

FOCUS

MAGAZINE

FOR THE PROFESSIONAL & THE ENTHUSIAST

THE 'OUT OF THIS
WORLD' ISSUE

INTERVIEWS

NEWS+REVIEWS

EXPERIENCES

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MICS

AND STUFF

THE INSTITUTE OF VIDEOGRAPHY
ISSUE 235 | SPRING 2019 | SEVEN POUNDS

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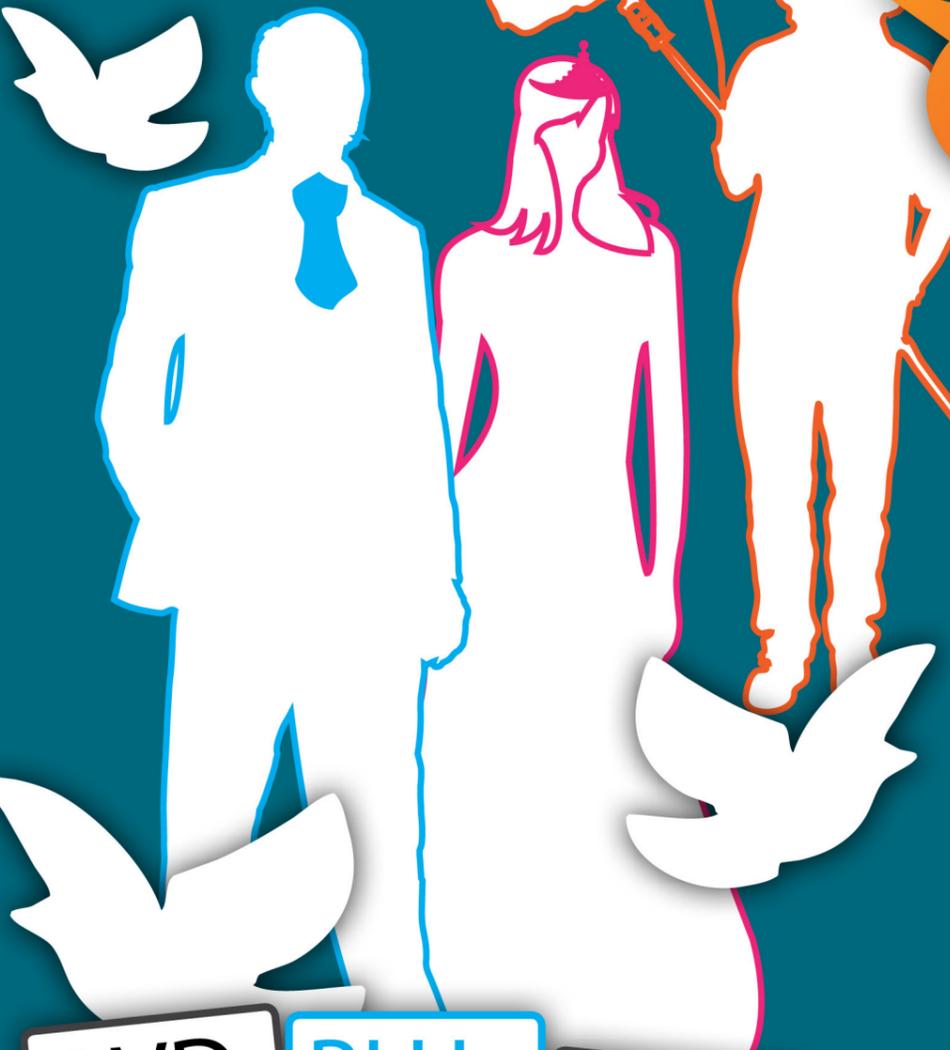
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cover picture: Solar Eclipse, see page 42
photograph: Gillian Perry

notes from an editor

First things first! We have a new Exec! At last! There are four members: Ian Sandall from Stockport, Peter Hinkson from Lytham St Annes in Lancashire, Zulqar Cheema from Harlow and myself Tony Manning, from Loughton, Essex. As Focus goes to press we are organising our first meeting. Before long we hope to meet F2F with as many members as possible since our AGM is due some time in October.

I hope the next phase of our saga will be The IOV – Beyond Survival! Yes it's something of an achievement that we're still here – but we want to do much more and to have more interaction and involvement with our members as we do so.

Some of our key tasks are ongoing and are listed below. Of course, new members will have new ideas and will help to shape our priorities.

- Launching the long-awaited new website (we hope you can access it as you receive this issue)
- Rebuilding our relationships with partners across a wide range of equipment manufacturers and dealerships, university media production courses, etc.
- A renewed emphasis on the craft skills of video production, by means of information, competitions, training courses and a fully revised and expanded Fourth Edition of VideoSkills.

Over the past year a number of volunteers have stepped forward to join the discussion and to help with delegated tasks. Notable amongst these have been Chris North, Mark Percival, Graham Bernard and Keith Woolford. As well as mopping up some of the work some challenging questions have been posed, including the BIG one, "What is the IOV for?"



Larry Jordan with Tony Manning – IOV stand, at the last Birmingham KitPlus Roadshow (P. 9)

Inevitably this branches off into other questions, e.g. "Is what it's for the same as it was in the 1980s, or different?" In examining these questions we have had a look at ourselves and also at similar organisations in our field such as the GTC (latterly the Guild of Television Camera Professionals), the virtually defunct Guild of Professional Videographers (last

news update November 2014), WEVA – Wedding & Event and Videographers Association International, The Association of Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems UK (ARPAS-UK), and a number of web entities active in reviewing and offering advice to film-makers such as cinema5d.com.

There is always something to learn from the competition. In terms of aims, and service to members the GTC is probably closest to what we do, with its stated intention to "establish, uphold and advance standards and expertise within our profession." Its main constituency has been broadcast TV camera operators, but that boundary has altered as technology itself has changed, and indeed some of our members are also GTC members.

In brief, the bulk of GTC members have followed a career path resulting in full-time employment as part of a team or organisation. By contrast, our members have more typically been video enthusiasts who at some point have developed a part-time production business, often starting with social videography before branching out into corporate events or other niche areas. They have learned through experience in the main and often work alone or in a small local enterprise.

That locality could be anywhere, not just London or Media City (Salford), and our members often have a presence in their local community in the types of work they take on, including charitable work.

Tony Manning

Summer 2019 issue copy deadline: 15 May 2019

So, ADOBE IS A PASSION?

Do you know your CS5 from CC and your Rush from the Pro?

Well, as luck would have it, we have a great opportunity for you to convert all that inner excitement into text!

The principal thrust is Premiere pro – new updates, tips and tricks and gossip plus other Adobe related features. A whole page to engage with our readership.

premiere pro

WANTED

Focus MAGAZINE

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The opportunity to be co-opted to the Executive Committee in an advisory capacity or designated role is available.

e: admin@iov.co.uk



Tony Manning, Editor
e: focus@iov.co.uk | 07960 719 520

Tony Manning, Chair & Arbitration Officer
e: tony.manning@iov.co.uk

Zulqar Cheema, Webmaster, Treasurer & Membership Secretary
e: zulqar.cheema@iov.co.uk | 07973 801 883

Ian Sandall, Executive Member
e: ian.sandall@iov.co.uk

Peter Hinkson, Executive Member
e: peter.hinkson@iov.co.uk

Keith Woolford, Magazine Design
e: keith@arch-media.co.uk | 0121 445 4619

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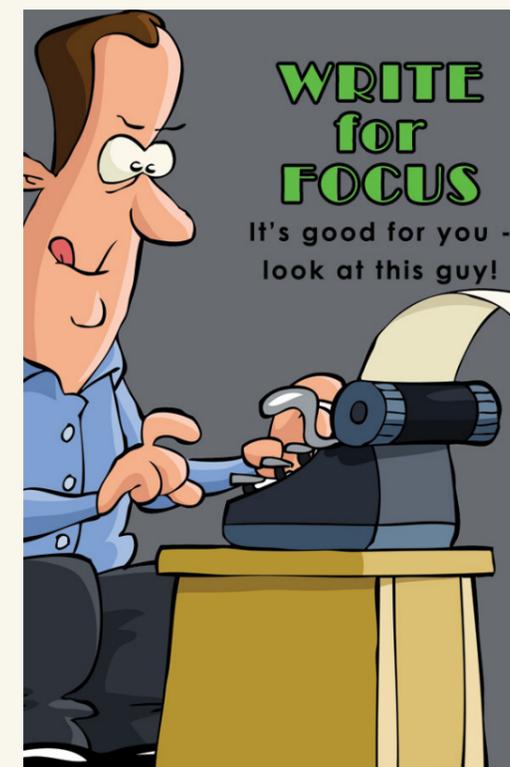
We wish to invite advertisers associated with our profession to take space in future issues. Principally digital with short run of paper copies

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Full page (266mm x 133mm)	£240
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news fit to print

So, that was The Photography Show and The Video Show 2019. Mightily attended by thousands of professional and enthusiast visitors enjoying an entertaining mix of pro and consumer gear, demonstrations and presentations. The big boys were on hand with their latest shiny objects alongside others with their no less appealing alternatives.

Ignoring the £16 parking and the over-priced sarnies, which is now a given, there was plenty to fascinate and drool over.

Let loose from the shackles of last year's IOV stand, one member's leisurely amble 'off-piste' to meet old friends and new – side-stepping the obvious to seek out other exhibitors' products that may have missed the bright lights...



The Photography Show

The Video Show

Make a 2019 Exhibition of yourself

30 May	KitPlus Roadshow, Glasgow
4 June	KitPlus Roadshow, Bristol
11-12 June	MPS, Olympia London
13-17 Sept	IBC, RAI Amsterdam
5 Nov	KitPlus Roadshow, Manchester

Award Winning Novo

Displaying a range of beautifully engineered tripods, monopods (the Explora MP20 achieving Digital Camera World's 'Monopod of the Year 2017' status), cases and filters – there were discounts of 30% to be had for visitors.

Tucked away at the back of the stand was a prototype video head presently being designed. The 'MBH100' will have continuous balance control for cameras up to 15Kg along with friction control for both tilt and panning. Made from CNC aluminium, they intend keeping the weight under 3Kg, appreciably less than comparable brands.

Paul Cockerill, Sales Director, tells me "The balance control uses a new system unlike springs which are quite clunky." They are employing a 'cord' which is "thicker than wire", and yet to be patented, and unique to Novo. Probably due to market this summer.

Novo are also working on a new gimbal and promised to keep us updated.

www.novo-photo.com



RØDE Rides High

Gaining attention for reaching a wider audience, Podcasts seem to be the new black. Audio blogging has been with us for almost 40 years, but the term 'Podcast' only since 2004. Apart from building followers, it also has the potential of generating serious revenue.

With the release of the brand new all-in-one RØDECaster Pro, this has just become much more affordable. "It's the first of its kind, There are no other products in the market that do this and have these features", says Alex Smith of marketing.

"Usually, you would have to spend significantly more money in a broadcast solution or have to bodge together a mixing desk and all the other different features. We are very excited".

Apart from an attractive £570 price tag, it looks the business with an OLED touch screen, enough inputs, sliders and buttons to be an efficient and very portable unit. No laptop required with recordings made via an SD card – just add your mics! "Pretty much everything you would need to run either a streaming radio station or podcast, all in one box".

www.rote.com/blog/all/rodecaster-pro

K&F Concept

Purveyors of photographic accessories from the other side of the world, K&F Concept supply keenly priced camera backpacks, tripods, sliders, microphones, mounts, filters and more.

With selective consideration, you could bag a bargain. They had several particularly good-looking lightweight and waterproof material textured backpacks on display.

I succumbed, once again, and nabbed a holster bag.

OFFER: there is a 25% discount available off many products via Amazon (search 'K&F Concept') – use code: DFPSD9RP

www.amazon.co.uk



Alex Theakston and Alex Smith demonstrate the brand new all-in-one RØDECaster Pro



Book 'em Danno

Who said 'Print is dead'? The resurgence of the humble book has seen an increase in its popularity with £1.59B worth of sales last year.

Regardless of the practicalities of the all-new front-lit Kindle, there's something reassuringly tactile about thumbing through ink induced paper. I still subscribe to various hardcopy magazines and read books at bedtime.

Case in point, there seemed more re-sellers at the Show this year.

One such company, snazzily called 'CBL Distribution' claim they are the 'largest specialist of photography based books in the UK'. Looking at their stand, I wouldn't be surprised. National Account Manager, Pippa Simpson show me the extent of titles on their shelves.

Offer: Pippa has arranged that Focus Magazine readers receive a generous 25% discount plus free P&P on all titles held.

Info: www.cbldistributionltd.co.uk

Loupedeck

A new gizmo aimed at speeding-up the editing processed was available. Originally designed as hardware tool for Adobe Premiere, Lightroom and Photoshop – FCPX have now been invited to the party.

Co-founder Felix Hartwigsen was on hand to go through its features of the machine with me – which were flying off the shelves. "Final Cut Pro X, is one of the most popular and revered video editing softwares in the industry. With this integration, professional video editors and filmmakers can expect a faster and more precise video editing experience".



Co-founder Mikko Kesti personally created the prototype machine then an over-subscribed crowd-funding allowed the Finnish company to release the '+'.

If editing via a mouse or track pad is less intuitive than you would like, the Loupedeck+ keyboard may be the answer as it can be customised to the users specific needs.

Info: <https://loupedeck.com>

Exclusive Competition

We have two nle manuals, courtesy of CBL, to offer as prizes for our Spring issue of Focus competition.

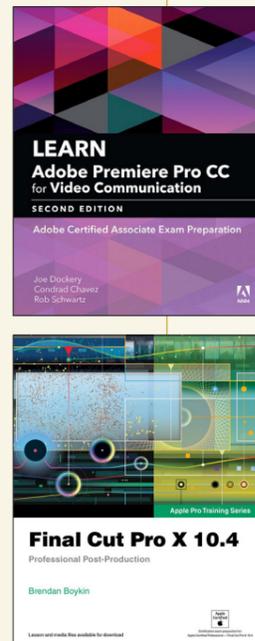
Both Premiere and Final Cut Pro users are catered for – no favourites here.

The first is *Learn Adobe Premiere Pro CC for Video Communication* (2109) and the second *Final Cut Pro X 10.4 Professional Post-Product* (2019).

Email your name, address and chosen title together with the answer to this question during April 2019:

Robert Donat is featured in our regular Film [Re]View, page 20. So, how was he instrumental in developing the moving image some 15 years later?

email: keith@arch-media.co.uk



Ink and Paper and DPS Group

Champagne may be cheaper, but absolute rubbish in your printer. Personally, I wouldn't allow compatible carts within five miles of my Epson P600, so always stick with originals.

Current supplier of choice is dpsb – part of the DPS Group, based in the home counties. A suitably vast range, swift delivery and probably the best prices you will find today. Sounds more like a Trust Advisor statement, but entirely true.



Company Director, Maneesh Patel, is very much a hands-on sort of guy as we discussed the range of media available on his stand. They also stock traditional matt and gloss papers along with those of exhibition and museum grades. Quality seems their by-word at exceptional prices.

Maneesh has extended the 'Show Only' promotion to Focus readers: 5% off Espon inks, Hahnemuhle and Canson papers plus 10% off Indigo inkjet papers. This is in addition to the already discounted website prices. Available to the end of April 2019, please quote: IOVDPSB at point of contact.

Info: www.dpsb.co.uk | 020 8466 7230

Kitted-Out and in the Pink

Bumped into Matt Robbins of KitPlus and, despite best endeavours, there was no commitment to hold one of their 2020 Roadshows back in Birmingham. Something to do with logistics, the north and the south locations.

John McCombie of Pinknoise was altogether more accommodating as he showed off his Aladdins Cave of camera accessories. Pinknoise are always happy to address queries on sound – particularly with the potential minefield with the imminent 700MHz changes.

With BVE moving to a summer date and its possible future in question, both Matt and John agreed the return of our own IOV Show is long overdue!

www.pinknoise-systems.co.uk www.kitplus.com



AKM Music

IOV friends Tony and Viv from AKM were busy on their stand as usual. Sparing time for a chat, both were very upbeat about their growing catalogue of broadcast quality royalty free music CDs. Regularly reviewed within these

hallowed pages, members can rely on innovative music to accompany their projects.

They have generously offered 25% discount off any CD until the end of April 2019. Please quote: IOV2019

www.akmmusic.co.uk

Other News

Dangerous Lithium Batteries

Those travelling to the USA will now need to pack their lithium batteries in hand luggage – not in cases destined to be carried in the aeroplane's hold.

This includes: "Devices containing lithium metal or lithium-ion batteries, including – but not limited to – smartphones, tablets, and laptops, should be kept in carry-on baggage. If these devices are packed in checked baggage, they should be turned completely off, protected from accidental activation and packed so they are protected from damage."

www.faa.gov/news/updates/?newsId=89425



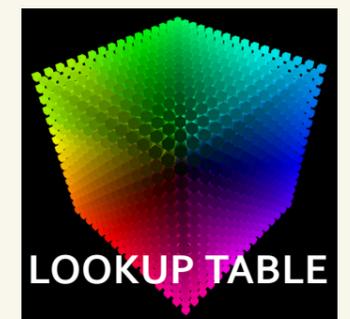
Lots and Lots of LUTs

Since we live in a colourful world, and not a 1940s black and white film noir, balancing our projects to reflect the mood is very important.

