



My name is João Lazaro, and I'm a Brazilian artist and filmmaker who arrived in Newcastle in September 2023. One of the first people I met here was Peter, who works at the Contemporary Art Gallery on High Bridge Road. He said, "I know where you'll find your people: at the Star and Shadow Cinema."

So, I went there, and after being inducted as a volunteer, I began to understand how the cinema operates, participating in meetings and volunteering at events. I started as a technician and then offered to run a video production workshop, primarily aimed at volunteers.

I've been conducting workshops like these since 2015 and absolutely love it, so I thought it would be a great way to contribute as a volunteer and connect with fellow filmmaking enthusiasts. Initially, I received support from Steve and Anna Barbir to set up the events on the rota, and later, Carmel also helped.

It was surprisingly both difficult and easy. Difficult because, without a traditional management structure, it's hard to know who to consult to ensure you're doing things right. But it became easier once I realised how supportive everyone is.

After attending a few meetings to see if my workshop would be feasible and welcomed, it became clear that it had the backing of the other volunteers.

I set up the events in the rota, gathered registrations, and prepared the sessions. All three workshops I organised were fully booked, and I received great support from Dan, who is very proactive. He also helped facilitate the workshops, which I had to remain open-minded about, as our teaching styles and approaches to filmmaking are quite different. In the end, it turned out to be a fantastic collaboration.

I received positive feedback from all the volunteers and non-volunteers who attended, and we managed to create something from each session. Currently, we're planning new sessions focused on post-production, and if all goes well, I'll be hosting more workshops like this in 2025. It's exciting to create and film at the cinema because this is exactly what I had hoped for when I first walked through its doors. I wanted to make films with other volunteers, and now I'm working to make that a reality, with the support of fellow volunteers. To me, this is what the Star and Shadow Cinema is all about.

About Newcastle Film Club

Disclaimer: I do not represent the views of Newcastle Film Club or its leadership team. I am writing this as a member of Newcastle Film Club and a volunteer at Star and Shadow Cinema.

At my first meeting at the cinema, before I had a chance to introduce myself as an artist and filmmaker keen to create, collaborate, and get involved with Newcastle's filmmaking community, Dawn said, "You should meet Sam from Newcastle Film Club."

Sam was eager to meet over coffee, and I soon joined the Newcastle Film Club (NFC), participating in filmmaking challenges and attending their Sunday meetings.

Many of these meetings were held at Star and Shadow Cinema, and it's wonderful for local independent filmmakers and enthusiasts to have such a space to screen their films. I can only imagine the challenges of trying to organise this in a typical commercial cinema (though I have no doubt in the capabilities of the NFC leadership team to pull it off).

The meetings at Star and Shadow have been some of my best memories since arriving in Newcastle. I know other Star and Shadow volunteers, such as Paul Doherty and Jack Golden, are also members of NFC, and I'm grateful for their efforts. I hope I can contribute in the future to merging NFC and Star and Shadow initiatives.