IN THIS ISSUE

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NOTES FROM THE EDITOR
Tony Manning

We thought it was time to get a new edition of Focus out there as we all stumble towards the light (an oncoming train perhaps?) with the scourge of Covid beginning to fade from our lives - leaving behind all sorts of damage to individuals, families and businesses. Some will find it hard to recover. The pandemic is far from over, of course, as we witness the growing tragedy of India and Brazil and have to recognise the truly global nature of what we all face.

For IOV members, and our colleagues across a wide range of enterprises in the production and events industries, we hope we can get back to the work we love, make a living and please our clients with our visual creations.

So this special edition of Focus is one small symbol of recovery.

I hope you enjoy this issue and that it provides something useful to you. We aim to get its reach extended way beyond our membership.

My thanks go to all our writers and to those whose comments helped to improve the look of the magazine, particularly the ever-reliable Chris North.

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CLICK TITLE TO NAVIGATE

UK Wedding Industry Task Force

In the Autumn of 2020 in a world of Covid-related pain and with the entire economy under severe threat a few enterprising people came together to try to represent at least one part of it - the Weddings and Events sector.

We are currently progressing through the roadmap* to phase in the re-opening of different sectors of the economy and social activity starting with schools from early March. An important aspect of this hoped-for release that involves possibly most of our members is resumption of weddings and events. In this respect the **UK Wedding Industry Task Force** has worked to bring together and represent the vast range of specialities and businesses, large and small, involved in a sector worth an estimated £14.7bn pa.

Everyone connected with the sector has felt the chill of the close-down – from venues to DJs, from florists to videographers. The Task Force has been actively working with government to get the sector properly recognised – and supported in practical ways.

"The weddings sector, paralysed by the restrictions imposed as a result of the pandemic, has been unable to trade in any commercially viable form since March 2020. Many businesses report catastrophic losses and over three quarters of businesses have reported revenues down by over 75% (UK Weddings Survey).

Unlike other sectors, however, the majority (95%) of consumers have postponed rather than cancelled their weddings with 220,000 UK weddings postponed since the first lockdown.

With 475,000 weddings currently scheduled to take place in 2021, including 196,500 postponed from 2020, the industry is predicted to generate £25 billion for the UK economy in 2021.

Approximately 400,000 workers are involved in weddings:
• 250,000 people depend on work related to delivering a wedding day
• 150,000 more work in "support functions"
• Many couples opt for the additional romance of a glamorous foreign setting for their wedding. Travel restrictions have affected this too, including the requirement to self-isolate on returning from designated destinations.

The UK Weddings Taskforce letter to the PM dated 2nd June expressed the frustration of the sector as further delays delays to opening up were announced:

"…the industry is increasingly angry to be told that they cannot be trusted to host more than fifteen or thirty people while other sectors host thousands. Families are also bewildered by the stance.

The wedding industry and its supply chain have heavily invested in post-21st June, not least because many weddings going ahead freely will mean the difference between surviving or going bust for 60,000 businesses and others in the large local, regional and national supply chain."

Of course all of this is happening in the context of the emergence of the Delta variant and the likelihood that we are at the start of a third wave requiring mass vaccination at home and internationally.

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July 19th is trumpeted by the Government as "Freedom Day". The PM's former preference which was "Terminus Day", may be quietly dropped since its association is with the end-point of a bus route, after which the bus goes round again!

Everybody Dance Now!

From that date responsibility is largely handed over to individuals to make their own decisions about mask-use and social distancing (requirements under Health and Safety legislation remain).

Keep up-to-date: England; links are also there for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Re-opening and the Video Professional
Wedding planning (which affects so many in the world of video production and photography, and of course venues) will return to normal.

There will be no restrictions on the numbers of attendees at live events. Festivals return. Not Glastonbury, the Isle of Wight or Notting Hill, but other smaller-scale festivals will go ahead – although some artistes will prefer to stay away e.g. Richard Ashcroft at Sheffield's Tramlines. Nightclubs re-open.

The risk of illness and transmission will not disappear. It will remain a legal requirement to self-isolate if you test positive for Covid.

Backed-up demand?
It remains to be seen how different the world that we re-enter will look from the world we used to know. Will many of the conferences and events we used to film remain online? Businesses that have been struggling to survive may have smaller or no budgets for video. We may have to make adjustments, both in how we work and expectations - while avoiding participating in the Race to the Bottom.

Safety on Shoots
Since we will often work in close proximity to others and sometimes in crowded spaces, we will need to consider preventive measures with or without legal obligations. There's some useful advice on safety measures here.

Time will tell if relaxing Covid regulations will work out (for the most part) well. If it does, people can rebuild their livelihoods, their support networks, and their mental health. So here's hoping!

Tony Manning M.M.Inst.V. © 2021

The Roar of the Greasepaint…the smell of the (returning) crowd?

Chroma Key on a shoestring
by Chris North

Inexpensive Chroma Key in a small space

Chris North takes a look at chroma key on the cheap and how this could add another string to your bow. He covers buying and setting up a chroma key cloth screen and lighting in a small space, understanding the principles and using domestic floodlights to reduce costs.

