



BFI National Archive Installs 'Scanity'



The BFI National Archive has announced the installment of of DFT's Scanity HDR, a state-of-the-art film scanner. It has been installed at its Conservation Centre in Berkhamstead, to assist in the digitisation of the UK's rich film and television screen heritage.

Established in 1935, the BFI National Archive holds one of the largest film and television collections in the world. It includes material from the earliest days of film to current television content. This includes around of 60,000 fiction films – including features – on all gauges of film and formats of videotape, 120,000 non-fiction films, and around 770,000 television titles, in addition to millions of other items such as scripts, posters, still images, books, journals, articles and newspaper cuttings relating to Britain's cultural heritage.

Scanity was purchased as a part of a Lottery-funded programme to "unlock film heritage" by investing in the digitisation, preservation and interpretation of film, providing access to the UK's screen heritage to the public. The programme ensures that the people can access and enjoy British filmmaking, regardless of where they live or where that film heritage is held. In total, 10,000 titles will be digitised and made available online in a project that runs through to March 2017.

Heather Stewart, BFI Creative Director, Programme said: "Our Unlocking Film Heritage programme has changed public access to the UK national collection of film and television through the launch of Britain on Film. Many of the 10,000 titles due to be digitised by the end of 2017 have been unknown and unseen for decades."

The Scanity film scanner was chosen after extensive testing to ensure the technology was able to safely handle delicate or damaged film materials from a variety of film gauges and formats, some of which date to 1895 and are in formats that are now obsolete. The digitisation process works by taking a 'snap shot' of the original 'master' film. Once scanned, the 'master' is either returned to the BFI's Master Film Store facility in Warwickshire, or returned to the lender.

Once digitised, the scanned images are enhanced using Scanity's in-built software tools to remove scratches and dust, in conjunction with other post production tools to enhance the images prior to becoming available to view via the online BFI Player.

Charles Fairall, Head of Conservation, Collections and Information, BFI, said: "Scanity is the ideal film scanner for the 'Unlocking Film Heritage' programme because it combines very careful handling of film with the capability of scanning at relatively high speeds. This is particularly important given the scope of the project, which is aimed at providing high volume digital access to these most fragile and historically valuable film collections preserved by the BFI National Archive."

Simon Carter, Director for DFT, added: "This is a very exciting project and we are delighted that Scanity was chosen as the preferred scanner for this project. We are looking forward to the months ahead and to helping the BFI achieve their goal to digitise 10,000 titles for everyone to enjoy."

Image: The BFI Archives – Charles Fairall, Head OF Conservation, BFI (left) and Kieron Webb, Film Conservation Manager, BFI (right).

(JP/MH)