of films. If no weeks are available, and if it is a very good film indeed, ask to swap it for one that you have already booked, else you will have to select from your reserve list. At the end of the call, the operator will read you the complete list of films as a confirmation. Leave your name, and that is it. The confirmations will arrive at the Union within a couple of days. When they do, take them immediately to either the Union Cashier (OFU films) or the Arts Office, so that orders can be raised.

For the BFI, the same basic principle applies, but they will often check the availability of films first before going through again and booking them. OFU's BFI account number is **O163**. The BFI require that OFU supplies the confirmation, by fax or by post, after the films have been booked.

4.1.7 Sounds scary?

Not at all. At Filmbank, the operators are Peter Matthews, who is the boss and a useful person to talk to if you want to do something dodgy (e.g. a commercial screening), and Dawn Sluman, who will often chat about the films you are booking while the computer does its stuff. At BFI, the man in charge is Andrew Youdell, who refers to the FBO personally as "Oscar". His underling is Jim Dempster, who also happens to be a major figure in the BFFS.

The whole booking process should only take twenty minutes - and that includes both OFU and Arts seasons. If it goes wrong, and you discover that you have booked two films for the same day, then they will usually cancel without charge if you notify them soon enough.

Finally, watch out for special deals - for example, the BFI will include any short film with a feature for a flat rate, and used to run a good deal where they gave 20% off all films if five or more were booked at once.

4.2 Publicity And Representation

Publicity is not just the concern of the Publicity Officer. Everyone can get involved in the marketing campaign in a variety of ways.

4.2.1 Where do those Quads come from?

National Screen is the major UK supplier of cinema trailers on 35mm, and they also happen to supply Quads. Our account number with them is **678**. They usually invoice about a week after despatch. The posters themselves are usually delivered within a couple of days of ordering. The Union reception keeps them for collection.

Some Quads are available - free of charge - from an independent supplier, MPD (Moving Print Distribution). These are usually for films released by smaller distribution firms, and so are more likely for Arts films. For the purpose of ordering, it is only necessary to state the name of the "cinema" - i.e. Oscar Film Unit, but the account number in case of query is **O384**.

Sometimes, posters are released in a non-standard or foreign format, e.g. in portrait orientation (a US style called One Sheet is about the same size as a Quad, but in the opposite orientation). These posters will obviously not fit in OFU's usual noticeboard, but can still be purchased then cut up or photographed.

Technically, Quads do not become the property of the society, since they are copyrighted publicity materials. The contract with the suppliers states that used Quads should be either returned or destroyed. OFU "destroys" Quads by giving them away!...

4.2.2 What else can be done before the start of semester?

That is up to the imagination of the Publicity Officer. Complete programmes can be put up in every house on campus during moving-in day, when all the houses are open. Gradually these will be ripped down, so individual film posters should be produced for later in the semester. A booklet or leaflet of reviews is a good way of generating interest. An insert into the Freshers' Pack might be time consuming, but well worth it. Copies of Quads from the Internet can be used in Bare Facts, and turned into slides for showing at the start of films. Finally, liaise with other societies, particularly media ones such as the radio station, and arrange to swap advertisements.

Make up a set of slides listing the films to be shown, but make them versatile so that they do not go out of date after the first film. And make them fun and interesting, so that the audience actually reads them, rather than talking to their friends. After experimentation, it has been found that the best results for slides are obtained by designing the graphic on a computer, then simply photographing it on a monitor - although watch out for resolution problems (bearing in mind that, when projected, the image will be several metres wide).

Ask GU2 or a helpful Tonmeister student to make up a tape of music to play before the start of films, and intersperse each song with an advertisement for yourself or other societies to whom you owe a favour.

Finally, update the OFU website to show a current list of the film season - and encourage people to visit it, by mentioning the URL on other publicity.

4.2.3 What about once the semester has started?

Posters are going to require continual replacement, but that is an obvious point. More importantly, once the semester is underway, you must encourage students to buy season tickets, perhaps with a promotion in the first week. Even more importantly, encourage students to join the society as a full member (i.e. staff) - the Freshers' Fair is a valuable opportunity not to be wasted. Think about having a film running at the OFU stall to grab people's attention, and make them think it is worth joining - they will be bombarded with offers, so make sure OFU's stands out. Lots of Quads, and things to give away (such as promotional posters) will encourage people to stay longer.

A stall at Freshers' Fair usually has to be booked the previous semester. Watch out for details at Societies Standing Committee.

4.2.4 Union representation

There are a number of committees and meetings at which OFU must be represented, else apologies sent. Otherwise, the Union is within its rights to freeze all accounts - which for a vibrant film society would be a disaster!

Main committees to remember are Student Council (Thursdays, approx. every five weeks, 6pm, LT-D); Societies Standing Committee (Mondays, approx. every five weeks, 6pm LT-E); and Arts & Entertainments Committee (every Monday, 6.15pm, Grant Mitchell Room). Societies Standing, in particular, is useful, as you will get to meet and liaise with other societies, who may want to run film events.

New committee members are also expected to attend CHAT (Chairman and Treasurer) training at least once.

4.3 Finance

Although the Treasurer should be trained, both by the previous Treasurer and by the Union's CHAT scheme, here are a few pointers to looking after the finances.

4.3.1 Tell me about Z1 and Z2

All accounts at the Union are split into categories. Z1 is for operating expenses - everything from chinagraph pencils to the films themselves. Z2 is for social activities, such as subsidised cinema trips. The Union will not supply a budget for Z2; all money within it must be raised by OFU's extraordinary activities such as the standard projectionists fee, or from sales of food and drink. The Union operates accounts from Z3 to Z9 but these are unlikely to be relevant to OFU, being mainly designed for sports clubs.