In Focus #234, we featured a colour grading offer thru' the American company Color Grade which offered great assistance to fashion your clips in an intuitive way. This issue, we direct your attention to Lookup Tables or LUTs as they are more commonly called.

A veritable treasure trove is available entirely free of charge from Shutterstock who have gathered 129 – yes, 129 count 'em – including 36 from our friend Denver Riddle of aforementioned 'Color Grade', to add that special cinematic look.

www.shutterstock.com/blog/129-free-cinematic-luts



01

NEW LEGS FOR AN OLD BLOKE

Now, let's get this straight – my Sachtler Flowtech are expensive legs. I bought cheap legs and they have lasted about five years of light use.

Actually, they were mostly used in the studio so not much hardship there. Now I am getting on a bit and don't want to haul heavy gear about.



BY MARK PERCIVAL

WITH LEGS AKIMBO AND GETTING ON, THESE DEFINITELY AREN'T AVAILABLE ON THE NHS

MARK PERCIVAL CONSULTING



If I was being a curmudgeon about the question – I would say videography is a young person's game. However, I decided that I deserved something with a little more panache before I cast off my mortal coil. I bought Sachtler Flowtech legs and a Sachtler Ace head. Some 40 years ago, I could have put a down payment on a house for what I paid in January this year but that is inflation for you.

A few things you need to know. I still use Nikon cameras and, with dodgy eyesight, I use an external electronic viewfinder (Zacuto EVF). Plus, and to max the quality out of the gear, I record with an Atmos recorder. All this stuff festoons from Manfrotto quick release gear and adds up to some weight (about 4kg with fast glass). I occasionally also hang an audio recorder and mike receiver off the rig.

I was tempted by other well-known makes, swayed like a palm leaf thrashed in the wind from one to another. The Sachtler Flowtech

was so different I applauded what actually looked like 'redesigned from the ground up'. I liked the cut of its jib, preferring to ignore what the sponsored pundits said in review. Pundits only want to be associated with good kit so won't post on poor gear.

The carbon fibre Flowtech legs are remarkably stable. The head is what you would expect from Sachtler – a pleasure to use – even with my camera scaffolding secured. The Flowtech quick release legs means that I can change height and re-level without getting a hernia – even fully laden. It is the smart design that caught my eye. Leg adjustment handles at the top of each leg – no more bending down balancing a heavy rig above your head. Magnetic catches securing the legs so I can carry them with the handy handle without tripod legs swinging about like a tower crane jib in a high wind.

And, an adjustable spreader which is off in seconds. Leg adjustment that gets my camera down near ground level

with a flick of a button (actually three buttons). Lastly, as you would expect, an illuminated level bubble. How little things bring light to the shadowy corners of advancing years.

I paid my King's ransom over New Year so I am still in my honeymoon period. So far so good – we are still talking, which bodes well.

As time goes on I propose to share experiences using the Sachtler – 'tales from my legs' perhaps. I am mostly engaged on fund-raising and community projects so there is little similarity in the filming situations except that talking heads get a good airing. Communicating credibility is important to success in any field.

Having steady legs helps stave off any existential crisis for another day.

Mark Percival



02

PROFESSIONAL CAMERAWORK

Intention is senior to Mechanics. When you mean to do something, no matter how small or big, no matter how simple or impossible, if one truly and purely intends to do it and then does it – it was the intention that carried it through to completion. It was the intention that guided all of the mechanics necessary to get it done. And by mechanics is meant tools and materials and stuff – and even the human body itself.

BY JOE CANEEN
M.M.INST.V.

OFFERING A KEY TO
CAMERAWORK, A
PERSONAL APPROACH
THROUGH EXPERIENCE



A short story

I was once interviewing the employees of a rather bigger-than-life character. A couple of the lads were on the back of his yacht shooting at targets in the sea with a .45 hand gun. They weren't having much luck. And, they weren't aware they were being watched. Suddenly, the old man tapped one of them on the shoulder and said, "Give me that".

He took the .45 and 'BLAM, BLAM, BLAM', hit all three of the targets.

Then he handed back the gun and said, "Just hit it", and left.

You can add all matter of complexity into anything, most of which will prevent you from getting anything done.

If you think about it, all the best things you ever did or accomplished and which brought the greatest joy were driven by the purest of sheer intention. If you waver, you miss. Or you take a long time. Or produce a less than desired result.

I'm pretty sure this applies to Martial Arts and to the apparent miracles pulled off routinely by the best sportsmen and women around the world.

Intention is senior to mechanics.

How does this apply to camerawork?

I had already sort of figured this out earlier in my camera career. By treating the camera as an extension of my eye and keeping my attention outward (whether I was on a tripod head, crane, dolly or hand-held) I was essentially eliminating a certain number of mechanical 'vias' (like going from Point A to Point B via Point C, rather than going direct). The trickiest was the Worrel geared head, and that's where I sort of perfected my approach. With a geared head (designed for the heavy cinematography cameras) you've got one gear that does the pan and one gear that does the tilt, and you have to operate them together regardless of



Natural fluid camera movement: the camera moves from a low angle to the left of the subject (1), travels behind (2) and finishes on the right at eye level (3) as he walks past

different speeds or degrees of movement of either the pan or the tilt. Then add a crane to the mix with someone moving you through multiple axes in space at the same time... if you thought about it much, you simply couldn't do it. I'm sure you can think of similar complex actions that, once practiced, you execute 'without thinking about it'. And when you find yourself thinking about it, you mess it up. When I later heard the 'just hit it' story, the full simplicity finally dawned on me. But it was with an understanding of the meaning of that statement. Intention is senior to mechanics.

So, in camerawork, what are the 'mechanics'?

It covers the camera itself and all of its mechanisms, the lens and the subject of optics, film and the subject of exposure, the camera mount (tripod, dolly, crane, etc.) and head, your hands, legs, eyes and everything else that holds that all together. And then there's the stuff

(people, objects, spaces) that move within your frame. It's all the physical stuff and there's lots of it.

When you're brand new, you worry about all of these things and you might say that you're introverted into the mechanics. Your stuff probably even looks mechanical. But with knowledge, practice and experience, your attention goes more and more outward and the mechanics just become an extension of your intention when framing and composing scenes.

And that's what it takes – knowledge, practice and experience.

Even this is a rather complicated explanation of something which is itself a simplicity when it comes to explaining good camerawork.

The short version is: 'Just shoot it'.

Joe Caneen

[RE]SPITE

Transitions link clips in a myriad of different ways. They can make or break your Spielberg effort without due care and proper attention.

Jeff Benjamin of gto5Mac offers basic and possibly less well known tips in FCPX.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=HETXeyBteMY

03

FAVOURITE KIT BITS #1

On this page we'll feature the bits of kit that people have found useful. All manner of things large and small, cheap and expensive – anything that helps you capture sound and vision or gets you out of a fix.

Let us know what you keep in your kit bag, whether you use it regularly or just occasionally. Anything goes! In this issue, we've invited Chris North to remove the fluff and lint to shares his Favourite Kit Bits.

BY CHRIS NORTH
M.M.INST.V.

DELVING INTO THE MYRIAD
OF CAMERA BAG POCKETS
TO REVEAL WONDROUS
GEMS!

CHRIS.NORTH@IOV.CO.UK



1. SMALLRIG SUPER CLAMP WITH BALL HEAD

This small clamp can be used to hold small monitors, microphones or any other bit of kit you need to fix to a table, tripod leg, mic or lighting stand, fence, door or even a picture rail. Made of solid metal, it's well engineered and finished, with jaws that open to a maximum of 5.5cm closing to grip a pipe down to 1cm diameter. I have several which I use to fix lights to a lipped picture rail, mount mics and hold scrims.

[Amazon](#) | £10

2. BATTERY TESTER

I couldn't manage without one of these in my bag. It has saved me on several occasions when discharged batteries have got mixed up with charged ones – and also when an AA cell has discharged prematurely before being used.

[eBay](#) | £3

3. BLIND SPOT POWER JUNKIE

This new KickStarter product will be available shortly to solve most of your powering needs. It not only enables you to use your Sony NP batteries to power kit but you can also recharge them on the unit. It also has all 3 USB sockets including USB-C.

[kickstarter.com](#) | £70

4. GROUND LOOP ISOLATORS

These coils cut out the buzz and hum from those annoying ground loops caused when you link several bits of audio equipment together, like audio from a computer to an amp. The larger one with phono plugs/sockets is very versatile but I later bought the small 'Besign' brand one which has 3.5mm jack plugs to connect directly with my laptop. I also keep spares in my kit bag – these annoying audio problems invariably develop when on location at someone else's premises.

[eBay](#) | £9 - £10



5. TRIPOD PLATE 'D-RING' SCREWS

These handy little ¼ inch screws with a 'D' ring have saved me a lot of frustration when changing tripod plates on small cameras.

I have replaced all my tripod plate screws with these since you can tighten them by hand without a coin or screwdriver.

[Amazon](#) | £3.99 for two

6. LIGHTING SPIGOT KIT OF PARTS

Twenty-two bits of hardware for less than a tenner to get you out of a jam! Four aluminium lighting spigots with ¼ to ¾ inch threads, four steel double-ended quarter-to-quarter inch and four ¼ to ¾ inch female converter inserts (the ones you always lose because they are so small). Plus a nicely engineered cold shoe mount with two locknuts.

Oh, and a cheap plastic cold shoe just in case!

Apart from the latter, everything is metal and feels durable. I have used the spigots to mount LED panels on microphone stands and the thread converters on mics and tripods. (£8)

[Amazon](#) | £8

7. WINDSHIELDS FOR LAV MICS

I have used Rycote fur covers on my lapel mics for years but there are many other alternatives. I also have a couple of Bubblebee fur covers which have an air space inside to reduce the noise of light wind buffeting the mic whilst preserving acoustic transparency (£21).

Comica (pictured) also make a good quality fur cover with a small toggle to tighten the elastic around the base. They come in a pack of three.

[Amazon](#) | £10 for three

8. SMALLRIG BATTERY PLATE FOR SONY NP BATTERIES

Sony NP batteries (F969, F550 etc) are used to power all sorts of equipment – monitors, LED Lights etc, not just camcorders. It makes sense to be able to use these with other equipment that will run off 7.5v via a power jack. You need to get the right lead of course since these little power jacks come in a multitude of sizes.

This one by SmallRig is a bit plasticky but lets you make full use of your Sony fit batteries. It will not charge them though. For that facility you would need something like the Blind Spot Power Junkie.

[Amazon](#) | £10.50



9

9. LAV MIC SPLITTER CABLE

You can probably buy these but I could not find one with lockable (screw thread) sockets like these so I made this one up to enable me to connect two lav mics to the stereo 3.5mm mic jack on my DSLR. The left hand mic socket is wired to the tip of the 3.5mm jack plug and the right hand mic socket is wired to the ring of the plug so you can make use of the stereo mic input to record two separate mics – ideal for an interview set up if you are using a DSLR.

[i](#) eBay | £2 to £4

10. AMBIENT 48V XLR LAVALIER POWER ADAPTER

This neat but expensive adapter converts the 48v phantom power from your camcorder/mixer to around 5.5v so that you can connect lav mics when you don't have a 3.5mm powered mic jack. Even if you do, it's better to use a balanced XLR cable from your presenter back to the camera, rather than a flimsy lavalier mic lead. The Ambient delivers top quality balanced audio and is available with the mic connection plug type you require.

I use the Sennheiser version with the lockable screw thread.

[i](#) pinknoise-systems.co.uk | £89



10

11. NEEWER TRIPOD SLIDING CAMERA PLATE

I have several light-weight tripods with different heads – a real frustration if you want to set up two and quickly swap your camera from one to the other.

I decided to standardise on these sliding plates because they are well engineered, so cheap yet accurately made and well finished. Aluminium alloy with levelling bubble, safety pin and 1/4 inch and 3/8 inch camera screws. Manfrotto compatible apparently.

[i](#) Amazon | £12

12. BEEWAY SD CARD STORAGE

Protective storage boxes are a must for keeping SD cards safe and dry.

I chose this Beeway one made from strong 'crush-proof' plastic and has a good seal to keep out dust and moisture. I opted for the 12 SD card version as there have been reports that some of the others grip cards too tightly causing cards to split apart when used multiple times.

This 12 card SD-only version does not have that defect but if you drop it the cards can pop out of their foam compartments – however, the box stays firmly shut.

[i](#) Amazon | £9



11



12

13. GREY CARD TARGET SCREEN

This small 10 inch flexible Grey Card is useful for setting exposure and also getting focus spot-on. Just get your subject to hold it next to their face. Flip it over to the white side to set white balance. It twists up to go in a small pouch in your bag.

[i](#) Amazon | £22

14. COLD SHOE (FOOT)

These are very useful for attaching mic holders, pistol grips, small LED lights and other small items to a cold shoe. Be sure to get one with two nuts – one to clamp the foot to the shoe, the other to tighten up to the kit you are mounting with the 1/4 inch bolt. Precision made in high grade aluminium – cheaper ones tend to be a bit loose.

[i](#) Amazon | £5 for two

15. TIE CLIP LAVALIER HOLDERS

These come in two types, this one grips the lavalier cable, others clip on to the mic itself. The cable versions are also useful for attaching the lav cable to clothing about 30cm from the mic to prevent the cable being pulled and dislodging the mic.

[i](#) Amazon | £2



13



14



15



16

16. SMALLRIG SHOE MOUNTS

These quality metal cold shoe mounts can be used when you want to mount and remove light-weight kit quickly from a rig or grip.

I use them for mics and lights and have fitted them to a couple of pistol grips for hand-held video mics.

The shoes have an internal taper so that the foot is gripped tightly and can't slide all the way out.

Whilst not cheap, they are so well made and supplied with screws and an Allen key.

[i](#) Amazon | £11 for two

So, that's what I carry around in my Kit Bag. I hope it's inspired or, at very least, entertained you.

Chris North

WE INVITE READERS...

to send in their own personal favourites. Those invaluable items, (excepting any lint deposits) tucked away in the camera bag.

Please send pictures with your written copy.

[RE]SPITE

The anatomy of a plugin. A behind the scenes 'thinking out loud' of a new plugin and how it can be used – check out this YouTube vid by Industrial Revolutions on their Grid Slideshow.

Plugin author Peter Wiggins offers an entertaining layman's approach.

www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1634&v=EAh-KCHQIPg

O4

ROLAND VIDEO SWITCHER GETS TRACTION

BVE is a lot about live streaming with tools & services to support this. Some IOV members undoubtedly are engaged in some way with live streaming.

The great British client base often likes the idea of live streaming without having an inkling of what is involved both technologically and making the content look acceptably professional.

BY MARK PERCIVAL

SWIMMING AROUND BVE 2019, MARK BELIEVES THAT STREAMING IS THE NEW BLACK.

MARK PERCIVAL CONSULTING



As part of IOV's planned upgrade to the Video Skills material I have no doubt that streaming will find a place. To which end, I would like to make contact with members who are making a business of, or dabbling in, live streaming services.

Camera feeds from most cameras with an SD or HDMI output can be fed into a streaming workflow. That is the image capture sorted! Microphones either through cameras or mixers can also contribute directly. Audio sorted! How though to select the different feeds dynamically to make a coherent story? This is where video switching comes in.

At a recent workshop, the Production Gear chaps in North London assembled a showroom full of clever solutions to provide streaming. As you would expect they streamed the presentations. Some tech chains were eye-watering costly and high end. Frankly, they were over complex as well unless perhaps aspiring to a full

outside broadcast standard. There was even a mobile rig for outside broadcast built into the back of a Mini.

What caught my eye was a combo assembled by Matrox which included a Roland compact vision mixer (V-1HD). The Matrox Monarch HD box handled single-channel transmission including encoding and enabling both streaming (generating an H.264-encoded stream) and recording an MP4 or MOV file to an SD card. The Roland gave tools to combine and manage the camera/sound feeds, including cross-fading between 4 HDMI sources, providing Picture-in-Picture and split functions. All this for less than £2k.

I was excited about this combo as I saw it as a setup that I thought a local youth group or organisation could manage effectively. Imagine the 'buzz' enabling young folk to 'produce' their own programmes. Simply as a training tool to get experience of the live streaming process the Roland would be exciting.



The Matrox stand at BVE again featured a Roland mixer but this time a prototype of a rather bigger version with an expected price of about £10k – just for the mixer. The prototype was 4K capable and enabled a huge range of different inputs giving multiple 'shots' each from the four 4k camera feeds, supporting high dynamic range processing to give and a better video/computer graphics mixed outputs without external conversion.

Roland was also on the JVC stand but this time with a more compact mixer. Clearly Roland have developed something of a good reputation with suppliers.

To me this means that Roland are technically robust and don't cause suppliers excessive headaches. JVC had assembled a streaming package that included the Roland and their PTZ camera and management desk. Might this be the way things are going for private commissions (weddings, funerals, corporate events and so on)?

Some IOV members are using PTZ and remote management for theatre recording.

I have connected into a range of mixing desks to get audio feeds into my field recorders at events. Perhaps the flexibility gear, like the Roland offers, might develop the same for video – tapping into a venue's pre-installed network?

Or perhaps I have just not caught up with a trend that is already well established.

