

# Focus Magazine

The monthly publication of the Institute of Videography

Issue 195 - April 2011 - £3.50

## Evolution DSLR



*A review of the Panasonic Lumix GH2*

By Niels Puttemans

also this  
month



6-months  
down the  
line with the  
Sony NEX  
VG10

By John De Rienzo



Magic Lantern  
firmware for  
the Canon  
550D

By Ian Sandall



IOV @ NAB

By Kevin Cook



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## Contacts

### Administration & Membership Enquiries

PO Box 625, Loughton,  
Essex IG10 3GZ United Kingdom  
e: info@iov.co.uk  
t: 0845 741 3626 (UK)  
t: +44 (0) 20 8502 3817 (Int.)

### Executive Administrator

Kevin Cook F.Inst.V.  
e: kevin.cook@iov.co.uk  
t: 020 8502 3817

### Membership Administrator

Ariane Nombro  
e: ariane.nombro@iov.co.uk  
t: 020 8502 3817

### Executive Chairman

Ron Lee F.Inst.V.  
13 Coleridge Avenue, Dentons Green, St  
Helens, Lancashire WA10 6RN  
e: ron.lee@iov.co.uk  
t: 01744 29976

### Treasurer

Steven Abrams F.Inst.V.  
2 Ingledene Road,  
Liverpool L18 3HJ  
e: steve.abrams@iov.co.uk  
t: 0151 722 6692

### Arbitration Officer

Ron Lee F.Inst.V.  
13 Coleridge Avenue, Dentons Green, St  
Helens, Lancashire WA10 6RN  
e: ron.lee@iov.co.uk

### Assessment Administrator

Chris Waterlow F.Inst.V.  
59 Sissinghurst Close,  
Pound Hill, Crawley  
West Sussex RH10 7FY  
e: chris.waterlow@iov.co.uk  
t: 01293 886484

### Institute of Videography Ltd Executive Committee

Ron Lee F.Inst.V.  
Steven Abrams F.Inst.V.  
Mark Quinn  
Chris Waterlow F.Inst.V.  
Janet Fenton  
Phil Janvier M.M.Inst.V.

### Published By:

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174 Roding Road, Loughton,  
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e: focus@iov.co.uk  
t: +44 (0)20 8502 3817  
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## Copy-wrong

Thankfully we live in a society  
that recognises intellectual  
rights. You've only got to look at  
those countries that don't and  
you'll realise what little positive  
input they have had in the world.  
I might upset a few people in  
saying this but, culturally,  
copyright-less societies are lesser  
societies in general. Proper  
societies can only survive and  
flourish if they accept that  
ownership shouldn't only exist in  
physical assets - but also in  
creativity, invention and  
reputation.

If you undervalue the person  
who writes the story, designs the  
clothes, develops a brand,  
invents the process, takes the  
picture, composes the music....  
you will lose them. I guess the  
only positive that would come  
from this is that those who  
survive by stealing other people's  
intellectual property would die  
themselves if there was no one  
left for them to steal from.

The main problem seems to  
be that most people don't see  
copyright and intellectual theft as  
being criminal. At worst its the  
kind of activity your average  
lovably rogue or Del Boy would  
engage in. This is probably down  
to the fact that intellectual  
property is so easy to steal as  
most of the time you will not  
have to look over your shoulder  
whilst you are stealing it. If a  
shop keeper left the doors to  
their store open over night and  
returned the next morning to find  
it empty you could quite  
understand it if someone said to  
them - "Well - that's your fault".  
Still, that doesn't make those  
that stole the goods perfect  
citizens. They will be thieves!

Whilst finding out who owns  
the copyright in something can

## The Cook Retort



often be confusing it  
surprises me the  
types of people who  
totally disregard copyright and  
regularly steal other people's  
work. I'm not saying that event  
videographers are the worst  
culprits, but some of them will  
conveniently overlook the  
inclusion of a piece of  
commercial music in their work  
time and time again. Apart from  
the fact that its extremely easy  
and cheap to properly license  
commercial music for weddings  
and events (or use royalty-free  
music come to that), its  
tremendously unprofessional (not  
to mention criminal) to provide  
work for a client which contains  
stolen property.

Even if you don't ever get  
caught you'll have to excuse the  
rest of us for looking down our  
noses at you. In my mind it is  
without doubt one of the first  
signs of them being a cowboy  
videographer. If they dodge  
copyright they are just as likely  
to be dodging tax and proper  
insurance. And, funny enough,  
its the very same videographers  
who rant and rave if they hear  
that their clients have been  
copying their work. Go figure!

Though times are tough,  
observing copyright shouldn't be  
seen as an area where costs can  
be cut. In the eyes of the law  
(and any right-thinking person)  
you might as well plan to steal  
your next camera. As copyright  
owners there will come a day  
when you will lean on these laws  
yourself - so if you ignore them  
now they might not be there  
when you need them. ■

Kevin Cook

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# Need any help in fighting off the pirates?



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# IOV News

Industry, Technology & Regional News

## IOV @ NAB

**The IOV will be sending a small delegation to NAB in Las Vegas this year to discover what American videographers want from their trade association. If you know anyone that will be going to NAB - the IOV would really like to meet up with them!**

With a growing number of membership enquiries coming from the USA, the IOV is keen to develop a proper strategy in serving these membership enquiries. Whilst the present range of benefits and its accreditation system have been developed with a world-wide membership in mind, there really is no better way for the IOV to find out what members want than actually speaking to them, face-to-face.

"We believe that the way the IOV is structured, its range of benefits and our accreditation system could be easily adapted to perfectly match the demands of the North American market," commented IOV Chairman, Ron Lee. "We have already started to research the changes that we believe would need to be made to the Business & Legal category of the VideoSkills syllabus.

However, this mission is about discovering what the market wants by way of a Code of Practice - and whether this could or should be incorporated into the learning material and exam for a specific country or region."

With nearly 100,000 registrants, NAB will bring together a vast cross-section of the videography community. Being the world's largest exhibition of its kind, NAB will also bring together all the key suppliers and manufacturers.

The IOV has four main objectives on this visit...

### 1 - Talk to local videographers about what they would want from a trade association

*We think we know, but we are sure that you will know!*

### 2 - Research what the IOV would need to add or change about its accreditation system and learning material to make it fit for their market

*We want to understand what the real-world business and legal*

*challenges are in being a professional videographer.*

### 3 - To identify videographers who might be willing and able to head-up the IOV overseas

*The world is a smaller place these days, but there's nothing like having great people on the ground who fully understand local trading conditions.*

### 4 - Make contact with local manufacturers and distributors

*The IOV prides itself on the unique relationship it has developed with industry suppliers and manufacturers - and how it helps them to connect with the industry.*

## Reaching out

Ron and I will be in Las Vegas from 9th till 14th April. During the exhibition we will be based in and around the halls - as well as scheduling meetings outside of exhibition times.

If you would like to meet up with us, or know someone that would, please email [nab@iov.co.uk](mailto:nab@iov.co.uk) and we will arrange a suitable time to get together for a chat. If you can't make it to NAB but would like to be kept informed about the IOV's activities in your area, please email us too. ■

**Kevin Cook**  
Executive Administrator  
[kevin.cook@iov.co.uk](mailto:kevin.cook@iov.co.uk)

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## Assessment Results - March 2011

The assessment panel met on 3 March 2011 when the following award was made:

### Master Membership:

**Hamdy Taha** M.M.Inst.V.  
(Werrington, Peterborough)

Not a very high percentage of passes this time, which is a shame as I thought we were really on a roll after the last session! Members seem to be slipping back into the old ways of not reading or fully complying with the assessment criteria.

I would like to take this opportunity to re-enforce the message that these criteria are not there to trip you up in any way. They are there so that by

complying with them you are able to demonstrate the basics in video production. There seems to have been a trend recently of including as little live audio as possible, as if a few seconds will 'have to do'. A few seconds is hardly enough time realistically to be able to assess someone's knowledge and ability of microphone selection and placement in various situations, as this is what the panel is looking for.

It is true that if all the criteria are not

complied with then the applicant will not pass assessment, however, it is also true that adhering to all the criteria will not guarantee you a pass, there is more to producing a 'passable' video then complying to some basic criteria. Lecture over!

Another reminder that due to the recent increase in the VAT rate, single assessment charges are now set at £66.50. This is also included on the application form.

The final cut-off date for the next assessment meeting is Tuesday 31 May 2011. Your application must arrive on or before that date to be included in the June 2011 session. ■

**Chris Waterlow F.Inst.V.**  
Assessment Administrator



## More video for VideoSkills please!

With the 3rd edition of the VideoSkills book now released, the IOV is looking for video clips that help explain the core skills and information contained within the learning material.

videoskills.net has already been updated with the new learning material and exam questions, and will be expanding over the coming months to include more illustrations, video examples and tutorials on the key skills of videography. The IOV Executive has been pleasantly surprised at the number of members and non-members who have expressed an interest in submitting material in the past and wanted to open up a formal process and explain the conditions for those wishing to donate clips and tutorials.

