Film meets innovation at BRITDOC ‘07

Documentary makers ‘speed date’ leading innovators when Would Like to Meet returns

25th – 27th July 2007 Keble College, Oxford

The men and women shaping our future will gain a unique insight into the world of documentary making at BRITDOC 07 when Would Like To Meet returns to unite filmmakers with professionals from an unfamiliar industry.

Bringing together 20 of the UK’s leading innovators with 20 filmmakers, this year’s Would like to Meet the Innovators (WLTM) will provide a rare opportunity for filmmakers and innovators to share their experiences of working in two creative, yet radically different, industries. Adopting a “speed dating” format, the sessions will enable each innovator to spend 5 minutes with every filmmaker, to offer an insight into the workings of their cutting-edge and continually changing industry, hopefully paving the way for future collaborative ventures.

Hosted by the Royal Academy of Engineering, The Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council, The Institute of Engineering and Technology and The British Computer Society, WLTM will provide a forum for such engineering luminaries as Paul Westbury, who worked on the design of the Arsenal Emirates Stadium, alongside radical innovators like Iain Roberts, whose research into the mechanics of the bobsleigh will prepare him to compete at international level at the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics. With the aim of increasing awareness of the true nature, diversity and value of engineering, the event will enable these innovative engineers to discuss the wide-ranging issues which are raised within the course of their work. Covering varied topics such as nano-technology and climate change, these discussions may act as a catalyst for future documentaries between filmmaker and innovator.

Christo Hird, Managing Director and Executive Producer at Fulcrum TV and Chair of WLTM explains “WLTM is an essential, effective and entertaining way for filmmakers to meet those with great stories to tell. Every specialist with a passion believes there is a documentary in it; every filmmaker wants to find the subject that no-one else has spotted. But today it is harder and harder for these two parts of the documentary making process to meet. WLTM is a fast way for specialists to meet twenty very different filmmakers. People understand how they can collaborate. No time is wasted but valuable contacts are made.”
Editor’s Notes

Including...

Iain Roberts
PhD researcher/ Skeleton Racer
University of Edinburgh
Edinburgh University PhD student Iain Roberts is passionate about applying engineering principles to improve his understanding of his sport - skeleton bobsleigh. His PhD is on the mechanics of skeleton bobsleigh and ice friction. It involves F1 style instrumentation and data-logging to measure sled performance and ultimately build a new tailored sled. “It is difficult to achieve measurements in any dynamic situation. Limited space available inside the sled, combined with the cold temperatures, vibrations and forces greater than a space shuttle launch adds to the challenge of accurate data collection to improve sled design.”

Protected only by a lycra body suit, Skeleton bobsleigh involves sliding head-first down an ice track at up to 85 miles an hour on a sled steered by the slider shifting their weight. “It all depends on weight transference and actual bending of the sled. The better you understand how the sled interacts with the ice and how your movements transfer through the sled to the track, the better you can perform.” says Iain. He started sliding three years ago and competes at an international level - “Medals are won and lost by 0.01 seconds, a sled tailored to the individual could be the advantage that wins a gold medal.” Iain’s plan is to build up track knowledge and advance the sled design aiming for success at the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver.

Dr Eleanor Stride
RAEng/ EPSRC Research Fellow & Lecturer in Ultrasonics
University College London
Eleanor Stride is fascinated about the art and science of design, of the way things work and making them work better. She works on ultrasound imaging, at the interface between engineering and medicine, focusing on developing miniature diagnostic tools (in the form of tiny bubbles injected into the blood stream) for the detection and treatment of cancer, heart problem and arthritis – which represent three of the most significant health problems worldwide.

The microbubbles are first coated with a substance to form a “shell”. Once injected into the blood stream the shell acts as a contrast agent to provide strong ultrasound echoes and give much better images. The flow of blood, containing these coated bubbles, can be traced throughout the body and anomalies, such as poor functioning of the heart or cancer, can be detected.

These microbubbles can be used for targeted drug delivery and gene therapy. Drugs or DNA can be incorporated into the microbubble. The bubbles can be traced through the body using low intensity ultrasound and then destroyed with high intensity ultrasound to release the drug in a specific region, for example at the site of a tumour. By localising the treatment in this way, the harmful side effects associated with many forms of chemotherapy can be greatly reduced – dramatically changing patients’ lives.