Mark Percival

IOV GATHERING AT PINEWOOD STUDIOS

Seventeen IOV members got together at Sony's Digital Motion Picture Centre at Pinewood on 23 January 2019.

Matt Trigwell, our host at Sony, welcomed us to the Centre, and outlined the facilities available there, the production work carried out on site, and the training and equipment familiarisation programme.

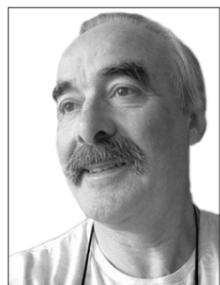


Members enjoying the moment with Sony at Pinewood Studios

BY TONY MANNING
M.M.INST.V

WITH DANIEL CRAIG BUSY
ELSEWHERE AT PINEWOOD
STUDIOS, SONY DULY
ENTERTAINED

TONY.MANNING@IOV.CO.UK



We used the day to consider best practice issues in video production across four areas:

1. Business Concerns
2. Membership
3. Equipment
4. Training

Best practice – 1) Business

Inevitably, some of the areas above overlapped. Discussions of business concerns, for example, brought a strong plea for mentoring from established producers in both technical and business arenas.

The impact of rapid change in technology across our industry was an important topic, and included changes in ways of delivering completed projects. For example, are DVDs dead, or soon to be so? Additional copies have always been a source of revenue. Additionally, it is satisfying to provide something finished and physical all in an expertly designed case to one's client. As delivery moves online,

clients can simply invite whoever they want to view the finished work and make and move copies around at will to play on an array of devices, just as has happened with music.

I made a short presentation on Data Protection (GDPR) focusing on what members need to know, and to do. How much of a threat does GDPR compliance present?

The impetus to create legislation was the aggressive unsolicited marketing attacks carried out by large companies. Although small businesses who do their best to respect their clients' information are not likely to be the targets of the ICO, the Information Commissioner's Office, there are things that small business owners have to consider:

- a) Do I need to register with the ICO? If in doubt complete the self-assessment on the ICO website.
- b) You will need a privacy policy if you don't have one already.

GDPR does not, or at least should not, trump common sense. *Legitimate Interests* is a key concept here, whereby you use people's data in ways they would reasonably expect and which has a minimal privacy impact, or where there is a compelling justification for the processing. This wording is taken from the ICO site itself and those who want more detail can find it [here](#).

There's much more I could cover, but space being at a premium maybe go to the [article](#) I mostly relied on.

There are those who over-react to new legislation in ways that might lose you business, and there have been many instances of schools forbidding parents, let alone video companies, photographing or filming their events for fear of falling foul of the law when images could be maliciously posted on Facebook and beyond. Being clear about the law can be helpful in negotiating with potential clients who harbour unrealistic anxieties.

The final main topic under the "Business" heading was that of low price competition – often accompanied by low skill! This is a familiar

phenomenon, particularly in times of austerity, in which people are cautious about spending and inclined to look for special offers. It is also a time in history when pretty much everyone has a film-making tool of one kind or another. This led on to a discussion of our USPs to validate expert practice and command a respectable fee. This topic linked well to Ian Sandall's later presentation.

Best practice – 2) Membership

During this discussion we looked at what current and future members could reasonably expect from the IOV as part of their membership. Here are some points that arose:

- a) Media production students are probably an unlikely target for membership, at least at full price, although they may well be interested in the information we can provide on our website. Most of all students want work experience. This has long been the case, but is difficult to deliver.
- b) We don't do enough to promote unique IOV services, i.e. Accreditation and Arbitration.

c) We need to be better at supporting new members soon after they join. This used to be an aspect of the Area Rep's job, and has tended to fall away as fewer areas remained active. This needs looking at again.

d) We need more video-based learning. This includes examples of good quality work submitted by members, as well as elements of VideoSkills lifted from the type to a video demonstration.

e) We need active, lively, searchable forums on the new website. To a large extent this will be a matter of members getting back into the habit, and success building on success as queries get answered. Much as members complained about the old website the Forums were heavily used.

f) We do need to honestly consider the image of the IOV and to build a more assertive image based on the skills & experience of members.

g) Encouraging member involvement on a volunteer or project basis is important going forward to create a more lively and democratic organisation.



Checking out the Sony PXW-Z280



Sony PXW-Z190

Best practice – 3) Kit for today's video producer

This was an opportunity to hear about and get hands-on with some of the latest Sony cameras, with Dave Stannard, Sony Professional, and James Leach, Sony UK Professional Product Manager demonstrating and answering questions.

Three main camcorders, models Z280, Z190 & Z90, had been made available.

Sony's PXW-Z280 is described as the "World's first 1/2" type 3 CMOS Sensor for broadcast 4K"

Dealer review [here](https://www.proav.co.uk/sony-pxw-z280-4k-handheld-camcorder): (<https://www.proav.co.uk/sony-pxw-z280-4k-handheld-camcorder>)

View a hands-on test of the run'n'gun Z190 [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qFsgCodobfY): (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qFsgCodobfY>)

See the ProAV video review of the Z90 [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7p26NLTGXuk): (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7p26NLTGXuk>)

Not all members present used Sony cameras, although most have at some point. Other brands are available!

Best practice – 4) Training

a) It is a priority to get VideoSkills Workshops going again. I outlined some of the proposals we have received. Getting from the wish to the reality is the hard part, but all agreed that this is a vital aspect of the IOV's work.

b) We aim to create a new and expanded edition of the VideoSkills Book as an online resource with an On Demand option. Ian Sandall is now leading on this and others are assisting.

c) Training on producing high quality sound was mentioned by a number of people, to the extent that excellent sound can rescue an otherwise problematic film.

d) Ian Sandall delivered a presentation entitled The Mindset of the Producer/Director. The aim of this presentation was two-fold, firstly to challenge us all about the extent to which we valued our expertise and; secondly to act as a taster for a possible one- or two-day course.

Ian made the point that most IOV members do what 'traditional' Producer/Directors do. They are multi-skilled carrying out the following functions and more!

- Produce
- Direct
- Shoot
- Edit
- Graphics, sound, writing, storyboarding, casting, etc.

He offered this challenge: So are you being valued highly enough...

- By clients
- By colleagues
- And crucially by yourself?

Ian concluded in this introduction, "IMO, Working for a 'day rate' is no way to make a living!"

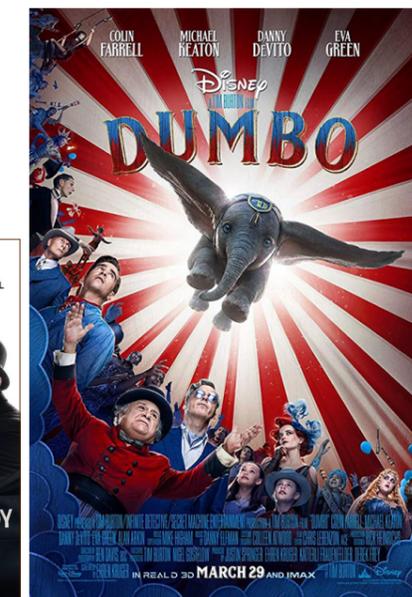
This was an excellent and necessarily provocative presentation, and I for one want to attend the two-day course! Let's hope we can make it happen.

All in all, I think this was a productive and enjoyable day, and I hope we can put on something similar before too long, ideally in another region.

A number of us continued the discussion in the relaxed setting of **The Black Horse Pub in Fulmer**, which I can thoroughly recommend!

Tony Manning

recent productions at Pinewood Studios



FILM [RE]VIEW – ‘THE 39 STEPS’

The original, of course. Mr Hitchcock weaved his magic some eighty-four years ago in a thrilling story of espionage, love, pesky johnny-foreigners and political intrigue. With a £50,000 budget (around £3.5m today) an enduring classic was born.

Mister Richard Hannay jumps, runs, ducks and (spoiler – look away now) wins the blonde and saves the day.

BY KEITH WOOLFORD

THE 39 STEPS (1935)

DIR: ALFRED HITCHCOCK

STARS: ROBERT DONAT

MADELEINE CARROLL

BOY MEETS GIRL,
GIRL DISLIKES BOY,
BOY AND GIRL HOLIDAY
IN SCOTLAND

KEITH@ARCH-MEDIA.CO.UK



Of course, the author John Buchan never had a blonde sidekick let alone a female-woman in a central role in this or many of his books and was added for spice in Charles Bennett's screenplay.

(Indeed, Alfred Joseph Hitchcock had, shall we say, a predilection to the real and peroxide. The well documented obsession, and more, towards his leading lady Tippi Hedren is not for these pages.)

The 39 Steps was first published as a magazine series in 1915 and there were eventually five Hannay novels with him doing adventurous stuff all over the place.

So, to the story, which substantially diverts from the book, has Richard Hannay going to a smog laden West End variety hall to fill time before leaving a 'boring' England the following day. Having purchased his one bob stalls ticket, it's 'Mr Memory' the fifth stage act we are interested in.

I forget who played him, but he learns 50 new facts each day. During the performance shots ring out and, well Hannay ends up taking a lady-agent back to his flat. She reveals her identity as a lady-agent saying the world is doomed and if anything is to be done she must visit a man north of the border. Carelessly for a lady-agent she gets stabbed and he goes on the run as the 'Portland Place' murderer to Alt-na-Shellach. Sounding more like a keyboard short-cut, he goes via that testament to Scottish know-how – the Forth Bridge.

At this stage the police, foreign agents and a milk delivery guy looking for his pony are chasing him. Not true about the milk guy.

From hanging precariously on aforementioned bridge to kissing an attractive Ms Carroll whilst attempting to thwart the law on the Flying Scotsman, he does some speeded-up running across the Scottish moors so favoured by black and white actors.

“What’s going on Richard – we’re black and white in the film?”



Eventually winding-up at the villain-in-chief's country house via Peggy Ashcroft's croft, he's shot but saved, wouldn't you know it, as the bullet lodges in a bible in his stolen coat's breast pocket!

More chasing, a confused identity, bit of political speaking and being cuffed to the lovely Ms Carroll ensues. Escaping their captives, and finding a welcoming inn in the sticks, what are the chances of that, they share an intimate moment involving nylons.

Moving on, he ends up back in London at the Palladium's 'Crazy Month' watching Mr Memory once again. Suddenly, all becomes clear. When questioned, Mr Memory replies "The Thirty-Nine Steps is an organisation of spies collecting information on behalf of the foreign office of ..." – BANG, before he could continue. If I had to guess which country, it begins with 'G' and it's not Guernsey.

The baddy having shot him – not our hero, the other one, who on his death-stage reveals the secret plans for a silent plane engine cylinder.

If he'd only waited until battery powered engines, it would have saved a lot of bother.

Closing frames sees them holding hands. No, not Mr Memory – Hannay and Pamela, for that is her name.

I was hard-pressed to find an adverse review to balance the article, but find one I did. (Well two if you include a 2/10 score by NickyCee off IMDb Reviews "Hitchcock's worst".)

Nymith (first/last name?), runs a blog reviewing books. Loads of books of all genres. A self-confessed 'Pseudo-Intellectual', with the tag 'Well-read. Well-versed. Well-grounded. Essays and Reviews.' This Minnesota gal has a crack at film reviews some five years ago and directs her first stab at our gem.

"It's time to call a spade a spade", opens Nymith. Calling the film "ham-fisted" and "Telegraphing is one of this film's most aggravating faults." The latter is fair comment, but we are talking about a mid-1930s movie – literally a different time to the more nuanced dialogue and acting today. These were theatrically trained actors. Here is an extract:



“ Look to the scene wherein Hannay has his interview with the film's villain and both are eyeing each other and the exits. What is the camera saying? “The eyes... look at the eyes...notice them...I'm only gonna say this once. The EYES, GODDAMNIT! You're not paying attention!” That's how much subtlety this scene is conveying. Similarly, the intro at the Music Hall has the unwashed masses shouting out often simultaneous questions to Mr. Memory.



"No, the bloody box bed doesn't come with a duck down duvet!"



"Darling, this new action-cam will revolutionise filmmaking"



Hitchcock zooms in his camera on so many of the audience members that rather than the spontaneous feel he was probably going for, the whole thing feels staged and awkward (as do many individual scenes, a strange thing considering its excellent pacing).

... The film's budget is as low as any B-flick and it often fails to rise above the usual failures of the genre: there's both a distractingly fake waterfall and an insectoid helicopter that appears to have wandered in out of some other film which, since it added nothing to the plot, should never have escaped from the cutting room. Hitchcock did make fine use of the moody Scottish scenery, however, especially during Hannay's stay with a local couple, where he meets the lovely and brave Peggy Ashcroft, who is one of the film's highlights: a vibrant and good-hearted woman married to a harsh religious zealot, a man who will nevertheless seize at money no matter how small. Ashcroft should have been the film's heroine, but instead the last we hear of her is a scream offstage as her husband lays into her for aiding in Hannay's escape and the heroine turns out to be Hitch's favorite: the blonde.

Madeleine Carroll portrays the frosty, snappish blonde in question, a thoroughly unappealing character (though nice to look at) to whom Hannay gets manacled, thus having to drag this walking liability all over the countryside. On failing to convince her of his innocence he gives up and starts playing the menacing stranger to keep control of her in a set of scenes both hilarious and subtly disturbing (after all, she doesn't know the truth...). The sympathy this wins her in swiftly undermined by her petulant screwball comedy remark "you bully!" Someone slap her, please. Even after her change of heart, she still does little to aid Hannay in his quest, though at this late point in the movie he does call her on it. And these two are supposed to end up together?

... And this leads to another problem, that of "groundbreaking." Film critics equate this as "great." Check the dictionary and you'll find that these two words are not synonymous. The 39 Steps codified all the needed tropes of the spy genre...but is this a good thing? This is the film that turned espionage into a veritable fantasyland – good

guys and bad guys, the dashing hero (cool under pressure and good with the ladies), the MacGuffin, the female foreign agent, the dastardly plot (that's almost incidental to the hide-and-seek game which provides the film's real meat) and of course that same sure-to-be-foiled-at-the-last-possible-second plot. All the things that made the spy story fit for children were started by Hitchcock, so the film historians say. I'm sorry, but that just doesn't impress me. "

—Nymith

Ouch, although not totally unkind to film and actors, she was subsequently taken to task by a reader and, in part, recanted saying "...already regret it as an unprofessional hatchet job".

The 39 Steps, or to be more precise Mr Hitchcock, gave us the template for future thrillers – random innocent, wrongly accused, flight, lady actress caught-up in the shenanigans, a scream morphing into a louder noise and the 'MacGuffin'.

Our hero started his escapades as a mere but successful mining engineer abroad before joining the army. Where he actually made his money depends on whether you're watching or reading.

Not only that, The 39 Steps is either set two months before the First World War shows up with subsequent derring-do seeing Scots-born Hannay as an intelligence officer or, as in the film, a Canadian the year the film came out.

John Buchan, 1st Baron Tweedsmuir, apart from writing 100 works, also had a career in the law, politics, diplomacy and writing propaganda during WWI. He became a member of parliament in 1927 and in 1935, was appointed the Governor of Canada.

Buchan concludes the series by bestowing a substantial honorific upgrade on his hero – Major General Sir Richard Hannay KCB, OBE, DSO, Legion of Honour.

"Though I could still see the reason for my first enthusiasm – the book was full of action – I found that the story as it stood was not in the least suitable for screening."

—Alfred Hitchcock

Produced by Gaumont-British Pictures to attract the lucrative American audience, the international stars were specifically brought over for this purpose. Although quintessentially a British movie, sorry film, they were told to "avoid all phrases which are purely

of importance to a British audience". It was a fantastic success both side of the Atlantic and effectively cemented Hitchcock's genius world-wide.

The few effects used are, as you'd expect, 'primitive'. Double exposures, model cars and an autogyro. There's also a nice transition from inside a car to outside which is more about the editing.

Pretty much from the 'One leap and he was free' mould, as a boys' own spy story it holds-up in today's over-used CG efforts knowing full well our everyday hero will ultimately succeed. I can just hear those flick-goers of yesteryear clapping enthusiastically as Hannay escapes, jumps through windows and holds the girl's hand at the end. And, give a knowing wink as the milk guy gives him his coat!

Inevitable, there are a few plot holes to move the story on – moving swiftly between Scotland and London without HS2 and why doesn't she scream more etc. There are also plenty of continuity errors and bloopers to watch out for too.

And yes, there are obvious studio scenes, like the waterfall and the sheep (who ate the first lot of scenery) on the bridge. But remember, the audience 85 years ago was nowhere as sophisticated as today's which expects much more.

There have been several versions since:

Kenneth More, 1959
– an almost scene-for-scene remake and wearing very, very short shorts.

Robert Powell, 1978
– with Sir John Mills as the soon-dead man-agent and much nearer the book.

Rupert Penry-Jones, 2008
– the BBC adaptation portraying Hannay as someone who would need help putting together an IKEA purchase.

Robert Powell, 1988/89
reprised his role over two series and 13 episodes with ITV (recently on the indispensable Talking Pictures TV).

There was talk awhile back that the BBC were going to produce a new six-parter.

Hitchcock's signature insertion comes outside the theatre throwing litter to the ground as our hero and lady-agent jump on a 25a double-decker. Scallywag.