IOV Chairman, Ron Lee, said, "Our intention has always been to augment the online learning material so that it compliments the book. However, our long term ambition is to expand on this quite considerably - and we think our members and others in our industry are well positioned to help us in this task."

Content can be in the form of video and/or audio clips, or purpose made tutorials. In order for the IOV to use the material as it sees fit, the copyright owner must be able to grant the IOV worldwide licence to use the material - in perpetuity. Any performers or models used within the material will have to have signed model release documents, as well as location release forms for content filmed on private property.

The clips themselves will also have to be supplied in a high resolution file format suitable for editing - and will be hosted on the IOV's server.

Ron Lee added, "Whilst we do not have any funds available for commissioning these clips, we will accept clips which have been sponsored by third-parties (as long as they are not detrimental to the IOV or its existing sponsors) and those which include branding from the contributors themselves."

If you would like to suggest a content donation for VideoSkills, in the first instance please email [exec@iov.co.uk](mailto:exec@iov.co.uk) with an outline of the content and what part of the VideoSkills learning material it helps to explain. You should also declare any third-party sponsorship at this point. The Executive's decision on whether content is suggested or not will be final. ■

**Kevin Cook F.Inst.V.**  
IOV Executive Administrator

## Get your shallow DOF at Hirecamera

Hirecamera have announced the launch of a new hire range consisting of cameras, camcorders, lenses and accessories based on Panasonic's Micro 4/3rds and Sony's E mounts.

Guy Thatcher, Managing Director said, "This was a logical decision for us. We are in the advantageous position of hiring both cameras and camcorders and have been closely watching the convergence between the two areas."

"Digital SLR video filming has been a very popular reason for hiring our SLR equipment over the last year. So it was only a matter of time before larger sensor camcorders arrived and it was very clear what demand they would create."

"However, we were still bowled over by the pre-launch enquiries for both the Sony NEX-VG10E and of course more recently the Panasonic AG-AF101. Stocking both cameras has meant a considerable investment in both lenses and accessories but clearly both formats will continue to gain in popularity – this is only the start."

Hirecamera are also stocking cameras for both formats - Panasonic's GF2 and GH2 and the Sony NEX-5. Thatcher added, "Digital SLR video has proved that, in some cases, having a smaller body allows you to film shots that would

otherwise be impossible with a bigger rig. By stocking these cameras, our customers will be able to hire ideal backup units for the larger camcorders.

Interestingly, we are also getting more enquiries from existing SLR photographers keen to try them."

A range of lenses from Leica, Olympus, Panasonic and Voigtlander are available for hire for the Micro 4/3rds mount (some using 4/3rds adaptor). Whilst the range of Sony E-mount lenses is restricted at present, further lenses will be added as and when they are launched and Sony's Alpha range can already be used with an adaptor.

"Sony are committed to the E-mount and will be launching another seven lenses over the next 18 months. The launch of the new Super 35mm NEX camcorder later this year will ensure huge interest in the format. Having recently disclosed the specifications of the E-mount to third party lens manufacturers, we are in a great position as Sigma's official UK hirer and naturally will be stocking their products as and when they become available. Indeed Sigma are also due to be releasing a Micro 4/3rds range which we will also be stocking from launch."

Adaptors are also available for both mounts allowing various lens types to be fitted including Leica M, PL and of course Nikon G, allowing Hirecamera's existing wide range of lenses to be hired with the cameras.

Hirecamera deliver Nationwide with hire periods available from 1 day to 1 month. Optional insurance is available on all equipment.

Further information can be found on Hirecamera's website – [www.hirecamera.com](http://www.hirecamera.com)



## Big scores for the bigger picture!

AKM Music, the UK's number one producer of Royalty Free Music have announced the release of six brand new CDs to their library - including a new selection for those seeking a big orchestral soundtrack.

The new CDs added are as include:

### AK127 - Children

Pre-school themes and lullabies, think In the Night Garden

### AK128 - Epic

Awesome full blown orchestral scores on a grand scale.

### AK129 - Lost Worlds

Enter the world of the unknown, futuristic soundscapes and otherworldliness

### AK130 - Business Matters

Corporate worlds, impact and motivation positive and winning

### AK131 - Hollywood Orchestral Scores

Pure cinematic bliss, think CSI, superb underscoring

### AK132 - Cut to the Beat Volume 7

Back again, this series just gets better and better



As company Managing Director, Anthony Kimber McTiffen explained, "It's so important for us to listen to our customers and production decisions are always based on what media producers are asking for when it comes to matching their visuals with a suitable soundtrack. We have always had a reputation for producing high quality music but with these six new productions the ceiling is raised. Our customers asked for big orchestral productions and this is what we have delivered in EPIC and Hollywood Orchestral Scores".

A new volume of the popular Cut to the Beat series and a CD aimed at the corporate producer (Business Matters) heralds a busy time for the music library. AKM Music have also confirmed they will be exhibiting at the IOV's ProVideo 2011 show and the new media show BE North in Manchester later this year.

For further details contact AKM Music direct - see the 'Copyright Free & Commissioned Music' section of the Trade Directory on page 12.



## P2 drops in price

Panasonic has announced new reduced RRP's for its entire line-up of high-capacity, high-speed P2 cards. The company's E-Series of 64GB, 32GB and 16GB P2 cards are now available with RRP's of €505, €350 and €276 excluding VAT, respectively.

E-Series P2 cards offer fast transfer speeds (up to 1.2Gbps), which is substantially faster than most professional solid-state memory cards offered by other manufacturers. All P2 cards use high-quality solid-state memory, extremely durable, die-cast aluminium construction and impact-proof connectors. This is in direct contrast to other solid-state memory card products, which often feature breakable, plastic casing with less reliable connectors. Additionally, P2 cards offer dependable performance during recording in all types of environments, as well



as instant access and complete data compatibility in all P2 camcorders and workflow tools.

Panasonic P2 solid-state memory cards ensure highly reliable, video, audio, and metadata recording, especially in challenging conditions of extreme temperature range, shock, and vibration. P2 cards allow professional users to benefit from a fast, easy, file-based workflow and exceptional reliability, and work in all current P2 products.

For further details contact Panasonic direct - see the 'Video Manufacturers' section of the Trade Directory on

### ASSOCIATE MEMBER



INSTITUTE OF VIDEOGRAPHY

### Newly-accredited Associate Members

The following have passed their Associate Member exam and are now able to use the IOV logo in their marketing material. They have also been set up with a web page which must be linked to when the IOV logo is placed on their website. Full details of the benefits of Associate Membership can be found at [www.iov.com/join](http://www.iov.com/join)

Richard Barden A.M.Inst.V.

Purley, Surrey

Alan Gray A.M.Inst.V.

Forest Gate, London

David Hobson A.M.Inst.V.

Wimborne, Dorset

Sophie Lee A.M.Inst.V.

Norwich, Norfolk

Kate Powis A.M.Inst.V.

Norwich, Norfolk

Ben Salisbury A.M.Inst.V.

Coventry, Warwickshire

Please note: Newly accredited Associate Members are published in Focus each month and will be accurate at time of publication.



# DSM Broadcastpower



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## P2 drops in price

IDX Technology has announced that it has signed an exclusive EMEA distribution agreement with Canadian manufacturer Dejero Labs Inc. Under the agreement, IDX will provide distribution and sales support functions for Dejero LIVE Platform, including the ground-breaking new wireless ENG transmission system that uses multiple 4G and 3G cellular networks to transmit live broadcast quality video.

The award-winning Dejero LIVE Platform allows broadcast professionals and news crews to connect their camera to the Dejero transmitter, a compact portable peli-case and broadcast live within a matter of seconds. Broadcasting video via cellular networks means virtually no range restriction, significantly reducing the cost, staff and time involved in operating satellite trucks or mobile uplinks. A Dejero video server and online manager can be installed in a studio or newsroom to control and manage incoming video sources.

Rob Waters, Sales Director for IDX Technology Europe, said "Dejero are a hugely innovative and forward thinking company, and as a result the LIVE Platform offers most reliable highest quality video and cost effective



method of getting live news quicker to air than ever before. IDX has been supplying broadcasters, sports and news crews with power equipment for over 20 years, so we are perfectly placed to handle sales, support and technical consultancy for the Dejero LIVE product range."

The Dejero LIVE solution was chosen by Canadian broadcaster CTV to broadcast live video footage of the Olympic Torch Relay, a 100 day event over 45,000 kilometres, in preparation for the 2010 Winter Olympic Games. At the following NAB 2010 exhibition, Dejero LIVE was selected from over 1500 exhibitors for the prestigious Broadcast Engineering Pick Hit award.

For further details contact **IDX Technology Europe** direct - see the 'Batteries & Power' section of the Trade Directory on page 12.

## Panasonic at NAB

Panasonic will be making a series of news announcements at NAB later this month.