The Key
The 'key' to chromakeying is lighting the green screen uniformly. A hot-spot in the centre and dark edges will make keying more difficult since you will have to take away a wider colour spectrum to get the screen to key out. That will also take away more colour tones from your subject image, which you do not want to do. Ideally you should have a perfectly flat green screen with no noticeable undulations or creases. Having said that you can get away with a little bit of undulation, so you don't necessarily have to stretch the screen to make it dead flat. But in that case you may need to use more lighting to remove shadows and variations.
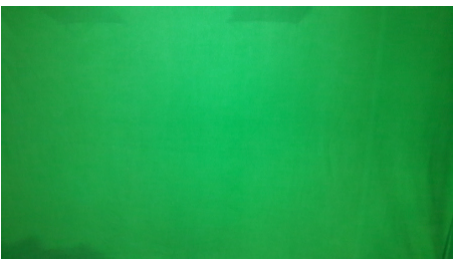
The Green Screen
In my 'close screen' set-up, the green screen is hung on a pole (actually a piece of 22mm copper plumbing pipe) which is suspended from exposed roof timbers with parachute cord over brass hooks. This means that the screen can be raised and lowered and even pulled up to the ceiling with the screen cloth folded over it so that it is out of the way when not in use. The screen cloth is held onto the pole with large (100mm) bulldog clips so that it can easily be removed and hung elsewhere. I also attach a 2cm square

wooden batten along the bottom in the same way, to make the cloth hang flat.
If you wish to use the screen across a room in this way you will need to devise some way of holding the pole in place. That could be

between two lighting stands or on a home-made floor-standing wooden frame. Or you may be able to arrange your set with the green screen on a wall or over a frame leaning against a wall.

The size of your green screen is important since it will determine how much space you have to move about and how many people you can get in shot. Ideally your screen material should mirror the normal 16:9 ratio of HD (or wider).

It is not always necessary to have the actual green screen material cover the whole of your camera frame - you can cheat by filling in the areas beyond the physical green screen with masks generated in your hardware or software. The masks in effect paint the areas beyond the physical screen with electronically generated green. Your background picture will key-in over the whole of your framed shot. Of course your subjects must not stray beyond the edges of the real green screen otherwise they will disappear!

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I have tried several green fabrics but by far the best is lightweight (280grm) Emerald Green fleece. The big advantage of fleece is that it has a matt finish. It does not crease when you fold it up and it hangs well because it has some substance. It also blocks any light or reflections from windows or shiny objects behind it , which would otherwise show through and spoil your uniformly lit screen. (That is the problem with the cotton muslin often sold as greenscreen material). It's also cheap! (about £6.50 per linear metre 1.5m wide). Since it is folded in half on the factory roll it will have a crease on the fold when you first get it, so you may need to press this out by pressing (not 'ironing') with a steam iron. Don't move the iron back and forth or you may stretch the fabric unevenly.

Lighting the screen
Ideally you will need two uniform lights to illuminate the green screen. At a pinch, you could get away with one but that tends to make life more difficult. I am currently using two 30-watt LED domestic floodlights 2.1 metres away from my 'close' green screen in a space of 2.1m x 2.6m within a 3.4m x 3.5m room, which has a 2.7m ceiling height.
A high ceiling is helpful because it enables

you to reduce the horizontal space required between your subject and the green screen by placing the lighting high up near the ceiling and directing it downwards on to the screen 'over the head' of your subject, which is normally me, seated 80-100cm in front of the camera with the green screen about 75-80cm behind me. It also avoids having to light the screen from the sides which requires much more space beyond the screen. High lighting is a bit of a compromise of course, since the light is closer to the top of the screen than the bottom. overcome this by aiming the centre of the light towards the bottom of the screen and illuminating the rest with the peripheral light from the lamp.
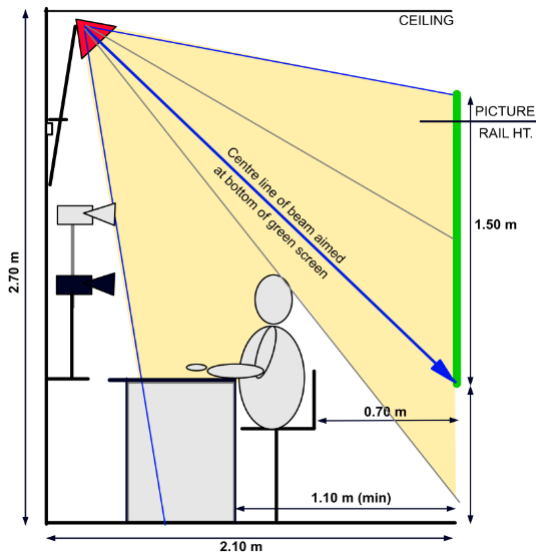

Some of the light illuminates the subject but at such an acute angle that the subject's shadow is either obscured by the subject or it falls below the green screen, so it does not interfere with the greenscreen illumination.

This is a two light set-up with the subject seated more or less centrally in front of the green screen and mid-way between the lamps. This means that only the less-intense spill light falls on the subject's head - otherwise there would be a hot-spot on the head. This is particularly problematic in my case since I have a shiny bald top. I have also attached flags at the bottom of the flood lights to prevent direct light falling on the subject. This allows more control from the subject softlights positioned to the side.

The 30 watt domestic floodlights I am using have a small array of 36 yellow (when not illuminated) square LEDs as the 'bulb' since this type of lamp seems to give a much more even illumination with less of a hot spot in the centre than the multi-LED diode lamps with hundreds of LEDs. The colour temperature is cool daylight (about 6,500 degrees K). They have a CRI colour index of 75, a 120 degree beam angle and cost around £15 each. They are quite small - about 18 x 16.5cm and produce about 3,000 lumens. You will also need 2 in-line connectors and cabling to a mains 13 amp multi socket and some means of mounting the lights.