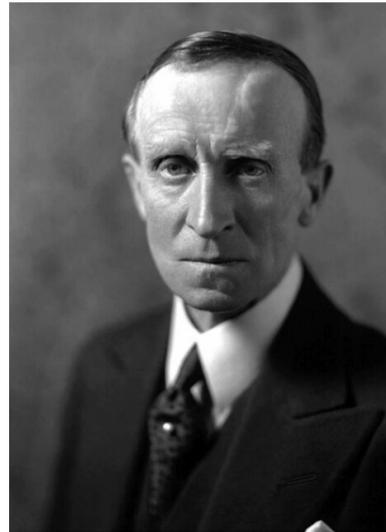
The theatre has had many successful runs on a minimal stage where four comedic actors parody the film playing over 139 characters between them. (I confess, I've seen this in Birmingham, Canterbury and Liverpool, and three times at the Criterion, London. Go see.)



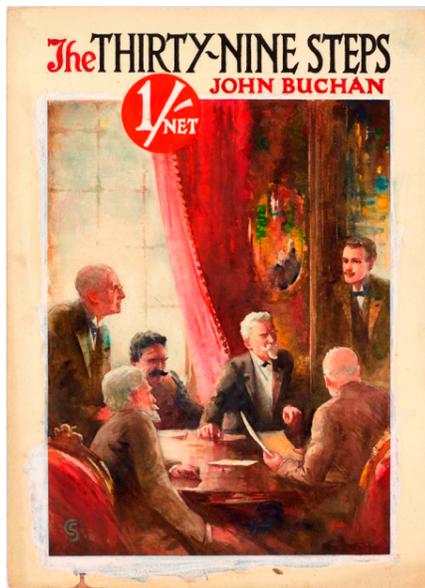
Robert Donat and Madeleine Carroll



Alfred Hitchcock



John Buchan



"Look, I really do want to finish this haggis sandwich"

In truth, it's difficult offering a fully unbiased view now having seen the film so many times. Definitely a bit more than a favourite uncle.

Away from the cellulose acetate, radio plays have had Orson Welles, Glenn Ford, David Robb (with Tom Baker) play Hannay. There's even been an interactive book and a 2013 video game for Windows and Mac OS!

In the written word, last year Robert Harris penned a new Hannay novel (The Thirty-One Kings) with possibly more on the way.

Blue Plaques recognise Robert Donat (1905-58) in Barnet, London, Madeleine Carroll (1906-87) 'Actress and Humanitarian', in West Bromwich, Birmingham and Sir Alfred Hitchcock (1899-1980) in South Kensington.

I know you are dying to ask how far Winnipeg is from Montreal. Well it's 1,425 miles!

"Am I right, sir?"

Keith Woolford

* Google it, I can't do everything for you.

areas & area reps

The opportunity to meet up with other members face-to-face used to be a popular element of IOV membership. Then somebody invented Google and the worldwide wotsit and it was easy to search for what ever info or solutions you wanted from your warm and comfy chair at home.

The time and cost of travel came into it too. If your nearest meeting was fifty or more miles away you might think twice, three times if you weren't assured of an interesting topic and a good turn-out.

Call me old-fashioned but I still think that people meeting up remains important even in an age of virtual reality. So even if meetings are occasional with a social get-together now and again I still think they are worthwhile.

Some dedicated Area Reps continued to try but often felt they were swimming against the tide, an exhausting experience. At times it was disappointing or indeed embarrassing to have a pitifully low turnout when a speaker or presenter had taken the trouble to attend.

At this point my understanding is that only a few areas persist in meeting on anything like a regular basis. So, is there any continuing purpose in areas and Area Reps?

One aspect of the Area Rep 'Job Description' was always to welcome new members personally and to be a point of contact for all within their area. Having made contact they might be able to suggest someone else who might share that member's special interest. If there was a meeting to attend, so much the better. Back in the day this was often how enduring video partnerships came into being, and endured for decades.

Our new website has the facility to show on a map where all the members are, and each individual can add information about themselves and their work. This then presents the opportunity for informal self-directed links.

Of course these days people can get together via Skype and similar platforms and many creatives collaborate quite effectively using this and other means. Using our TV channel on Vimeo (which we intend to develop massively) people can see and comment on each others' work. Using the Forums they can communicate on any relevant topic, create debate, and fix problems.

Tony Manning



7

IKAN S7H 7" MONITOR

Having spent many hours looking at specifications and reviews of on-camera monitors I eventually decided on the IKAN S7H. I could just as easily have plumped for another brand or model but having taken the plunge with the IKAN, how does it perform in practice?



BY CHRIS NORTH
M.M.INST.V.

TAKING THE PLUNGE –
IS IT MORE IKEA THAN
IKAN AND HAS THE RIGHT
DECISION BEEN MADE?

CHRIS.NORTH@IOV.CO.UK



Build quality

Well, it's plastic – I knew that but it is nicely made and other brands seem to be using the same case. It is finished with a satin rubber-like surface that is popular at the moment. All the input sockets are located on the bottom, masked by the front bezel, which I like. This not only protects the plugs but also keeps cables out of the way – and you can read the labels from the back without having to peer underneath. All the buttons and switches are on the top where they are easy to locate. There are four 1/4 inch brass mounting bushes – one on each edge, so you can also suspend the monitor from an overhead mount or use the two side mounts or just mount conventionally from the bottom on the ball joint provided. Some people have complained that leverage on the mounting bushes can crack the plastic housing if you put pressure on the monitor – for example when inserting or removing the batteries on the back. The battery

slots are a very tight fit so if you mount the monitor by the bottom bush then you could put a lot of lateral pressure on it and perhaps crack the case. So you have to practise inserting and removing the batteries before you mount the monitor. No problem if you are careful but I prefer a different mounting solution.

Custom mount

It seems obvious to me that any monitor is best mounted by pivoting it horizontally from the sides. This has several advantages. Firstly, you are using two mounting points which makes it more stable and evens out the load. Secondly, you are able to swivel the monitor up and down easily without altering its horizontal position – and it can be locked in place with the turn of a thumb nut. And, most importantly in this case, pushing and pulling the batteries does not cause any leverage on the mounting bushes. Unfortunately there is no mounting

frame available so I have made a simple frame from aluminium bar. My frame is designed so that I can fix a flag or hood to the top bar, which can also swivel to obtain the correct angle to shade light from the screen. I can also fix this frame on a short bar underneath a camera if I wish to use it to monitor myself speaking to camera or as a teleprompter screen close to the bottom of the lens.

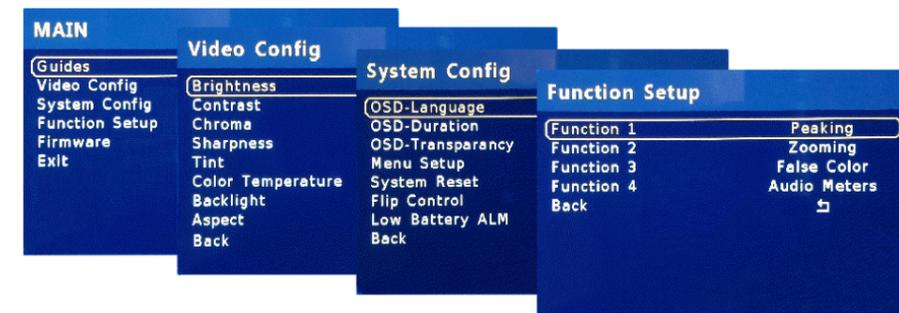


Unfortunately, the monitor's side mounting bushes are too low down to enable the monitor to rest in equilibrium without having to tighten the fixings firmly. This is a significant issue with other mounting options since the batteries are mounted on the back near the top – so their weight tends to make the monitor top-heavy, with a tendency to swivel backwards. Not

particularly a problem with my frame mount but it can put undue stress on the bottom mounting bush if you just use that with the ball mount supplied.

The menus

The menu structure is nice and simple and is activated by pressing on a small thumb wheel on the right of the top edge.



This brings up the main Menu screen where you can scroll down to configure Video, System and Function buttons. There are four programmable function buttons on the left of the top edge. I have these set to bring up Focus Peaking, Zoom to focus, False Colour and Audio Meters – but you can set them for your own preferences and the things you are likely to use most.

In the System Menu you can allocate different User Menu set-ups and set the screen to flip horizontally or vertically or both. I find it particularly useful to be able to flip the image horizontally when doing a piece-to-camera. You can of course do this with your camera's own screen but it is easier on self-op to do it on the monitor screen. Similarly your camera will probably have things like

focus assist (fringing) or zoom (enlarge) to help focusing by eye but I find it easier to do this from the monitor – and the buttons are easier to find.

The thing I find most useful is False Colour for setting exposures accurately (see note, page 39).



Flicking quickly from False Colour to normal screen enables me to judge the atmosphere / lighting set-up and to see the accurate technical exposure of everything on screen, so I know I am good to go.

The Video Config menu covers all the usual controls, including Chroma and Tint as well as the ability to set the Colour Temperature of the screen so that you can see colours accurately, no matter what the lighting. And, from the point of view of efficiency and viewing comfort, you can also set the Brightness of the screen. Indoors I have this set to 60% of the 700 nits available. All the other settings seem to be fine out of the box and produce a picture that matches the one on my camera's monitor. But if it doesn't you can easily tune in the correct settings to obtain a match.

Sockets

I decided to pay a little more for a model that has an SDI input since SDI has very little lag when driving a separate monitor – unlike HDMI which can be disturbingly laggy if you are filming action or panning and zooming. The SDI connectors are also more robust since they have locking collars. But no use of course if your camera only has HDMI! I also chose a model with

SDI (and HDMI) signal pass-through, so that I can feed the signal on to other gear if needed. But I could not justify the extra cost of built-in signal conversion. So I can only pass through the same signal that I feed in.

Powering

The intention is to power these on-camera monitors by on-board batteries mounted on the back, although an external power lead is also supplied. This monitor only requires one 7.2v battery but two can be mounted on the back for longer run time – and can be hot swapped. It comes with two Canon battery plates which slot on to the built-in battery mounts. Since I generally use Sony NP-F batteries I also had to buy two Sony adapter plates.

The monitor comes with a 4 pin mini XLR to D-Tap lead. If you are not using batteries, you can only power this monitor externally via a 4 pin mini XLR! You can buy mini XLRs on the internet quite cheaply if you are up to the mini soldering required to make up a lead from a suitable 12v power adapter, (it will accept 7-24v).

Conclusion

For around £575 (inc. VAT and postage) along with two Sony Battery plates,

this monitor does all I need it to do. The picture is crisp, bright and natural. This model cannot import and process LUTs but if you don't shoot RAW that will not be a problem. If you do there are other, more expensive, models available. With a brightness of 700 nits it 'can' be used outside with suitable shading (using my technique of angling the monitor upwards and setting a black flag over it so that the screen reflects the underside of the black flag and not the bright environment in front of the screen). But for regular outdoor filming you would probably be better with a monitor capable of delivering 1200-2000 nits brightness. That would use more battery power of course.

The build and finish of this monitor is good but it is plastic and will probably break if dropped from a metre or more – particularly if you have two heavy batteries fixed to the back. But it is not intended to be dropped is it! It is a pity that it is not supplied with a 'U' frame so that it can be mounted using the two side bush mounts but you can easily make a simple 'U' frame or square surround which will give you a bit more flexibility and peace of mind, particularly when struggling to remove the batteries in-situ.

Chris North

apple orchard

One of the disadvantages of having the latest Apple offering, or any tech for that matter, is dreading the announcement that it's being replaced by a leaner, fatter, thinner, super-charged model which is altogether shinier than yours. (Much worserer* is paying out dosh for that overdue replacement three weeks before the above happens.) Yes, I know your beautiful iMac still works/edits exactly the same as it did yesterday. So, a big welcome to the latest range of power-packed iMacs!

Along side an expected 31.6" 6K Apple display, featuring a Mini LED backlight design, there's also talk of an easily upgradable and redesigned Mac Pro. What a lovely combo for 2019. A new 16" MacBook Pro and Apple tv+ anyone?

Mac Mini + iPad

Seems like only five minutes (Focus #234) since a decent upgrade was made to these tablets. The market seems saturated with all manner of offerings so the grass at Cupertino gets mowed frequently. Subtle idiom aside, the inners have had more punch added whilst leaving the outside pretty much as is.

But, hold your horses – a possible brand new 7th-generation entry-level iPad could well be in the works.

And, whilst probably not including OLED, it could have a 10.2inch display. There, that's enough caveats.

iPhone + iPad

With Samsung apparently toting a foldable screen they've been sending samples to both Apple and Google of their tech.

This South Korean company, (who release their 'Galaxy Fold' April 2019 for around £1.7k) maybe leading the field, but Apple have already registered patents on a folding device. Behind the scenes, Apple are working on a heated screen to keep its integrity in colder conditions without damage. Presently, Apple and Samsung are suing the pants off each other.



Potential foldable iPad, courtesy of Dutch company LetsGoDigital

Apple Watch

With 45 million smart watches sold during 2018, Apple were responsible for a staggering 50%. However, with the likes of Samsung, Fitbit and Garmin snapping at their heels, market share may well suffer.

Final Cut Pro

A second update for FCPX, along with its close buddies Compressor, Motion and stepson iMovie, was released during March 2019. Principally a bug fixer but with a real added bonus.



Last issue we reported that 'legacy' media (like QT7) will be totally incompatible for the next MacOS (post-Mojave) as it shifts away from 32bit.

When opening these apps, Apple will now give an alert, offering to convert the media and pop them in to the current library's media storage location.

Now pay attention –this is the VERY IMPORTANT part – do not upgrade to the next MacOS without converting beforehand as this option will NOT be available. (Also, do not pass Go and do not collect £200.)

There is a raft of popular/familiar media formats going south, but equally more sticking around. Now would be a good time to put your media house in order.

Info: www.support.apple.com/en-gb/HT209000

Keith Woolford

(* 'Worserer' – used during the sixteenth-century and due a welcome comeback about now.)

8

THE INTERVIEW –ALISTER CHAPMAN

To some degree, there is an emotional investment in the commissions we undertake. Whether becoming part of that wedding, connecting with a corporate gig or the joy of a children's dance performance.

Stepping up several levels, we have videographers of the calibre of our interviewee. Total commitment – with an extreme edge.

BY KEITH WOOLFORD
A.M.INST.V

GRAPHIC BY
SIMON ILLUSTRATION

INTERNET IGNORANCE
AND THE ATTRACTION
OF FILMING EXTREME
NATURAL EVENTS

KEITH@ARCH-MEDIA.CO.UK



A busy man indeed, what with all that chasing stuff.

I caught up with Alister, who's family home is Brakenall one hundred miles back down the M40 towards Oxford, at this year's Photo & Video Show held at the NEC, Birmingham. As an ambassador on the Sony stand, the rolling 4K footage revealed the quality of his work and the extent of his undeniable dedication.

Amid the hullabaloo of Hall 5, we discussed his film career thus far...

Keith – So, for those of us who panic over getting our gear wet, how on earth did you get into chasing extreme weather conditions?

Alister – I made a pitch to the National Geographic to make a programme about storm chasing and got a commission and established my own production company to film extreme and severe weather!

Keith – Was this directly related to a change in the climate?

Alister – This was 1999 and at that time climate change was being talked about and discussed – it certainly wasn't the hot topic it is today.

Keith – What prompted you to personally go chasing these often destructive, if life threatening events?

Alister – The programmes were big successes but one of the things I realised each one we made we were spending between £10,000 and £20,000 on stock footage. The overall budget was between £100,000 and £150,000 and of that we were spending almost 20% on stock footage realising that every time I went out there I was getting this great footage.

After that, I continued to focus on stock – shooting storms, natural extremes, northern lights, volcanoes and all those sort of things. That became a really big part of the business and I still do that today. It's less of the business today as it's become a very competitive market.

Keith – We are here on the typically large and impressive Sony stand showing off their latest shiny offerings. What's the connection?

Alister – Ten years ago, I became a Sony ICE, an Independent Certified Expert because I use a lot of cutting edge technology. If you want a long shelf life of footage you need to use the new format as it comes in.

Keith – Having said that, what do you currently shoot on?

Alister – I currently shoot on Sony Venice on 6K or 4K on the F55. The Venice is a cinema camera, superseding the F55, which has gone up one level. So, I'll always be shooting on that cutting edge of technology.

I originally qualified with a degree in electronic engineering. So, I actually understand how the things work. The two merged so I can explain to people how it works to cut through all the crap that's out there on the internet.



Keith – Whilst the internet can deliver tons of useful and often life-saving information to your armchair – how-to YouTube vids, latest reviews and the like – what had you particularly in mind in the effluent department?

Alister – A lot of the stuff out there is absolutely wrong and I can help demystifying things I write about that on my website, www.xdcam-user.com, and that's why I end up coming to shows and events like this to talk to people and help explain how things work.

Keith – I started my interest in stills photography at a club level, took an O and an A level, which is a great foundation. Whereas you just hold these up and point – which is fine but if you want to know a bit more and have control...

Alister – Yes, there is so much which is badly understood. An example is the ISO. In the world of video until the large sensor cameras came out you used DB and Gain. You put in 6Db of gain and

the picture gets twice as noisy, you put 12Db and it get four times. Every one knows that a camera at 18Db is probably going to be too noisy for most people but 6Db is probably okay to get away with.