The AJ-PCD30 P2 Drive is a new three-slot P2 device with a super-speed USB 3.0 interface that delivers the industry's fastest offloads from a solid-state source. The new USB 3.0 standard facilitates dramatically higher transfer rates of up to 4.8Gbps, which achieves offloading AVC-Intra 100 footage at more than 15X real-time, making the PCD30 especially well-suited for use in long-form production. The AJ-PCD30 P2 reader will be available this summer at a tentative RRP of €2,030 excluding VAT.

With a tentative ex-VAT RRP at €5,000, the 3D-ready AG-HPD24 Deck with native 24P recording and a new Workflow Tool that features Super-Fast USB 3.0 Interface and HDMI Output will also be shown at NAB.

Panasonic will also be introducing the BT-LH910, a powerful new 23cm (9-inch) LCD monitor for field and studio applications. Breakthrough features include a new high brightness, high contrast IPS panel that affords the best picture quality in its class; newly-developed 3D assist functions; and professional interfaces including HDMI and 3G-SDI. The

BT-LH910 will be available this month at a tentative RRP €3,000 excluding VAT.

The Panasonic versatile wireless system for its new AJ-HPX3100 master quality 1080p P2 HD camera recorder simplifies the process of utilising user-selected metadata. Comprised of the AJ-WM30 wireless module and AJ-SFU3100 software, the new system promotes a seamless transfer of critical camera information between the HPX3100 and a vast population of intelligent devices including PCs, iPads and iPhones. The new AJ-WM30 wireless module and AJ-SFU3100 software key will both be available this month, with suggested list prices of €130 and €1,300 excluding VAT, respectively.

Three new software products will also be announced - including the AJ-SF110 Video Ingest software and AJ-SF100 Linear Tape-Open (LTO) Archive software, and AVCCAM Importer software which is a free QuickTime plug-in that eliminates the need to convert AVCHD files to ProRES422 files before editing in Final Cut Pro.

For further details contact **Panasonic** direct - see the 'Video Manufacturers' section of the Trade Directory on page 13.

## Buy one recording mode - get two!!!

JVC Professional has recently introduces their new GY-HM750 ProHD camcorder - which is a HD/SD compact shoulder-mount model that offers simultaneous recording to two SDHC cards and optional ASI module for live ENG microwave broadcasts. Ideal for ENG news, sports, documentaries, events, and other location shoots, it offers the industry's fastest shoot-to-edit workflow by recording native HD or SD footage in ready-to-edit file formats on low-cost SDHC memory cards.

Equipped with the same 3-CCD imaging system in the GY-HM790E, JVC's ProHD flagship camcorder, the GY-HM750E delivers outstanding 1920x1080 images in a small, lightweight form factor. It records at selectable data rates up to 35 Mbps and can record HD footage in 720p, 1080p, and 1080i, as well as SD footage (576i).

Using JVC's established native file based workflow, the GY-HM750E includes a dual card slot design that records to non-

proprietary SDHC cards and/or optional SxS recorder. A new feature, borne from numerous customer requests, allows simultaneous recording to both SDHC cards, for instant backup or client copy.

JVC's native file recording technology allows recording in ready-to-edit file formats for Apple Final Cut Pro or Adobe Premiere (.MOV), as well as other major NLE systems that are compatible with Sony XDCAM EX files (.MP4). For legacy SD applications, the camcorder can also record standard DV files (.AVI or .MOV).

Building on the modular approach of the GY-HM790E, the GY-HM750E includes a 68-pin

chassis connector that creates a clean, direct interface with various modules - no external cables needed. The new KA-AS790 ASI output module, for example, provides a direct feed from the camera to a satellite uplink or microwave transmitter via BNC, which is ideal for broadcasters that want live HD video from the field. Not only can the camera be connected to the transmitter or uplink with a single BNC cable, thereby eliminating the need for additional 'black box' interfaces, but the GY-HM750E automatically switches to low-latency mode (less than 300ms delay) when the module is in use.

JVC has also improved its Pre Rec (retro cache) feature, which

continuously records and stores footage in cache memory and helps prevent missed shots of breaking events. The GY-HM750E stores 20 seconds of footage in its cache. Other features include variable frame rate recording, extensive image customisation, a high resolution (1.22 million pixel) LCOS viewfinder and 4.3-inch flip-out LCD monitor, and JVC's patented Focus Assist functionality. The GY-HM750E also features two XLR audio inputs with phantom power, plus manual audio level controls with audio meter.

The GY-HM750E includes a Canon 14:1 zoom lens, though it accommodates a variety of lenses with its 1/3-inch bayonet lens mount. JVC offers lenses from Canon and Fujinon, as well as a broad line of studio and field accessories that are compatible with the GY-HM750E. The camcorder will be demonstrated at the upcoming NAB Show in Las Vegas.

For further details contact **JVC** direct - see the 'Video Manufacturers' section of the Trade Directory on page 13.





## Gliding into PEC

PEC Video is proud to announce that they are now UK stockists for Cinevate. Their core product includes high quality linear tracking systems, optical viewfinders, matte boxes, follow focus systems and camera shoulder rigs, these items and more were amongst the several new and exciting product ranges PEC Video demonstrated at BVE.

Cinevate's mission statement is simple - "to equip filmmakers with the optimal tools to achieve their creative goals." And with that Canada based Cinevate have dedicated themselves and their hi-tech production facilities to designing and manufacturing some of the very best accessories for DSLR's and Video Cameras ever seen.

Dan Wheeler PEC Video's Sales Manager says, "Cinevate show



fantastic attention to detail and have a real standard of excellence. They are incredibly approachable and welcome constant feedback from their customers to help make even better products. A lot of their staff have broadcast and production experience in their backgrounds and this really shows in just how well thought out their solutions are."

For further details contact PEC direct - see the 'Dolly & Track Systems' section of the Trade Directory on page 12.

## LED with switchable colour temperature

Ianiri UK has recently introduced a new camera mounted LED light with variable colour temperature control. The new Minima LED light offers switchable colour temperatures, full dimming control and outstanding brightness.

Manufactured by Visio Inc., the Minima is a very small unit that weighs a mere 190 grams. Despite its diminutive proportions, the Minima provides an excellent level of output at 100 lm / Watt, equivalent to a 50W tungsten. Uniquely, in a unit of this size, the light offers full colour temperature switching, with 6 settings from 2800°K to 6500°K.

Nick Allen-Miles of Ianiri UK commented, "The Minima does away with the need for colour gels to control image temperature, buying the camera team valuable time while reducing the size of their kit bag. But most importantly, the quality

of the output is excellent, marrying outstanding brightness with amazing colour accuracy." The Minima achieves this accuracy

by combining red, white and yellow LED lights to form a continuous spectrum with full-range frequency. Low-cost and inaccurate analogue circuitry has been replaced by a digital

signal microprocessor and a 25K frequency PWM controller. This allows for the colour ratio of different LEDs to be adjusted precisely according to different colour temperatures. Minima's CRI (Colour Rendering Index) can reach above 90% at any colour temperature from 2800°K to 6500°K. Minimum colour shift is guaranteed to be within the range of 3-step dimming.

With the unit featuring 144 individual LED light bulbs, the Minima delivers a pleasant, uniformly soft light that delivers natural skin tones with an excellent 3D effect. Despite the sophistication of its electronics and its powerful lighting output, Minima features a low power consumption design and with a run time of 1.5 hours.

Allen-Miles adds, "In today's media frenzy, time is of the essence. The camera operator is always looking to start shooting fast, with the least possible set up time. And production departments are increasingly calling for footage that can go to air without time consuming colour correction or relighting in post. The Minima can help camera teams capture broadcast-ready, beautiful pictures fast. They can now shoot interview after interview without reaching for spare batteries, gels or reflectors."

The Minima is available from Ianiri's dealers across Europe at an SRP £169.00 / €199.

For further details contact Ianiri UK Ltd direct - see the 'Lighting' section of the Trade Directory on page 13.

## Boom, boom, boom!

Rycote has added three telescopic carbon-fibre boom poles to its range of accessories for broadcast and location sound recordists: the 1.63-metre-long G3, with three sections, and the 2.49-metre-long G5, with five sections. The G5 is itself available in two versions, a standard version and one with an internal coiled cable and built-in Neutrik XLR connector in the hilt.

For several years, following their takeover of US boom pole manufacturer Lightwave Audio, Rycote has been selling telescopic boom poles under the Lightwave name. However, with the launch of the Rycote-branded G-series carbon-fibre poles, the entire range, including the A3 and A5 aluminium poles, will now be rebranded as Rycote products.



Featuring the same lightweight patented triple-cam 'grip and twist' locking system as the A3 and A5 poles, and with no metal parts to add to their weight, the new G3 and G5 combine lightweight construction with great tensile strength. As on the A3 and A5, the locking mechanism is designed to be resistant to jamming when the pole is dirty; however, if necessary, the locking collars can be completely stripped down for cleaning in the field if required. The G3 weighs a mere 360 grammes, the standard G5 is 580g, while the G5 with internal cable weighs 720g.

The G3 and G5 boom poles are ideal additions to the location kit of any broadcast, ENG or film sound engineer. All three are on sale now, with UK recommended VAT included retail prices as follows: G3 = £150, G5 Standard = £204 and the G5 with internal cable = £288. Prices will vary in territories outside the UK.

