



Melvyn's model masterpieces

An East Finchley man behind the special effects in Doctor Who and a number of classic TV programmes has won a major award.



The Model Unit film shoot crew featuring the centre piece of the Enola Gay model used in the filming sequences, Melvyn appears on the far right of frame.

Melvyn Friend, who specialises in miniature model making for television films, was honoured by the British Academy of Film and Television Arts.

His work with the Model Unit team at the renowned Ealing Film Studios in west London earned him a BAFTA for best visual effects at the British equivalent of the Oscars.

The award was given for life-like model sequences in a chilling documentary telling the story of the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima in 1945. Although Melvyn has been involved with other projects which have been nominated for BAFTAs and Royal Television Society awards in the past, this was the Model Unit's first win.

"It's a fantastic accolade for us all, especially as it's just the first year of the Model Unit establishing itself outside the BBC," says Melvyn, who lives in Manor Park Road.

His work for Doctor Who included the model of the Houses of

Parliament destroyed by the Slitheen spacecraft in the 2005 series as well as the construction of the new Daleks.

The unit was founded by his colleague Mike Tucker, following the closure of the BBC Special Effects Department after more than 40 years of amazing work for various BBC and independent productions.

As an experienced freelance Melvyn's effects work doesn't only involve models and miniatures; he is regularly involved with physical effects, practical props, pyrotechnics and atmospheric and has worked on classic programmes such as The Young Ones, 'Allo 'Allo and Tomorrow's World.

He says: "You need to be very adaptable in this vocation, a bit of a lateral thinker. Ana-

lysing how certain things are achieved on the screen can take away my enjoyment of a programme so it is often refreshing to watch films with no special effects in at all."

Ever resourceful, Melvyn also takes on more domestic projects for local residents who find his carpentry skills produce the 'special effects' to solve their storage needs, for example.

If you need any special effects of your own, you can contact him at: melvyn_friend@hotmail.com.

Festival controversy

continued from front page...

Spirit of the festival

Rossana Christianson, continued,

"Community Focus usually runs a stall as part of the arrangement for Happy Go Lucky performing, and we returned our stall-holder's application in May. In the first week of June we were telephoned, with an apology, to say that Happy Go Lucky could not appear. So we didn't have a stall either, as the dancers help to run it, and they were too disappointed to go along. It's a shame, as we do enjoy the festival. I wish we had known about the changes sooner."

The North London Performing Arts Company was another group whose young actors were unable to appear.

Spokeswoman Emily Ward said: "A lot of our children are local to East Finchley, and they were very disappointed, as they get a huge buzz out of appearing in the festival. This is a splendid and very well run festival, but, as with all local festivals, arrangements are last minute. If we are performing, we generally get a phone call at the beginning of June."

This group at least will still be performing in Cherry Tree Wood, at the Muswell Hill Festival on Sunday 17 September.

Confusion over booking

Martin O'Donnell, a festival organiser, refuted the claim that the Happy Go Lucky Dance

Group was cancelled at short notice.

He said: "They were never booked, and there had been no correspondence with them since the previous year. No group is entitled to a spot on stage although, if they wish to participate next year, we will make every effort to accommodate them."

"There is no set procedure about booking. If a group approaches us we make a note of their interest, discuss it at the festival steering group and then, more often than not, offer them a slot. Up until the end of March, when we met Masterpeace and discussed the possibility of working together, no community groups had approached us about playing the festival this year."

Mr O'Donnell denied that the festival had become more commercial, saying the steering group had encouraged more craft and charitable stalls and had tried to remove the "blow up hammers and throw three darts" type of commercial ones. Rising costs, including security, meant the festival will be lucky to break even this year.

The East Finchley Community Festival steering group welcomes local people to help it plan next year's event. If you are interested, come to the annual review and planning meeting on Thursday 21 September, at 7pm at the Green Man Community Centre.

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