Then, when the big sensor cameras came out everyone moved to ISO and nobody has a clue what that means. I could give you a camera at 2000 ISO what does that mean? On an electronic everyone thinks it's sensitivity and its not. It's an exposure rating. It doesn't tell you how sensitive the camera is at all, it just doesn't because it doesn't tell you how noisy it is, doesn't tell you how it's going to perform in low light – none of those things. A film camera, yes it would because ISO is a measurement of how dark the film comes exposed for a certain amount of light.

With an electronic camera, the manufacturers are allowed to rate it in three different ways and they all choose the one that suits them the most. Pick a number from a marketing point of view that works for you and make that its base ISO.



Alister Chapman

Keith – Life for the pro and enthusiast can seem to be getting more technologically challenging as the world of videography advances and more shiny gear comes to market. They say knowledge is power – what’s the answer to all this misinformation you refer to?

Alister – This is the problem, it’s permeated around the internet that the ISO is a sensitivity rating and it isn’t – it’s an exposure rating and they are two very different things. Nobody is explaining this, teaching this – nobody knows. You can’t just take a photography film technique and apply it to an electronic camera directly as they are two different beasts.

Keith – You’ve already mentioned two cameras employed in your work, are these the only linchpins in capturing your footage?

Alister – I shoot with a wide range of cameras depending on what I do. So, everything Sony based – A6300 pocket camera, A7s and A7r, SF5, S5 and 55 and the Venice as well. A huge range of cameras.

Keith – As soon as new models are released, I assume you get the opportunity to play with them and see whether they are worth your attention?

Alister – Yes. And, because I write about them on my website I normally get them fairly soon as they come out. I do a lot on picture profiles and settings etc.

Keith – How and where did the world of video begin for you?

Alister – I was a TV cameraman for 30 year’s, working on ‘Top Gear’ during the Tiff Needell days fitting in-car ‘mini’ cameras the size of today’s full cameras!

Other broadcasts included motor sports, windsurfing and being involved with the ‘Ski Sunday’ programme.

Keith – Are there any other areas of the profession you would like to try?

Alister – I spent three years running a post production facilities house. For me as a cameraman, this was a fantastic learning period. I learnt about post production and grading and what you can do.

These were the Digital Betacam days! Seeing it from the other side and the crappy camera work coming in and having to fix it.

Keith – What next for Alister as I can’t imagine you are about to settle on the sofa at home yelling at Grand Tours on the overuse of some filter or another?

Alister – I’ve been really spoilt because my life has been an amazing adventure. I’ve been able to do things I wanted to do.



Suddenly, bridezillas and their over-bearing mothers don’t seem as daunting as they did prior to meeting Alister.

Keith Woolford



ALISTER CHAPMAN
DoP / Cameraman / Producer
Blogs, Reviews, Training and Workshops

blog: www.xdcam-user.com
website: www.tvcameraman.info

video assets

Confession. My fonts have further bloated by a ridiculous 5% since the last issue of Focus. My glib line on an international shortage of Helvetica, Times and Comic Sans (ditch the last for sanity’s sake) was promptly ignored by its own author! Of course, I could stop whenever I wished.

If you wish to join the party, here are another six locations for free resources to float your boat or otherwise. There’s a smattering of video tutorials, none I hasten to add are on plumbing or dry stone walling, and plugins to keep you going until next time.

All are free – but please ensure you are satisfied with the quality and provenance before installing.

1) FRAME.IO TUTORIALS

Those lovely people at Ripple Training have offered a smorgasbord of tutorials for Frame.io’s online video review and collaboration platform. A total of 14 lessons covering all aspects the application.

This also includes information on the 30-day trial of the Frame.io Pro Plan. (Note: recent update.)

www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLj5Nh9NxSxdm5fT1DObAoNEwPpVjoRGMo

2) FONTS, GRAPHICS AND TEXTURES

Oodles of good quality resources. Also available are templates, mock-ups and other creative matter. Some may have limitations on commercial usage.

Joining their email subscription will deliver daily offers straight to your in box.

www.pixelsurplus.com

3) AUDIO FADES IN FINAL CUT PRO #1

Offering a ‘one-click’ option on fading sound via a shortcut. This shortish video is offered by Industrial Revolution.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dgbf5O9SV-Q

4) AUDIO FADES IN FINAL CUT PRO #2

Another option to the above, also offered by Industrial Revolution, is a set of nine audio fade plugins. Simples.

<https://industrialrevolution.com/products/xeffects-audio-fades>

5) PREMIERE SPEEDY EXPORT

Smart Rendering has come to Pro CC to assist matters. This video, hosted by Nathaniel Dodson, claims it will improve rendering by a factor of 5!

www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=10&v=Qigj1ryF1aA

6) FCPX TEMPLATES

An up and coming designer of Final Cut assets currently has four free plugins on his website plus a selection of seven competitively priced. (One in particular caught my eye is ‘Flat Earth’ for \$14.95 which animates maps.)

<https://jonbelew.com>

Keith Woolford



9

ON-CAMERA MONITORS

In order to frame, focus and adjust the exposure of our shots, most of us rely on the camera's eyepiece or small built-in screen most of the time - and most of the time that works pretty well. But there are occasions where you need to set up a shot more precisely, either for drama, documentary or a set-piece interview. That's where an on-camera monitor can help you nail the shot you want, both technically and artistically.

BY CHRIS NORTH
M.M.INST.V.

EXAMINING SET-UP,
THE COSTS, AND THE
BENEFITS. PLUS, WHY
FALSE IS POSITIVE!

CHRIS.NORTH@IOV.CO.UK



Purpose

Of course, it does take a bit more time to set up your rig but that time can be saved during the shoot because you can see quickly that you are in focus and that you have the exact exposure you want for all parts of the scene.

Others involved can also see and agree the framing, character and mood of what you are about to capture. Now is the time to adjust the lighting and the position of people and objects on set or location. Get it right when you shoot so you don't have to waste time trying to correct things in post production.

If you want to capture high resolution and high bit depth, so you are not limited to your camera's compressed files, then you could consider a monitor-recorder, such as those made by Atomos.

But beware, you also have to buy the solid-state drive to put inside these models if you also want to record, which can add significantly to the cost.

The advantages of a monitor

Apart from the fact that it is easier to see a bigger screen it is also easier to see what is in focus (with or without focus assist features) and more particularly you can make use of False Colour (see below) to see the details of exposure in every part of your scene - so you can be sure you are not going to burn out the whites or lose the blacks. You can see much more detail about exposure in a simple and usable way that is far better than using basic zebra stripes, which by comparison are quite crude.

For me, False Colour is one of the biggest advantages of an on-camera monitor. It provides both accuracy and speed when setting exposure. It also helps when adjusting lighting to get exactly the mood you want without compromising extremes or losing mid-tone details. Of course, False Colour is a technical 'aid'. It does not replace your artistic judgement. But it helps to keep your artistic aspirations within technical bounds.



Screen Size and Cost

The first question you need to ask is do you need an on-camera monitor? How would it help you in the work you do? If you are doing run-and-gun filming then a monitor will be too cumbersome. For speed and mobility you will probably need to rely on your camera viewfinder. If you do need a monitor but want to remain fairly mobile then maybe a five inch screen will suffice but to really take advantage of a set up location, a seven inch screen will be better. Size and resolution are the things that are likely to affect price the most (unless you are looking at very high specification professional cinematic monitors).

Screen Resolution and Brightness

If you just need a simple monitor for framing a shot (eg to use with a remote camera) then resolution might not be a great issue and you may be able to get something workable for £100 or less. But that is not what we are looking at here. We are looking to aid and improve our technical capture ability. So we will be looking at least at full HD 1920x1080p and with a decent build quality and feature set that is easy to use. That means you need to be

prepared to spend around £500 or more to really take advantage of the technology. Brightness will also be a consideration if you are to use the monitor outdoors. Indoors, 450 nits will suffice but for anything else, 700 nits is the minimum - and for outdoor use more than 1200 nits. Although you can get away with 700 nits outside if you have an effective sun hood (or box) - but more of that later. A good contrast ratio also helps with clarity and definition - say 1200:1. And for use with other people on set a good viewing angle will help - 178 degrees is now common. Some will also allow you to select (or dial in) the colour temperature for the screen so you will see the true colours in the filming location.

Buttons and knobs

Buttons and knobs are more expensive to incorporate in a product than the chips and firmware inside it. Often the internal hardware will be the same across a range of products but adding buttons costs! That is why touch screen control is popular. The touch screen is a



fixed cost for all models using that technology.

But buttons and knobs make it easier and simpler to call up the most used functions and navigate menus.



Feature list

You may have your own priorities but generally speaking I would want to see, and to have easily accessible, form programmable buttons, Focus Assist and False Colour. These are the things you will be switching on and off all the time. You will also want to be able to access the menus easily, which is where a menu knob or thumb wheel can speed up things a lot. I would also want to be able to show and hide all the standard technical on-screen details (aperture, focus distance, zoom, frame rate etc) ideally with a single button press. Most monitors will probably have waveform, vector-scope and histogram screens but to be honest, these are more for technical analysis than to aid quick on the spot camera adjustment.

If you are likely to film in 4K then you need to be able to view this on a 1020p monitor. Some monitors will convert a 4K input to 1020p to view and some will allow a 1:1 pixel-for-pixel view of a quarter of a 4K image. So in effect, you can check a 4K shot on a 1020p screen – but you can't see all of it at once. And, if you are likely to shoot in RAW you will probably want your monitor to be able to output a normal picture by converting the milky RAW image to a conventional colour and contrast picture by calling up specific Look Up Tables (LUTs). Many monitors do not provide for this.

Input signals and sockets

Most monitors these days operate on an HDMI signal but you may wish to have the option of a professional SDI input. HDMI can result in a noticeable lag between the live action (as seen in your camera's screen) and that appearing on the monitor. SDI tends to be better in that regard, so if you are filming action or using frequent camera movements then SDI is preferable – provided that your camera has an SDI output of course!

Some monitors also have a signal 'pass through' so you can take the signal from the monitor to another monitor or transmitter – and some can even convert HDMI to SDI and vice-versa, but that function will add significantly to the cost of the monitor.

Powering

Monitors can use a lot of power if they are left on throughout a shoot, so you may well want to have a power adaptor with an appropriate plug. There is no standard. Some use 'power jacks' of various internal and external sizes, some use mini XLR 4 pin etc. Some come with a power lead to allow connection to a standard professional D-Tap battery socket. It's worth checking what is required and what is supplied because some of these leads can be quite expensive.

Battery powering is no easier. Some monitors have a built-in Canon plate, others a Sony fit, and some a generic plate for which you need to buy a battery adaptor plate for your particular battery preference. It's a good idea to standardise with other equipment you already have.

I use Sony 2 pin NP-F batteries for my Ameran lights so I looked for a monitor that would take those (although I had to buy the Sony adaptor plates!).

It is also useful if your monitor will accept two hot-swappable batteries so that you can replace one whilst it is still powered by the other.

Build quality

Very robust top-end monitors can cost several thousand pounds – but we are not looking to spend that sort of money here. We need something sensibly well made and finished. It will undoubtedly be plastic – but we don't want cheap brittle plastic.

Most of the well-known monitor brands sell respectably durable products (although the brand name is not necessarily the manufacturer – several badged products seem to have the same housing, and probably the same internals in some cases!). You just have to read the professional and user reviews.



Note the burn outs in the window area (shows Red in False Colour)



False Colour enables you to set safe exposures quickly and accurately

Your choice!

At the end of the day you need to choose a monitor that will add some value to your production kit in terms of added convenience, accuracy and the certainty that you can set up and nail the shot you want. These days look for at least full HD, a brightness of at least 700 nits (lux). A seven inch screen is a useful size for most things unless you really do need something smaller for portability. False Colour is a must, as is focus peaking and zoom-in.

The ability to accept 4K and show part of the 4K image pixel-for-pixel will be useful if you are likely to film 4K sometimes and you don't want the expense of a full 4K monitor.

And, don't forget LUTs if you intend to film in RAW. Other than that, pick a reputable brand and read other people's experiences and reviews.

Also be aware that prices for the same monitor can vary considerably both in the UK and in Europe.

Chris North

FOOTNOTE

False Colour

False Colour is a simple way to see accurate exposure levels in every element of your shot. Basically it 'posterises' ie simplifies and paints the shot based on the brightness of each part.

Each level of brightness shows up as a specific colour. Total black shows as PINK. Burnt out white shows as RED (ie 100 IRE). But the real beauty is that you can see the brightness at every level in 13 bands, each rendered with a different colour. Properly exposed

skin tones show as light GREY. Bright areas just before over exposure show as YELLOW.

So it is quick and easy to see all your exposure levels across the whole of your scene – and either adjust your camera's exposure settings or change your lighting. Flicking between False Colour and your normal screen enables you to make artistic and technical judgments and adjustments quickly and easily.

You really can't do without it!

10

CREATING SOLAR ECLIPSE VIDEO

This article looks at an opportunity we had to create a DVD about a Solar Eclipse expedition, which has sold hundreds of copies over the years.

I wanted to share with you what we create, why we create it, and how we have managed to sell all those DVDs.

BY GILLIAN PERRY
M.M.INST.V.

THE YEARNING AND TRICKS
TO CAPTURE DISTANT
LIGHTS



Introduction

My husband, Roger Perry, had a video business called 'RPP Video'. Its focus was on filming dance shows for families, and wedding videos. Now in his seventies, he has stopped the commercial business but still enjoys video as a hobby. During all of those years our spare time has been committed to our astronomy interests. Last time in Focus, I wrote about our visits to see the Northern Lights and how we capture those events and post them onto YouTube.

In this issue I will talk about the work we have done to produce a DVD for the British Astronomical Association (BAA) about expeditions to see the Total Solar Eclipses (TSEs). We have now made 18 trips to see total eclipses (TSEs) as well as travelling to Annular and partial eclipses which are, in our opinion, less spectacular and don't command the same level of interest from astronomers. Since 2006, we have created a DVD for nearly every TSE and this explains how...

The background

When we started viewing eclipses in 1991 a few intrepid explorers from the UK would travel to view these events, many of them creating their own set of photographs of the eclipse.

That for us was 18 TSE's ago and whilst in those days very few people tried to video the event, many people were watching it using only binoculars (note you must only view the sun indirectly during the totality phase the rest of the time you need appropriate filters).

Today, there are many travellers from the UK going to these events and many different methods of capturing what they witness. After the eclipse, people are keen to see images and video others have captured, either as a comparison to their own images, or as a memory of an event they have observed – especially as the total phase of the eclipse is over in seconds.

Today people can expect to see far more detail in the images digitally

captured and lots more analysis will have taken place about the Total Eclipse and the Sun. Few people spend time collating all of the eclipse material together, in one place. This has created a unique market to have all of the material people are willing to share and we can provide that to them on one or two DVD or BluRay discs. We have managed to bring together photographs, videos of the event, talks, drawings, spectrograph images and post eclipse analysis. From highly technical material to the fun images people have taken before and after the seconds of totality.

What led us to produce our first commercial DVD

The DVDs we produce all started back in 2006. There has been an ever-increasing number of people chasing the shadow created by the moon passing in front of the sun, creating the TSE. The 1990s saw us travelling from Hawaii, up into the Andes Atacama Desert, India, where it's believed to be unlucky to view, and all the way on several flights to outer Mongolia.

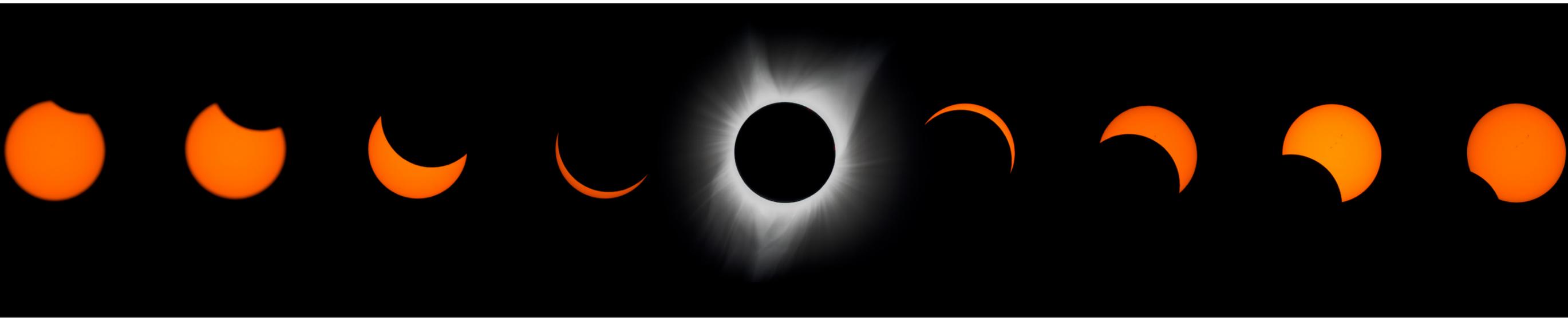
Popularity grew in 1999 when the shadow travelled across the earth covering many parts of Europe including the British Isles. We headed for Turkey but many people witnessed the dark but cloudy skies in Devon and Cornwall. Many people were enthusiastic to see a TSE in a clear sky but many of the eclipses in the early 2000s were a long way from the United Kingdom and the 2005 eclipse could only be seen by ship in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. We were on a ship just off Pitcairn Island having just met the descendants of the Bounty mutineers.

