Report to the Victorian Association of Photographic Societies from the VAPS AUDIO VISUAL Sub-Committee. March 2017

This is an initial report (pages 2 to 7) for presentation to the VAPS Camera Club delegates and Executive at the VAPS Half Yearly meeting March 19th 2017.

The VAPS Audio Visual Sub-Committee (AVC) was formed in December 2016 with eight appointments and a brief of requirements from the VAPS Executive. A précis of the NewsBrief announcement is detailed below as background to the AVC's work. This initial report serves as the required discussion document before the next stage of actual recommended changes to the Interclub AV rules drafted and circulated in time for the VAPS October AGM.

The VAPS Executive announced in the December 2017 edition of the VAPS NewsBrief the formation of a new AV Sub Committee. The new committee was charged with the responsible for drafting a set of AV rules for the Interclub that will explore and incorporate current techniques used Nationally and Internationally.

The first of two tasks required by the brief was to prepare this discussion paper with issues and directions for possible changes to the AV rules. This report and discussion paper is to be presented to Camera club delegates at the VAPS half yearly meeting on Sunday March 19th 2017.

After the circulation and making of this report available on the VAPS Web Site there will be adequate time for responses, comments and submissions to the AVC before the final report and proposed AV Rule changes submitted for voting at the October AGM and then, if approved, implemented for the VAPS 2018 Interclub.

AVC chaired by John Spring (Member at Melbourne CC & Macedon Ranges PS) and including;

Bob Thomas   (Member at Melbourne CC & Waverley CC)
Sue Rocco   (Member at Caulfield PS & Melbourne CC)
Jan Burt   (Member at Rosanna PS)
Ruth Burleigh   (Member at Warragul CC & Melbourne CC)
Phil Ryan   (Member at Doncaster CC)
Garry Patterson   (Member at Bendigo CC)
Julie Bird   (Member at Knox PS)

Reference advise from previous VAPS AV sub-committee chairman-
Barbara Butler (Member at Melbourne CC)

The AVC expects that time will be made available at the May 2017 VAPS Frankston Convention to have a question and answer session where AV producers and others can seek information and provide comments. The VAPS executive will announce a cut of date (June 30th) for formal submissions to the AVC in response to this report and discussion paper.

VAPS Audio Visual Competition Rules – Discussion Paper

The Audio Visual Sub-Committee (the Committee) has evaluated the existing VAPS Competition Rules with a view to ensuring that they remain relevant, particularly when compared with Audio Visual Competitions in other jurisdictions. The committee concluded that although the bulk of the existing VAPS rules reflect current practices and the expectations of A/V workers, there are several areas which are no longer appropriate either due to changing technology or evolving creative needs.

The Committee's discussions were based on several fundamental assumptions:-

1) Wherever both possible and practicable, the VAPS rules should be compatible with current practices in other jurisdictions, particularly APS.

2) A/V rules should create a framework which allows Audio Visual producers to use the full capabilities of modern digital cameras, and

3) A/V rules should be framed in such a way as to be readily understood by both the participants and the judging panels, avoiding undue complexity while simultaneously encouraging creativity and stimulating interest from newer entrants.

As an adjunct to these rules, the Committee also identified a need to create clearer guidelines which would enable both judges and participants to understand the interplay between the various components of sound, imagery and production. Such clarification would greatly enhance an overall understanding and appreciation of A/V making generally.

There was general consensus that the existing rules remain generally relevant, however the following primary issues were identified as warranting further consideration. A more detailed discussion follows in subsequent pages.

1) **The use of movement and simulated movement in A/Vs.**

   A/Vs in various jurisdictions now embrace various forms of movement, including video footage which is not currently permitted in Victorian A/Vs. Current technology and the prevalence of video capabilities in most modern cameras suggest that this issue needs to be re-visited.

2) **The 3.21 category.**

   There is a significant difference in the interpretation of this category in Victoria when compared to other jurisdictions. 3.21 in Victoria has been defined as being an A/V of exactly 3 minutes and 21 seconds. Elsewhere it has been defined as being an A/V of **up to** 3 minutes and 21 seconds.

3) **The current scoring system for A/Vs.**

   Currently, in Victoria, judges are asked to award points for the Audio, Visual and Production elements of an A/V up to a maximum of 20 points. These points are calculated by allocating a maximum of 5 points for audio, 5 points for images and a maximum of 10 points for overall production. Feedback from judges suggests that this structure is inadequate and should be reviewed.

4) **The terminology currently used in A/V documentation.**

   Some of the terminology used in current VAPS rules is dated, inappropriate and contrary to the underlying principle of readily understandable and self-explanatory documentation.

5) **Categories –** what is the value, if any, of subdividing Open competitions into categories?

A closer look at these issues.

