

BKSTS/CEA

**ALL INDUSTRY
CERTIFICATION
OF BASIC
PROJECTION
STANDARDS**

INTRODUCTION

The BKSTS Cinema Technology Committee, in conjunction with the CEA, is trying to establish a means of certifying the standards of projection in a manner that would be acceptable to all the major cinema exhibitors and independent cinema operators. To this end a sub committee with representatives from Cineworld, Odeon, and Vue Cinemas, plus others such as UCI, VUE and independent representatives, has been meeting to set out the minimum criteria necessary to be considered to be an experienced projectionist. It is hoped that at the conclusion of their meetings, these criteria will be accepted by the CEA and all its members.

The reasoning behind this move is twofold. Firstly, all Exhibitors must be aware of the impact of European Community regulations that are imposed on many aspects of working practices, often with little consultation, and sometimes to the detriment of a particular industry. The changing of Licencing legislation from Police to Local Authorities may also have an impact. The U.K. Cinema Industry should be ahead of the game, with an all industry accredited assessment scheme.

There is a need for this approach to certifying standards. One concern relates to Health and Safety issues, where untrained or poorly trained staff may be left in charge of projection rooms full of potentially dangerous equipment. Projection staff must be shown to be fully competent not only in film presentation but also with the basic knowledge of the projection and sound equipment that they are using.

The majority of cinemas are also reliant on the projection staff as part of the evacuation procedure in the event of an emergency. Ideally we as an industry should be able to demonstrate that all these procedures follow a common standard, even though the systems may vary, and that they satisfy all Local Licencing requirements.

Secondly, from a business point of view poor or insufficient training leads to prints that, even on their first week of release, are already scratched and marked through poor film handling. Customers may not be aware of the reasons for the scratches and blobs over the screen, but they are increasingly aware that they do not see such blemishes on their DVD's at home. Film Distributors receive numerous requests for replacement prints, sometimes after just one weeks showing. Moreover, lack of knowledge means that shows are cancelled at short notice, leading to refunds, but more importantly, dissatisfied customers.

A number of years ago the BKSTS attempted to set up a standard training programme for all cinema projectionists. Part way through this exercise we were approached by Skillset, the body appointed to develop National Vocational Qualifications, (NVQ's) to Broadcasting and Film Studios.

One of the benefits of working with Skillset was the offer of funding for training; however the sticking point with Skillset was how to assess the levels of competence, bearing in mind the distance between locations of cinemas and the numerous different exhibition companies and independent operators. Skillset wanted a body of assessors to travel from site to site carrying out assessments and completing the necessary documentation that such "quango's" generate. Needless to say, such bureaucracy costs money, and the suggested fee for assessing each projectionist was around twelve hundred pounds.

At a presentation to a CEA committee meeting the training scheme was dismissed on the grounds of the costs; moreover, representatives of independent cinema operators were against the whole idea, on the basis that they had part-time projectionists who were already trained. Although the training scheme was scrapped, the many hours expended were not wasted. The committee went on to develop the BKSTS/CEA Projectionists Manual with the major funding provided by the CEA.

Approximately three years ago, a sub committee was set up to agree a set of minimum standards for new projectionists. During early discussions, it was shown that most of the represented companies had training courses that were based on the BKSTS/CEA Projectionists Manual. This was devised as distance learning course, and therefore, was acceptable for training in individual cinemas such as independent cinemas, where there may not be the facilities for a formal training scheme. It is an ideal unit as it introduces the trainee projectionist in a logical manner to all aspects of projecting films.

The requirement changed, in that this was not a training scheme but a set of minimum projection standards that all the companies accepted. The ability then, to assess projection standards, can be related directly to the modules in the Projectionists Manual. Trainee projectionists would be assessed during their training, all to the same levels. At completion, they would then be issued with a certificate provided by the BKSTS and the CEA.

It is not a means to give projection staff more pay for achieving the set standards, as had been expressed by some operators. Salary levels have, and will, continue to be set by individual companies as is the practise at present. There is no reason or call for this to change.

It can only work with the support of all of the exhibition industry. The objectives are to ensure that all elements of projection, including Health and Safety are assessed. Also that the minimum standards will improve the quality of the projected image for the benefit of the paying public, and for the reduction of damage to release prints for the benefit of the Distributors.

THE B K S T S / C E A ALL INDUSTRY CERTIFICATION SCHEME.

The starting point for the committee was to set out the requirements for the basic level of projectionist. Most companies have two levels of competence for projectionists, some have three. Some companies use titles such as Booth Attendants, Technicians, or just operators. Whatever the title, the levels of competence are similar.

At present we are only concerned with the first level of projectionists, and how we can assess these standards at a reasonable cost?