4.3.2 So what are these category headings, then?

Z1 and Z2 are split into basic categories, into which all transactions are placed. When you order a printout of the accounts from the Union Cashier, the first page will contain a summary of the debits and credits in each category. Subsequent pages then list every authorised transaction.

4.3.3 Who authorises transactions?

Any one of the three signatories to the OFU account, usually Chairman, Treasurer and one other e.g. Publicity Officer. Trish Flack is the Union Cashier and will guide you through the process. Her office is open daily except Wednesday, between noon and 2pm.

If, for example, a member has purchased an item and needs to recover the money, it is to Trish that one of the signatories must apply. However, within the University itself, transactions take place by means of IDT (Inter-Departmental Transfer), which should be used, for example, for printing at the AVS print unit - especially because IDT users get preferential service and at a cheaper rate. IDTs are raised by the Union Accounts Manager, Sue, who lives in the office immediately adjacent to Trish.

4.3.4 What about petty cash?

OFU handles more cash than most societies, and it is vital that it is all accounted for. From September 1999, a Stewards' Log is used to record all transactions. Ultimately the Treasurer is responsible for ensuring that all money is accounted for - which means that people should not dip into the petty cash if they have bought something on behalf of the society, unless the transaction is recorded and authorised.

4.3.5 What happens to Arts money?

Arts petty cash can be stored along with the OFU money, as long as it is carefully recorded in the Stewards' Log. It is paid into a completely separate Arts Cinema account held at the Union. Once a semester, the Treasurer must authorise an IDT from the Arts Cinema account to the Arts Office, consisting of all door takings (minus a reserve for any publicity that OFU carries out on behalf of the Arts Office, and for refreshments, etc.). The signatories for OFU are automatically also the signatories on the Arts Cinema account.

4.3.6 How do I prepare a budget?

Start by ignoring the form the Union provides. It is far too small for OFU's purposes. A set of properly printed forecast accounts will look far more impressive. Do not forget to offset the amount to be spent against the amount you expect to make from ticket sales.

Do not underestimate the time required to complete the forecast - to be done properly, it requires many hours of careful thought. Refer to previous budgets for guidance.

Large requests for money - such as major items of equipment - may be subject to a separate budget and a Union Finance & Services Committee review. Consult your friendly Societies sabbatical officer for details.

4.4 Other Items To Check Before The Season Starts

Before the start of the season, ensure that the theatre has been booked (usually it is done on a rollover basis) and, equally, that it is *not* booked for times when OFU does not need it, since Security are liable to get stroppy if it is left unlocked unnecessarily.

Buy in food for the punters to buy on the way in. Only experience will really show what products are popular.

Print off season and guest tickets, and print lists for the Union reception to fill in.

Check the projector is in good working order (gulp!).

It might also be a good idea to write or e-mail everybody in the society, not forgetting those returning from placement, to let them know what is going on, and to encourage them to re-join in the upcoming semester.

Issue free season passes to important people such as the VC and the Union President. It will help keep them on our side.

4.5 Running The Season

Have a GM every week, and keep them short - do not allow members, particularly first years, to become bored by what is seen as red tape. Mundane matters can be sorted out separately in a committee meeting as and when necessary.

At the GM, the primary task is to find projectionists and stewards for the following week's films. However, it is vital not to forget social activities outside of this. Encourage everybody to go to Chancellor's after the meeting, and then on to the pub (The King's Head is traditional). Organise special events, such as subsidised cinema trips (the Odeon will show OFU members around the projection room, if asked nicely, and might even grant free admission to a film every once in a while), games at LaserQuest, and of course the infamous Christmas Dinner, Pancake Day and Summer Picnic.

4.6 At The End Of The Season

The Chairman and Treasurer, between them, must account for all the money and tie up loose ends such as outstanding invoices at the Union. In the summer, a projector service must be booked - it is best to co-ordinate this with AVS. Towards the end of the spring term, the Union will request a budget to be submitted. Start collating film and purchase ideas for the next season!

5 Running A Film Presentation From Start To Finish

5.1 The Week Before The Film

5.1.1 Finding staff

The Chairman is responsible for finding volunteer projectionists and stewards for all films, except where OFU is showing the film for another society, in which case only a projectionist is required. The number of stewards for each showing is a matter of judgement, but is a function of the number of guests expected and the location of the film in the season (i.e. more help will be needed in the first couple of weeks when season tickets are being sold). A good number for an average showing is three - one to sell tickets, one to collect tickets on the door and one to sell food. If the audience is relatively small, then it may not be necessary for all stewards to stay throughout the film if they do not want to.

5.1.2 Checking arrival

It is vital to ensure that the (correct) film has arrived in good time. If it has not arrived by the end of the penultimate working day before the performance, then the distributor should be contacted.

It is equally important that the film is taken from the Union to G-box as soon as it arrives, in case the Union accidentally send it back, or in case the Union reception is closed on the day of the performance.

Whether or not the committee decides to appoint a librarian, the procedure outlined in section 5.6 for collecting and returning films must be followed carefully, since if the film is not returned on time, the society will be charged extra days' hire.

5.1.3 Picking up keys

Two sets of keys must be picked up from the AVS prep room on the ground floor of the lecture theatre block on the last working day before the performance. The G-box key ring allows access to the projection booth. The Tape Store key ring also contains keys to the OFU cupboard in G-box and to the Union ticket box. You may be asked to sign for the keys, particularly if you are holding them over a weekend.

