

The Silverhawk Sci Fi Film Project - Diversity and the Digital Revolution: a Group of Actors with Learning Difficulties Making a Film

Chris Hill

The Silverhawk Documentary is a film about a group of people with learning difficulties making an adventure film in collaboration with a host of outside experts including dramatherapists, actors, a film-maker, artistic makers, a storyboard artist and costume designer. This documentary will be of interest to dramatherapists from the perspective of performance – it tells the story of how we failed to complete the film, mainly because of the pandemic, and describes what we all took away from our efforts in a positive and uplifting way.

The backstory is that the presenter ran a drama group for people with learning difficulties from 2007 to 2021 at a group home for people with learning difficulties in Devon, UK.

Our drama group consisted of a bunch of enthusiastic individuals and our two Down's Syndrome leads were naturally talented actors. Having experimented with making a couple of films previously, the group were keen to do more and the idea of creating a sci-fi adventure story was born, mainly due to one member of the group being a keen Star Trek fan.

We wanted to improve on what we had done previously and began to fund raise in order to make props and sets and to buy in the expert help we needed.

Unfortunately, the Covid pandemic sabotaged this ambitious plan. Instead, we decided to make a film which tells what happened when we tried. It includes interviews with those

taking part including the actors with learning difficulties, dramatherapists, actors, and makers of all kinds.

The end result is a 30 minute documentary which was shown at a public screening at the Phoenix Arts Centre in Exeter, UK during February 2023. This documentary tells the story of our endeavours and is mainly narrated by Stephanie Lewis who was one of our drama-group actors.

Biography

Chris Hill is a former HCPC Registered Dramatherapist and a full member of the British Association of Dramatherapists.

My background as an Dramatherapist in the NHS over 27 years, until my retirement, includes working with those with acute and enduring mental health issues, people with learning difficulties and older people with dementia.

During the mid-eighties I was co-ordinator of a Community Arts Projects sponsored by Exeter City Council and the Devon Partnership (NHS) Trust. This Community Programme had a brief to design and implement numerous creative and multimedia projects in the community with an emphasis on the inclusion of people with learning disabilities.

I received an MA in Theatre Practice from the University of Exeter in 2000 where my research interests included shadow theatre and exploring different approaches to creating and then consolidating the process of 'drama performance' into film.

Recent publications and conference presentations

The Silverhawk Documentary, Dramatherapy Southwest Conference, 4th February 2023, Exeter, UK.



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