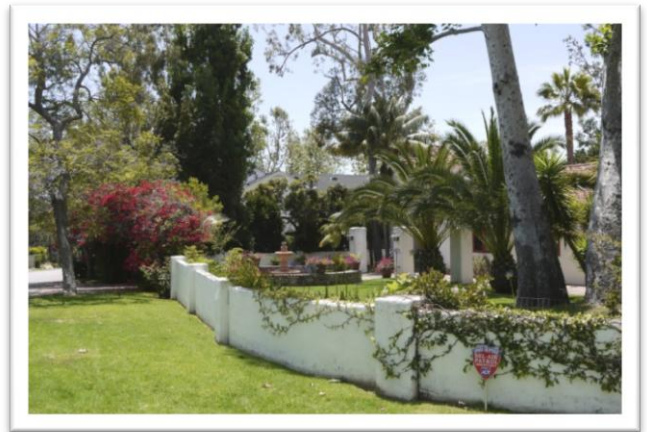


REPORT FROM LA ON THE "PRODUCED BY - AFCI" CONFERENCE, DISNEY STUDIOS BURBANK, LA
3-5 JUNE 2011

We left Heathrow at 11.30 on the dot. Uneventful but sardine style packed 11½ hour flight. Watched 3 films, tried unsuccessfully to sleep.

Arrived mid afternoon at LAX and the line – sorry queue - to get through Immigration was long – took about ¾ hour – finally collected our luggage and Fiona and I shared a (very expensive) taxi to our accommodation.

Driving through the city, around the hills between LA and Burbank felt like holiday surroundings with the Sun, the Mediterranean landscape, Palm trees everywhere, Jacaranda trees in flower, as well as Bougainvillea of various colours and Oleander.



Oakwood Apartments, Toluca Lake, are a collection of more than 20 blocks of apartments, 3 or 4 stories high, settled into the hills just above Warner Studios and, I later found out, Forest Lawn Cemetery.

There is plenty of parking, ferocious rules about who can come and go, 2 very pleasant outdoor pools with Jacuzzis nearby and children's paddling pools. Its like a sophisticated campsite with a small shop – but otherwise isolated from the outside world. The advantage for us was it was cheaper than the Sheraton – the other accommodation with a deal for the show - and the shuttle bus to the Disney Lot called in at Oakwood as well as the Sheraton. However, we were to find out that the shuttle was not that reliable.



It very quickly became apparent that the only way to get around to have meetings etc outside the parameters of the Conference was to hire a car. Taxis are expensive, distances are huge and there is very little public transport.

My chief reason for attending the show was to make contact with members of the Location Managers' Guild of America: LMGA. The plan was to meet at the "Produced By – AFCI": opening party on Thursday evening 2nd June at the Sheraton. I caught the shuttle bus from my end of Oakwood, and went off to the Sheraton with a few of the other people staying there. Fiona, Kaye and Belle all went to the party organised by the British Film Commission at the London Hotel in West Hollywood.

Vance Van Petten, Executive Director of the Producers Guild of America (PGA), was introduced by Mary Nelson, President of the Association of Film Commissions International (AFCI). Both welcomed us all to the first time the event was taking place as a combined celebration of both organisations. They both expressed their gratitude to Disney for providing space at their studios to host the stalls – outside for the first time. The huge programme of speakers for small, bigger and large opportunities to learn from established Producers. Stéphane Martinet, deputy Director of the Ile de France Film Commission then invited delegates to Cineposium in Enghien-les-Baines, France, about 20 minutes north of Paris on 12-14 September 2011.

I found Tony Salome, who introduced me to about a dozen other LMGA members. And I took the opportunity to introduce Stéphane to Tony and others. We fancied about trying to set up a Fam trip to coincide with Cineposium. Who knows how many members from the US would actually be able to make the trip, but it certainly became an interesting plan to aim for. Stéphane would obviously be delighted to help in any way he could.

As well as the LMGA members I also was introduced to Edward Duffy who is the Business Agent for the Teamsters local 399 area. Location Managers working in mainstream Film Production have to be members of the Teamsters Union 399 on the West Coast, and Directors Guild of America in New York. In order to qualify to join the Union, a potential member has to have done a certain amount of work at a certain grade and then has to work their way up the ladder in a strict process.

Parties are a good way to meet lots of people, but not to have practical discussions about what we could and should be doing to take forward our objective to get a separate category heading in the IMDb Crew lists. Lori Balton who is chair of the LMGA this year was not able to make the party for personal reasons – so Tony & I decided to arrange another meeting between the two of us plus Lori for lunchtime on Saturday – in a location that Lori could easily get to from her home.

Carol Segal (treasurer) a location manager who started her career almost as late I as did, originally from England, gave me a lift to the tail end of the British Film Commission party at the London Hotel on Sunset in West Hollywood. On the way we chatted about how and why we became Location Managers, and how in the US you need to qualify to join the Teamsters Union and what Carol did in order to qualify for Union and Guild membership. Carol has clearly become a vital part of the LMGA.