5.2 Before The Film

5.2.1 Projectionist

The projectionist must arrive in sufficient time to splice together ("spool up") the evening's film. This can, of course, be done earlier in the day or by someone else, but will typically take place about one hour before the start of the film, and will take about fifteen minutes.

By the time this is complete, the stewards should have set up the theatre, so that the projectionist can run a test screening on the film. This is to ensure that the print is not damaged, that the projector is running smoothly, that the film is in focus and correctly framed and zoomed, and to check that the sound is clear and at the correct volume. The film must then be rewound and rethreaded onto the projector ready for the start of the film.

The projectionist should also arrange a slide show to show while the audience arrives, which will typically consist of advertisements, both for OFU and for other societies. However, it is illegal for a film society to receive money to show on-screen advertisements. The projectionist should also provide a tape of music to play as the audience arrive. Film soundtracks or theme compilations will usually cause the least offence!

Lighting in the theatre should not be too bright, for several reasons - one, the theatre is incredibly ugly, and two, the slides need to stand out. The projectionist will usually need to stay to advance the slide projector(s) every minute or so, and can use this time to fill in all relevant paperwork.

Use of the rewind table, projector and sound equipment is discussed in chapter 6.

5.2.2 Stewards

Stewards should arrive almost as early as the projectionist, in order to set up the theatre on the projectionist's behalf.

The square slide/OHP screens must be fully wound up first, so that they are flat against the wall. They have a handle each, located underneath the blackboard at the front of the theatre. Then OFU's CinemaScope screen can be lowered in front of them, using the handle stored in OFU's cupboard in G-box in the blue windlass located on the wall of G-box. This screen should be lowered until about a foot of black material is visible at the bottom, then rewound by a single turn. When the handle is removed from the windlass, a braking mechanism stops the screen from dropping any further.

Once the screen is in position, the speakers (which live in Tape Store) can be placed at either side of it, as high up as possible. The easiest way of installing the speakers is to open out the tripod, place the speaker unit on top (remembering to tighten the clamp), plug in the wire that hangs over the side of the blackboard, then loosen the tripod and raise it up so that the speaker is approximately level with the bottom of the screen before tightening the tripod as much as possible. The speakers should be angled inwards slightly so that they point at the projector.

Once this is done, the projectionist can commence the test screening. Meanwhile, stewards should lock the front doors of LT-G (so that nobody can slip in without paying!) and also ensure that the correct entrance is adequately signposted. There are blue gels that should be placed over the windows of LT-G rear doors to prevent light leakage. Emergency exit lights should be switched on. If an Arts film, kettles should be filled from the drinking water taps in the downstairs toilets, and left to boil. The theatre should be cleaned so that it is in a respectable condition, particularly if members of the public are expected. A notice to the effect that the rear row is reserved should be installed, since people sitting immediately in front of the projector can cause a shadow on the screen! Then the stewards can set up the ticket and food tables outside and get ready to receive guests.

Once the projectionist has indicated that he / she is ready, guests may be admitted. Everyone entering the theatre must be logged. Life members and personal guests who are not paying admission should be listed in full in the projectionist's log. A clicker-counter is used to record all others. Guest tickets, whether purchased in advance from the Union (or elsewhere) or from OFU directly, must be collected on the door, so that a breakdown of entries can be maintained.

When the projectionist is ready to start the film, one steward should go down to the front of the theatre to unlock the front doors.

5.3 The Performance

Once they have cleared up outside and filled in all necessary paperwork, stewards are free to watch and enjoy the film. They should be prepared to receive any latecomers quickly and quietly, and ensure that they do not walk in front of the projector.

The projectionist, meanwhile, is at his or her most busy in the first fifteen seconds of the performance. The following must be done: lights dimmed, music stopped, sound source changed from tape to projector, slide projector switched off, and film projector started. Once any quick focusing and framing problems have been solved, it is good practice to leave G-box in order to check the sound level in the theatre outside.

The projectionist is free to watch and enjoy the film (noise-shielded headphones are a must) or read or work, but must never leave the projector unattended. Performance logs should be completed; in particular, it is essential that the projectionist has an exact record of the number of people in the theatre, in case of emergency. The projectionist is recommended to watch for splices (reel breaks) and insert small pieces of paper into the take-up spool, to facilitate the despooling process. Splices can be identified by the sudden increase in damage and dirt on the film, and by the small mark that appears in the top right hand corner approximately eight seconds before the splice and again at the splice itself. The picture may also jump slightly and the sound may pop.

5.4 After The Film

It is simply a matter of reversing the setting-up process. Stewards should assist people out of the theatre (and wish them a cheery goodnight) before putting away speakers, torches, signage, the window gels and anything else used during the performance. The screen can then be wound up. The theatre should be cleared and cleaned as much as possible. If tables were moved in LT-H, they should be returned.

The projectionist must despool (if it is the last performance of the film) according to the standard instructions, i.e. without rewinding the film. The projectionist must then package the film ready for return, remembering to apply the return address label to the box. The slide projector must be returned to its original state ready for use by AVS. All electrical equipment must be switched off and the projector and rewind table covered. Then everything should be locked, the lights switched off, and finally, the projectionist should use the phone outside LT-G to call security and let them know that the theatre is empty. Keys should be returned to AVS immediately by placing them through the hole in the prep room door. The film should be returned to the Union reception either the same evening or first thing the following morning. G-box must always be left in a clean and tidy state, because it is a privilege not a right that OFU uses it.

5.5 Emergencies

The procedure for emergencies is self-explanatory, and is covered in sections 3.2.8 and 3.2.9.

Basically, the audience should be evacuated (the projectionist should switch on all lights) to the amphitheatre area and security called. If it is safe to do so, then electrical equipment should be switched off and the carbon dioxide fire extinguisher located in G-box may be used if applicable.