In 2006, everything changed when the eclipse was in North Africa and would be seen in almost clear skies. For most eclipses, on the day, everyone travels to their chosen spot on the earth and captures the spectacle before heading back to their hotel bases and travelling home. The hotels could be yards from the chosen site or hundreds of miles. Rarely can you see one from your back yard. The 2006 eclipse had its own

very unique challenges. There were a few places across the North African Deserts where the eclipse could be seen and many people wanted to be there with the promise of a sky free from any pesky cloud. Getting to those places would prove a challenge with limited infrastructure and hotels in the vicinity.

There appeared to be only two options. Firstly, you could rent a tent near the eclipse line, travel there and stay for a few days or alternatively you could travel the six hours plus to the centre line across the Sahara Desert on the day of the event. One company, Explorers Tours, (no longer running under that name) decided to charter a ship and take some 600 people to Libya and travel through the desert on the day and then back to the ship. Even though they had chartered a ship, there were not enough local coaches in Benghazi to take 600 people hundreds of miles, so extra coaches were driven from Egypt to Benghazi in preparation for the day.





The local and Egyptian coach drivers proved that it was impossible to work together creating what could only be described as wacky races through the desert. The day was long, but everyone was thrilled to have seen the event – so much so that they asked the professional astronomer on the tour, Dr. John Mason MBE, to give a post-eclipse talk about what we had seen. Whilst John gives some superb talks pre-eclipse, the post eclipse-talk would be far more difficult. All of the material that needed to put together the simplest slide pack, including images and video, was sitting on people's camera memory sticks.

With several days on the ship, a group of us decided to help John pull together all of the material needed to create an interesting set of slides. The talk was given to a packed theatre on the ship and of course the inevitable question was asked "Can we get a copy of the slides?". We knew the slide pack was not in a form that could be shared, videos sitting externally to the slides, spelling of names not fully checked, people hadn't been asked if they were

happy for us to share images and no copyright had been placed on the material. The decision was made to rectify this and put all of the material on a DVD, to create something we would sell (to cover production costs) via the BAA. In fact, any profits would then go to the association who are a not-for-profit organisation who support amateur astronomers across the United Kingdom.

What would make an interesting DVD?

The rest of this article explains what we include in the DVD that makes it enjoyable for people to buy and watch. The format we follow continues to be a simple one, based not only on our expeditions to see the eclipse but also from the many other people who see the event along the path of the eclipse.

We always start with the pre-eclipse talk that is given to the people who have joined the tour. In most cases we travel with Dr. John Mason who is an excellent speaker and always brings some very useful and added interest

to the tour by sharing facts about the specific eclipse, that we may not have heard or read about before the trip. This sets the scene on where we are going and some of the challenges we will have on our chosen site where we will be viewing the eclipse.

It's worth noting there is always a challenge whether it is getting to the location or something completely different – from the number of other tours heading to the same place, poor weather forecasts, or a potential military takeover of the tour. You never really know what could happen! John ensures he covers all of the basics for those people who have never seen an eclipse and this makes it an excellent introduction.

If we then have any interesting footage of the travel to the site, this comes next, for example the Wacky Races in Libya, overtaking a man on a bicycle carrying a double bed balanced on his handlebars taking up the whole road in Indonesia or meeting the President of Uganda in 2013 on route to the eclipse site.

This section ends with a short talk to camera from our professional astronomer about where we are and what the conditions are actually like on the site. This can present a real challenge as the professional astronomer is often being asked hundreds of questions by people on the site. This could be anything from the detailed timing of the celestial event to being asked how someone should operate their camera.

The following section of the DVD is the actual eclipse of the sun. This includes footage and images sent in from people standing close to us and many more images taken on other sites along the track of the eclipse. Whilst we want to include as many images and footage in the DVD as possible, we need initially to set the scene and show footage that helps describe what we all saw. The majority of images and footage will be placed at a later point on the DVD.

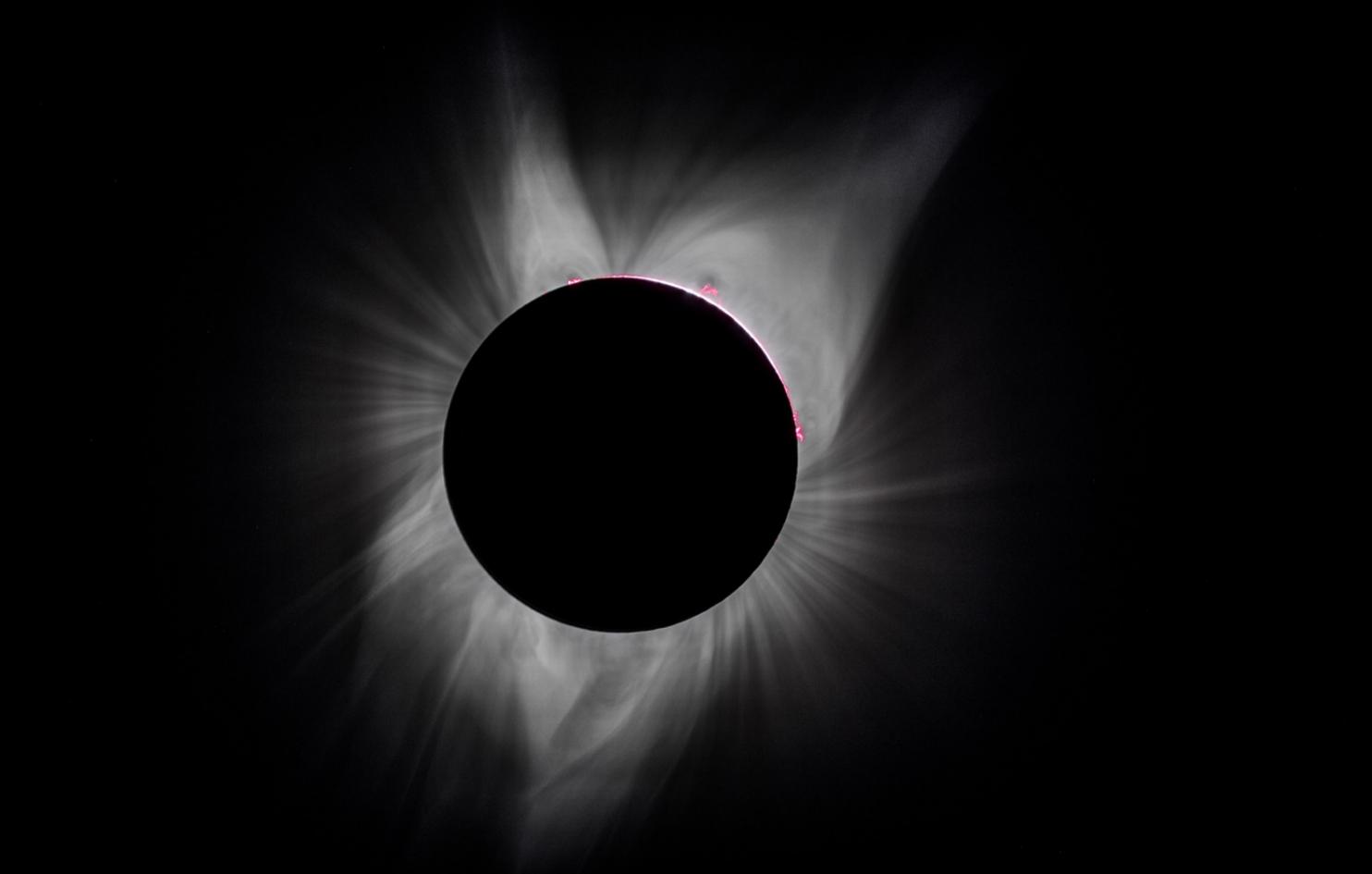
It's worth noting that some people are seasoned eclipse chasers and they have brought with them more equipment than you can imagine coming out of an average suitcase.

There are others who had little or no idea of what to expect and were trying to image an eclipse for the first time. Some people even choose just to watch the event but manage to capture interesting photographs and footage of people on site pre- and post- the actual seconds of totality. There is so much happening on the site, people wearing eclipse t-shirts, bringing the families favourite cuddly toy to watch the event, people drawing what they saw immediately after the eclipse, and the opening of a bottle of bubbly to celebrate.

In 2017 someone had an eclipse cake they had specially iced locally as part of the celebration, all washed down with tea sold by local organisation who had set up a stall to provide cups of tea to a group of English people on a ranch in the Grand Tetons, USA. The unexpected is always worth capturing. The next part of the disc will be made up of a short post-eclipse talk to camera by the professional astronomer explaining a little about what we saw at the time before any serious analysis of the footage and images has been seen.



The final section of the DVD is made up of all of the material that comes in the post – our request for images has gone out to the amateur astronomer community in the UK. That is often put into chapters so that those people can easily find their images if they purchase a copy of the DVD. It's worth noting we personally don't select the images for the DVD, we ask some well-known astronomers who are part of the BAA to select those for us and we are not looking for the best quality but the most interesting to the audience.



Roger Perry – eclipsing the competition

Acquiring all the materials to make the DVD

So far, this article has made the creating the DVD seem simple, but I am sure you realise that putting this together doesn't come without its challenges. To start with we have to encourage people to send us the images and footage. As we receive the material it needs to be carefully stored ensuring you can tie up the material with the person who created it. Once the DVD has been created and reviewed it needs to be marketed and sold.

We start with our own footage of the presentation that Dr. John Mason presents pre-eclipse. Of course, we can't see the room before we get to the hotel so we never know what to expect in terms of layout. We are also limited as to what equipment we can carry with us on our trip. We take a tie clip, radio microphone with us and a little MP3 recorder just in case we have problems with the radio microphone connected to the camera. We also take up to three video cameras to capture from different positions in the room and both wide angle and close up shots. The images that are projected onto a screen as part

of the presentation are often better seen when the room is dark adding another challenge. We obtain an electronic set of the PowerPoint slides to edit into the footage in post-production and ensure we get the best quality film for the DVD. In order to take video footage and images of the eclipse we are already carrying two or three tripods along with cameras and video cameras and I often pack a telescope. I mentioned earlier that you cannot look directly at the partial phases of an eclipse so we also pack filters for the cameras not only for us to look at the eclipse but also to protect the camera CCDs.

The final challenge I will mention is focusing on the sun, which can be very tricky if there are no sun spots to focus on.

Acquiring other people's images can also be challenging. We generally put out a note to the astronomical community as well as contacting some people we know who will be taking video and images. We often see if we can get satellite shots taken from space of the shadow passing across the earth. Often the space agencies will allow you to use that as long as you credit them, and again it is not-for-profit.

People who supply images also need to be assured they will be credited with taking the image but will not be paid for it nor will they be given a free DVD. Most people are happy to buy a copy of the DVD as we are doing it for a charitable organisation and there is the cost of the DVD disc.

The final product

We luckily don't have to do the marketing of selling of the DVDs but a charity, not for profit organisation, often depends on volunteers to do all the work so there is often chasing and agreeing how it will all work.

The tour company usually agrees to let people know that a DVD, and more recently a Blu-ray, has been produced and they are advertised by the BAA website. After the initial flood of orders, the sales continue over the next few months, and it is not unusual to have a request for a DVD produced a few years ago.

Finally, this article has focussed on the putting together of the DVD but we could have put together a more technical article on the filming of an eclipse which we could do as a future follow-up article.

You may be thinking about going to see an eclipse yourself. I have just seen some images from someone who went to the very northern parts of Russia in minus 50 degrees Centigrade to view only a partial eclipse – certainly something I would never do. We have only put together our own travel plans when we are travelling to somewhere like the USA or Australia. It's much more fun and easier, especially when you are travelling off the normal tourist trail, to go with others.

The future

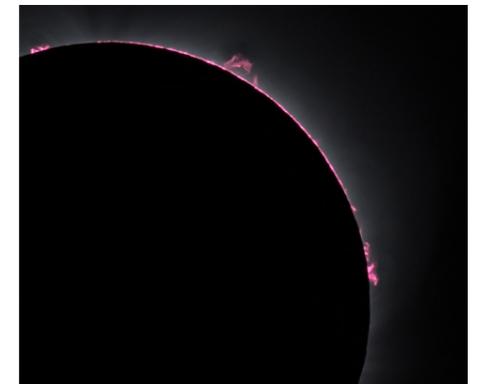
This makes it sound like we are producing something unique, and whilst in 2006 we were one of the first businesses to do this, more people have produced DVDs and even more have produced footage on YouTube.

In 2012, there was a DVD produced locally in Australia following the eclipse in Queensland and, following the 2017 Great American eclipse, many people produced movies about the spectacle. One company, the Eclipse Mega Movie, created images of the obscured sun from as many locations as possible stringing them together to make one very long eclipse movie. I believe work is still ongoing adding images to the movie.

It goes without saying there are more eclipses to come. This year we are travelling to Chile and have already started planning the 2020 trip to Argentina. The 2021 eclipse is difficult as it can only be observed on land in the South Shetland isles which is on route to Antarctica.

In 2023 we will see the return to Australia although it only just touches land and gives a very small region to view it from. If you are really interested in seeing an eclipse then the 8 April 2024 will see another eclipse traversing across North America with predictions for skies with few clouds in Texas and Mexico.

Gillian Perry



If you are interested in a DVD, take a look on the British Astronomical Association website. This offers a list of all of the eclipse DVDs presently on sale: www.britastro.org/shop_catalog/127

For your first eclipse, I would always recommend travelling with someone who has some knowledge about the event. A company we use (we supplied the video for their website) is:

www.intrepidtravel.com/uk/astronomy

CHEAP LAPEL MICS – WORTH THE RISK?

Chris North takes a look at choosing lapel mics and asks why pay for top brand lapel mics when you can get very cheap ones on the internet?

Well, there are situations where you really don't want to risk damaging or losing your expensive lapel mic and where an alternative may just fit the bill.

BY CHRIS NORTH
M.M.INST.V.

DRAWN TO A LOW-COST
BARGAIN MIC – WILL IT
WORK FOR YOU?

CHRIS.NORTH@IOV.CO.UK



All is may be fine if you are in a studio or controlled environment but what if you are mic'ing up a sports person or climber – or even children or wedding guests, who may not take care of your kit? The answer could be a cheaper lapel mic. But you don't want to risk a failure or poor audio. You need to choose your cheaper mic based on user recommendations and audio samples, remembering that different mic designs produce different sounds or tones.

Top brands v cheap

Professional microphones, made by the well-known specialist manufacturers, will have been designed to meet the demands of various professional users, on stage, for film, broadcast etc. both for voice and for music – and more particularly they will be fairly rugged, reliable and the quoted microphone specifications, can be relied upon as being truthful and accurate – which is not necessarily the case with cheap microphones you purchase on the internet.

What are the things to look out for?

— *Hiss*

One of the worst common factors with cheap mics is HISS. But there are some out there that are both sensitive and have low hiss levels comparable with some professional lapel mics. All condenser mics produce some hiss of course, because they include electronic 'amplifiers'. The trouble when looking for a cheaper one is that you can't rely on the specifications quoted or the consistency of manufacture. So you may get a good one or a bad one – even under the same model number or brand.

If you are doing an interview in a quiet room you do not want hiss to be audible, so in such a controlled situation a more expensive lapel mic would probably be more appropriate. But you can often get away with a cheaper mic and a small amount of hiss, which you can remove in the edit



JK mic J-017 Cardioid

by using specialist audio restoration software like iZotope RX or even a free audio editing program like Audacity or the plug-in provided with your editing software. Hiss is normally fairly uniform and limited in frequency, so low level (volume) hiss can therefore usually be filtered out without any noticeable effect on your audio – particularly if it is speech.

If you are recording outside then hiss is less likely to be a problem since it will probably be masked by general environmental noise (trees hiss a lot!). Traffic, bird song and just the general sounds around you will probably be much louder than any small amount of hiss from a well designed cheap mic.

— *Sound Quality and Frequency*

Theoretically, the best microphones will reproduce the full spectrum of audible sound frequencies from 20Hz to 20,000Hz (we can't really hear anything outside that range) – and each frequency will be reproduced to the same 'level' – which we call a 'flat' response because the graph of sound volume plotted for each frequency will produce a horizontal line.

If we only wish to record the human voice we do not really need the very low and very high frequencies because they are beyond what our voices can produce. Nor do we necessarily need all frequencies to be reproduced at exactly the same level – because such technical accuracy would not necessarily result in the recorded voice sounding 'natural' (whatever we mean by that).

— *Natural Sound*

Cheaper microphones can also sound thin (tinny/like an old telephone) or hard (like banging two pebbles together) or thick (not enough clean response in the upper voice frequencies).

Provided all the frequencies are there you can often tweak the final recording to make it sound more natural. But not always. The only sure way is to test out the mic you intend to use – or at least read as many professional reviews as possible.

User reviews – and indeed YouTube samples – need to be taken with caution but they can be a guide.