For further details contact Rycote Microphone Windshields Ltd. direct - see the 'Audio Equipment Supplies' section of the Trade Directory on page 12.

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## Area IOV News

### Midlands

By Chris North

Our February meeting, featuring Colin Day's presentation about the Art and Science of Voiceovers, followed on from the IOV's National AGM at the Hillscourt Conference Centre to the south of Birmingham. Colin, who now works with his wife Emma from their state-of-the-art studio at their home near Bromsgrove, informed and entertained us until 10pm with an account of his life as a voice-over artist and with technical explanations of how it is done - with a bit of celebrity gossip thrown in. We began with a dramatic audio clip of Colin voicing the introduction to the Last Flight of Concorde.

We were interested to hear how he became a voiceover artist - as he explained, it is not something you can study for. In Colin's case it developed from his days as a young DJ, then through local Radio to TV continuity and to voicing cinema adverts. Then, as he became better known, he travelled the country doing voiceovers



wherever required. His life changed dramatically with the advent of the ISDN line, which enabled studio quality audio to be transmitted to any destination - so he could then work from home.

Members had no shortage of questions throughout the evening, ranging from kit to techniques. Colin explained that there was a move back to 'retro' kit - valve amps and ribbon microphones - which could deliver a richer, smoother sound than modern condenser microphones and digital pre-amps - but the recordings were made digitally. He explained how the recorded sound was affected by the characteristics of the mic used, the type of pre-amp and the room acoustics. Some mics suited some voices better than others - Emma preferred a directional mic for her voice rather than the large Neumann studio mic, which suited Colin better. There was also a discussion about room acoustics and how to improvise with blankets and



duvets if you did not have access to a studio for a particular recording. But at the end of the day there was nothing like a professional voiceover to lift a production, as several of our members who had previously used Colin could testify.

Sadly we had to bring the evening to a close at ten o'clock, with members' questions still flowing. The 19 members and guests who attended were rewarded with attractive mouse mats featuring classic old microphones - and of course a reminder that we could contact Colin on 01527 889317 or via [www.Thurstonday.co.uk](http://www.Thurstonday.co.uk). Thanks to Colin and Emma for a very full, enjoyable and above all, entertaining evening. ■

### North West England

By Phil Janvier

Normally, I would write a report after every Area 3 meeting and post it to our members but last year was a strange year and on top of that we only managed three meetings instead of our normal four. 2010 began with an apology for the lack of a meeting in February because of bad weather but we did meet 21st April. The subject for our meeting was the IOV Award Winners and eleven members turned up for this meeting and we showed extracts from all the winners. This as ever was a popular meeting as it showed the standard required to win an IOV Award.

On 12th May we had the first of the Better Encoding Workshops. Strictly speaking this was IOV VideoSkills Workshop, but it was led by one of our local members, Martin Kay, and involved a great number of our local members. The two-hour evening workshop attempted to provide the skills necessary to gain a working knowledge of how to encode video and media files efficiently for digital delivery. I learnt a lot that evening and I am grateful for the preparation and effort that Martin put in.



On 16th June 2010 we welcomed back Peter Harman from Vinten. Peter over the years has become one of our favourite guest speakers and he gave us an opportunity to see the Vision AS and Protouch systems plus a new prototype unit of the Vision Blue tripods. Peter's visits are always a real opportunity to bring your own camera and test it on the tripods being demonstrated and he is such a charismatic engineer that it made a great evening. Sadly only nine members turned up but for those who did attend it was a great success.

On 15th September eight members turned out for Michael Walker and Dr Jim Mooney of AIMES Grid Services C.I.C Ltd who work with the storage and rendering of 3d video and did a lot of work for last year's Shanghai Expo. Together they gave a presentation on data centres, the virtual "Cloud" and digital security as well as Render Farms and stunning 3D quality CGI and visual effects. While some of the concepts were new to the members overall the evening was both interesting and challenging.

Sadly our final meeting of the year was cancelled due to large number of members giving apologies for absence. However, this cancellation was the catalyst to ask some serious questions about the future of the local meetings in Area 3.

In the last few years there has been a fall in the attendance patterns at our meetings. From the beginning of my time as area rep numbers could vary between twelve and thirty, but lately our numbers have declined. This led me to ask some serious questions which I emailed out to members earlier this year - and I'd like to thank all those who emailed me, posted on the IOV forum or rang me with their thoughts.

It is clear from the replies that there is still a desire to meet occasionally and in various places around the whole of Area 3. I will therefore endeavour to find suitable topics, skills and speakers. However, there will be a difference. At present our IOV local group meetings are now economically unviable. Consequently, if we are to have meetings they will only be confirmed when enough members have booked in advance to make them viable. The cost of our meetings is dictated by the venue costs which are approximately £70 a session, we charge £5 to members who attend and that means to break even we need a minimum of fourteen members per meeting. Therefore, if fourteen members can commit to a meeting it will go ahead, hopefully at a variety of locations. I will of course keep members posted on news of our next event. ■

## Find out about IOV Meetings in your Area...

The IOV holds meetings on an area basis throughout the year. If you would like to receive notification by email of when your nearest meetings are being held, simply register on the IOV's website. You can then subscribe to receive automatic emails when new meeting notices are posted by the Area Rep.

Full details of how to register and subscribe can be found in the 'Using this Site' section located in the upper main menu of the website.

### Scotland North

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### Scotland South

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01555 661541

### North East England

Mike Trehwella - [mike.trehwella@iov.co.uk](mailto:mike.trehwella@iov.co.uk)  
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### North West England

Phil Janvier - [phil.janvier@iov.co.uk](mailto:phil.janvier@iov.co.uk)  
0151 487 9338

### S. Yorks, Humberside & Lincs.

Brian Fernley - 0115 989 2787  
[brian.fernley@iov.co.uk](mailto:brian.fernley@iov.co.uk)  
Ross Ironfield - 01522 872 328  
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### North & West Yorkshire

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### North Wales & Borders

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### East Anglia & A1 Corridor

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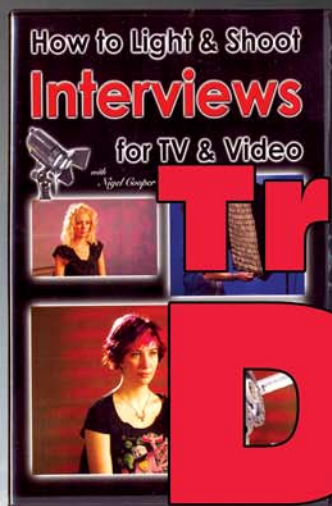
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If you would like to present your products or services at local IOV meetings - please contact the IOV's Central Office on 020 8502 3817 or email [info@iov.co.uk](mailto:info@iov.co.uk)





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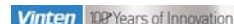
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# Evolution DSLR

*A review of the Panasonic Lumix GH2*

By Niels Puttemans

**DSLRs have blazed through the landscape of event videography for a few years now. Although they offered amazing imagery and new possibilities, they also came with some new problems: aliasing, moiré and audio monitoring have been challenges we didn't use to face.**

Panasonic has been a part of the DSLR market for a while with their GH1. Interesting as this camera was (with video autofocus functions and an articulated screen), the poor implementation of an AVCHD codec let it down in more challenging environments. It wasn't until the firmware got hacked and the 'GH13' was born, that it became a serious contender. Although here at Ever After we have used the more ubiquitous Canon offerings, we eventually settled down for this unsung DSLR hero that will happily use pretty much any lens ever created.

With the Lumix GH2, Panasonic released the 2nd generation of this camera. As with all new technology, in the beginning there's always plenty of scope for improvement. Did Panasonic deliver with the GH2? Oh yes! They certainly did!

## Getting technical

Let's get the technical mumbo-jumbo out of the way first. The GH2 is a micro4/3 type camera, which means it has a crop factor of about 1.9 when compared to a full frame 35mm stills camera, or just about the same size as a 35mm film camera. This means the depth of field is deeper than the Canon 5D, and a tad deeper, but pretty close to the 60D.

The touch-screen is an improvement on the GH1: it is sharper and now offers 'touch focus' when used with a compatible lens. The kit lenses offer some interesting features such as stabilisation, touch-focus, push-auto style focus and complete autofocus all of which



are surprisingly well implemented. As is the case with all stock lenses, they are quite slow and I would not recommend using them indoors. A variety of faster micro 4/3 and full 4/3 lenses are available, but obviously more expensive.

The implementation of the codec is a mixed blessing. There's a 'cinema 24p' mode which gives you a gorgeous native 24p image at either 24mbps or 17mbps. You can also use a 1080i60/i50 or 720p60/p50 (NTSC/PAL), but these are limited to 17mbps. If you ever come across a Panasonic engineer that has a good explanation for this, please give him my number! I'm sure that we'll see a hacked codec soon that will address this, but as most of us want to have a 'cinema feel' anyway, it's pretty much a none-issue.