There are three emergency exits: the rear door takes people across the Rushes cafe roof; the front left door requires people to exit via the stairs near LT-A, B and F (although the exit is mysteriously signposted to the left, across the first floor foyer); and the front right door takes people through LT-H. This last is the fastest and hence preferred route, so it is essential to ensure before the performance that the escape route is not blocked with tables and chairs.

The telephone number to call security in an emergency is 3333. Never dial 999 on campus.

The number of people assembled in the amphitheatre should be carefully checked against the projectionists' log.

Emergency problems with the equipment is discussed in detail in section 7.

5.6 Receiving And Returning Films

As described elsewhere in this manual, Films generally come from one of two places: Filmbank, or the BFI. They should arrive a good few days before the first showing, and you should check that they have arrived in good time to contact the distributors if necessary. If a Sunday film has not arrive by, say, 2pm on Thursday afternoon, then ring and check with the distributors that it has been despatched. If you leave it until Friday then it will be too late - Saturday deliveries are expensive and unreliable. It is essential to return the film to the distributors straight after the showing, or they can charge large fines. Projectionists should get into the habit of sticking the return label (inside the box) on the box as soon as they open it. In the bottom of the box is a piece of paper telling you how to return the film, but at the moment, this is the procedure: For films from the BFI, there is no need to do anything. Simply take the film back to the Union reception after the showing (or first thing the next morning if the Union is closed when the film has been despoiled - but don't leave it too late... 10am or 11am seems to be OK) and it will be collected. This is arranged by the distributors, and you should phone them if there is a problem in getting the film ready for return (see details on sheet in bottom of film box, or ring the BFI main switchboard and ask for the bookings department). For Filmbank films, it is necessary to phone Securicor to arrange for collection. Ideally ring them on the Friday and arrange for them to collect it on Monday (but ensure that they realise that it is to be picked up on Monday and not straight away). Alternatively, phone them first thing on Monday morning and request for it to be collected the same day - they can't always promise, and so may collect it on Tuesday - Filmbank don't seem unhappy when this happens, but leaving it until Wednesday is pushing it. Fines for late return are more likely - from both distributors - for popular films that other film societies will have booked very soon afterwards.

Here is Andy G's idiot-proof guide to contacting Securicor:

- 1) Phone them on 0870 240 0555
- 2) Tell them you have a parcel for collection on Monday (or whenever).
- 3) When they ask for an account number, give them Filmbank's account number, which is 9052771, and telling them that you are returning to Filmbank. (They sometimes get confused and think that you are from Filmbank).
- 4) They may ask for the parcel number - they don't actually need the full number, just the first two digits. (Actually, they are checking that it isn't an 08 number. All our parcel numbers so far have started with 02).
- 5) Give them your telephone number as a contact.
- 6) When they ask for the collection postcode, tell them GU2 7XH (or possibly 5XH). *Ask them to collect from "The Students' Union Reception"*.
- 7) When asked what is in the parcel, it's "a film" (or "a video").
- 8) If they ask "what service?" then it is "standard".
- 9) They will give you a collection reference number - make sure you not this down. If they fail to collect the parcel then you should ring them back and quote this number, so it is important to remember it.

And just in case you have not yet got the hang of it, here is a helpful cut-out-and-keep reminder for librarians:

- * Check that the film has arrived on Thursday (for Sunday) or Monday (for Wednesday) and phone the distributor if not.
- * Always arrange collection in advance, if possible (ideally phone on Friday for Sunday films, or Tuesday for Wednesday films).
- * Check that the parcel gets collected (sometimes reception can be shut when they arrive to collect it - in this case they don't bother to try again later)
- * Be careful when it comes to Bank Holidays - don't ask them to collect it on Bank Holidays.
- * Don't use anything other than standard service unless Filmbank has authorised it.
- * If it comes to Friday and the film has still not arrived then it may be possible to collect it in person from the Hounslow warehouse. Phone Filmbank for details, but do it early - they close early on a Friday.
- * If you have to return a film other than via Securicor then the Post Office's Special Delivery has worked for us in the past - make sure you arrange for a suitable level of insurance.
- * Securicor will leave a collection note at reception when picking-up the film. It is worth keeping hold of this for a few weeks, in case something goes wrong or missing.
- * Remember that films should be returned with the head in the middle of the reel (i.e. as if projected on a portable projector and then *not* rewound). Occasionally the distributors will ask you to send the films directly to another film society. In this case, it would be polite to send the films rewound, i.e. with the head on the outside.

6 Equipment Manual

6.1 Slide Projectors

6.1.1 Types

There are two types of slide projector, both covered in the projectionists' course. The most common type is the carousel magazine type, of which there is one in G-box that AVS allows OFU to use free of charge. The other sort has a linear magazine. OFU owns one such projector, which lives at the opposite end of G-box.

Typically, slide projectors have a master on / off control, which will turn on a cooling fan; a lamp on / off control (that will not function if the master control is off); and a lamp brightness control. A brighter lamp setting means that the lamp will burn out sooner. Lamps also burn out if the projector is switched on and off repeatedly. To avoid this, slide projectors have a shutter called a "douser" that can be used to block light when no slide is inserted.

6.1.2 Alignment

With the magazine removed, insert a slide with plenty of light colouring on it. Line up the projector centrally on the screen. Remove the slide and rotate it through 90°, in order to check that the image is central and straight in both the horizontal and vertical directions.

Alignment is achieved using the screw-threaded legs of the projector, or less precisely using a wedge of some kind.