One of the things we were all agreed on, if we can swing it with the organisers and without treading on the toes of the Teamsters; the GOLM and LMGA should host a joint seminar next year talking about our roles, what we do and how our worlds collide and part.

The following day I had a meeting with the Production Designer and Line Producer of ARGO – a film to be directed by Ben Affleck and shooting in LA, Istanbul and one day in London en route. Having already scouted in London in May as the team were travelling from Istanbul to LA, there was work still to be done to secure the locations that Ben and Production Designer, Sharon Seymour, had chosen and I thought it would be good to meet up on their home territory. The production is funded by Warner Brothers so I thought maybe the meeting would be a casual stroll down the hill from Oakwood Apartments to the studios. But things are rarely that easy – their office was in Brentwood, which is between Bel Air and

Santa Monica. So having navigated for Fiona through the wilderness of Los Angeles on Thursday I had enough confidence to hire a car and brave American traffic.

We had an enjoyable and productive meeting – excellent cup of coffee with Sharon - and strangely the US Location Scout on ARGO is Lori Balton, President of the LMGGA, so we had an opportunity to meet briefly and to compare location photos. Lori is looking for the interior to a building that I am hoping to secure the exterior in London.

Drove back to Oakwood, confidently navigating the route, and having shopped in a health food store that sold produce that wasn't 90% sugar! Arrived in time to go to another party with Fiona, Jenny and sadly not Kaye who was suffering from some horrid stomach bug. The shuttle bus eventually came to Oakwood to pick us up and take us to Disney where there was a wonderful party in front of the building held up by the 7 dwarfs.



There was no way we could ignore the fact that we were at Disney Studio.

We were full of admiration for the way in which delegates from the US came up to us, introduced themselves and asked us what we were doing, who we represented etc. It was done with such charm and candour, I was full of admiration.

On the return journey after the party Jenny Cooper, Fiona and myself were the only 3 people returning to Oakwood after dropping off the rest of the coach passengers at the Sheraton.

The show was magnificent – very well supported and in the open air. Breakfast was a feast on arrival – fruit, coffee, pastries, juice and once again Vance Van Petten and Mary Nelson welcomed all the delegates, thanked Disney and the show got going. Belle Doyle, Fiona Francombe, Kaye Elliot and Jenny Cooper were very generous in allowing me to hang out with the UK crowd on the stand that Belle had booked for Creative Scotland way back in the early Spring. So thank you to them all.



My previous experience of the AFCl show was in 1996 in the Downtown Convention Centre. All indoors, hot and the people visiting seemed fairly uninterested in filming in London.

This occasion was very buzzy, many producers visited the stand as they had been on Fam Trips to the UK, to London in particular, and came to visit friends on the stand. Andy Weltman and Tara Halloran made introductions and it was all a great fun as well as feeling that relationships were solid.



Visiting the rest of the show was exciting and impressive – more so than these pictures show.



I went to a session in a tiny arena – not much bigger than a standard easi-up – to hear Andy Fraser – VP of Physical and Post Production for Morgan Creek – and Marc Abraham – Producer and Writer of Children of Men amongst many other projects. Also part of the session was Donna Zuchlinski, the Ontario Film Commissioner. Ontario offer a significant Tax Break, but it was clear that the reason people shoot in Ontario is that there are competent crews in the State – as well as the Tax break – which means that films make considerable savings by being there.

Other States or Countries that offer better Tax Breaks do not become an attractive opportunity if it means bringing crews in from LA – so we better make every effort to ensure that skilled crews continue to be trained and given experience in the UK through indigenous production of both Film and TV.

I took notes on the session – but the most significant thing that Marc said, and he was backed by both Andy and Donna, was that the whole business of filming in Ontario was made simple and a pleasure by the competence and hard work of the Location Manager.

This was Music to my ears and ammunition for the attack on the walls of IMDb.

Lunch with Lori and Tony took place in the Cat & Fiddle Pub on 6530 Sunset Blvd, West Hollywood.

We discussed the previous approaches, the fact that Tony had met a person in the LA office of IMDb – has her card, had written to her with no result. Had phoned her – no answer.

Tony feels that IMDb consider that it is too expensive to create a separate heading – but that perhaps the key might be to offer to pay money to make the change.

GLM had sent a letter in 2009 had no response

What we decided was:

- We would independently try to contact IMDb to express our request for there to be an extra paragraph with the heading in the crew lists: Location Department
- That we try to find an individual to deal with both in LA and the UK
- Col Needham - who started IMDb still lives in Bristol – we need to find him.
- I will contact the Canadian Location Managers through Ontario Film Commission to make an approach from their end
- We would try to arrange for a joint seminar to take place at AFCI next year
- That we would definitely keep in regular touch

At the end of the show on Sunday the stalls were packed away remarkably quickly and Kaye, Fiona and I went out for a meal at The Smoke House – almost opposite the entrance to Warners Studio. George Clooney is a regular customer, and is apparently why his Production Company is called Smoke House.

We flew back to London on Monday evening, but as we had not been able to book any meetings, we has a free day to spend the day exploring until it was time to catch the flight.