Another great Panasonic idea was to come up with a new battery type instead of sticking with the GH1 style. I can only see one advantage there and that's for Panasonic, not for the

user. If I start to sound bitter, let me correct you straight away: I LOVE THIS CAMERA. Yes, Panasonic made some odd choices, but read on and you'll see why I'd happily live with those.

## Redefining expectations

Goodbye aliasing and moiré. You've read it right, unlike all the other current offerings in the DSLR market, this camera handles aliasing and moiré issues extremely well. It's become all but invisible in just about all circumstances and is no longer an issue. Intricate brickwork, stripy suits, this camera will happily film it all!

If you underexpose and throw your camera about like a monkey with an itch, you can still create problems that the codec doesn't deal with very well, but I'd like to think we're all a bit better than that.

What about the audio? The GH2 has a built-in stereo mic, it's nothing like a Rode NTG-2 shotgun, but if you have to,







it actually does give you quite usable audio if you're close enough to your source. I'd say it's somewhere in between the Canon built-in mics and the Rode videomic.

The GH2 does have a mic input of the 1/8inch variety and more importantly, you can set the levels in 4 steps (for the built-in mic or an external one). You can also see level meters on your display alongside a very useful histogram and a basic zebra-system.

Plugging in your external mic, it even reminds you to power up that mic if needed! But...still no headphone socket and you can't adjust the audio levels while recording.

The GH2 has a 16 megapixel sensor, the image of which is scaled down for filming. But Panasonic came up with a great idea, why not have a '1:1 crop function'? The result is a video mode where only the middle 1920x1080 pixels on the sensor are used, which is more amazing than it sounds. No aliasing or moiré at all and the focal length of your lens multiplied by about 3. This means a 50mm prime becomes a 150mm lens at the

touch of a button without degrading the image.

With the GH2 Panasonic have made their camera a lot more light sensitive, it's in a different league then the GH1, the ISO ranges from 160 to an extremely clean 3200 when filming in the regular film modes. When using the 'crop-mode', grain becomes apparent anywhere above 400 ISO.

The HDMI output of the GH2 is uncompressed while filming, which makes it an interesting choice for those nano-flash or similar recorders.

### Using the GH2 in a run and gun environment

Ever After specialises in films with no re-takes, uncontrolled sets with mixed lighting and actors that can be very camera shy: yep we produce wedding day films. Having a camera that can be quick and versatile is a must and the GH2 delivers!

The articulated screen and vastly improved EVF (electronic viewfinder, great when it's just too sunny outside) are a pleasure to work with. There are no overheating issues or warnings, battery life is not too

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shabby (about 2.5 hours of filming per battery, a battery grip is due out in February) and the only recording limit you have (NTSC version) is dictated by the size of your memory card (SD). If nothing else, that makes the GH2 one of the few options for an unmanned DSLR camera. The PAL version does have a 30 min recording limit (thanks to some old stupid tax laws), which I'm sure will be hacked out of the way soon, at least that's what happened with the GH1.

At this point I have to mention that the LCD screens on the Canon DSLRs are superior, no doubt about it. I would go as far as saying the LCD is the weakest point of this camera. We've had several instances where the LCD showed aliasing and banding (due to its lower resolution), the footage in the NLE however looked gorgeous with no traces of these artefacts. These seem to be due to a line-skipping system that is used for the LCD screen, but not for the encoding of the footage.

As a rule of thumb, I

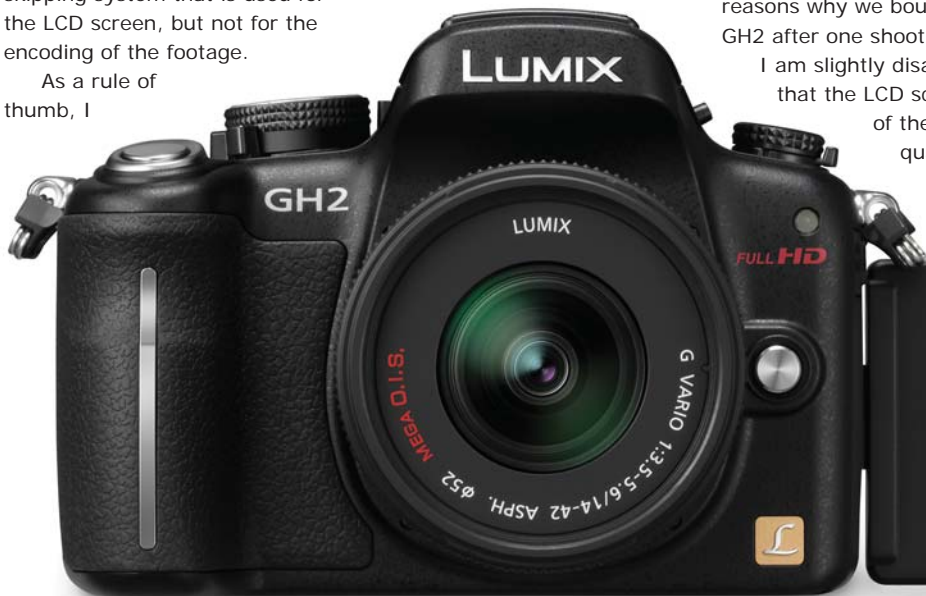
would suggest the usage of the EVF in low light, the eventual footage still looks better than that, but it will give you a far better indication than the LCD. You can of course use the full quality HDMI output with an external monitor to avoid all these issues, but we found that after a few shoots, you know how to 'translate' LCD-quality to actual footage-quality.

As I mentioned before, the stock lenses are useful, but slow. At present we use a variety of vintage lenses (some fast zooms, but mainly primes) and I can't say I miss the auto-functions. Focussing a vintage lens can easily be done with an expanded zoom function, which you can



point anywhere with the touch screen. It is however (just like all DSLRs) not available while recording.

The camera and stock lenses are very light and while at first they can feel like they've been manufactured at a Fisher-Price plant, they are actually quite robust. They do have their uses, especially outdoors where the OIS (optical image stabiliser) allows for some handheld shots that would otherwise fall apart.



Due to its crop factor it's often commented that it is difficult to get a wide angle shot with the micro 4/3 cameras. Again, this is where the kit lens comes in handy as it starts at 14mm.

There are several other options (such as a 9-18mm zoom); the key is to search for native 4/3 or micro 4/3 mount lenses.

We use our GH2 on a variety of rigs: tripods, monopods, DPSlider, glidecam and a DVmultiRig. It's easy to use and balance on all of these and it's especially nice to have a very light glidecam system if you want it.

### Overall assessment

Is this the perfect camera for everyone? No, it isn't. For us the GH2 has redefined the possibilities of DSLR shoots. The solved aliasing and moiré issues, audio monitoring, zebras, no recording limits, improved low light shooting, 1:1 crop function ... all of these are reasons why we bought a second GH2 after one shoot.

I am slightly disappointed that the LCD screen is not of the same quality as Canon, but this is

only in issue in low light where the EVF will rescue you and your footage will be better than expected. An external monitor (even a bargain basement one) will make this a non-issue for £150.

Due to its massive market share, it's difficult not to compare it to the likes of Canon's offerings. Without a doubt, Canon has the edge when it comes to taking stills (something we're not bothered about), robustness and in very rare occasions the hair sharp DOF of a 5D mark II can be cool. Apart from this, I would say the GH2 gives Canon a run for its money from user friendliness to image quality and anything in between.

The recently announced Birger adapter will even make the use of Canon lenses (including IS and auto functions) possible on micro 4/3 bodies. So although it might not be perfect, it comes pretty damn close! ■

**Niels Puttemans**  
**Ever After Video Productions**

**Notes:** as the GH2 uses a mirror-less design, technically term DSLR is incorrect. Panasonic markets the camera as a 'mirror-less DSLR' and Canon is rumoured to release such a camera later this year.



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# hindsight

6-months down the line with the Sony NEX VG10 - By John De Rienzo

**Firstly, I was not entirely sure how to approach this review. The Sony NEX VG10 has been out a while now and I am fully aware of how quick technology moves on within the industry. This review is based on my own personal experience since purchasing the camera in October 2010.**

If you are anything like me then you would be extremely excited and get a buzz at the purchase of anything new and I tend to spend a lot of time staring at the unopened box before seeing what's inside!

## First impressions

I was surprised at how small the actual main body of the camera was, with the bulk of the supplied lens adding a fair proportion to its overall dimensions. The lens appears to be very well built and it was easy to attach to the main body of the camera. I did notice a little play in the lens once attached to the camera but more on that later. On handling the camera I found it ever so slightly top heavy and quite awkward to hold.

Most of the weight comes from the 18-200 E-Mount lens which has built in image stabilisation - a feature missing from the main body. The aperture range of the lens is f3.5 at 18mm and f6.5 at 200mm.

Most of the user buttons are hidden behind the 3inch LCD screen with the exception of the

record button and a photo button. There is a headphone jack, a mini HDMI and USB2 connector located on the right side of the main body as well as options for an external microphone which can be attached via a 3.5mm jack. No XLR inputs I am afraid but this is to be expected from a consumer model.