6.1.3 Focus

Insert a slide with plenty of contrast. Use the remote control to adjust the focus or, if necessary, manually rotate the lens housing.

There is no zoom control on a slide projector. The size of the projector lens is specifically set for a given theatre. A normal slide in landscape orientation will fit exactly in the height of OFU's CinemaScope screen when used in AVS' slide projector.

6.1.4 Use of carousel magazine

Take an empty carousel and examine it. There are usually 80 slots for slides, plus another slot, labelled 0, to which the carousel should be turned before placing it on or removing it from the projector. If, due to a blockage, the carousel was previously removed without rotating it to zero, then it must be reset by turning the base plate underneath the magazine until it clicks. In this way, the slot in the base is underneath the 0 position, so that slides placed in the magazine will not fall out.

Slides placed either in the magazine or directly into the projector must be aligned correctly. Some slides will be marked with the correct orientation, but it is simple to work out: simply look through the slide and adjust it until it is the correct way round, then rotate it about one corner so that it is still the correct way around, but now upside down. When all slides have been loaded into the magazine, place a cover over them and twist it to lock it into position. Then load the magazine onto the projector, ensuring that the 0 slot is placed in the correct position.

The remote control or the buttons on the slide projector itself can be used to advance or reverse through the magazine. There is also a slide eject button on the projector body. Holding down this button will eject the current slide so that the magazine can be turned to any slide position. The new slide will be loaded when the eject button is released. Equally, when the slide show is finished, use the eject button to return the magazine to position 0 before removing the magazine.

If a slide becomes jammed in the projector, it may be necessary to remove the magazine without returning it to position 0. In this case, insert your finger into the release clip on the projector, in the centre of the ring formed by the magazine, and the carousel will simply lift away. With the cover still on the magazine, turn it upside down and rotate the base plate back to 0 before continuing.

Some projectors have an automatic advance, that can be set to move between slides every few seconds. It is usually possible to set the delay between slides, in the range 5 to 60 seconds or thereabouts.

6.1.5 After use

Return the projector to its original state after use, ensuring that it is pointing towards the Lecture Theatre screen (not OFU's anamorphic screen) and that the remote control is plugged into it, if applicable.

The remote control lives on the lectern at the front of LT-G; it is effectively attached to a very long extension cable, and it is this that must be reattached after use.

6.1.6 Changing the lamp

If it is the middle of a presentation when the bulb fails, use the release lever on the underside of the projector to engage the spare lamp. Once the release has been used, it is necessary to open the projector housing to reset. Never touch a lamp with the bare hands, whether blown or not. If it has not blown then touching it will damage the fine coating on the glass, and the grease from your fingers will burn when the lamp is next used. If the lamp *has* blown then the chances are that it is still very hot!

6.2 Sound Equipment

OFU's sound equipment is quite self explanatory; there are two amps, one for the theatre and one for G-box, and a tape player. The theatre amp is used to select the input signal for both. Typically, as well as the projector and the tape player, there may be a microphone attached, the radio is sometimes useful, and it is sometimes necessary to attach e.g. a video player as well.

The sound volume and tone should always be checked by the projectionist in the theatre itself, both at a test screening and after the film has started.

Sound from 16mm film is always monaural.

6.3 Film Projector

This is only a brief reminder of lessons learned in the projectionists' course.

6.3.1 Power and lamp

The main power switch engages a cooling fan, that should be left running after the lamp is switched off until it is possible to feel cold air being blown out of the vents in the top of the projector. The lamp is switched on separately, and has a current (effectively a brightness) control. The lamp will not strike if the internal amplifier is switched on, in order to protect the sound equipment.

6.3.2 Lacing up

Follow the diagram on the projector body. Ensure that the gate is closed and that the lifting sound wheel has not been jammed open. Leave a loop of film at top and bottom of gate, otherwise the film will jump. The top of the loop should be as high as the mark on the spool tower, and the bottom of the loop should follow the obvious path around the tensioning wheel. Having the loop too large at the bottom will cause the film to come into contact with the wheel underneath which may damage it. A large loop will also throw the sound out of synch.

6.3.3 Running film

Turning the motor control by one notch engages the motor, without shining light through the film (there is a shutter or "douser" in the projector). If the projector sounds rough, stop the film immediately and check that it is laced up correctly, particularly with regard to the size of the loops above and below the gate. Otherwise turn the control to the next notch in order to open the douser.

It is wise to give the take-up spool a small nudge to start it, since there is a cut-out on the projector that engages if the film goes slack.

6.3.4 Focus, zoom, framing, alignment

Adjust the zoom control first by turning the end of the lens housing. Then focus using the large black knob on the side of the lens mount. Framing - i.e. ensuring that the top of the picture comes at the top of the screen, not at the bottom - is achieved with the small black knob. Tilt and alignment can be altered with the screw-threaded legs of the projector. Small changes in alignment may be achievable using the framing control, especially for a widescreen film, where it does not matter how much of the printed black bar appears at top or bottom of the image.

If the film is in CinemaScope, attach an anamorphic lens in front of the main lens before focusing. Ensure that the anamorphic lens is rotated correctly, otherwise the image will skew. Do not open the gate with an anamorphic lens in position, as this will damage both lenses.

6.3.5 Sound

Sound is obtained by shining a light through the optical soundtrack. There is a special lamp for this purpose, called an exciter lamp. When its control is activated, you will be able to see a red light glow (the actual exciter lamp itself) immediately in front of the sound wheel and a red LED will light on the side panel. If the former fails to light but the latter does illuminate, you must replace the exciter lamp.

Some films have a magnetic soundtrack; a small lever beneath the exciter lamp housing engages this mode. The Fumeo projector and most portable projectors have the capability of recording onto a magnetic soundtrack while the film is playing.