— *Breath pops and wind*

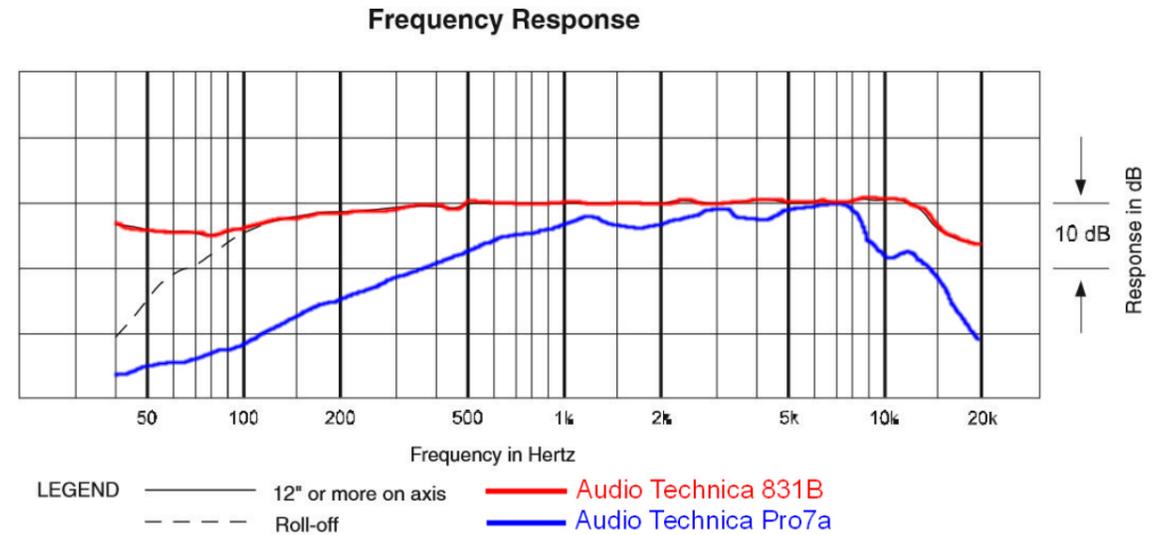
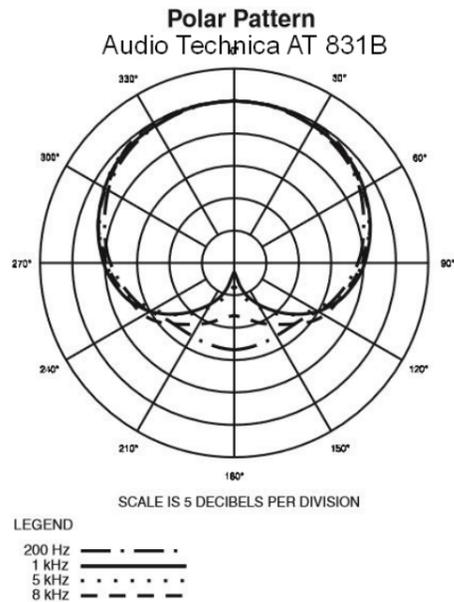
Expensive mics can be just as susceptible to plosives (breath from 'P' and 'B' sounds) as cheaper mics. The closer a mic is to the mouth the more likely it is that it will be blasted with air from plosives. Omni-directional mics can be fixed upside down to help reduce plosives but cardioid mics have to be set to face the mouth. Outside, wind covers/furs are normally essential. Cardioid lapel mics can be more prone to breath pops and even the lightest of breezes outside.

— *Handling / clothing noise*

Some lapel mics seem to pick up a lot more clothing noise than others, irrespective of cost, but in most cases you can avoid clothing noise by mounting the tie clip or pin carefully or by taping the mic to clothing or skin to stop rubbing when the subject moves.

Mic Placement

Because a lapel mic is placed much closer to the person's mouth than a conventional mic it will 'sound closer'. There will be more breath sounds



recorded and it may sound thicker if it has a full frequency response – the deeper sounds may be more noticeable. If you are using a lapel mic with a cardioid pick-up pattern then these deeper sounds may be over-emphasized due to the ‘proximity effect’, so the voice will not sound as open and ‘natural’, although that could be the sound you are trying to achieve. So we really need to think about choosing a microphone to produce the sound we want from a particular person’s voice. Male and female voices will often benefit from microphones with different characteristics – and from different microphone placement on the body. Being able to try out cheaper mics can be helpful.

Placing the microphone say on the chest, particularly if concealed under clothing, will pick up deeper sounds from the chest cavity and can make a male voice sound boomy or muffled. Lapel mics often tail off the lower frequencies to avoid this. So the frequency graph for a lapel mic (and indeed other mics) will often not be ‘flat’. Lapel mics that produce the best, naturally sounding voices, will often have a carefully tailored frequency response. The best mics are the ones that sound good in most circumstances that ‘you’ will use them in.

Let’s look at a few of the cheaper lapel mics I have tried.

Cheaper Mics

– **Aperture A-Lav (Omni) £35** (S/N quoted 65dB - very low hiss)

A clean sounding mic, very low hiss for a cheap mic with a clear crisp sound which can be tweaked nicely when editing. It has its own (rechargeable) power supply and a very long (3m) fixed cable so you can use it for wired interviews. It can be used with the supplied TRRS jack to your phone and has a headphone monitoring socket in the belt clip power unit. It will also work at a lower level without the power pack but the audio is on the Ring not the Tip of the TRS – i.e. it will feed into the right hand channel of a powered TRS mic socket.

– **JK Mic J-044 (Omni) £25** (S/N quoted 63dB - quite low hiss)

A very small lapel mic with a really nice natural sound, open but with good clear bass. Low hiss – almost as quiet as the Sennheiser. I have a couple of these and have no hesitation in using them. I always take one of these as a spare. I keep one with my miniature Tascam recorder in my pocket and one with my DSLR camera in case I decide to shoot impromptu video when out and about.

– **JK Mic J-017 (Cardioid) £25** (S/N quoted 63dB - but high hiss in use)

Much more self-noise than the J-044 omni version (despite being quoted as the same) but a standby if you need

to record in a noisy environment (where the hiss would be masked by other noise) and you can’t justify a more expensive cardioid such as the Sennheiser ME-4N miniature (£110) S/N 63dB.

The J-017’s cardioid pick-up pattern is very pronounced. Off-axis sounds are well rejected. Clear but sounds a bit harsh (stony) on my voice and does not have a full open rounded bass like the J-044 unless you invert the phase – in which case the sound is fuller and richer. Placement is critical. It is also very sensitive to plosives and even light air movements outside but works well concealed under light clothing, especially if you use a fur wind cover as well. In quiet locations you will need to process out the hiss when you edit – it can be done!

– **JK Mic J-069 (Cardioid) over-ear boom £33** (S/N quoted 63dB but a bit noisy in use)

A specialist head-worn mic if you need to keep the mic close to the mouth to minimise other environmental noise or avoid feedback from PA speakers. Obviously visible with the boom across the cheek and mic near the mouth. Properly placed just to the side of the mouth to avoid plosives it produces good results. If you invert the phase when recording you get a rich warm sound because of the proximity effect needs

hiss-removal in post if used in a quiet indoor situation. Very good in noisy environments but sensitive to wind and drafts.

Would I use a cheap lapel mic?

The short answer is, ‘Yes’... in some situations. If I am concerned that an expensive mic might be lost or damaged, for example in sports or when being used by children, or perhaps outside where a small amount of hiss would not be noticeable, then I might use one of my £25 mics. But, I would only use a cheap mic that I have found to perform to my satisfaction in terms of low hiss and which produces an overall sound that I like.

Wrapping up

In my experience you cannot rely upon the noise and frequency figures quoted for cheap mics. At best they are probably aspirational and at worst untrue. But there are cheap mics out there that will do the job, although you may not get the tonal character you want. With professional mics there will be good record of user experience and examples of the sound they produce. With cheaper mics you may have to do a bit more tweaking in post production but in the end no-one need know.

What’s your favourite lapel mic ?

Chris North

THE FREQUENCY RESPONSE GRAPH, above
More expensive lapel mics, such as these from Audio Technica, have accurate frequency graphs so you can assess their characteristics.

- The 831B (£200) has a good flat response and produces a nice rounded sound.
- The now discontinued Pro7a is not responsive to high and low frequencies but will emphasise the voice in noisy environments.

Tip
Many lapel mics produce an out-of-phase signal, so if you can engage ‘phase reversal’ or ‘invert phase’ on your recorder you may get a fuller, more rounded sound.
Try it and see.

[RE]SPITE

Set-up tests on five shotgun mics – Sennheiser, Rode, Schoeps and Deity prove an ear syringe is overdue! Apart from the obligatory 40sec ad (B&H - yep, American) it could offer a useful insight.

This 16min vid hosted by Parker Walbeck with Brenden Bytheway give it a go.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LL2ITmiUGQ8>

12

WEDDINGS – THE MAN IN THE MIDDLE

As a qualified IOV member and vicar, Phil Janvier sees the filming of weddings from both sides – truly the man in the middle.

Here he offers an insight into the good, the bad and the ugly, and how we could up our game. Is it divine intervention or all in our own hands?



Philip officiating at a wedding

BY PHILIP JANVIER
M.M.INST.V.

THE REVEREND OFFERS AN
INSIGHT TO SUCCESSFUL
WEDDINGS FROM BOTH
SIDES OF THE FENCE

PHILJANVIER@BTINTERNET.COM



The potential bride and groom are standing in the church office – and I am laughing as I try to talk them out of getting married!

The wedding booking form is in their hands, and they are wondering how to spell their father's middle names. We laugh some more until I tell them how much it is going to cost... I sigh, the Church of England Fees are agreed by the General Synod and then ratified by Parliament, so I have little say in them. Then the groom laughs, "you're still cheaper than the photographer and the reception", he says. Have you thought about videoing your wedding I ask? The majority, reply, 'No,' and again I sigh. Occasionally, I ask why not?

I get a range of answers from; I haven't thought about it; too expensive; my uncle will do it on his phone; too much hassle.

I believe churches and the videographers have a few things in common.

- We have rivals that offer a similar job
- The bride and groom aren't convinced by our services (pun intended)

Firstly, the videographer has to contend with the photographer. Every DSLR camera now can be used as a video camera, and many photographers are doing both stills and video. So why pay for two services when you can get it all in one. Similarly, the churches are contending with hotels, Registry Offices and licensed wedding venues with many couples unable to tell the difference.

Secondly, if you want quality, then you have to pay for it – deliver on your promises and meet the couple's expectations. Too often, there are cowboy operations out there, providing poor services. That's true of the videographers and the churches! For me, I love weddings, I enjoy being a part of something that, in the majority of occasions, is a fun event.

Everybody wants to be there, and they want the couple to have an outstanding day. So when I conduct a wedding, I try to ensure I get to know the couple, what makes them laugh and what they want from the day. That's true whether I am the minister or the videographer. Then reality arrives, or, as I heard it put politely, 'the midden hits the windmill.'

I struggle to lead a marriage service when the photographer or the videographer are undisciplined mavericks. I tend to think that as a qualified member of the IOV I make a good minister to work with. My ground rules are simple and few. To the photographer, you may use your flash, and you may take pictures during the service but be discreet. You may walk up the aisle to get a decent close-up of the exchanging of the vows and rings. However, I want to pull out my greying hair when the photographer crawls up the side aisle to get a low angled photograph. Surprising not only me but also the future mother-in-law with

the flash bursting forth from by her feet. Nor do I expect the photographer to push me aside to get a close up of the hands. To the videographer, yes I will wear a radio microphone, yes you can have a position with a great vantage point of the bride's face but no please don't walk up and down the aisles, with your DSLR on its rig capturing the congregation's faces as the couple make their vows. Barging in front of the photographer, or vice-versa, and then arguing about their lack of professionalism in a barely contained whisper. Then my favourite gripe... turning up for a wedding in a stained and threadbare outfit or suit, or wearing jeans and a grubby black t-shirt, smelling of the great unwashed. Everyone else at a wedding has made an effort... so should you!

So, before I morph into a grumpy old man – hold on, I am a grumpy old man, I know that there are vicars, ministers and priests who are unreasonable, unhelpful, and downright rude.

They are almost impossible to work with and just make your life a misery when you are filming a marriage service. I do hope that grumpy old (add your own word here) clergy are dying out and that a newer group of professionally minded ministers are taking their place. But 'Life' being what it is, the chances are that some of my younger colleagues are just as much a pain in the armpit as some of the older ones. So where does that leave us?

We all need to be professional about services, delivering what we promise and on time. However, unlike the photographer and the wedding venue, the videographer and the church need to up our game. We need to promote our services so that we are seen as essential and not a luxury. We need to challenge the growing assumption that we are an optional add-on. I genuinely believe that a good wedding in a church is impossible to beat. There is something about a church that cannot be replicated in most secular venues.



Philip and his Panama off to officiate at a wedding

Here, I am sure, you can swap church for any other religious celebrational place, the additional factor as such is belief. Whether you are an atheist, agnostic or believer, when someone truly believes in something it transforms the occasion. It is the difference between going to watch a football match not knowing who is playing, and supporting a team. When you involve yourself emotionally into the wedding, you get more out. This is not just true for the church, but also valid for the videographer. All the best videographers I know are passionate about their work. It is not just a job, but a vocation or an art form. When we lose passion, either through tiredness or cynicism, we lose our way.

That leaves me with a few challenges:

- How do we better promote our services?
- How do we communicate with the bride and groom?

- How do we create and meet a realistic set of expectations?
- How professional are we in our work?
- How do we present ourselves in public?
- How do we become passionate about our work?
- How do we overcome tiredness and cynicism?

I do not pretend to have all the answers, but some of it is down to our own self-esteem and that of the company or church we represent. To effectively market our services we have to hold to a strong belief in our ability to provide a unique and excellent service.

Too often we doubt ourselves and those abilities. That's why being part of the IOV is essential and why accreditation is so important. You may say nobody has ever heard of the IOV outside of professional circles and yet, putting letters after your name is empowering.

My M.M.Inst.V. means that I have been tested by my peers, that I know I am capable of providing high-quality material to my clients. The self-confidence that gives me is invaluable. We are professionals and proud of it.

Of course, there are moments when things go wrong, but good communication and maintaining good relationships will bring us through to the other side, hopefully not too covered in the 'midden'. As a priest, minister and team rector I strive to be the best church minister I can be.

As a qualified member of the IOV, I strive to be the best videographer I can be. I may fall short occasionally, but in my heart I know I am seeking to be the best I can be, and that aspiration drives me to be more professional in the services I provide. So, with the bride and groom, I want to help them celebrate their special day.

Philip Janvier

layman's guide to...

USB FLASH DRIVE – a relation to the SDHC Card featured in the last issue of Focus magazine. Weighing in at under one ounce, this removable storage device first saw the light of day almost 20-years-ago. With a shelf life of up to 100 years, the available write and erase rotations should out see the user.

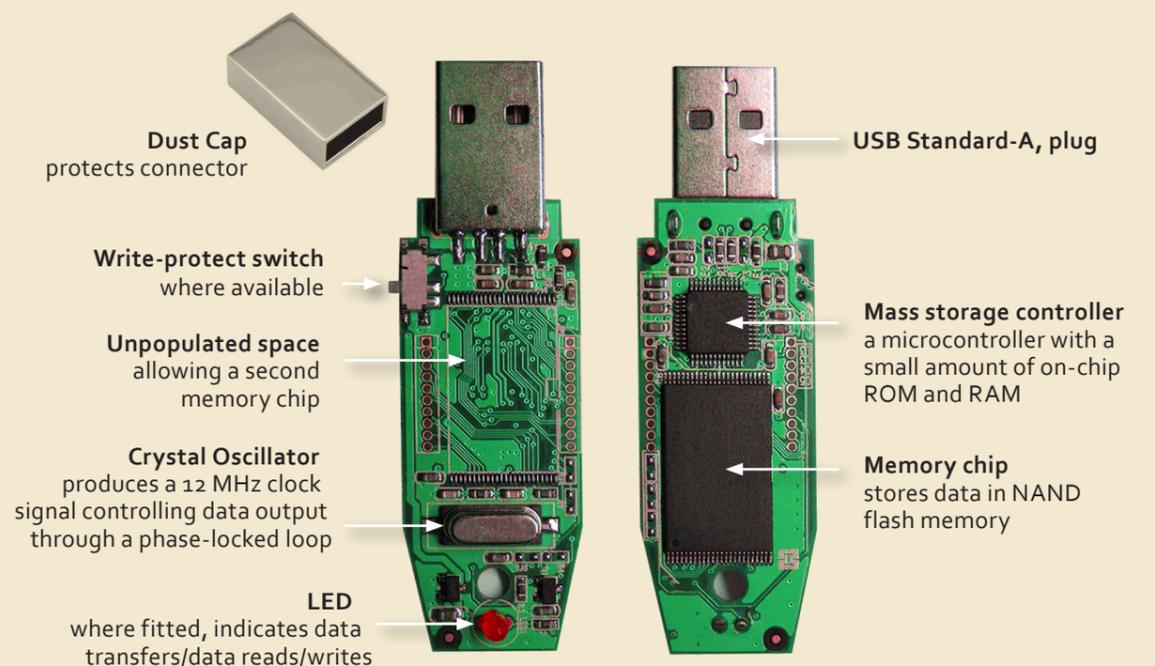
The widespread introduction of USB ports replaced the old floppy drives – the disks had limited capacity (1.44MB), were not very robust and prone to electromagnetic interference. Flash drives up to 2TB are now common (some claiming USB 3.1 Gen 2 theoretical speed of 10Gbps) and used for back up, storage and as a boot disk.

