

TREATMENT NOTES

These notes offer some support to the summary but the project at this stage necessarily remains flexible - and experimental:

It is essential that 'original' disc technology is used where indicated, and whilst a rare (reconstructed) working machine has already been used in earlier work the new work requires variants on this including a colour disc scanner. Research shows that by modern standards these machines are comparatively simple to make, involving only basic electro-mechanical components. As this takes place, and as experiments are conducted into achieving acceptable image production and subsequent optical transfer capability, detailed treatment and scripting will evolve alongside.

The image of the Baird character will always be faint and only ever appear (shot mid to close-up) on a present-day camera - an almost subliminal reflection behind the scanned imagery. Likewise, Taynham and Howe will probably appear initially in the background but 'come up to the surface' to emerge as a 30 line image. The dummy will only ever appear (CU) on scanner. All the dialogue will be conducted across these layers.

There will be no conventional establishing shots, and no long shots. They will be mostly soft-edged near-achromatic close-ups - the whole being on an 'intimate' scale 'close to the surface'. The exceptions will be the 'glossies' of Stooky Bill's TV - the only images to have a hard-edged feel layered in front of the rest. These will be a slowly emerging 'TV history', all static shots (on modern camera and processed), at first only superimposed outlines - virtually unrecognisable - from key images, then progressively filling out with detail with a look of diminutive cardboard cut-outs, piling one over the other in the bottom half of the screen, eventually to emphasise the most recent output and its attendant electronic techniques. This coda must be very slick. Meanwhile the dummy's head will fill full frame in 30 lines (the fatuous but self-assured Kong looking in through the window).

The audio elements will principally comprise: Original sound generated by the disc-scanning machines (derived from the vision signal); character voices; atmospherics; and disc-scanning sound synthesized and phased into an emerging conglomeration of sound from multiple TV channels - structured as a 'musical' score.

A working replica of the Stooky Bill head is already in my possession - a puppeteer will animate. All disc-scanned imagery will be transferred optically - and Baird and (in part) Taynham and Howe recorded directly - in-studio on Beta SP camera/sound/recording equipment. Post-production requirements include 3 machine offline and online editing and the use of a video dedicated computer (DVE).

DH 25/1/92.

THE TALE OF STOOKY BILL

'Fear hung over me like a dark cloud in my childhood, fear not only of God but of intangible evil, ghosts and spirits, creatures of unimaginable horror, waiting and watching for an opportunity...' John Logie Baird

The proposed work will draw on aspects of the earliest experimental phase of television as a foundation. It will adopt and literally use the first successful technology and through this allude to key historic moments and events at the very beginning of transmission. Woven into it will be a fictionalised element obliquely suggesting an alternative view of subsequent corporate determinism, and it is seen as a much expanded development of my short tape *Stooky Bill TV* made in 1990.

Visually it will posit opacity, texture, even roughness - a sense of the concrete - as in part a metaphor for the 'tangible' side of the screen in contrast to transparent and graphic modes of re/presentation. A significant part will be originated on replicas of Baird's earliest 16-30 line disc-scanning camera/transmitters (optically transferred), and key visuals will be created by this apparatus: It will acknowledge, albeit indirectly, his first unique successes through, for example, emerging 'shadow' transmissions, 1924; the first tonal image, *Stooky Bill* 1925; the first human image, William Taynham 1925; his Phonovisor invention, first vision recordings on wax disc 1926; the first trans-Atlantic transmission, *Stooky Bill* and a Mrs Howe 1928; to the first colour images, 'we found strawberries came out particularly well' 1928.

In the background, behind this veil of ongoing visual texture, the faint image of Baird (shot by modern camera) will appear from time to time engaged in fragmented dialogue with *Stooky Bill* - significantly his ventriloquist's dummy - who will have also appeared (at the surface in 30 lines). Bill the protagonist, the first convincing illusion ever transmitted, will progressively but subtly assert himself: Initially he is grateful for his inception, but eventually he assumes an arrogance and indifference - obliquely echoing Baird's mounting problems with the growing establishment (notably Reith and others at the BBC, his colleagues, the Marconi Co, etc) - and after rebuffing claims by his rival Taynham and later Mrs Howe, Bill proposes that future developments might be best served by himself... At the same time, through further episodic layering now in front of the disc-scanned visuals, a contrasting glossy 'cut-out' coda will begin to emerge (multiple frozen shots via dedicated computer) - a parade of *Stooky Bill's TV*.

These contrasts of layer upon layer; the earliest and the latest; the textural and the graphic; the still and the live imagery - both in and outside the (30 line) frame (and this itself moving within further fixed then moving frames - shades of my distant *TV Fighter*); will all parallel juxtaposed fact and fiction and the viewer's fluctuating belief in an intentionally elusive narrative - a story of TV.