OFU uses an audio pre-amp for better quality sound. This must be plugged in to the mains via its transformer. It has a five-channel equaliser control on it that is currently optimally set, but may need future adjustment. The pre-amp was built in 1999 by long-time member Andy Griffin. It vastly improved the sound quality from the projector, since previously rough buzzing sounds were an undesirable but common feature of OFU's film presentations.

The projector also has an internal amplifier that can be used for testing purposes, but is not recommended for actual film presentations. This is the purpose of the multifarious volume and tone controls on the side panel which in general should not be touched.

6.3.6 Care

The lens can be completely removed from the projector by turning the focus knob. This should be done in order to clean behind it with a soft brush. Similarly, the film gate can be removed for cleaning. This helps prevent fluffy images.

The projector must be oiled at regular intervals - this is the purpose of the projector log book. There are two holes on top of the projector, labelled in red. The smaller hole requires oil every 20 hours of lamp burn time, and the larger hole every 100 hours. For simplicity, this oiling takes place after the nearest showing to multiples of 20 and 100 respectively, rather than adding 20 hours to the last recorded oiling.

The projector should be serviced every year, preferably over the summer holiday when it will not be used. The service should be arranged with Fumeo UK through AVS, who must also agree to be present during the service. However, services have a nasty habit of stopping the projector from functioning correctly, so it is wise to run a test screening as soon as possible after the service.

Certain parts of the projector can be replaced relatively easily, e.g. exciter lamp, and even the lens / gate assembly, but for the most part, it will be necessary to call a Fumeo service engineer. In particular, the main lamp can only be replaced professionally. This will be necessary after 2,000 hours of burn time - roughly ten years' use. If the lamp is not replaced after this time, it will gradually burn dimmer and dimmer until it burns out. (Older-style projector lamps used to fail in spectacular fashion, sending shards of glass flying around the projection box and requiring that the projector casing be hammered back into shape!)

6.4 Rewind Table

6.4.1 Basic operation

Film always passes from the left spool to the right. There are two controls. The first is a three-position switch. Centre is off, right is on, and left is cut-out mode. The other control is a speed knob.

To use the table, ensure that the film passes around the small spindle so that the speeding film is kept out of the way of the controls, and that it passes around the right-hand spool in an anti-clockwise direction. Also ensure that the speed knob is set to its lowest level before engaging the motor.

Flick the switch to the right and the motor will start. Gently increase the speed control until the right spool starts to rotate. Once the slack has been taken up, increase the speed as far as you like.

6.4.2 Cut-out mode

Using the switch in the left-hand position engages the cut-out mode. If the film goes slack so that the central spindle drops, the motor will cut out. Additionally, an inspection light illuminates to allow easy examination of a portion of film.

6.4.3 Warning!

The rewind table is a tricky piece of equipment to master. The left hand spool runs freely, so when the motor stops, the spool does not (due to its own momentum). Therefore the film continues running off the reel at high speed, causing damage to the film. To counter this, it is necessary to brake the left wheel using e.g. a scarf in your left hand. *Do not ever touch a moving spool*, as it is more than capable of ripping off fingers etc.

The film moves at about 1,500-2000 feet a minute so do not get in its way. The controls are located behind the speeding film, so always exercise extreme caution.

6.4.4 Another warning!

When the cut-out engages, the motor will stop suddenly, causing the same effect as described above. This can happen if the film slackens slightly during a high-speed rewind, particularly between large spools where the angle of the film is lower. Never leave the rewind table unattended or unwatched even for a split second.

6.4.5 Which way around for the left-hand spool?

Most film projectors have the film passing around the take-up spool in the same direction as the film reel. Our Fumeo, however, has the opposite arrangement: the spools move in opposite directions, in a figure-of-8 configuration. When a film is to be rewound after projection on the Fumeo, it must therefore be rewound in a figure-of-8 style. Follow the diagrams posted on the wall of G-box.

6.5 Splicers

6.5.1 Spooling up and down

Splicers are generally used in conjunction with the rewind table to make up and make down a film.

Find the correct spool, as indicated by the reel numbers printed on the start of the film itself (and often hand-written on a piece of leader). You do not need to remove the leader from the first reel, nor from the end of the final reel.

Place the film across the path in the splicer, ensuring it sits exactly on the sprocket pins. Use the cutter to cut the film at the required position. (OFU always uses the 90° cutter). If the film has been spliced before, it may simply be a matter of removing the old splicing tape, rather than making a new cut. It is standard practice to leave one or two frames attached to the leader, so that it is easier to locate the correct piece when it comes to reattaching them later.

Now move the film down so that the newly-cut end exactly reaches the mark at the centre of the splicer, and use the clip to hold it in position. Locate the other piece of film to which you wish to attach this piece; ensure it is not twisted before placing it in the other half of the splicer and clipping it into position as before. Take the free end of the splicing tape and pass it straight over the top of the film, following the guides on the splicer itself to check alignment. Press the tape down firmly onto the splicer. Close the lid and press the handle down sharply to make a perfect splice.

Unclip the film, rotate it and the splicer by 180° so that you can tape the reverse of the film as well.

Do not forget to mark the splice with a large white cross using a chinagraph pencil, otherwise you will never find it again, which will be a bummer when it comes to returning the film. Do not mark the film itself - only use chinagraph on top of temporary splices.

Some people mark the edge of the film at the location of the splice - OFU discourages this, because the chinagraph melts inside the projector and makes a mess.

