
Road Trips with Phil the Magician

PA Cooperative Director David Lee reflects on the road trips, the locations, the laughs — and the secret ingredient behind the company's award-winning films.

ANOTHER week, another road trip with Phil Wilkinson. Over the last couple of years, I've travelled across the UK with Phil and Neil Cuthbert on a wide range of PA Cooperative video projects.

We've been to Inverness and North Wales, Aberdeenshire and Northumberland, London and Morayshire, the Scottish Borders and Perthshire, up a cold snowy hill in Dumfries & Galloway — and most recently, a hospital in Fife. We've filmed in forests, on wind farm sites and woodfuel yards, up hills and down dales, in sun, rain, wind, hail and snow.

Phil's drone once got carried off by the wind (it came home). He once lost his specs on a forest road, only for them to land in a spot where the wheels of a fully-loaded timber wagon passed either side of them, not over them. We've watched live music in Inverness, had a van karaoke singalong on the way back down the A9, and stopped at a fair few charity shops for Phil to hunt for bargains.

Oh, and we've made some great short films along the way — thanks to careful planning, clear briefing and always working hard to understand what a client wants. But above all else, the quality of the films is down to Phil. He's a brilliant technician, but what really makes the films sing is his innate ability to spot angles you'd never see, and capture those spontaneous human moments that bring a video to life.

This sometimes involves Phil disappearing into the woods or up a hill for a while, leaving Neil and me wondering where he is. But inevitably, the shots he gets while AWOL turn out to be exactly what we need. You can't teach that. Neil and I call Phil 'The Magician' because he has a special power to lift things way beyond the ordinary.

"What a privilege to work with people you like, to travel to beautiful places, to have a laugh along the way — and to produce work that you're proud of." — David Lee, Director, PA Cooperative

We're off to the Highlands and Aberdeenshire again in the coming weeks. Which definitely beats sitting at your desk for days on end.

ENDS

Notes to editors

1. PA Cooperative Ltd is a Scottish public affairs, communications, and video production consultancy specialising in land-based industries including forestry and rural affairs. Founded in 2013. www.pacoop.co.uk
2. This piece was written by David Lee, Director of PA Cooperative. It may be reproduced in full with attribution.