Dr Graham Dorrington
Department of Engineering
Queen Mary, University of London
Graham’s research bridges aeronautical engineering with biological sciences allowing him to study one of the most fascinating but hardest to reach places on the planet - the tropical rainforest canopy.

Graham’s research involves designing, manufacturing and flying a new type of airship (dirigible) over the northern Amazon. This will not only capture the outstanding natural beauty of the canopy but provide the possibility of discovering new species of life such as insects, arboreal fungi and possibly even new species of tree.

Given the current high rate of tropical forest destruction, Graham’s research is not only timely but of paramount importance. He has worked with the late Survival Anglia cinematographer, Dieter Plage, and has already been the protagonist in a film called ‘The White Diamond’ directed by Werner Herzog (2004). The airship used in this film proved to be a good-stable filming platform, but was technically limited. The new airship Graham is developing will be more capable, although as he himself says there are many engineering challenges to tackle.

Dr Mark Miodownik
Head of the Materials Research Group
King’s College London
Mark’s passion for material science has led him to form innovative partnerships with architects, designers and jewellers in developing the next generation of nanotechnology. Ground-breaking developments such as concrete that can communicate when it is about to collapse, smart hip replacements that can self-heal and intelligent wallpaper that changes colour if you become angry are imminent and Mark’s team are at the forefront of developing this new generation of animate matter.

Mark received his doctorate in turbine jet engine alloys from Oxford University. In 2003 he was awarded a NESTA fellowship to create a Materials Library as interaction space for designers, architects and artists to collaborate with materials scientists. The Materials Library was featured in a short film commissioned by NESTA which was shown at the Royal Institution and the Cheltenham Science Festival.

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Professor Nigel Shadbolt FREng  
Professor of Artificial Intelligence  
Southampton University

Nigel has been working in the area of artificial intelligence for almost thirty years. Since 1978 he has been carrying out research in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Cognitive Science. In the course of his career he has studied and researched in Philosophy, Linguistics, Psychology, Artificial Intelligence and Electronics and Computer Science. He has published and presented results in all of these disciplines and has sought to develop programmes of research across traditional disciplinary boundaries.

He is currently working in the area of knowledge technologies and web science, focusing on the creation of the next generation of the web, called the Semantic Web. He has recently set up the Web Science Research Initiative, a joint venture between the University of Southampton and MIT, working closely with Sir Tim Berners-Lee, the inventor of the web.

Paul Westbury  
Partner, Buro Happold  
MA(Cantab) CEng FIstructE FICE FREng  
Access to Europe’s most exciting sporting venues is no problem for engineering consultancy giant Buro Happold’s youngest-ever director and partner, Paul Westbury, as he’s had a hand in engineering many of them.

He worked as the Project Engineer for the O2 arena in Greenwich, which was awarded the Royal Academy of Engineering MacRobert Award for Innovation. He now specialises in the engineering design of sports stadia and has worked on many innovative and challenging projects in both the UK and abroad including the new Emirates stadium for Arsenal FC, Ascot Racecourse, the new Lansdowne Rd stadium in Dublin, the Winter 2006 Olympics Speed Skating Oval, Turin and helped prepare London 2012’s bid.

In 2000 Paul became a Partner and Director of Buro Happold at the age of just 30, making him the company’s youngest partner. He is now the Director of Buro Happold’s Design & Technology Board where he promotes blue sky thinking and innovation and has developed a reputation as a holistic problem solver who promotes excellence in design. He added “youngest ever” achievements when he became the Royal Academy of Engineering’s youngest ever Fellow in 2003 at 33.

Professor Alan Winfield  
Hewlett-Packard Professor of Electronic Engineering  
University of West England

Alan is an engineer and an academic and his research is in the area of biological robotics and is focused on the scientific and engineering applications of Swarm Intelligence.

He is deeply interested in mobile robots for two reasons: (1), they are complex and potentially useful machines that embody just about every design challenge and discipline there is and (2), robots allow us to address some deep questions about life, emergence, culture and intelligence in a radically new way, that is by building models. Thus, for Alan, robotics is both engineering and experimental philosophy. He argues that intelligent robots will become ubiquitous in the near future and we therefore need to start a dialogue now about the ethical and moral questions that will arise.
Contacts

For further information / Use of pictures / Interviews

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