1) **Movement**.

   Movement, or the illusion of movement, can be created in a number of ways in an A/V, including using the transitions embodied within modern A/V software (eg ProShow). Leaving aside software induced "movement", all other movement is created by displaying a succession of still images at a speed which creates an illusion of movement to a greater or lesser extent. Movement becomes more fluid when successive individual images are more alike and are displayed more rapidly. On the scale of perceived movement we thus have animation, time-lapse, burst mode and full video. All of these are well within the capability of modern digital cameras.

   Discussion:

   The committee agreed that all forms of movement should now be acceptable in A/V productions, including video. However, it was less clear whether or not all of these disparate forms of movement should be permitted in an "Open" section or whether some or all should be transferred to a more specialised section. A major difficulty lies in adjudicating the boundary between pure video and burst photography, where the frame rates can be almost the same and therefore almost indistinguishable from one another.

   A/V production is evolving on a parallel path to the evolution of cameras and photography in general. Just as we have adapted from film to digital images, we need to adapt to a broader range of options in the production of Audio Visuals. The committee appreciates that legitimising video in A/Vs is an inevitable part of this process and an essential step to ensure parity with other jurisdictions. The committee also accepts that there are likely to be transitional issues and that traditional A/V producers may have issues with accepting the newer technology. The committee considered three possible options, which are as follows:-

   a) **Allow all forms of movement (including video) into the existing Open Section**.

      Allowing all forms of movement in an Open section tends not to be popular with traditional A/V makers who see the medium as being an outlet for still images only. It is, however, the easiest solution in that it does not require adjudicators to differentiate between the various forms of movement. Moreover, it does not require the creation of a new section, which is consistent with a user friendly framework easily managed by competition administrators.

   b) **Create a separate section for A/Vs which contain Video .**

      If a separate section is created for A/Vs containing video, with all other forms of movement remaining in the Open section, then in all likelihood the new section would attract a relatively small number of entrants. This would perhaps create an imbalance in the value of awards across both sections, with entries in the new section competing against far fewer candidates making an award far easier to obtain. Segregating video footage from the existing A/V structure would be more popular with traditional A/V producers who see A/Vs as being primarily an extension of still photography rather than an entry into the world of video production. However, it would introduce an element of complexity which currently does not exist.

    c)   **Creating a separate section for A/Vs containing Video and/or any other forms of motion.**

If **all** forms of movement were moved to a Multimedia section, then it would create a more even competition given that many current A/Vs already use movement of one sort or another. However, it would deprive the more traditional A/V worker of some of the options currently available, (animation, time lapse etc) and force those producers to move to the Multimedia section of the competition which would not be popular. Movement in A/Vs has existed as a legitimate element for many years, and allowing the addition of video to impact on existing techniques would be an unintended consequence.

Irrespective of how the sensation of movement is created in an A/V, it was generally agreed that such movement should not exceed 20% of the total running time. (The illusion of movement created via software in the form of transitions etc would not be included in this total).

The committee formed a majority view that Option (a) above provided the least disruptive and most easily implemented way of introducing video to the A/V competition.

2. **The 3.21 category.**

There was general agreement that limiting A/Vs to a precise limit of 3 minutes and 21 seconds has been a useful initiative but one which no longer serves a useful purpose or conforms to the definition of 3.21 used elsewhere. An exact timeframe is no longer difficult to achieve given the precision of modern software. It was considered that the more widely accepted definition of "Up to 3.21" was likely to allow more flexibility, produce better and more varied A/Vs and be less of a deterrent or source of confusion to new A/V makers.

3. **The current scoring system for A/Vs.**

The committee's members include a breadth of experience in judging A/Vs, and there was universal agreement that the existing scoring framework is completely inadequate when it comes to producing a fair and accurate assessment of A/V productions.

Currently, an A/V is scored on the basis of a maximum 5 points for the audio component, 5 points for the images and 10 points for the overall production. It was agreed that this very limited scoring system should be expanded to enable greater flexibility in judging individual A/Vs and thus a more accurate result.

The committee recommends doubling the existing scoring range so that both audio and images might attract a score of up to 10 points each, with the overall production being marked out of 20. Assistance to judges in the form of a point allocation guide was also recommended (see attached draft)

Awarding points for the Audio Component.

An additional issue which arose was the need to review how points are allocated for the soundtrack of A/Vs. Many successful A/Vs achieve high scores for soundtracks which contain no artistic input whatsoever by the producer. The sound track is applauded for its appropriateness yet does not represent any artistic or creative input by the A/V's producer. The question considered by the committee was "Should an A/V with an excellent sound track, but

with no artistic input by the maker, be awarded as highly as a voiceover or a composite audio track requiring significant audio mixing skills? The committee consensus was that the answer to this question is "No".

