

Profile John McDonald

My interest in movies started as a young boy at primary school and has never lagged although for a while I shared my interest with “magic” and the art of illusions and conjuring. My first projectors were old Creamota boxes with skewers as spindles. My first real projector was a 9.5mm hand turn Ace, produced by Pathescope of London. It cost me the princely sum of £9.19.11 (\$19.99). I purchased it from Sly’s in Queen Street, Auckland, who used to regularly advertise in the *Weekly News*. My first film was a *News Parade* for the year 1946 and we just about wore the film out with hundreds of screenings to family and neighbourhood kids. Then followed a primitive Pathé 9.5mm camera and home processing at Cyril Ruscoe’s home in Wanganui East. Regular visits to local theatre projection booths were an eagerly awaited treat, with treasures in offcut 35mm film stock from the splicing bench and the chance to rewind the big movies. One soon became friends with all four local cinema projectionists.

When the local St John Ambulance brigade approached me to operate their new Debie D-16 sound projector, I thought I had won a million pounds and I switched interests to this gauge and started collecting 16mm films in the 1960s eventually amassing a collection of over 500 films. Contacts were made with sales outlets in America, England and Australia and for the next 25 years, I would purchase many 16mm sound films from these countries.

My real interest in collecting is the old slap-stick comedies and early National Film Unit releases such as *One Hundred Years* and very early “*Weekly Reviews*” – some of which depict my interest in steam trains. *The Railway Worker* and *Railway Centennial* are two of my favourites as well as being rare. From Australia I purchased the three hour history of the cinema *Pictures That Moved & Talked* along with some great steam train movies.

Being a founding member of the group that formed the Film Buffs has brought me in contact with so many people who share my interest in movies etc. It is a great honour to have been elected as Patron and I look forward to watching the club grow over the next years.