



Colchester Film Makers

Newsletter



Independent six-part comedy drama series ***“Life Is Just a Bowl of Cherries”*** written by **Pauline Warren** has officially entered post-production following an ambitious year-long production schedule spanning 18 shoot days.

Produced by Colchester Film Makers in collaboration with Vocal Freedom Productions, the project brought together a dedicated behind-the-scenes crew of 20 people and a volunteer cast of 74 performers. The series will also be re-edited into a feature-length film version, with plans for submissions to UK and international film festivals and competitions.

Alongside the production, an original soundtrack has been developed specifically around the emotional journey of the story and its characters. Some songs were written from the perspective of individual characters, while others have been composed to enhance atmosphere and mood throughout the series. Working within an extremely limited budget, the production team embraced AI-assisted music creation to craft what they describe as an “AI orchestra.” As part of a parallel creative initiative, human vocalists are now being cast to replace the AI-generated singing voices, ensuring a human performance remains at the heart of the soundtrack.

Life Is Just a Bowl of Cherries represents an ambitious independent filmmaking effort, with the team ultimately aiming to bring the series to a major streaming platform. The production was further supported through the legacy of the late New York actress and arts mentor Betsy Parrish, whose encouragement of independent creativity inspired producers Leigh Martyn Thomas and Gethin Thomas to bring the project to life. Parrish, respected within theatre and acting circles for her decades of work mentoring performers and supporting the arts, was a close friend to the Thomas family. Funding inherited from Parrish was used entirely to cover practical production costs, while the cast, crew and post-production team continued to work on a voluntary basis in support of the project’s independent vision.



So many locations!

Including a stately home, a hairdressers and a pub!



Singers Needed!

Auditions for Singers are underway!



Gethin and AI causing a riot at the Police Station filming!



CLUB PROMOTION AND FILM SUCCESS

On Saturday 23rd May the Cherries Clips trailer featured on THE BIG SCREEN for the first time at Nick Pelas' Colchester Independent Short Film Festival at Firstsite. The QR Code at the end takes you to the sign up to subscribe to updates. This helps us build our 'cherries army' list of followers to promote to in the future.

Colchester in the 2020's episodes 1-4, 6 & 7 are now published on the CFM Youtube channel. Episode 5 and 8 will be completed during next season.

Two external filming opportunities for the Fellows Network of CIBSE (Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers) saw donations of £800 raised this season, thanks to CFM members Harry, Logan, Al, Neil, Leigh and Gethin for visiting London and editing these features.



Other Filming for Witham Operatic Society, screenings for the Women's Institute and film rentals raised external donations to £1055. Continuing to do these external 'jobs' is helping the club fund expenses for our own films too.



COLCHESTER FILM MAKERS BRANDED GEAR

At the start of next season we will be placing another branded merchandise order.

To place a CFM Branded Zip Hoodies and/or T-shirts order, there is a form on the members webpage or let the committee know directly with your order. Costs will be re-calculated based on final order quantities and everyone will be reminded in September.

FIRST T-Shirt is free for new members only.

The club merch worn out and about helps the general public recognise us, perhaps get curious and look us up if they are interested in film making, plus they have served us well on location and at events. Andy is also in the process of ordering the new ID cards ready for next season.

Modelled on location by Barrie Gibbard.



Independent Producer Joe Brown on his CFM Assisted First Film.

We recently caught up with emerging filmmaker Joe Brown following the completion of his first short film *The Last Behemoth* – a nostalgic black-and-white creature feature inspired by classic stop-motion animation. Joe originally pitched the project to the club in May 2024, before we helped him secure a filming location and cast the film’s lead actor, Jedd Bonstad-Clark, whose sword-fighting expertise proved vital to the production.

Reflecting on the filmmaking process, Joe described post-production as both challenging and rewarding, particularly the lengthy collaboration with animation company Corrupt Animation to bring the film’s creature sequences to life. He also took on editing responsibilities himself despite having limited prior filmmaking experience.

“The ultimate goal,” Joe explained, “was simply to make sure the story worked – that it had a beginning, middle and end that connected properly.”

The film’s striking monochrome look was a deliberate artistic decision, designed to evoke the atmosphere of classic monster films such as *King Kong*. Joe felt black and white gave the film the nostalgic “stop-motion vibe” he wanted, while also complementing the practical performance work and animation style.

Joe also praised Jedd Bonstad-Clark for his physical performance and sword choreography, admitting there were moments in the edit where he “didn’t want to cut the bits that Jedd was doing” because the movement work was so strong.

Speaking about lessons learned, Joe encouraged aspiring filmmakers to build confidence, network, and immerse themselves in creative communities.

“Don’t be scared to expose your creative side,” he said. “Networking and getting to meet people makes a huge difference.”

Looking back on the project, Joe says the experience has firmly cemented his passion for filmmaking.

“I’ve definitely got the bug now.”



RETURN TO EARTH UPDATE

We're excited to share a quick behind-the-scenes update on our latest project, Return To Earth, which is currently deep in production! The team has been working tirelessly to bring this ambitious sci-fi vision to life. While we are still firmly in the trenches of the creative process, watching the daily progress and seeing the story slowly come together has been incredibly thrilling. We are pulling out all the stops to ensure this film delivers the exact cinematic experience we've been aiming for since day one.



A special shoutout goes to our talented animator, Hen the Pen, who is currently hard at work crafting the highly anticipated "creature feature" segment of the film. Bringing these complex sequences to the screen requires a massive amount of dedication and artistic precision, and the animation is already looking monstrously good. If all continues to go smoothly on the production front, we are keeping our fingers crossed for an official release later this year. **Stay tuned for more sneak peeks.**



**COLCHESTER
FILM MAKERS**



2026/27 Season Programme

Committee Plans

Next Season Meeting Updates

The committee will meet through the summer to create a fabulous season of mixed meetings. Along with the list being updated on our website, there is also a dedicated MEMBERS ONLY page which will be updated with more details about what each week entails.

We will be including pitch nights, screenings, technical and practical nights and encouraging the development of more club collaborative film making, while developing our skills and bringing in expert speakers to fill in the gaps in knowledge, so WATCH THIS SPACE!

<https://colchesterfilmmakers.co.uk/programme>