On quick observation of the LCD screen I found it to be very clear and sharp although not a touch screen like other consumer models. To my surprise the LCD cannot be swivelled to face frontward. That is a real shame.

Moving on to the audio, Sony have added a very nice quad capsule spatial array microphone which is well placed on the top handle. According to Sony this Mic has exceptional front side directivity and stereo separation. In other words it is more sensitive to the sound coming from the front than behind. Initial tests proved this to be true and I was very impressed with the sound capture from the inbuilt mic.

Unfortunately Sony omitted manual audio control or visual meters so we have to make do with AGC. Having said that the mic appears to handle quite well in most environments, although naturally I would have preferred manual gain control.

I do not want to dwell too much on the photo capabilities of this camera apart from the fact



that it is based around the Sony NEX5 with full PASM. It is to all intents and purposes a very capable stills camera, although Sony have omitted the raw option which can be found on the NEX5!

The main reason for my purchase was the fact that it is equipped with a large APS-C sized sensor. It is generally the same size as that found within the Canon 7D with the same capabilities for shallow depth of field encompassed within camcorder shaped body.

Sony use the AVCHD format outputting to M2TS files with 24mpbs as its highest setting - a little higher than the NEX3 and 5 which is 17mpbs. I recommend you purchase a few SDHC cards and batteries for the camera. Sony recommend an SDHC card of class six and above for reliability.

## On the road

Like any new purchase you will need to spend some time to get to know where all the buttons are and be confident that they can be accessed and used within a pressurised environment such as a wedding - which is where I will be passing most of my experience from.

My first head scratching moment came when I thought the camera had a fault. There is a visual dial on the LCD screen which allows you to change the

settings via the buttons behind the screen. This appeared to disappear as I was shooting and reappear sporadically, effectively making any changes impossible when not showing.

To explain further, if I wanted to change shutter speed or aperture I could only do so when the option was visibly showing on the LCD screen, but it kept flashing and sometimes disappearing altogether. After many phone calls with no success I initially thought the problem was coming from the attached lens which appeared slightly loose. Maybe it was not making good contact. Then I turned to the battery. Sony have opted for a battery which you need to push upward to secure as opposed to down like their other models. Maybe this was the problem?

Eventually by sheer chance I realised that the photo button would disable the camera when pressed. The problem is the placement of the photo button is such that you cannot help but touch it especially when shooting with the top handle causing this dilemma. It left me wondering what Sony were thinking of when designing the camera!

Another design problem is that the LCD screen needs to be open to access the controls. You will therefore be severely limited if you wish to use the viewfinder as a way of monitoring as this is disabled on opening the LCD screen!





## The front end

I found the lens to be great and really sharp outdoors although would have preferred a constant aperture throughout the 18-200 range, but here I know I am asking too much.

I would strongly recommend a variable ND filter for outdoor use to keep the exposure under control and keep the lens open to produce those beautiful shallow depth of fields shots. The lens has very pleasing bokeh - far nicer than our Tamron lens on our Canon 7D. In fact the quality of the picture is sometimes stunning and this for me is its saving grace.

The lens is a little too slow for indoor work and when the lights dim. Having said that you can raise the gain to 27db which is equivalent to ISO 12,400 in stills mode. Something for emergencies!

Sony do have the 16mm pancake lens at f2.8 and I believe many more E-Mount lenses will be introduced in 2011 to accommodate the camera. You can also buy many adapters to fit whatever lens you like on the body. Please bear in mind that you will lose the ability to auto focus and you will also lose IS. Sony have recently updated the firmware which now allows it's own A-Mount lenses to auto focus on the camera.

Whilst on auto focus the camera performs acceptably in good light, but I generally prefer to use manual focus 100% of the time. I would not recommend hand holding the camera whilst shooting as it becomes very awkward and although the lens has good stabilisation some form of shoulder support is required to make the camera more accessible and steady.

There is no record limit unlike most DSLR'S and I found no problems with overheating after recording speeches for over 50 minutes. This for me is a major plus factor.

## Why

I was very surprised to see the omission of 'focus assist' and the exclusion of zebras and peaking. I cannot explain how disappointing this is and in many ways it will be a deal breaker for many. Getting correct exposure is hard. Thankfully my eyesight is quite good and with the screen being sharp I did not have any major issues with manual focus. There is a histogram but it



disappears during exposure compensation adjustment which is when you need it!

I honestly feel Sony have deliberately left these features out to keep it in line with the consumer brand, but wait...the Sony NEX5 has a very nice focus assist of 7x & 14x, so why not the VG10? I am also certain that these can be fixed with a firmware upgrade - something I doubt will happen in the foreseeable future, if at all. If Sony is reading this then all I ask is that they make people who have invested in this technology happy by introducing these features by a firmware upgrade.

## In post

Transferring the footage to Adobe Premiere CS5 is a breeze with Premiere natively supporting the AVCHD format. I would strongly recommend you purchase a fast and capable computer to handle these compressed files otherwise you may experience stuttering and slow performance.

## Conclusion

There is no doubt that this camera is capable of some beautiful footage. It is comparable to DSLR's. This is not a camera for those looking to invest in a sole camera for weddings though. The poor user interface is by far the biggest problem.

However, if you already own one or two cameras (be it HDV or DSLR) and want to add this to your arsenal then I would recommend it - with caution. For those who already own the camera like myself we have got used to its many downfalls and, given time, are bowled over by the images it can produce.

I personally believe that if Sony fixed a few of its obvious flaws by means of a firmware upgrade then I would not be so cautious as to recommend this model. As it stands there will be a divided audience. There is no doubt you will either love this camera or hate it. ■

**John De Rienzo M.M.Inst.V.**  
De Rienzo Films

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# HOW TO **TURBO-CHARGE** YOUR Canon 550D

Introducing the Magic Lantern Firmware upgrade for the Canon 550D - by Ian Sandall



**Users of DSLRs don't need to be told about the many disadvantages of shooting video with these cameras. However the downsides are more than compensated by the beautiful pictures that can be obtained – even 'out of the box', and much has been written here and in many other publications about how large-sensor devices are about to take over the world.**

So as a result, a major industry has sprung up offering all sorts of supports and gizmos to help make shooting with DSLRs easier. Because until the recent arrival of the Panasonic AF 101 and the Sony F3 (and doubtless a myriad more following on) the only way to get a large sensor was to get a Red - or a DSLR. And most videographers I know of are not in the business of throwing a Red and some primes in the back of their car and tootling off to shoot a wedding.

However, many accessories currently being offered for DSLRs are just today's video equivalent of Snake Oil – promising everything, but delivering very little. But who hasn't been bewitched by those beautifully anodised and machined contraptions to pimp up their Canon? (Er, you haven't? Well, read on anyway...)

This review is for probably the most useful 'mod' you'll ever make to your DSLR – and best of all, it's free! That's the good news. The bad news is that it is a bit fiddly to do and if you mess it up, you 'brick' the camera (and you won't have any warranty.)

## Background

Around two years ago no-one had really considered shooting anything sensible on DSLRs – until the release of the 5DMk2. Offering HD video at only 30 fps (useless even to Americans as NTSC is actually 29.97 fps) it was still hailed as the Second Coming. And as Canon updated the firmware and actually made shooting video more possible, an American with the unlikely name of Trammell Hudson was working on 'hacks' to make it even better. A lot better. Like a real video camera!

And so Magic Lantern was born. A firmware hack for the 5DMk2 that gave it all the features that Canon couldn't (or more likely wouldn't) offer. Bear in mind that DSLRs are imported as stills cameras and as such attract a different rate of duty than video cameras – hence the limitation of recording length and many other 'de-specs' that frustrate DSLR users.

Fast forward eighteen months and most people shooting video on 5DMk2s will have tried or will be using Magic Lantern. (And it would be interesting to know how many rental 5DMk2s have the hack – with or without the owner's permission!)

Since then we have had the 7D (unhackable, they say) and the 550D. More recently we have had the 60D and by the time this article is published, the 600D which is basically like the 550D but with an articulating screen. And they all shoot excellent HD video.

It's always struck me as odd that Canon have so many DSLR

cameras yet they don't seem to have a great deal of standardization. You would think that it would be cheaper to make them all on one line with one chassis and spec them (or de-spec them) to a price-point, rather like Ford Escorts. However they all seem to differ in terms of physical construction, control layout and even screen quality.

For instance my 550D has a different control layout to my 7D, yet the way they work (on video at least) makes it difficult to tell rushes apart. I am told they even have the same sensor. And - the 7D is not hackable (even though you would expect it to be as it's basically a 5DMk2 with a 4/3rds sensor) but the 550D is, proving that the gubbins inside must be





completely different. (And all this notwithstanding a post by Trammell Hudson in June 2010 doubting that the 550D would ever be hacked!)

Prices for a Canon 550D body are slightly over £500 currently; by the time you read this, they'll probably have dropped further due to the introduction of the 600D. Add some lenses and bits and pieces and you could be shooting HD video with gorgeous DoF for under £1500!