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Lighting your subject

For simple web streaming you may be happy with the lighting provided by the two floodlights which spills on to your subject but you can do much better than that. Just placing an angle-poise lamp on the desk directed downwards can provide a useful warm fill light for an interior. You will no doubt have some video lights already, which can be used to supplement and mould the spill from the floodlights. You do not need a lot of light - just enough to give shape to your subject and create the right tones to match the background you are keying in behind.
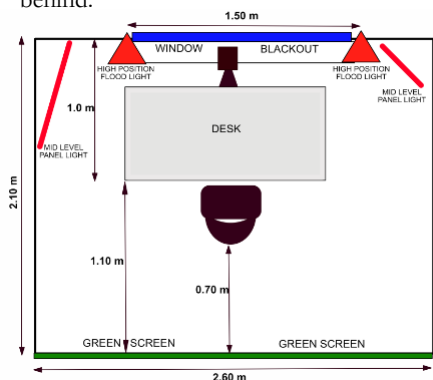
Always set your camera's colour balance manually with a white card in front of your subject - you can then adjust the colour of the shot separately in the chroma key software to match your chosen background.

Soft lighting is usually preferable since it does not create unnatural hard shadows, which can make faces look aggressive. I am currently using three 38cm square tile lights which have 33cm opal diffused panels. These were bought initially for still photography to use with a light tent but have proved to be very useful for portraits and for video when used closer than 1.5m from the subject. I have mounted two together on an aluminium 'U' rail to give me a soft light almost 75cm wide.

This pair is mounted 1.2m to my left (screen right) with a single tile 80cm to my right (screen left) with the bottom of the panels level with the top of my head. Both are fixed to existing shelving using small clamps with 1/4 inch mounts, so I do not need to clutter the small room with lighting stands.

The tile lights are daylight / tungsten switchable and also have an infinite dimmer control, which is extremely useful for sculpting the light on your subject's face. They are rated at a daylight colour temperature of 6000K and deliver 1200 lumens each from 24 watts without flicker. Branded 'Puluz' they cost around £44 from Amazon.

The long shot

Whilst I have concentrated here on how to greenscreen in a very confined space, as a means of showing what you can achieve, you do need a greater distance between your camera and green screen if you want to retain full control over the lighting of your subject or if you wish to do walk-on or full length body shots. In my second set-up I have the green screen on the wall about 3 metres in front of the camera (currently illuminated by only one 50 watt floodlight but two 30 watt lights would be better).

In this set-up the lighting is still set high up near the ceiling on a pole (pipe) between the roof timbers. It is about 1.3 metres away from the screen and angled sharply down. I have attached a flat, black shade (flag) to the bottom of the light to prevent light spillage onto the subject, who can be positioned immediately below the light without being affected by spill light, so I have complete control of the subject lighting.

This gives me about 1.2m between this position and the desk. It does not sound much but with the wide angle lens needed in these situations it does provide sufficient space for two or three people to be in shot without feeling too constrained.
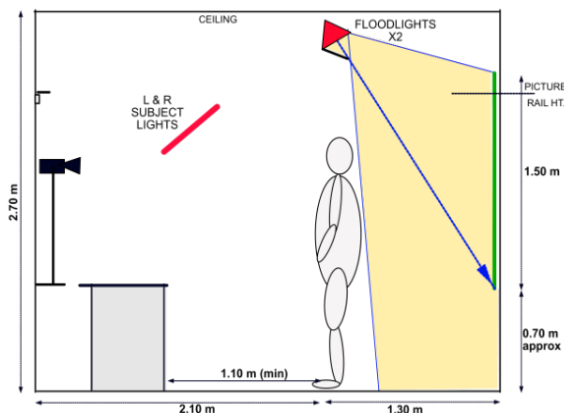
Live v Post Production Keying

It is much easier to get a good and realistic key if you can do this live with hardware such as a BlackMagic Mini video switcher, or in live-view software like OBS, but you can do it afterwards in the edit. There are pros and cons for each. The main disadvantage of simply filming someone against a green screen and then adding the background in the edit is that you do not really know whether you have a good key against the green colour which will work well with the colour and brightness of your background picture until you start to edit - and at that stage it is too late if it does not key well. In theory it should not make any difference but in practice it does because we are not operating in a perfect world. Let me explain.

Removing the green background is particularly important at the edges of the subject. If the edges are solid and well defined, such as the outline of arms or shoulders, then you just concentrate on getting rid of the background green without noticeably erasing the subject edges. Then remove any green fringing (spill) on the subject. It's a different story when it comes to keying more delicate things like wispy hair or fine light-coloured whiskers (I know all about whiskers!). Use a higher shutter speed to get a cleaner key and avoid motion blur.

Generally it is easier to key if you are going to substitute a dark background. That is because black contains the full colour information, so wispy white whiskers will show up in fine detail against a keyed-in black background. Try doing that against a white

keyed-in background. It is much harder, and sometimes impossible, to get a really good key of fine detail against a bright white ground. That is because white is white - there is nothing else is there to grade against. White produces a very harsh and unnatural contrast.

The edges can't grade off imperceptibly, as they can against black or a dark colour. The result is that you lose the fine detail in order to get the background to key out or you keep the detail and see a fringing or 'blocking' in between fine details such as wispy hair. So if you can view your subject live against the keyed-in background you can see how well the key is working for the combination of your subject and the background. If it is not working well you can adjust the relative brightness of the background and subject.

This is best done with your actual subject lighting, which is why it is better to light your subject separately - or at least have supplementary lighting on the subject.

A good test is to key-in a white background temporarily. You will then be able to see more easily the keyed edges of your subject and also whether there are any dark areas or speckles on the green screen area where the green screen is in shadow from your subject or is not lit evenly or sufficiently. Against a black background or a dark background picture you will not notice these imperfections. They can show up as 'noise' or agitation against some brighter areas of your background picture, spoiling the illusion of reality. Even with this cheap-and-cheerful set-up we do not want that! Always do your final key adjustments with the actual background picture you will use.