Subsequent lawsuits aside, it was an Israeli company who invented the USB Flash Drive, although the Singapore company Trek 2000 International were first to market. Come the second incarnation, USB2 (2002) supposedly increased the speed by a factor of 20 and USB3 (2008) around ten times. USB 3.1 Gen2 will double that again.

Easily transportable, they don't suffer the shortcomings of the humble CD/DVD ie fragility, capacity, scratches, etc. nor the potential of moving parts failure of the optical drive. Preformatted as FAT32 file system allows

it to be accessed on most devices and permits utilities to repair or retrieve corrupted data. As it appears as a USB-connected hard drive it can be reformatted to any file system supported by the host operating system. Most do not have a 'write protect' ability, unlike SDHCs. USB (Universal Serial Bus) will be around for some time yet with over £46Bn of 'Flash' memory sales anticipated world-wide this year, (in 2017, Germany alone sold over 13.5m units).

Keith Woolford



13

BLACKMAGIC POCKET CINEMA CAMERA 4K, PT.II

In the last issue of Focus I offered my first impressions and they weren't 100% good. And, to be truthful, the passing of a few weeks hasn't changed my mind.

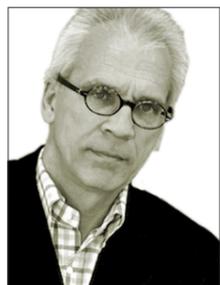
Many of you will have heard that the camera is in short supply with some individuals selling new ones on eBay for almost twice the retail price. So I'm tempted! But read on to see what I intend to do...



BY IAN SANDALL
F.INST.V.

LETTING RIP AND ON THE
BRINK – THE SHINE IS
CERTAINLY DULLING AS
IAN LIMPS ALONG...

SPL-COMMUNICATIONS.CO.UK
IS@IANSANDALL.VIDEO



To pick up from that article, the camera went back to BlackMagic but apart from replacing the faulty battery door, nothing was done. The excessive heat I reported on in my first article was 'within tolerance' I was told. Really. So they sent it back. DHL managed to lose it for a day but eventually we were re-united!

I then got to thinking recently that Blackmagic must have some really clever people working for them – and some really bloody-minded ones too. The really clever people developed the UI which is about as simple and logical as a camera UI can be. And they developed the lovely sensor that can create sublime images.

The bloody-minded ones probably work in customer service and don't respond to emails containing constructive criticism.

Others of the same mind-set also engineered the HDMI output on the original pocket cinema camera

and carried it over onto this one, notwithstanding complaints from people like me (and a load more too I am sure!). This is the HDMI output that only works with certain monitors – definitely not mine I have found out! And they probably also decided NOT to give it an SDI output. You know, those connectors like grown-up cameras have. Things like this just serve to annoy the customer.

And, that's not the only failing, some of which have been addressed in the latest firmware upgrade. But some more fundamental ones will always remain.

Chief among them is the non-articulating screen. When I first got the camera, I thought the screen was quite bright. And it is, in comparison to the last pocket camera. But it's not as bright as my Panasonic mirrorless – but that of course also has an articulating screen. And when you get into the sun, it's just not as bright as it needs to be.

So you're faced with using some kind of monitor or viewfinder and the 'pocket' concept just goes out of the window. After all, the whole object of a 'pocket' camera is to take it with you when you're out and about – including outdoors.

A monitor sounds a good idea. At least they're reasonably priced – providing you buy the right one! But they're big and bulky and really what you want is something like the Zacuto Gratical but at a cost of one and a half times the price of the camera plus something to screw it all onto, like a cage, that's pushing the camera into another price bracket altogether.

So, for the want of some bloody-minded people at BlackMagic NOT wanting to develop an articulating screen for whatever reason, (let's face it, a smaller one would have been fine and might not use so much juice!), here's a camera that has limited use to anyone who actually tries to make films for a living. The annoying thing is, they had a blank

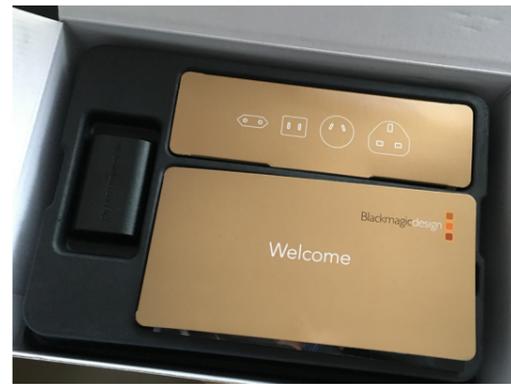
sheet and then went and developed a camera with the same stupid basic shape as the original Cinema Camera. I mean, honestly...

Even Canon with their ugly-duckling XC10 and XC15 cameras have much better usability. OK there are other drawbacks as we know, but if you sit down and look at the BMPCC 4K – I mean really look hard at how you're supposed to work with it, it's all wrong!

I know there are a lot of fanboys (and girls) out there who think everything that Grant Petty develops is wonderful but that just isn't the case in the Real World. If anyone at Black Magic had taken any notice of feedback from professional shooters, this camera would not look the way it does today.

The irony is that had they done so, they could have charged getting on for twice the price. Because, let's face it, for the performance of the sensor and the UI (ignoring if you can, the useless shape) it's knocking on the door of a Sony





PXW FS-5 Mk2, a Panasonic AU-EVA1 or even a Canon C300 II when it comes to picture quality. With its Pro-Res codec or in 4K RAW, it'll spit out some magnificent pictures.

I recently did a location shoot on it on a very sunny day and used all my cards up in an hour and a half. Over 200Gb of RAW 4K files for 25 mins of footage! Some of the pics were wonderful. Some I either over or under exposed so badly due to not being able to see what I was shooting that even with them being RAW files and using Resolve to grade, they still looked odd. Maybe it was too much use of the Vari-ND filter. Maybe it was finger trouble. But the two major issues were the silly file sizes and the lack of being able to see the screen.

This leads me onto the other main drawback of the camera – the lack of switchable ND. Again, I'm sure this would have been possible when working with a blank sheet – IF someone at BM had actually asked a film-maker and taken note of what they said! So you're faced with using Vari-NDs screwed onto the lens or a matte box with NDs. Again, this moves away from the original pocket concept.

The much-vaunted B-RAW (Blackmagic RAW) has not arrived on the latest firmware update (6.1) even though I was hoping it would – it might have been a convincer, seeing as I use Resolve a lot of the time, so 4K in even 3:1 RAW results in gargantuan files. B-RAW should make a massive difference to

all users of the camera providing their edit system can read it, as the smaller files will make it possible to edit on less powerful machines using smaller drives.

And, that is the ONLY reason I am keeping it for now. To see what Black Magic's own version of RAW is really like. It may or may not be a game changer.

Then I'll either decide to keep it (and use it for interiors) or sell it on and walk away.

To be continued

Ian Sandall

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THE IMAGE – A BRIEF HISTORY #1

For many, the Brownie, an innovative folding, the handy Instamatic or the Automatic 8 movie camera was the catalyst of their wondrous photographic journey.

Kodak were synonymous with capturing the world and its family in black and white or glorious colour. Those precious memories could be collected in five days from the local chemist. Then along came digital...

BY KEITH WOOLFORD
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STILL OR MOVING IMAGES
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The more adventurous would blackout the bathroom and inhale chemicals to hurry the process. Mini-pioneers in their own right. Later, most waited patiently for postie to deliver the tryptic concoction via TruPrint with their 'special' textured colours. And, that free film to start all over again.

Mr George Eastman pretty much started the whole shebang for the masses in 1888 with the 'Kodak'. It had a pre-loaded roll film offering 100 circular pictures of around 2½ inches in diameter. Their slogan 'You press the button – we do the rest', was literally true as the camera was return to the factory for processing and your prints!

So, 130 years since that posh lady in the fancy hat and striped dress started snapping with a much scaled-down consumer version of what the professional and enthusiasts used. Replacing, of course, glass plates and cumbersome wooden cameras with accompanying spiked three-legged support system, which would now be

deemed a WMD in the wrong hands. Now hand-held and peering through a slightly domed viewer, more often shielded from the bright light to see the upside-down image, made everyone an instant artist and keeper of memories.

Pre-Dawn

Capturing that image was an elusive quest sought by scientists, the gentry and the moneyed. Yes, you could employ the services of an artist to paint that hunting dog at your knee or a professional for that high cathedral ceiling – mostly, it was beyond the realms of the average man/woman in the street/road.

Recording the world around us could actually be a natural phenomenon as Archaeoacoustics say that potters throwing clay on their wheels may have 'recorded' ambient noise within the pot grooves thousands of years ago. (There was a report that declares an oil painting yielding the word 'blue' following analysis. Mmm, me too.)



Earliest surviving image 'View from the Window at Le Gras', c. 1826

Back in 1902, Charles Sanders Peirce explained that, "Give science only a hundred more centuries of increase in geometrical progression, and she may be expected to find that the sound waves of Aristotle's voice have somehow recorded themselves."

(Is this more in the territory of a Jurassic Park fantasy? – although the premise of this work of fiction to bring back amber clad DNA doesn't sound completely out of the question these days.)

Anyway, I digress.

Whilst there was fair amount of messing around attempting to capture images with light sensitive materials as early as 1717, there was no apparent willingness, and certainly no ability, to 'fix' them.

The Camera Obscura, possibly dating back as far as the fourth century, was all the fashion. Effectively, a small box, or even a room, with a pin hole which projects a reversed and inverted scene to within. The 'artist' could then accurately trace the image to reproduce this on the chosen media. As the nineteenth century dawned, Thomas the son of Josiah 'The Potter' Wedgewood, along with Humphry 'The Electrician and The Lamp' Davy were very near, but it was the permanency issue once again, which stumped their endeavours.

Dawn

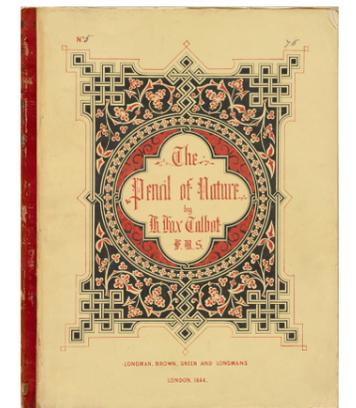
Twenty-six years later – the break through.

It is acknowledged that a gentleman across the English Channel was the père of photography. Lauded as having produced the earliest surviving 'photograph'. Un Monsieur Joseph Nicéphore Niépce (1765-1833), a French inventor of note. Frustration with his inability to draw was the mother of invention.

Mixing bitumen of Judea with water produced a thick tar-like substance to be coated on a pewter plate. The heat dried plate was then inserted into a small camera pointing out for an upstairs window at his home at Le Gras for over eight hours. The plate was then washed in a mixture of oil of lavender and white petroleum, which dissolved the soft areas not hardened by the sunlight. Once air-dried, the result was a 'positive' image of the bitumen and bare metal.

The long travel of experimentation with other light sensitive solutions had finally produced the goods.

Niépce coined the term Heliography but it was Sir John Herschel, acclaimed photographer / astronomer / chemist / mathematician, who brought together the Greek words for light and drawing to arrive at Photography.



There followed a flurry of processes – Louis Daguerre (1787-1851) with his daguerreotype – a silver iodide coated silvered surface developed by mercury fumes all in a matter of minutes and, perhaps more significantly, William Henry Fox Talbot (1800-77) for allowing the filming of Harry Potter scenes at his home at Laycock Abbey, Wiltshire. Oh, and the Calotype.

Moving away from metal and glass, the Calotype paper-based process fixed a negative image from which many positives could subsequently be made.

In 1844, Fox Talbot published the first book illustrated with photographs. If you spot one in a car boot, do let me know.



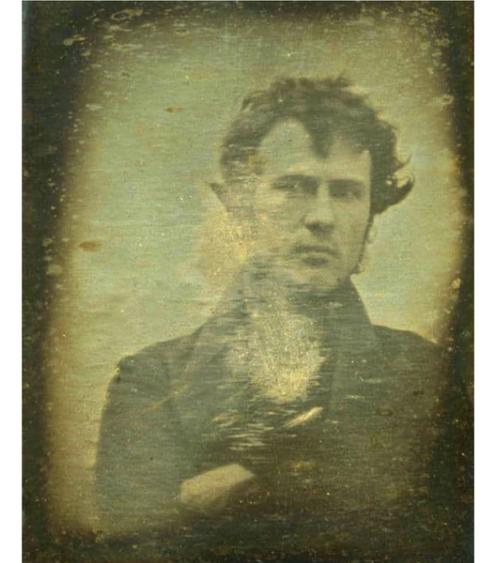
The Kodak girl



'Boulevard du Temple', Paris 1838
oldest photograph with people recorded, ten minute exposure by Louis Daguerre



Fox Talbot and chums at the Reading establishment, 1846



The first selfie? by Robert Cornelius, 1839

Post Dawn

There were many other photographic process types, (Tintype, Ambrotype, Collodion, Pannotype, Albumen, Cyanotype, Photogravure to name but a few) and we've already seen imaginative use of the different surfaces employed to hold the image.

As to photographers themselves, how long do you have?

Early on, this new art form was used to record places and, to a lesser extent, people. Due to the exposure times, buildings and the landscape could be relied on to be pretty stationary whereas us humans have a habit of fidgeting if more than an arm's length from the TV remote.

The nineteenth century's Don McCullin's – the real pioneers in their field, were risking life and limb to record the devastation of war. These included Mathew Brady (1822-96) photographing the American Civil War (1861-65) and Roger Fenton (1819-69) the Crimean War (1853-56). Having photographed Queen Victoria and Consort, she promptly recommended Fenton go off and record her war!

Speaking of her Maj, she often holidayed at Osborne House, Isle of Wight and when taking to this two-cruise holiday there I always call in at 'Dimbola', Freshwater, just down the road. Home of Julia Margaret Cameron (1815-79), she could be classed as the first celeb photographer with the likes of Darwin, Tennyson, Browning, Millais, Rossetti, Burne-Jones, Ellen Terry, Alice Liddell and the aforementioned Herschel sitting for her. There was a distinctive soft-focus about her portraits but Julia would have to wait a century to have them cheapened.

Early adopters utilised special head clamps to ensure the sitter remain still during long exposures. And, definitely no smiling!

There are many other nineteenth century photographers that could be mentioned – Robert Cornelius, Nadar, Alfred Stieglitz, Lewis Carroll, Auguste Lumière, William Friese-Greene and Eadweard Muybridge. The latter three made a particularly important impact on our chosen interest and will make an appearance in the next issue of Focus.

We now make the leap to the relatively modern era of photography.

Enter Messrs Eastman and Strong who founded Kodak then quickly establishing their American company as the most dominant provider of cameras, film and chemicals in the industry.

The Kodak box was followed by folding cameras and, for \$5, the Pocket Camera. Bram Stoker in *Dracula* (1897) wrote:

"I could not enter it, as I had not the key of the door leading to it from the house, but I have taken with my Kodak views of it from various points."

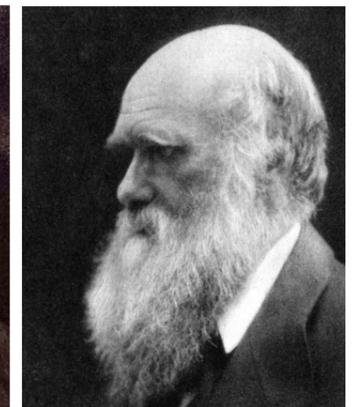
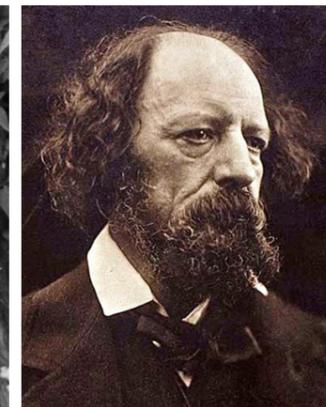
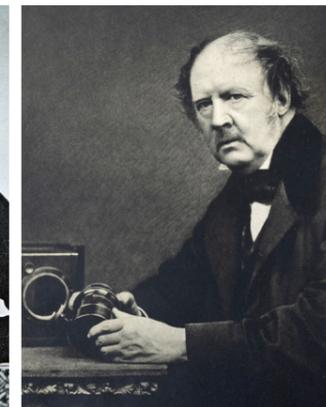
This was the same year the camera launched. Now that's product placement.

Then, some one hundred and nineteen years ago the Kodak Brownie hit the shops.



Having said everything there is to say about early stills photography, next time we retrace our steps arriving back in 1872 when, wait for it, moving images first appeared. And, I will exclusively reveal how the actor Robert Donat contributed to the world of film.

Keith Woolford



top: Joseph Nicéphore Niépce; Louis Daguerre; William Henry Fox Talbot; Julia Margaret Cameron
above: John Herschel, Alice Liddell, Alfred Lord Tennyson and Charles Darwin – all by Julia Margaret Cameron

THE IOV

So, what do our members do?
Well, what don't they do?!



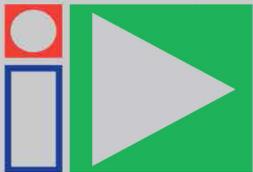
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