However for the money, there are compromises to be made and these can have an effect on what you shoot and how you shoot it. The Magic Lantern firmware hack gets round most of these – and in my opinion now makes it more useful than my 7D – which is almost twice the price.

## The Best accessory ever?

So what is a hack and why is it the best accessory you'll ever add? Every Canon camera has firmware inside it that makes it do what it's supposed to do when you switch it on. Basically, these cameras have so many functions, that hard-wiring for all the possibilities would make them four times the size and four times more cumbersome. So, an installed program (the firmware) runs the camera from a 'flashable' memory and makes it do what it's supposed to do when you press the relevant button.

From time to time Canon updates the firmware with various bug fixes and to make the camera more useable. The latest 550D firmware is version 1.0.9 (and to install Magic Lantern you'll need to have this release in your camera.) What Magic Lantern does is to drastically 'upgrade' Canon's firmware to offer a load more options to make creative shooting much easier. However it does this in a rather clever way (which is probably a by-product of how the software engineers reverse-engineered the hack in the first place.)

First, you 'fool' your camera into thinking it has a new Canon release of firmware to upgrade to. Then, whenever you switch the camera on, it looks for a program to 'boot' from – and this autoexec program is now actually on your memory card! It's like changing the BIOS on your PC to make it boot from a CD instead of the hard-drive.

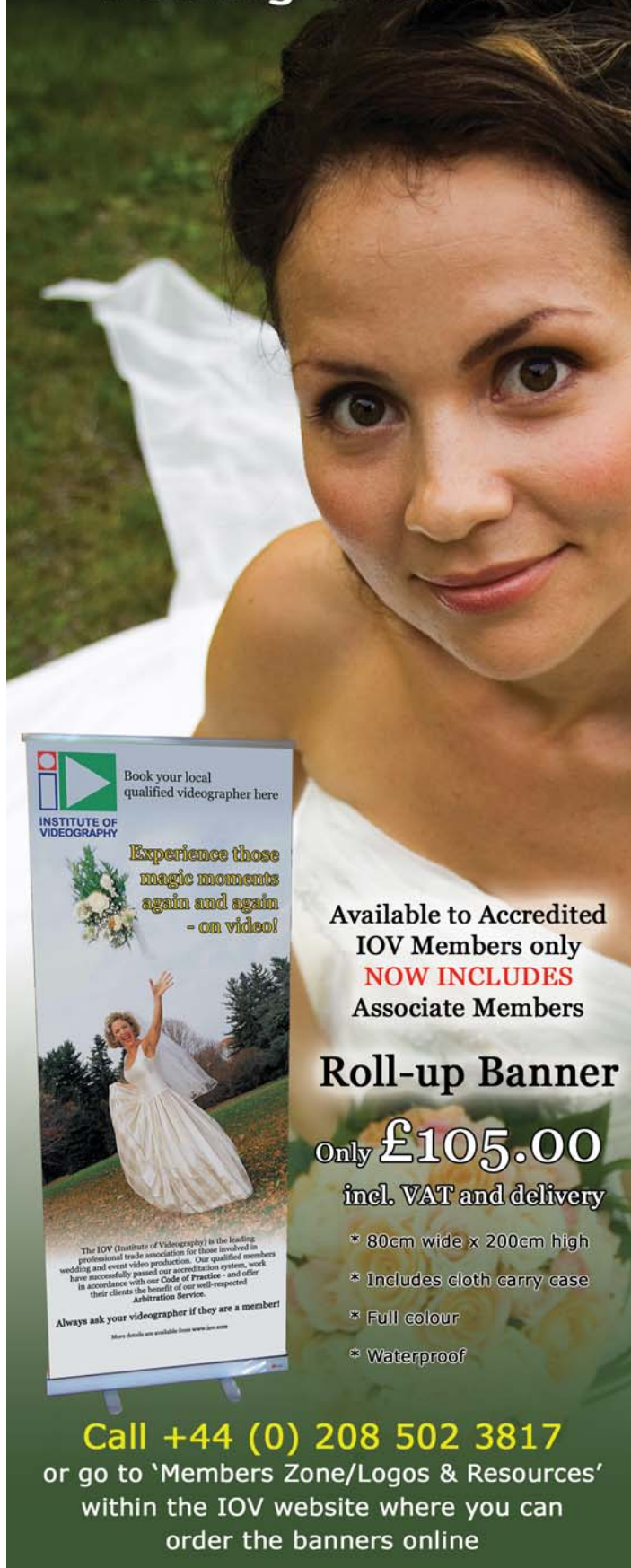
AND the real beauty of this is that once you've 'hacked' the camera to tell it to do this, you can always have the newest release of Magic Lantern running – just by copying the latest autoexec file to your cards!

## What Magic Lantern does

The latest release of Magic Lantern that I have at the time of writing (dated 23 February 2011) offers all these upgrades from the 'standard' 550D; these are accessed by pressing the 'erase' button to open up a GUI menu:

- Bit rate control (QScale parameter) for the H.264 encoder – for better quality pictures – but at the expense of card space
- Zebra stripes for overexposed / underexposed areas
- Spotmeter, histogram
- Cropmarks (16:9, Cinemascope, Fisheye)
- Intervalometer (classic or HDR)
- Trap Focus: camera takes a picture when something comes in focus
- Remote release with either the LCD face sensor or audio trigger
- Rack focus
- Stack focus (Live View only)
- Lens data computation
- Onscreen audio meters
- Manual audio gain, selectable input source, disable AGC and digital filters
- Display time remaining during video recording
- Debug functions (display CMOS temperature, screenshot, logging)
- Fine tuning for ISO and shutter speeds; also ISO 25600
- Kelvin white balance
- Clean LiveView display without any overlays (selectable)
- On-demand auto tuning for ISO, shutter & Kelvin white balance
- Quick access to some useful settings like HTP, ALO and contrast

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Now, many of these functions you'll never use. For instance setting up a focus pull is fiddly and it's normally quicker and easier to do it by eye, but many others turn the 550D into something approaching a real video camera – and offer real pro features, like: zebra, variable WB, much more variable ISO, on-screen masks, histogram and spot-metering and (best of all) manual audio level controls.

Upsides and Downsides

Running with the 550D with Magic Lantern makes it possible to have an almost infinite degree of control over what you are shooting and, with a little practise, turn out very fine pictures indeed. It also means that you may be able to travel lighter as in most cases you're not going to need to record your sound separately. So what are the downsides?

First, as stated before, it's fiddly (and a trifle risky) to upgrade. Second, because you boot from the card, there's no way to store any of your ML settings, so they will be lost on a power-down. And third, it is still experimental software so you must expect some glitches. The good thing is it's easy to downgrade or ignore – as we will see.

Fourth, it means that any card you use in the camera will have to be set up first. So in future, rather than just copying off your rushes and re-formatting the card in-camera, you'll have to be rather more careful. But trust me; it's a small price to pay.

Last, there have been reports that batteries don't last as long and there may be a risk of over-heating. Certainly I have got a few more buffer warnings – but never any overheating leading to a shutdown. However speaking to people in countries rather

warmer than the UK, this can be a factor.

The Upgrade

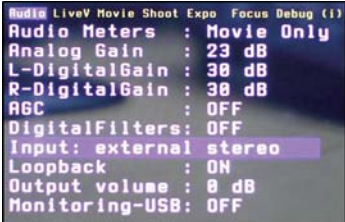
The upgrade process is covered in many places on the web – best of all on the Magic Lantern pages (<http://magiclantern.wikia.com/wiki/550D>) so these are just my notes to help you understand what you'll be doing and why. So – dare you continue?

The first thing to do if necessary, is to upgrade the standard Canon firmware for the 550D. The build of Magic Lantern I have discussed here requires Canon's 1.0.9 firmware. This is a pretty easy process which can be done on your PC using an SD card reader. The program is on the Canon site together with full instructions.

The second stage is to fool the camera into thinking that is has another firmware upgrade. This is done with one small file (magiclantern.fir) that makes a permanent change to the camera (this is correctly called a persistent change.) Like the 'official' Canon upgrade, this is done by writing the file to an SD card and then launching the upgrade process in the camera. Once the red light stops flashing at the end of this process, turn off the camera and remove the battery right away!

What you have done is to install what's called a 'Bootflag' program. That means if a start-up program is visible to the camera on its SD card, it will boot from that card. If not, it won't - and will boot from its inbuilt memory. Now your camera is ready to accept Magic Lantern - if you choose to run it. At the moment it is able to run it or not – depending on what card is put into the camera.

The third stage is to make your SD cards 'bootable' using a small program supplied. Onto these SD cards you also put the latest release of Magic Lantern



(mine is currently February 23rd, 2011) and a few other small files, all of which are supplied. Now when you put your modified card into the camera and switch on, the camera will boot from that card and Magic Lantern will be running when you're in video mode.