I have already mentioned that you can use generated masks to fill in the edges of your shot beyond the area of your physical green screen. Most chroma key hardware/software combinations, such as BlackMagic's ATEM Minis, will do that easily but you can also do it in the edit. Post production or software chromakeying also allows you to shrink your subject to fit the context and relative size of objects in your background - again, you can use simple rectangular masks to fill in the space around the shrunken shot so that the background scene will key-in over the whole frame.

Use green covered furniture or boxes to provide physical support to your subject or other real objects in the set and line these up with the objects in your background picture - like the edge of the desk in this keyed-in studio background.

The other advantage of adding your chromakey background picture in the edit is that you can experiment with different backgrounds, which you cannot do live (or if you have recorded live output). You could key in and record an electronic green over your physical green screen - so when you try different backgrounds in the edit you will have a perfectly uniform green background with no blemishes to worry about. However, you do need to take care to scrutinise the edges of your key carefully before you record since once you have recorded the electronically generated green background you cannot go back to adjust it.

Creating the illusion
It does not matter how well you do the technical keying-in of your background the composition will still look artificial unless the subject (presenter/actor) is matched to it in terms of colour, brightness and lighting. It is

generally easier to match indoor backgrounds because we are normally filming the subject against an indoor green screen. Also, indoor lighting can vary from point to point in a room and we are conditioned to accept a little variation if the overall colour balance is right. But with an outdoor background the presenter must be carefully lit and colour-graded to match the background daylight.

You need to identify the height and direction of the light in the background shot and place your key light to create highlights and shadows to match. This is important for both indoor and outdoor scenes to make things look realistic. The other thing that can make a chromakeyed shot look unnatural is the camera position. You need to shoot your subject from the same height as the camera used for the background shot in most cases.

This is particularly important for indoor backgrounds. If your background is shot from standing eye level and your presenter is shot from sitting eye level they will appear to be above the objects and furniture in the background.

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To create truly convincing real-life scenes you should shoot your subject with the same focal length used to photograph or film the background - or at least the focal length should be similar if you intend to capture the illusion of the actor in a real location, particularly for drama shoots.

Also, you cannot cut to a different camera angle unless you have keyed-in a plain background - otherwise you would have to change the background picture to reflect the camera angle in the keyed scene - and you can't convincingly do a live zoom on your subject because the background is static and
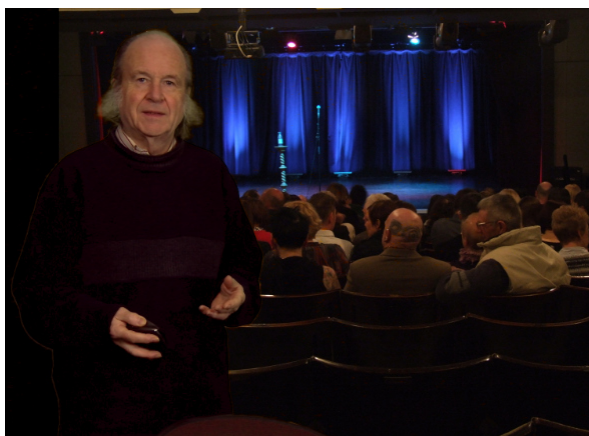
Match the intensity of light on your subject with the the location background.

will not reflect the change in perspective, so your subject may appear to fly in space! Reflections and hot-spots on your subject can be a particular problem when filming people indoors - particularly presenters who wear glasses, since these can reflect lights and computer screens. If a computer screen is showing or reflecting the green screen on to someone's spectacles the green reflection will be keyed out and the background will show through. Subject lighting and computer monitors should be placed to the side so that they are not reflected on spectacles.

Someone with a bald head is also difficult to light because overhead lights will reflect off their head, particularly if placed directly above. I know, I have one! The solution is to place the lights to the side with the presenter mid-way between - and don't point lights directly at the top of the subject's head. Placing subject lighting in a lower position also helps to avoid head hot-spot burnouts.

Sound
To add the final touch of realism to a simulated live location shot you need to add some ambient sound. Placing an actor in front of a a background showing a garden, mountain or street will immediately be perceived as artificial if there is no convincing ambient sound to complement the shot, no matter how convincing your visual chroma key is.

Opportunities
The ability to offer greenscreen as part of your business could well win you additional work. Not everyone who needs to appear on screen has a nice office or quiet work environment so if you have a semi-permanent green screen set-up you can invite people there. Or you could have a portable and well tested set-up. That will, of course, require more kit - light stands, screen supports etc. so will require a bigger outlay.

You may also find opportunities to offer greenscreening for parties and schools - a pedal car with a video of a road shot from the back of a car keyed in the background usually goes down well with children.

Rounding up
Videography has always been about skills. Specialising in one area of work can be lucrative when there is high demand for that skill - but if the market changes unexpectedly you can be left high and dry unless you can offer other services. That's where honing the craft of chromakeying can generate another income stream. The basic greenscreen set-up I have suggested, with two floodlights, only costs around £100 and it could generate more business, so why not give it a try?

Chris North M.M.Inst.V.

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VFX for Video Producers

by Tony Manning

& MAGIC BULLET 14

Most editors/videographers operating small businesses are not VFX specialists and don't need to be. They do like to sprinkle some magic dust on their productions, and this will mostly fall on titles, Title Sequences and Colour Control – sometimes for a particular look, a look that sets a mood, sometimes to attain consistency across sequences, and less often (one hopes) to rescue otherwise unusable clips.