Most major exhibitors plan to have the most senior projectionist at each site to carry out the assessment using a checklist of assessors criteria which will be the criteria for certification of that level. Once the trainee has completed all the criteria to the satisfaction of the assessor, the documentation will be sent to the company Head Office. The Technical Director or Technical Manager will then complete the simple paperwork necessary to issue the Certificate. Smaller companies and Independent operators have maintenance contracts with installation and equipment suppliers who could carry out assessments during a service visit at a small additional charge.

There are also members of the Cinema Technology committee who would be prepared to carry out assessments, at a cost to be determined, but based on time and distance.

What of existing projectionists? Many of these meet, and very often exceed the standards, but have not been formally assessed. Therefore, an accepted method of issuing certificates to the projectionist must be devised without carrying out a full assessment, but by relying on the assessors experience and knowledge of the person.

For the scheme to have credibility, it must be shown that all the methods of assessments are fair. Similarly the issue of certificates to established persons must also be judged by the same criteria and also to be seen to be fair.

The committee have looked at projection duties and consider that the minimum criteria for a Projectionist to be classified as competent are set out below, with explanatory notes. Note that these are the minimum requirements, and do not preclude any company adding elements that they feel are necessary. These criteria are set out overleaf.

THE CRITERIA FOR CERTIFICATION AS A COMPETENT PROJECTIONIST

HEALTH AND SAFETY

1. Has read, signed and understands relevant H & S Policy and ensures that it is fully implemented.

The Companies represented on the committee all give induction courses on commencement of employment which includes emphasis on Health and Safety. Further Health and Safety training is ongoing during all further training. This should be the accepted norm.

2. Participates in prescribed H & S training activities.

Exhibitor companies have differing procedures, but all meet the same criteria for public safety. There should be evidence on site to support this.

3. Understands Regulations/Rules relating to emergency lighting and evacuation.

The applicant should be able to explain the principles of maintained Primary and maintained Secondary lighting, and the importance of means of evacuation.

4. Can carry out evacuation, and take necessary action if equipment fails.

The applicant will be assessed on participation in evacuation drills, and also on their knowledge on the equipment installation. [Assessment should be on a percentage of questions based on the Health and Safety policy of each company, using a YES / NO checklist.

FILM AND PROJECTION

1. Demonstrates correct procedures for lacing up film in order to prevent film damage.

The lacing up procedure should be witnessed. Good practices include cleaning the projector film path, keeping leaders off the floor, ensuring that the film is engaged on sprocket teeth and around guide rollers, and that correct lacing up is checked with the inching process.

2. Checks and adjusts focus, racking, ratio and sound levels.

It should be shown that the image on the screen is paramount, and that automation is fallible. After every start up, whether by manual or automation, the applicant should ensure that focus, racking, the correct lens and aperture plate is being used, and the sound should be checked through the monitor panel of the sound rack.

3. Monitors sound quality and levels in the auditorium.

It should be emphasised during training that the monitor panel is no substitute for an auditorium check, especially when the auditorium is full, or partly full.

4. Can identify all the key parts of the projection equipment, including the film path.

A clear knowledge of the projector and soundhead is required in identifying possible faults with the screen image and sound, and with identifying areas of film damage.

5. Understands the construction of film, speed of projection, and can identify sound tracks and ratios.

This is background knowledge that is required in the making up of a programme, especially with regard to setting up automation systems.

6. Can demonstrate the making of a join.

The applicant should be observed making joins, ensuring that racking is checked. Knowledge of the splicer should also be assessed, relating to correct operation of the cutter, and cleanliness.

7. Can identify film damage, the likely causes, and remedial action to be taken.

This applies to noting damage on receiving and making up a print, as well as during make up, and during projection.

8. Understands timesheets, and ensures that programmes run to time.

The applicant should be fully conversant with his company's way of working.

9. Knows who to contact in case of problems or emergencies.

This would apply to any case, whether a technical problem or related to Health and Safety.

10. Can start show competently, both manually, and using automation /interlock (if installed).

This would be assessed by watching more than one start up. The applicant would be checked on the first three elements of these criteria being used as one procedure.

11. Understands and follows company procedures for the receipt and dispatch of film.

The assessment will vary in accordance with each company's differing procedures.

12. Can make up advert and trailer packages and insert into the relevant part of the programme.

The ability to determine whether the filmlets are head out or tail out. How to determine the ratio. The cutting of leaders and tails. The ability of making joins in rack. Cleanliness of the workbench.

MAINTENANCE AND ORGANISATION

1 Demonstrates knowledge of Companies' preventative maintenance procedures for projection and sound equipment; including checking and topping up oil levels, examining parts for wear, cleaning lenses and sound optics etc. etc.

The applicant should be assessed on daily, weekly, and other routine maintenance procedures, also to show the reasons for the maintenance, and demonstrate the ability to record all maintenance undertaken using Company documentation.

2. Carries out routine housekeeping duties, such as cleaning projection rooms and equipment, using approved methods and materials.

