



New Found Sound

NC/U | 1hr 15m incl. Q&A chaired by film historian Richard Weeks

Performing live: Laura Namyslo, Sunny Li, Charlie Franklin, Jack Cunningham, Timi Somefun, Youth Music Initiative Falkirk Junior and Senior Trad Bands

Thanks to music tutors Claire McCue, Calum McIlroy, Marc Duff and John Somerville

10am on Sunday 23 March 2025

Screening material courtesy of National Library of Scotland's Moving Image Archive and the Scottish Association of Moviemakers

New Found Sound 2025

New Found Sound is an initiative that has been part of HippFest from the start, run in partnership with Youth Music Initiative and the National Library of Scotland Moving Image Archive. Young musicians from Falkirk District schools work with silent film composition mentors and their music tutors to compose and perform new scores for silent shorts selected from Scotland's National Moving Image Archive. Musicians from the Youth Music Initiative Senior and Junior Trad Bands provide live accompaniment for a further selection of films with arrangements of traditional tunes. This year's programme includes the following titles. We are grateful to Kevin Cameron for providing the programme notes on the films of Falconer Houston.

***Tales from the North: Highland Pink Elephants (1958)* accompanied by Falkirk Junior Trad Band**

The Scottish Association of Amateur Cinematographers (SAAC), now known as the Scottish Association of Moviemakers, organised the Scottish Amateur Film Festival from 1949 in association with the Scottish Film Council. The festival's prizewinning films were initially presented at Woodside Terrace, before moving in the 1970s to the Cosmo Cinema in Glasgow (now the Glasgow Film Theatre, GFT).

Tales from the North was filmed in Pitlochry, the original location of what became an annual tradition: SAAC's Crieff weekend. The film, through a series of vignettes, offers a whimsical take on human foibles. *Highland Pink Elephants*, for example, follows a thirsty man who visits the Blair Atholl distillery, indulges in its hospitality, has one dram too many and begins to hallucinate.



An Apple a Day (1941) accompanied by Falkirk Senior Trad Band

Prize-winning film at 8th Scottish Amateur Film Festival, 1941. Selected as one of the 10 best fiction films entered in the 1934-41 festivals at the 9th Scottish Amateur Film Festival, 1942.

Frank Marshall developed an interest in photography and film as a schoolboy, eventually making the family story film his signature style. His son, daughter, and later his grandchildren served as his willing actors. He wrote, directed, produced, edited, and sometimes acted in his films, which often carried his wry and gentle humour. Marshall also designed and built his own sets and props.

His films, often centred on his immediate family—his wife Chrissie, daughter Muriel, son Nairn, and later his grandchildren—explored familiar themes with a distinct authorial signature. These comic narratives open out from small incidents that disrupt the tranquility of home life in Whitecraigs, a suburb on the South Side of Glasgow, before equilibrium is happily restored.

Marshall played a key role in developing Scotland's amateur cinema infrastructure. He was the first chairman of the Scottish Association of Amateur Cinematographers (SAAC) when it was founded in 1949 and served on the board of the Scottish Film Council until 1972.

An Apple a Day received significant recognition, a prize-winning film at the 8th Scottish Amateur Film Festival in 1941, and at the 9th Scottish Amateur Film Festival in 1942. It was selected as one of the ten best fiction films entered in the 1934–1941 festivals.

Falconer Houston Animated Shorts

Filmmaker Falconer Houston was a familiar figure to fellow Paisley Buddies, especially in art and education circles. He was a leading light of the Paisley Art Institute, through which he regularly exhibited his ceramics and paintings. He taught generations at Castlehead High School where he was a fondly remembered art teacher, until his retirement in 1989. Despite his profile the extent of his film making was unrecognised until 2015. Yet without Falconer's eclectic work, which ranges from observational documentary to period drama, we would have very few moving images of the post-war period in Renfrewshire. It speaks volumes about Falconer's own unassuming modesty that such a prolific and accomplished filmmaker could be forgotten in his own lifetime, his films scattered throughout various Local Authorities departments.