Working to modest budgets most independent producers are satisfied with the toolsets in their editing platform, Avid, Final Cut Pro, Premiere, and Vegas being popular and sophisticated. Those who want dedicated features will possibly respond to the offer of free **Resolve 17** software by BMD.

The company's hope is that once they are competent using the software they will upgrade to the Studio version (£225) and perhaps invest in one of their outboard panels working the wheels to speed up your work. The Micro costs £755 and its big brother the Mini comes in at £2265.

Another serious contender in the world of colour is **Magic Bullet 14** especially since it now sports major upgrades and is at last compatible with Final Cut Pro as well as with **Tangent** control units (Element, Ripple, Wave). Also new to the party,

OpenGL and OpenCL support, allows impressive speed gains.

A few key points before we dive into the detail. Magic Bullet is a mature guy on the block, around and developing since 2007.

It's highly sophisticated and precise, giving infinite control of anything in the frame, but you don't have to be an expert colorist to tangle with it. It's also a substantial investment at $1000 for a perpetual licence, and from the look of it you would have to shell out again for further updates if you can't resist them.

This will be a very brief tour of the features of MB14, but I will include links that will allow you to learn in depth what's on offer and how to use the tools.

To the majority of editors, Magic Bullet is the number one plug-in for cinematic looks and colour correction. Reviews mostly range from highly positive to OTT. A few retain an independent voice. Steve Hullfish, for one. "…*my favorite things about Magic Bullet are that there are a ton of cool, prebuilt presets that are easily and intuitively customizable and the interface is beautiful.*"

He then goes into detail about what's wrong with MB14 before concluding, *This is clearly a tool for someone that doesn't have color correction knowledge or experience who wants to make their video look cool. In that, it succeeds. In making Steve Hullfish happy, it fails – except the UI is beautiful.*

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Steve is an expert colorist and clearly thinks the starting point ought to be understanding colour science. If you're inclined to agree **here**'s a good place to start.

MB14 is set of seven tools:
Looks - the one most know of, and comprehensively updated
Denoiser III
Colorista V
Cosmo II (talent dewrinkler!)
Mojo II (the instant grader)
*Film (for emulating film looks)*
Renoiser (for true-to-life grain)

What's new in Looks 5
☐ 300 customizable Presets with a keyword search facility
☐ over 40 Powerful Tools to customize or build your own new Looks
☐ Huenity* – you didn't expect that, did you?
☐ Color Remap
☐ Channel Mixer
☐ LUT Browser
☐ Color Handling
☐ Tangent Support

A typical interface with the toolchain in place at the bottom of the screen.

*A tool to unify hues! Useful for skin tones,
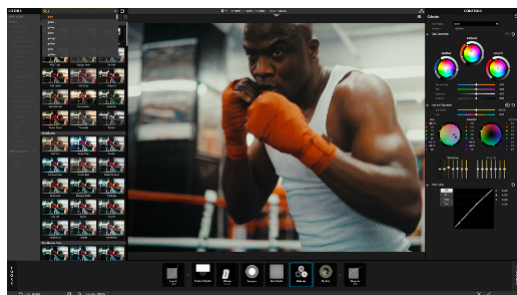
MB 14 provides a veritable arsenal of tools to use in your work. If possible do as Larry Jordan recommends (p.30) and play with it. Learn some of the theory of colour as a basis for what you do. As in most art forms exercise restraint - not too much - unless your project really calls for the cyberpunk look!

Editors and colorists are often faced with treating other people's footage. They are unable to go back in time and alter the circumstances in which the footage was created. In a small business often the camera op and the editor/colorist are one and the same. So some problems can be solved live rather than later. The basic skills involved are:

Art direction - dressing the scene so it looks great in the frame, maybe nothing more than moving an object out of shot - especially if it's your own tripod!
Lighting, including white balance. Get it right in the shot and you won't be chasing shadows as it were later.
Wardrobe. I saw one tutorial where a great deal of effort went into matching the t-shirts of the two guys in the shot. Again maybe this could have been fixed in real time in the shoot.

Useful resources.
Follow 43 practical tutorials here
Denoiser Quick Start Guide
Steve Hullfish critique in full
Stu Maschwitz on MB Looks 5 c. 38 worthwhile minutes!

Note : US spellings used for consistency

Reviewed by Tony Manning M.M.Inst.V.

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It's Showtime - Virtually!

Like most aspects of civilisation trade shows all over the world have had to be cancelled or postponed. Since large-scale media shows take a great deal of time to plan it is no surprise that they rely heavily on as much certainty as possible as a basis for such planning.

Remember this? People milling round at a show (BVE)!

production world! Given the city's proximity to the UK and its many attractions I can imagine a number of people who might like to combine visiting the show with a short city break.

We have been busy planning for re-opening the RAI Amsterdam for the 52nd edition of the show and for what's going to be an unmissable event."

The dates are 10 -13 September 2021 **with a fall-back of December 3rd-6th**. From experience IBC is more of a small, very high-tec, town, than a show! If you do visit, make a battle plan with plenty of R&R or you'll be exhausted!

Media Production & Technology Show,
This was planned for May 2021 and with an impressive roster of presenters and exhibitors found it had no choice but to put the event off for a whole year.

BSC Expo will now not happen in 2021. That's British Society of Cinematographers.

KitPlus had hoped to be in Salford in April but we await news of their future plans.

The Photography Show was scheduled to run once again in Birmingham in March but became a virtual event taking place on 6 & 7 March 2021.

IBC - Just possibly, by the time we reach September this year the risk of infection will be low enough to permit economies to be fully open and for international travel to resume - so maybe **IBC** in Amsterdam will be the hot venue for all of us in the visual

Photokina in Cologne is another large scale event and probably worth a (virtual) visit.