When it comes to despooling, remember that the film must be returned to the distributor unrewound, so it must either be despoiled onto separate spools and then each spool rewound again (remembering that the “unrewound” state assumes the non-figure-of-8 projector) or rewind before despooling onto separate spools. The former is marginally easier because it is easier to find the splices, but the latter is probably a little faster.

6.5.2 Reel numbers

Reel numbers are located on the headers and footers, i.e. the bits of film usually removed when splicing reels together. Usually the numbers will be printed within the frames, so that they can be seen on screen as well as when examining the film. So reel one will have REEL-1 HEAD at its start and REEL-1 FOOT at the end. Often the reel numbers may have been hand-written on the header as well. Sometimes these numbers do not agree with the printed version. In this case, either panic, or examine the film to see if there are any indications as to which reel it is. The first and last reels can always be identified by the credits sequence. Generally either the final reel or the penultimate reel in a four-reel film will be the shortest one.

Some printers use an alternative numbering system for the reels, which is closely related to the 35mm print production process (in which each spool is approximately half the length, in terms of time). The head of reel 1 will be labelled REEL-1 but the foot will be REEL-2; thus reel 2 starts with REEL-3. The final reel may have REEL-6 or REEL-8 at its foot.

6.6 Portable Projectors

The same principles apply to portable projectors as to the Fumeo. However, they will not accept spools greater than 1,600 feet. If it is necessary to use a portable projector for a film showing, e.g. because the main projector has broken down, it is polite to warn the audience before the start that there will be reel breaks, and preferably before they buy their tickets!

Many portable projectors have the facility to rewind the film in the projector, either through the gate or directly reel-to-reel.

AVS' Elf projector is self-lacing. Move the bottom lever back to engage a series of guides, then start the motor and feed the film in through the marked slot (ensuring that the leader is completely flat and undamaged). When the film emerges from the other side, stop the motor and simply slot it onto the take-up spool as usual. (In fact, there are special spools available that do not even require an operator to do this.) Then, when the motor is restarted and the film goes taut, the guides will automatically retract. Clever, eh?

7 Equipment Troubleshooting

7.1 Broken Film

7.1.1 During film presentation

Symptoms: Film in projector slackens, cut-out engages, screen goes ominously blank and the sound goes down the plughole.

Immediate action: Switch off projector motor. Apologise to the audience, either with a slide if available, or preferably in person - or get a steward to do it.

Fix it: Unlace the projector. The film can be left on the projector while repairs are made. Decide how important was the scene that the film broke during to the overall plot.

If it is worth repeating, then clean up both broken ends of the film using the cutter on a splicer, removing any damaged frames completely. Check that the film is not twisted before joining the two ends together - a twist can be painfully difficult to get rid of. Now rewind the film by rotating the top spool about a dozen revolutions before relacing the projector. Restart the film.

If the scene was not worth repeating, then a simpler solution to a film snapping is to simply attach any old bit of header to the broken end, then spool it onto a new reel. The film can then be restarted from the exact point at which it broke.

When restarting the film, ensure that sound is switched off until after the projector motor has come up to speed, otherwise it will sound like an old wind-up gramophone is just getting going.

7.1.2 On rewind table

If the film snaps on the rewind table, the priority is to stop the free-spinning left reel before hundreds of feet of film fly across the room. Always have a brake (e.g. scarf) handy when using the rewind table. Also stop the take-up spool by switching off the motor. Clean up the ends of the film and reattach as in the projector case above, again ensuring that there is no twist. Return the speed control to the lowest setting before re-engaging the motor.

7.2 Film Projector Faults

7.2.1 Image

a) No image

Symptom: The film is running through the projector but nothing is on the screen.

Fix it: Hopefully, this is a test screening, not a performance.

Check that the lamp is on. If the lamp switch is on but there is no actual light shining inside the projector, then the lamp has failed to strike. Check that the internal amp switch is off, then switch the lamp control off and on again. If the lamp still fails to strike, then it may well be time to call a Fumeo engineer, and to very quickly despool the film so that it can be shown on a portable projector. (Only the first reel needs to be despoiled before starting the film presentation - the rest can be done while the film is running).

If the lamp is on, then ensure that you have switched the motor control all the way around (i.e. that the douser is open).

If there is still no image, then you had better start hoping that it is a *very* dark film...

b) Unstable image

Symptom: The image is unstable, and is jumping up and down.

Fix it: This is usually caused by the bottom loop of the film being too tight. If this is a test screening then it is best to stop the projector and relace everything from the sound wheel up. If this is a performance, then it is up to the projectionist's judgement whether to stop the film. If the film gets dangerously tight, the projector will automatically adjust itself, at the expense of the top loop.

c) The top of the image appears at the bottom of the screen

Symptoms: The tops of people's heads appear under their feet, University Challenge-style, or alternatively, characters' feet appear to be standing on their own heads.

Fix it: Adjust the framing control, and the vertical alignment of the projector, until the problem disappears.

d) Fluff

Symptom: The curse of all projectionists, fluff is present if part of the image seems to suddenly become obscured by the shadow of a small shrub.

Fix it: If this is a test screening, stop the film and unlace. Remove the gate plate (by pulling the tab) and the lens (by turning the focus knob to its fullest extent) then use a soft brush to clean inside the gate area.

If this is a performance, fluff can sometimes be removed by blowing sharply into the gate area. More stubborn fluff may be shifted by licking thumb and forefinger, then quickly pinching the moving film just above the gate. The stickiness of the saliva should carry the fluff away. (Similarly, a splice passing through the gate sometimes removes fluff). Otherwise it may be necessary to stop the film.

Very occasionally, fluff may have been present when the print was processed, in which case the shadow is printed on the film itself and there is nothing you can do about it.

e) Aspect ratio

Symptom: All the people are about two centimetres wide and four metres tall, and they change shape as they move about the screen.