I became involved in bringing Falconer's work to a wider audience in 2015 through a commission from Richard Weeks who was then Renfrewshire Council's Film Project Producer. Richard has done a considerable amount of work in consolidating and celebrating



the film history of the region. To this end he invited myself, a local filmmaker, to make a film that gave an overview of Houston's work. Richard had first been alerted to Houston's work when a film *The Bute Pottery* was deposited with Paisley museum by the widow of the subject of the film, Alex Sharp. Given the age of the film Richard assumed that the maker of the film had passed away but, some time later, he spotted Falconer's distinctive name in a catalogue for Paisley Art Institute. Very soon after that contact was made and the extent of Houston's film career revealed. I had worked with Richard on a number of archive related projects and had also made a biography of Houston's contemporary at Glasgow School of Art: Alasdair Gray, and so was given a small commission to make a short about Falconer which would serve as an introduction to his work.

As a genuinely lovely and inspiring character with an infectious laugh, meeting Falconer was a real privilege. To say he was sprightly seems a bit patronising but even in his 80s he was curious and energetic with a self-deprecating and mischievous sense of humour. I filmed him on a number of occasions and each time he was a bundle of delight and incredulity at being the subject of a film, rather than the maker. The first time was at the launch of *Sanctuary*, the first film work ever to be exhibited at the Paisley Art Institute Exhibition, albeit 50 years after it had been made in 1965! Houston described it as the only film he had made as a piece of self-expression. It is a beautiful slice of coolly controlled art-house cinema centred on the plight of a disaffected music teacher.

Sanctuary paints a rather bleak and angsty view of the experience of creatives who find themselves teaching in urban schools. The teacher experience represented is very far from the exuberance that seemed to be more characteristic of the day-to-day life of Falconer's classroom. The films in our New Found Sound programme are a testimony to the excitement and creativity that he could generate as a teacher. Mixing various techniques from 2D cut outs to pixilation they show pupils creating worlds which expand the bounds of the classroom through the medium of animation. The polished results of the films suggest a laborious process as stop frame animation demands high levels of investment in time and planning. Unlike today where results, via smart phones and tablets, can be accessed immediately, shooting on 16mm celluloid in the 60's and 70's would have involved long wait times to get films back from the laboratory. There would be no guarantees that you had exposed or indeed loaded the film properly. From my own experience of working in education, Mr Houston's willingness to involve high levels of risk and experimentation would be something that I suspect very few teachers today would expose themselves to for fear it might come back to bite them on the bum.

In making my own film about Falconer the freedom to inspire pupils was a theme he returned to again and again. He kept strong ties to current education trends and was highly



critical of what he saw as the academisation of art in schools. In his day the art class was a place for kids who struggled with formal education to shine. Not that he lacked ambition for his charges. One of the key works in Houston's oeuvre is *The Cry of the Pee Wee*, a period film about the covenanters in the 18th century. The scale of this production is truly epic and brought in multiple departments in the high school which produced it. This multidisciplinary approach prefigures some of the most radical ideas in education. In making my film we tracked down some of the young participants now in late middle age. For each of them their involvement was a formative experience. The film itself won Houston one of the few accolades in his career as it picked up the top prize at the Amateur Film Competition held at the Cosmo. Judge Basil Wright (an important film maker in his own right), commented "I have never seen a film with such intensity of purpose".

As consumers and indeed makers of film we are continually exposed to the heroic notion of filmmakers as controlling tyrants. Houston's work suggests another path. One that is participative, inclusive and curious. I have no doubt that Falconer would be completely tickled to learn that the work that he made with young people in the 60's and 70's is being used to inspire current generations.

KEVIN CAMERON

Kevin Cameron is an award-winning filmmaker, educator and artist based in Lochwinnoch, Renfrewshire. He has made films for BBC, STV and Canal Plus in France. A graduate of the Universities of Glasgow and Bristol, he has a long-standing interest in participative filmmaking and has helped many communities across Scotland make their own films.