The Visual Storytelling Conference was organised by Future Media Conferences for May 14th -17th 2021. This is a multi-day, multi-track, hybrid training conference featuring immersive, engaging content with experienced photographers and content creators.

NAB itself (NY, Washington, Vegas, in October) might be a bit of a push for most of us, but again there is an increased awareness of the need to engage internationally via digital means given the unpredictability of travel and attendance in person.

Tony Manning M.M.Inst.V.

Click on blue text to activate external web links

Focus
5-Minute Tip
Image is everything
Present yourself well

The idea for this short article came from an episode of IOV's Focus TV in which Gavin Gration spoke about the need to improve our presentation to clients using Zoom or similar platforms: "It's one thing speaking casually to family members, but quite another engaging with potential clients."

Glenn Kirschner set up and ready to go

Nor was this consideration an add-on during times of lockdown, since it is likely that this will be part of how the world works from now on. Some familiar ways of doing things will diminish or disappear – sending letters, with DVDs containing samples of our work, travelling for speculative in-person meetings.

In-person meetings and on-site or venue-based filming will still happen, but much of the business of getting business will be online, and multimedia, in the sense that as well as conversation, video content and slides can be shown to assist in the process.

The process, lest we forget, is about winning a customer. To do that we must impress. To impress, we must take a step back and think about how a potential customer will judge us. Because judge us they will! Since we are in the Visual Arts, how we look and sound and generally come across will be crucial.

TEN TIPS
TO PRESENT YOURSELF WELL

1. Use a proper camera. Or a good **smartphone**! A cheap webcam for this purpose won't do. Troubleshoot any connection issues (too many hungry processes open, other programs trying to access your camera, etc.)

2. Set the camera up properly so that you can engage directly with your client/s. Not off to the side or looking up your own nose. Check the framing. How do you look? Is your choice of clothes suitable for your audience? Check for **moiré patterns**. See what else is in the picture. (More on that below).

3. Set up your lighting with care. Check it, tweak it, check and tweak again, in good time.

4. Think about the image you want to portray. This will affect what background you choose to show. You don't want clutter. You don't want "domestic." The background should support your image as a video producer. Avoid distracting items, including things you enjoy in your private time that are nothing to do with your business.

Eliminate other distractions as far as possible, TV, phones, children, animals etc. (Don't actually eliminate your kids!)

5. Pay particular attention to your sound, both level and quality. Use a dedicated mic and (probably) a good audio interface. See Photo Shelter Photography Blog.

6. Get comfortable with your chosen platform and host the meeting yourself. Have a Plan B in case it falls over!

7. Think about how much time to allocate to the meeting, not too short, and certainly not too long.

8. Prepare and test any materials you plan to show.

9. Think about closing – it's a selling process. Get to some action points, including some means of confirming agreements.

10. Nobody gets good at this without practice! Link up with someone and get the training in. This will include the social skills of making introductions and putting people at ease before moving to the business agenda.

Tony Manning M.M.Inst.V.

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Automatic Transcription Tools

Automatic transcription from voice can be a real godsend to producers who undertake a lot of work involving talking heads or interviews. If, on top of that, there is a translation requirement, finding a reliable and affordable solution becomes critical. Trying to do this work fully manually or hiring specialist translators would push the budget, and your already frayed nerves, right through the roof. Fortunately there are solutions available.

Trint

Trint offers a familiar range of levels of subscription (Starter, Advanced, Pro, Pro Team, Enterprise) with the cheapest plan starting at £40 per month (charged annually). There's a 14-day trial period and if you cancel within that time your card is not charged. The service can also be paid for by the hour.

Trint offers the following:

• AI automated transcription of audio and video files.

• These files are converted into searchable, editable interactive transcripts.

• The vocabulary builder tool allows the user to upload custom (perhaps technical or uncommon words or phrases).

• Users can upload recorded audio and then instantly create a transcript in more than two dozen languages - from Chinese Mandarin and Hindi to Japanese and Spanish.

• Trint's Editor, integrates with tools like Adobe Premiere to power onward workflow.

Simon Says

The offer from SimonSays is to "transcribe, caption, translate, and subtitle in 100 languages." $15 buys you 24 hours of credit per year.

Production pros are enticed with the following additional benefits.

• Enhanced Video Assembly Editor.

• Custom dictionaries for increased accuracy.

• The ability to import files up to 20GB.

• Access to the latest AI speech models and features.

Export is available in all plans to Word and Excel, and (for folks like us) to Final Cut Pro X, Adobe Premiere Pro & Audition, Avid Media Composer & Pro Tools, and Blackmagic DaVinci Resolve.
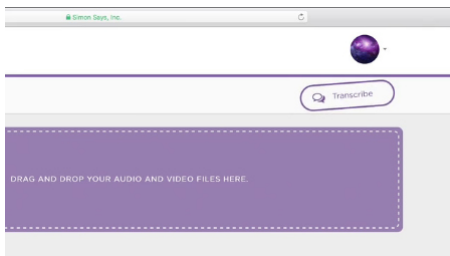
All plans also include translation; "Transcribe first in the original language. THEN translate into the desired language(s)." Shamir from. Simon Says has numerous tutorial videos to help new users get familiar with the program.

Here's a more detailed review in the Final Cut environment.

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Sonix

Sonix offers a similar range of services:

• Its in-browser editor allows you to search, play, edit, organize, and share your transcripts.

• The advanced automated translation engine increases your global reach with over 30 languages.

• Allows you to convert your files to subtitles in seconds and customize with the most advanced tools on the market.

• Share video clips in seconds or publish full transcripts with subtitles using the Sonix media player.