Fix it: This is an anamorphic print (check the box - does it say Panavision or CinemaScope?) Fit an anamorphic lens in front of the normal lens. Framing and focus will not need adjusting.

7.2.2 Sound

a) No sound

Symptom: There is an image but no sound.

Fix it: There are a number of possible causes. Is the exciter lamp on? Is it working (i.e. can you actually see the lamp is alight through the red window)? Is the main OFU amplifier set to the correct sound source, and is the volume up? Is the pre-amp plugged in and working? Are you sure that this print has an optical, not magnetic, soundtrack? And finally (don't laugh, this has happened) did the stewards remember to put the speakers out in the auditorium and plug them in?

More subtly, the main OFU amp may have been inadvertently switched to an incorrect mode, e.g. Tape 2 Monitor may be on, or Speakers B. An indicator in the main display will let you know if this is the case. There is also a mute button which may have been accidentally pressed - this is indicated by the light in the volume control flashing.

Always turn the volume down before switching anything on or making any corrective adjustments - otherwise you might suddenly blast the audience.

b) Sound is grossly distorted

Symptom: The film sounds like it is being played underwater.

Fix it: This usually occurs when the spring-mounted wheel that is used to keep the film tight as it is fed onto the sound wheel has been jammed up, and therefore the film is *not* sufficiently tight on the wheel. Simply pop it down.

Small distortions are inevitable on 16mm prints, particularly older ones in which the optical soundtrack may have been damaged.

c) Sound is out of synchronisation with image

Symptom: Someone fires a gun, but you only hear it half way through the next scene.

Fix it: If the film was badly printed in the first place, there is nothing that can be done. However, often synchronisation problems are due to having too large a loop of film beneath the gate. In this case, there are simply too many frames between the gate and the sound wheel. The only way to fix it is to stop the film and remove the excess.

7.2.3 Motor

Symptom: The take-up spool does not rotate when the motor control is engaged.

Fix it: The cut-out is engaged. Wind the take-up spool gently by hand to take up the excess slack.

7.3 Lost Splices

Symptom: You suddenly panic because you forgot to mark the splices!

7.3.1 If the film has just started

Fix it: Do not panic. You can mark them with a piece of card as they pass through the projector. Watch the screen carefully at approximately 40-minute intervals, and you will notice: (a) a marked increase in damage and dirt on the image; (b) a timing dot in the corner of the screen about 8 seconds before the reel change; (c) a pop in the sound a possibly a slight jump as the splice passes through the gate, together with (usually) a scene change and another timing dot. As soon as you see this, lightly touch the film as it passes onto the take-up spool, and when you feel the splice, stick a piece of card or paper into the reel between the incoming film and the film already on the spool.

7.3.2 If the film has finished

Fix it: Start by panicking and running about LT-G swearing at the stewards. Now calm down and return to the rewind table. Start to rewind onto a 1600ft spool (i.e. as supplied by the distributor). Try and remember how much film there was on the final reel - i.e. was it full, or only half full or what? Some films have the exact length of each reel noted on the label of the box (usually the inside one, rather than the outer, which is used only for delivery purposes). When you are approaching the point where you think that the splice might be, slow the rewind table down, and lightly touch your finger against the moving film. You should be able to feel the splice.

Alternatively, there is a sneaky trick you can use on some films. Look very carefully at a segment of film on the side of the sprocket holes and sometimes you will be able to see a tiny serial number printed at intervals along the edge. This serial number will differ between the two reels, and so can be used to gradually centre in on the splice by winding back and forth. It is best to use a manual rewind table for this.

8 Useful Contacts Directory

Filmbank

Warner House, 98 Theobald's Road, London, WC1X 8WB
Telephone: 020 7984 + extension...
switchboard 5950; fax (for confirmations) 5951.
Bookings: Peter Matthews 5957; Dawn Sluman 5958.
Accounts: Brenda Daines 5962; Darius Boller 5963; Bhavkia Pandit 5964.
Website: <http://www.filmbank.co.uk>
Account no: GUIUNOSCI

BFI

Andrew Youdell
Telephone: 020 7957 8935; fax 020 7580 5830
e-mail: bookings.films@bfi.org.uk
Website: <http://www.bfi.org.uk/collections>
Account no: O163

National Screen

Main: 020 7534 6400
Orders: Unit 10, Westpoint Trading Estate, Alliance Road, West Acton, London W3 0RA
Telephone: 020 8992 3210 or 020 8992 3284; fax: 020 8752 0593
Finance: 12 Golden Square, London W1R 3AF
Telephone: 020 7534 6322, fax; 020 7534 6310
Account no: 678

MPD

153-157 Blackhorse Lane, Walthamstow, London E17 5QZ
Main: 020 8498 4450; fax: 020 8498 4451
E-mail: mpd@delta-display.com
Account no: O384

Securicor

Telephone: 0870 240 0555.
Filmbank's account number: 9052771.

University Arts Office

Pat Grayburn, Arts Co-ordinator: ext 9167
Susan Wallach, Arts Secretary: ext 2167

Useful websites

Many useful websites exist as links from the existing OFU website; however, in case that should be lost, here are some of the main ones:

<http://uk.imdb.com> - Internet Movie Database - for the most extensive collection of film reviews in the world!
<http://www.empireonline.co.uk> - Empire magazine.
<http://www.folkcorp.co.uk/uos> - UniS in the 1970s, in photographs, as taken by a member of OFU at the time. Useful contact.
<http://www.photobition.co.uk> - the company that actually stores and handles films for Filmbank.

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