The emphasis on cleanliness of the projection box cannot be overdone. The applicant should be assessed not only on methods of cleanliness but also on his attitude toward the need for it.

3 Knows where to find all projection room spare parts.

Self explanatory.

XENON LAMPS

1. Can change and line up a xenon lamp, using all relevant company safety procedures and equipment.

This element is not considered to be an essential part of a projectionist's duties by some operatives. Others consider that for a projectionist who is single-manning, the ability to change and line-up a xenon lamp is a requirement. The certificate of competence will indicate whether this element is included or not.

2. Records the change of lamp.

The need to identify the number of hour's usage of the previous lamp, and the recording of the starting hours on the meter for the new lamp

The Trainee/Projectionist.

As previously stated, most of the major companies have their own Training Schemes which are based on the BKSTS Projectionists Manual, thus it is not our intention to impose a projection training scheme. However for any company desiring one, assistance can be sought from the BKSTS who could give advice on a training scheme. It would be based on the Projectionists Manual which as shown below, contains all the information necessary in the various modules. Any experienced operator should be able to guide a Trainee through all the processes using the Manual, and continuous assessment, to reach proficiency.

The ability to achieve a certificate of competency can be learned from Module One of the Projectionist's Manual, and the first four units, as shown below.

Unit One. FIRST THINGS FIRST!

- ✍ How film gets to your cinema
- ✍ How to identify and check incoming film
- ✍ How to understand and check film can labels
- ✍ How to unload film safely
- ✍ How to inspect film reels and wind them onto spools
- ✍ How to recognise common types of film damage
- ✍ How to make up a film programme for long-play systems
- ✍ How to make up a film for multi-projector systems
- ✍ How to break down a film programme for dispatch

Unit Two. KEEPING IT CLEAN.

- ✍ What contamination is
- ✍ How to prevent and remedy contamination of film
- ✍ The importance of cleanliness in all areas where film is in use
- ✍ The cleaning requirements of different equipment and work areas
- ✍ What cleaning materials and methods to use, and why
- ✍ The importance of manufacturers' guidelines for cleaning equipment
- ✍ Why you need to know what your organisation's cleaning policies are

Unit Three. PUTTING ON THE SHOW.

- ✍ What we mean by a "show"
- ✍ The projectionist as presenter
- ✍ Health and Safety aspects
- ✍ Lacing film in a projector
- ✍ Choosing correct aspect ratios and lenses
- ✍ Focusing the projected image
- ✍ Ensuring good screen illumination
- ✍ Ensuring good sound reproduction
- ✍ Preparing the auditorium
- ✍ Final pre-show checks
- ✍ Presenting and monitoring the show
- ✍ Preparing for the next show

Unit Four. ROUTINE MAINTENANCE (PROJECTION ROOM)

- ✍ What parts of a projector may benefit from routine maintenance
- ✍ How to maintain film joiners and ancillary equipment
- ✍ What projector maintenance you can carry out yourself
- ✍ How to maintain picture head components
- ✍ How to maintain sound head components
- ✍ How to maintain Xenon lamps and associated components
- ✍ How to maintain long-play systems
- ✍ The role of routine maintenance scheduling

Following assessment, a Certificate would then be issued, stating that the person named has satisfied the requirements laid out, and is competent to be left in charge of a projection room and able to prepare and start a programme.

It is proposed that all certificates should be designed using the logos of the BKSTS and the CEA in order to give credence to the fact that this is an all-industry initiative. These would be numbered, and issued by the BKSTS, and the name of the recipients kept on a central register. However, each and every exhibitor can customise the certificates by adding their own Company logos, but these must still include the BKSTS and CEA logos within the document, and the wording must be the same.

In conclusion, we would re-iterate that this is intended to be an all-industry initiative, and the committee is already made up from a number of major exhibitors.

There is no ulterior motive in trying to increase salaries of projectionists. As was stated in the introduction, this remains the right of each individual company. They have always, and will continue to set their own salary levels. Rather, the intention is to raise standards of projection, and to avoid outside agencies imposing unwanted bureaucracy.

The Cinema Industry has seen amazing growth in recent years, but long serving projectionists are declining, many through retirement. To replace their expertise requires a new generation of competent projectionists all trained to a consistent standard recognised by the whole industry

The projectionist is the final link in the production of a film that may have cost tens of millions of pounds. The Producer and Director expect the same care in the making of a film to be given to the showing of it. Such investment deserves the best presentation achievable, and this is the responsibility of every Managing Director or proprietor of a cinema. If the standard of image on the screen is poor, with dirt flecks and/or scratches, if the focus is soft, if the sound is too quiet, or more likely too loud, it no longer matters who the star of the movie is, or how much it costs to produce, the audience will feel cheated, and will increasingly resort to DVD's and 'cinema' sound systems.

Good film projection can match and exceed the latest Digital Cinema technology with training, and commitment. We are looking for the support of all the members of the Cinema Industry to provide this commitment.