• Comprehensive multi user permissions allow you to grant collaborators access to upload, comment, edit and restrict access to files or folders.

• Search for words, phrases, and themes across all your transcripts. Stay organized with multi folder nesting.

• From web conferencing systems like Zoom to video editing platforms like Adobe Premiere, easily connect to the tools your teams use.

• Sonix is committed to the security of your data and provides multiple layers of protection.

Processing is Cloud-based, nevertheless completing a 10-minute recording usually takes under 2 minutes, but it might vary.
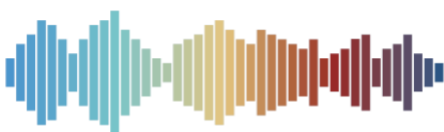
Blazingly fast and amazingly accurate

Other Sonix Reviews

Reviewed elsewhere, Sonix was considered "highly dependent on the quality of the recording and many other factors that can't easily be controlled." It relies heavily on "proper grammar," correcting things so that it no longer accurately records what was actually said…"When processing our classic historical speech recordings, it had real difficulty with some speakers even if they sounded clear to us."

Sonix offers a free trial including 30 minutes of free transcription. Complete access, and no credit card required.

Costs: Standard Pay as You Go is $10 per hour; Premium is $5 per hour plus $22 per user per month.

Descript

Descript's free option offer is for screen recording and limited editing.

• Record/edit/mix one project
• 20 screen recordings (720p max)
• 3hrs of transcription (one-time)

For $12 per month ("Creator") you also get:
• Unlimited projects
• Unlimited screen recordings
• 10hrs of transcription / month
• Timeline export
• Export using original assets
• Watermark-free video export.

The Pro package ($24pm) adds
• Overdub
• Filler Words Pro
• Audiograms Pro
• Publish Pro
• Batch file export
• 30hrs of transcription / month

See this **Tutorial** to get you started.

Click on blue text to activate external web links

happyscribe

Happy Scribe

Happy Scribe's strapline is "State of the art A.I. working side by side with the best professional transcriptionists."

The AI service is rated at 85% accurate (there would be many variables affecting this figure!) with a 5-minute turnaround (or 50% of audio length, and charged at 20p per minute while native transcribers rate 99% accuracy but at more than seven times the cost and with a 24-hour turnaround.
54 languages are currently offered.
Sub-titles are also part of the package.

• Upload files of any size and length.
• Multiple Export Formats
•By providing the starting timestamp, you can decide when the transcription starts.
• Seamlessly integrate with your favourite applications: Zapier, YouTube, and more.
• Create workspaces for collaboration
• Files are protected and remain private.
• PAYG pricing only, with a free trial.

Wrapping up
This has been a brief tour of some of the main offerings in the emerging world of AI transcription services. It's likely to be one of those things you didn't know you needed - just like streaming used to be!

As Catherine Pope points out, "One of last year's many disruptions was in the way we consume content. There was a huge boom in audio, as people embraced podcasts, audio books, and snippets through devices like Alexa. This is an important development for business owners. By creating audio content consistently, you can build authority and trust with your audience."

As with any technology in post it's important to remember the GIGO principle - Garbage In - Garbage Out! Where you have control of the recording environment, listen for those elements that will become problematic later. These can be in the recording environment itself, such as hum and interference, or noise intruding from elsewhere.

There can be issues in the script - sentences that are too long, sequences of words that look good but are impossible to say, or talent with heavy accents or a tendency to mumble. Redundant phrases (kind of, sort of, you know, if you know what I mean, etc) and gaps that are too long (your audience thinks you've finished) have to be flagged for removal in the transcription process.

Setting things up properly - using the appropriate quality mic, properly positioned, using a pop-shield for those plosives, creating a quiet environment, and briefing talent in a calm and encouraging way - all of these measures during production will save time and money later.

Click on blue text to activate external web links

Tony Manning M.M.Inst.V.

Digital Housekeeping

Work is certainly harder to come by during lockdown, but that doesn't mean there's nothing to do. In fact now is an ideal time to take care of some basic jobs you always meant to do!

Focus your attention on digital housekeeping. Update your website and social media. Tidy up and update any incorrect or out of date information. Add new content to all platforms where you have an online presence. Google My Business will reward you with more views if you update your profile with mages and short articles. Look at Google Search Console. Verify your website(s) and once done check for errors and speed issues. Broken links, duplicate content, slow load times and other easily fixable issues can seriously damage your chances of being found in search. The free tools Google provides can help you to find problems and fix them.

Do you have an appropriate privacy policy? Is your data protection information compliant? The former definitely makes a difference in SEO. The latter keeps you from risking a penalty.

Local search is vital for many small businesses to be found online. Look at every single opportunity to get local links and content published. Study the top search results on Google for your niche. Are you at the top of page one? If not, look at the top few organic results and see what it is they're doing better than you. Google remains the lead search engine. Bing is way behind but still relevant, so check your results there and make sure your Microsoft Bing Places for Business profile is fully populated and up to date. Some devices default to Bing and many users don't know how to change to Google.

Take the time to proof-read your website content. Tweak anything that is wrong or just doesn't sit well with you. The next day read it all again with a fresh set of eyes. You may be surprised at what you find.

Look at everything on your website and social media platforms from a client's perspective. Is the language appropriate for the target customer? Is it easy for them to find your contact details on both desktop and mobile?

Have you responded to enquiries and comments promptly? Customers often ask questions in unusual places such as YouTube comments. If you haven't checked the comments then you could be missing out on work. Not least because unanswered comments and questions on public platforms can be seen by others and may put people off.

Auditing and fixing your entire online presence will cost you nothing other than a bit of time. You'll be assured that your content is up to date, relevant, and fresh. It won't catapult you to the top of page one in search but it will remove barriers that could be holding your site back.