Do the same for all your cards and that's it! The good thing is, if you don't want to run Magic Lantern, just format the card in-camera and it will re-boot as a regular 550D. If you do want to run ML, just use a 'bootable' card WITH the Magic Lantern autoexec.bin file on it. The important thing is that you mustn't ever use a bootable card without the autoexec file. If you do, it won't start up and you'll have only a few seconds to remove the battery before the processor (which by that time has gone into a massive heat-inducing loop) could fry!

The Risks

From my reading, the risks involved are mainly:

- 1 - Loss of power at any stage of the upgrade process – so always use fresh batteries or a mains adaptor.
- 2 - Attempting to upgrade to Magic Lantern without having the Canon 1.0.9 firmware already installed on your 550D.
- 3 - Forgetting to prepare cards properly and having a bootable card without the autoexec.bin file on it.

Apart from that, the beauty of Magic Lantern is that as soon as a new version is released – and these are coming thick and fast – you just download it and put it onto all your bootable SD cards. You then have the latest release running – instantly. Also don't worry about the Magic Lantern data taking up card space. The files are very small – equivalent

to only a few seconds of video recording.

Conclusion

Magic Lantern offers a lot of what Canon have missed out – but demonstrably could have included. (Any musings on what the DSLR video revolution has done to Canon's prosumer video camera sales in the last 18 months are not for this article, but suffice to say I am convinced they will have more than made up for any losses by additional sales of EOS L lenses!)

It turns the 550D into what was my second DSLR camera into a useable first camera on many shoots and considering the software is free, it has the be the best deal of the year - and as such is highly recommended.

Upgraded correctly, it won't damage your camera and there are even instructions on the ML site on how to revert back to a previous unmodified state if you really want to remove all traces – say, if you wanted to sell it.

Finally please note that you run this software and any upgrades at your own risk. Neither I or the IOV take any responsibility. As it says on the site:



But my advice is to try it – apart from your time, there's little to lose and a lot to gain! ■

Ian Sandall M.M.Inst.V.  
[www.spl-communications.co.uk](http://www.spl-communications.co.uk)

**Note:** If you do upgrade your 550D, please consider making a donation to the developers. You can do this by PayPal on the site.





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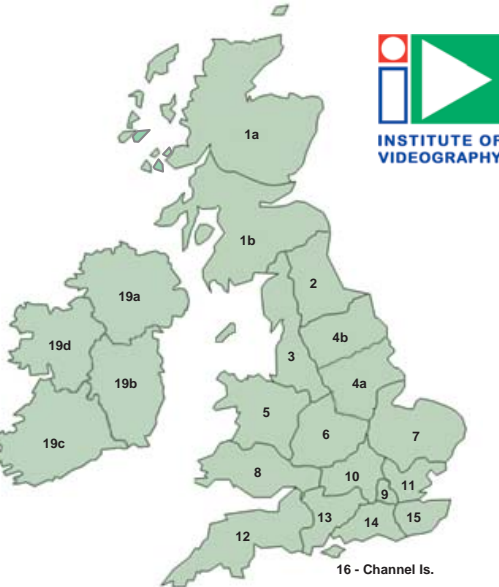
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Michael Leach F.Inst.V.	01902 893006	BC
James Mackenzie M.M.Inst.V.	01902 421254	ABC
Brad Miles M.M.Inst.V.	01455 202057	AB
Chris North M.M.Inst.V.	01530 836700	
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Bob Sanderson M.M.Inst.V.	01384 374767	AI
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Daniel Thompson M.M.Inst.V.	07708 506657	ABCFKGHMN
David Wilford M.M.Inst.V.	01858 410278	ACGNO
Jackie Williams M.M.Inst.V.	01455 848199	
AVInteractive *	01789 761331	ACDKMN

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Stephen Curtis M.M.Inst.V.	01502 712411	BCN
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Alan Torjussen F.Inst.V.	029 2066 6007	AFGLMN
Alan Vaughan M.M.Inst.V.	01453 884809	ACFGN
Chris Wheatley M.M.Inst.V.	01242 579712	ABCDKN

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Paul Cascarino F.Inst.V.	020 8988 2220	ABFN
Andrew Cussons M.M.Inst.V.	0800 234 6368	ABN
John De Rienzo M.M.Inst.V.	07877 908143	ABN
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Mike Henson F.Inst.V.	01494 438904	AUM
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Ray Burnside M.M.Inst.V.	020 7193 0721	ACGIKLN
Mario Crispino M.M.Inst.V.	01295 262260	ABCFHIJLKN
Matt Davis F.Inst.V.	079 6631 2250	ACFGK
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John Harding M.M.Inst.V.	01206 842607	ABCK
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Michael Lawson F.Inst.V.	07515 565 349	BCFGIKMN





# And Another Thing...

## The Future's bright

Back at the beginning of February Brett Allen alerted IOV Forum users to the existence of an organisation called goHDR that is developing a new camcorder capable of recording a much greater dynamic range than any previous video-based camera recording system.

Known as High Dynamic Range (HDR) the system is being developed jointly by a series of partners based in the UK (Warwick University and Entanglement Productions LTD., Leamington Spa), Germany (Spheron VR, Kaiserslautern) and USA (IBM, Austin, Texas).

As with all advanced technology there are a number of question marks over this project such as when will commercial cameras become available, at what price, at what size etc.?

Happily, as far as the viewing public is concerned, existing TVs should be able to show off the superior image quality just as high contrast

cinema (film) movies retain most of their dynamic range when broadcast.

I am very excited by the possibilities of this development as it seems that, cost aside, adopting HDR consists entirely of positives. However I suspect that we will have to wait awhile to see whether or not HDR is developed to the stage of commercial viability for camera producers.

What with HDR and big chip camcorders the future is looking very bright indeed for creative video-making.

## Meanwhile - back at the coal face

Regular readers of this column (the editor assures me that he's not the only one) will know that I like occasionally to report on where I think the corporate video business is at the time.

The experience of our company appeared to buck the trend in 2008/09 and 2009/10 when we had a good year followed by a

very good year but this current financial year has proved that what goes up must come down and we have had a very poor year in commercial terms.

But as the year is about to end there are definite signs of a return to normal business. We have noticed a gentle increase in training course bookings and the demand for our facilities services, and a more significant increase in demand for our corporate production service. So although this year (2010/11) will still be a stinker I am very hopeful that next year (2011/12) will see us get back to our usual level of business. And I know that my hopes are shared by our various Associates - camera operators, production assistants and training course deliverers - whom we employ on a freelance basis.

## Missing the Point

I notice that some politicians are trying to curry favour with a disillusioned electorate by proposing heavily to tax bankers' bonuses. Well it doesn't wash with me.

If a law was proposed whereby professional criminals should be taxed on their ill-gotten gains rather than prosecuted for theft, extortion etc. I doubt that many people would support such a proposal.

The money that I put in the bank is mine and I don't want it subjected to penal rates of taxation even at one remove via the grubby hands of those who would skim it like sweet-toothed workers in a chocolate factory.

## Help - I'm surrounded!

Here at **KLA Towers** we do a lot of printing. So we have a monochrome laser printer, two inkjet colour printers (one installed and one spare) and a disc printer.

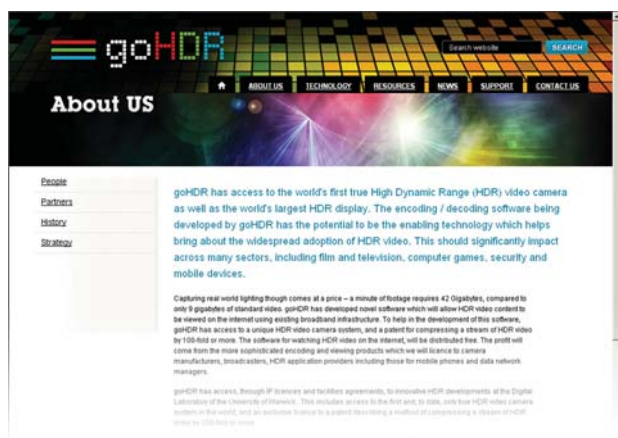
But recently the two inkjets have been playing up and failing miserably to get on with their job without a lot of intervention, suggesting that they both need replacing. The thing is they're both rather old (the younger one is seven years old) and current models don't use the same inkjet cartridges and the trouble is that I have a lot of spare cartridges for them and, as I'm sure you all know, inkjet cartridges cost a lot of money.

Now I couldn't go on with this situation and so purchased a lovely(!) new printer. But I'm too mean just to chuck away the old ones plus all those cartridges and so I'm still using the old ones (alongside the new one) until such time as I no longer have enough cartridges to run the darn things. Needless to say my studio now more closely resembles a print factory. But what would you do huh?

If anybody wants some very reasonably-priced Epson inkjet cartridges in the TO480 range do let me know. You could deliver me from this torment.

Meanwhile my laser printer continues to deliver perfect results in spite of its age (I acquired it in 1995) so it just goes to show that printers can go on forever (well almost). ■

**Stuart Little M.M.Inst.V.**



**Stuart Little is a director of KLA Film and Video Communication and Swanrose Video Training and Consultancy**



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Contact Peter: 01483-765605 [193]  
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