Clearly a creative soundtrack should not be rewarded purely on the basis of originality alone. Original creative content needs to be *successfully* executed to warrant a higher score. However, judges need to be assessing the creative input of an A/V's audio track in addition to how appropriate that soundtrack is to the A/V.

The solution to resolving this problem is twofold. Firstly the points range for the audio component must be broader so as to enable a wider range of scoring. The second part of the solution lies in educating both entrants and judges as to the value to be placed on creative content. This should be reflected both in the rules and in accompanying guidelines for judges. A draft guide is appended to this report.

In addressing these issues, the committee advocated a minimum increase from the existing 5,5,10 scoring to at least 10,10,20. This change is essential, especially given the increasingly complex nature of A/V production.

4. **Terminology.**

The A/V rules have remained framed in the language of the past and do not always reflect current terminology or the current emphasis on readability which modern documentation is intended to achieve. There are a number of terms which the committee almost universally viewed as anachronistic by today's standards. The committee recommends removing that terminology from the revised rules. One of the challenges to encouraging new participants lies in making A/V production interesting, inviting and self-explanatory. This requires not only that we embrace newer technologies, but that we communicate using readily understandable language. The following changes are therefore recommended when referencing A/Vs, although not all terms are currently used by VAPS.

Removal of the following terminology:-
Diaporama (replace with Audio Visual)
Fiche (replace with Identification Sheet)
Fusion (replace with Multimedia)
Photoharmony (delete, as it is not self-explanatory and there is no demand for a specific category. This type of A/V is already able to be entered in an Open competition.)
Maker (change to "Producer")

5. **Categories**
The committee questioned the need and desirability of having a range of categories (humour, travel etc etc) and concluded that having such a range was neither necessary nor desirable given that categories simply fragment the competition and introduce unnecessary complexity. Having categories increases the likelihood that smaller categories will be under represented resulting in awards being easier to obtain in those categories. An award made in a competition with few entrants achieves little but to devalue the awards in more highly populated categories. The committee concluded that such topics would be far better left as suggested ideas or genres rather than offered as specific categories.

6.

Numerous other issues were discussed, but in the opinion of the committee none require significant change at this stage. Parity with APS in most things is an aspirational but not essential aim, provided that VAPS rules remain compatible with APS rules. The committee's investigation into these issues has probably been more extensive than a recently conducted APS review, and therefore could perhaps be used as the basis for subsequent discussions as A/V practices within VAPS evolve.

VAPS Audio Visual Sub-Committee
John Spring, Phil Ryan, Bob Thomas, Jan Burt, Julie Bird, Ruth Burleigh, Sue Rocco, Garry Paterson
(We also acknowledge advise and historic information from Barbara Butler Chairperson of the previous VAPS AV sub-committee)

A General Guide to Scoring the three elements of an Audio Visual Production.

The Sound is …	Points
An excellent, relevant audio track, with **major** creative input by the producer and a significant feature of the A/V	10
	9
An above average sound track with obvious creative input by the producer.	7
	8
A well-chosen audio track clearly supporting the A/V's theme and an essential and integral element of the A/V	6
	5
A generic audio track with no artistic input by the producer and readily replaceable by another generic track	4
	3
A poorly constructed audio track (either music or voice) adding little to the A/V as a whole.	2
	1

The Images are ….	Points
Excellent original images forming a major contribution to the A/V in terms of relevance and overall impact	10
	9
Above average original images, w ell suited to the A/V and supportive of its overall theme.	8
	7
Well taken, competent photography and relevant to the A/v's theme, but not above average.	6
	5
Images which either do not support the A/V or reflect a below average level of photographic competence.	4
	3
Images which are, out of focus inappropriate or poorly taken (excluding historical or esoteric images)	2
	1

The Production Is …..	Points
A professional grade result using a range of production methods and demonstrating an excellent grasp of A/V skills and techniques plus a high level of creativity.	20
	19
An excellent, well-constructed and effective presentation, which skillfully blends the various elements to produce a result well above average.	18
	17
A well-produced and very effective A/V demonstrating an above average skill level and use of software.	16
	15
A competent use of software to combine the various elements in a pleasant and enjoyable production.	14
	13
A well-presented and acceptable A/V but lacking the appeal of other more professionally produced A/Vs.	12
	11
A fairly ordinary presentation lacking any special qualities. Essentially a slide show rather than an A/V.	10
	9
A basic A/V with very limited use of software and with limited interest to hold an audience's attention.	8
	7
A very basic A/V lacking in professionalism and without any significant use of software or creativity	6
	5
A lackluster production with a very basic combination of elements and little or no originality.	4
	3
Essentially a poorly produced production with amateurish techniques and no audience appeal or originality.	2
	1