Gavin Gration, MM Inst.V
Consultant, Video & CCTV
www.manchestervideo.com

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Stepping Out

Avenues for finding new production work.

After 15 months or so of in-out-shake-it-all-about Covid restrictions we are now moving tremulously towards a re-opened economy. Maybe. Will our old clients return? If not, where will we find new prospects?

The production and events sectors have suffered a particularly hard time over this period. The fortunate ones are there to fight again and are beginning to fill their diaries with postponed projects. Some former customers may not have survived at all or now have to be extremely cautious about their budgets. For many it will be as John Lennon phrased it "just like starting over" - but not in a good way!

So now might be a good time to consider some options for finding new work, and as part of this of developing our professional skills so that we are able to exploit opportunities. After all ours is an environment in which technological change tends to be rapid.

For example, even a year ago the ability to live-stream might have been an optional extra, but now it is, perhaps, an essential.

Marketing Me
Two of the most important elements of Marketing Me are your website and your showreel/s. These are big topics in their own right and are best covered separately.

Let's start than with the individual producer or business partnership. If you were to write, or rewrite, your professional resumé, what would you include? The resumé could form the basis for a script for a piece to camera, given the business we're in.

What would you emphasise? Experience? Craft skills? Personality (e.g. your ability to work collaboratively in a team)?

Perhaps you would offer to do everything from first contact to final delivery.

Or Maybe you would market one or more specialities e.g. to find work as a sound specialist, editor, drone operator or Steadicam op.

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Zero cost networking

Work via personal recommendation is probably the most desirable avenue. This is often achieved through impressing a former client not only with the quality of your work but also with your personal qualities in setting up the work as well as on the day of the shoot itself. Part of the latter is an attitude of mind. The article about the Weddings Taskforce reminds wedding video and events

specialists that we are part of a wider team of professionals doing our part in making a marvellous day for our clients. Being friendly, helpful, and collaborative is far better than being solely focused on one's own work.
I have certainly worked with camera ops who regard the stills photographer essentially as someone who gets in their way! (OK sometimes there are valid reasons!)

Being on set, seen performing your work, can bring enquiries. This is one of the main ways that builders get their work after all. People see them working and stop to enquire, or take down their number from their sign-painted van or from the A-board strategically placed at the front of the property they are working on. Just one ethical note - don't trawl for work if you have been hired-in - it's not your gig!

Talking to strangers at a training workshop, trade show seminar, business card in hand, will occasionally pay off. Even if it doesn't bring new work you might find someone you

can work with in the future, maybe someone with a particular skill-set you currently lack. Actually _being_ the presenter or the authority that writes the article, blog, or review gives you the status to attract interest too.

Well-known names who have mined this seam are Den Lennie, Alister Chapman, and Philip Bloom.

Incidentally, times of lockdown or limited paying work can be viewed as an opportunity to learn new skills or refine old ones. Even accepting that the expanse of available time and the motivational energy to do stuff are, it seems, often inversely correlated, for some this can get the juices flowing!

Low-cost formal networking

Local business networks e.g. **BNI**: Changing the Way the World Does Business® Not everyone's cup of tea but works for some. They're big on breakfast meetings.

IOV Exec Member David Hunter comments:

I joined my local Chamber shortly after starting my own business. At the time I wasn't sure if the cost of membership would be worth it. 10 years later and I'm still a member and I joined the board about 6 years ago.

Together with joining the IOV this proved to be a very wise investment. I have recouped the cost of membership many times over and, perhaps more importantly, I've helped to contribute to the success of other small businesses and the local economy.

The pandemic has been an excellent example of the positive impact being part of the Chamber has had. Many of the support measures that have been put in place have been shaped by our input.

If you're not already a member and are looking to expand your business I'd highly recommend checking out your local chamber.

Find your local Chamber of Commerce here **: britishchambers.org.uk**

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Showcasing and Social Media

Where social media used to be an optional extra now it's at the centre of many promotional efforts.

Making and developing your own channel takes regular work to create and maintain a presence , or budget permitting you can hire someone to manage all of this for you while you supply the creative content. There are several options :

Vimeo
A Pro Plan for Vimeo "the home for high quality video" will cost you £16 per month billed annually. You can even set up your own subscription service.

YouTube
Creators are attracted to the channel "to earn money directly on our platform in a variety of different ways, including through placed advertising, merchandise sales, and subscriptions."

Facebook
Facebook is an increasingly important avenue for promoting and expanding your business.

It's worth bearing in mind that some entrepreneurs exist only on social media, producing their content in many cases without ever toting a camera out into the real world.

LinkedIn
A professional profile on LinkedIn is certainly worth considering.. Here are some of the steps you should consider.

There are directories aimed at listing businesses who want to get government contracts. However you can go direct!

WEVA
The Wedding & Event and Videographers Association International might be important for those who specialise in weddings and events, perhaps internationally.

Industry Forums

Mandy.com
You can create a free profile - to post a job, or to find one - here's an example

4rfv.co.uk is the premiere online directory and a main news service for the global broadcast, film and television industry.

The Knowledge helps you choose from over 20,000 UK and international production suppliers. It's frequently updated and free to use.

Specialist Sites and Publications
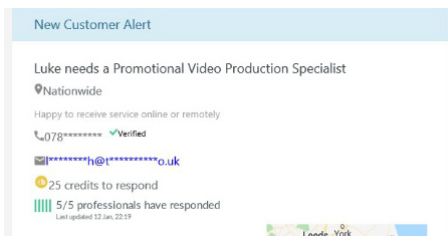(mostly digital these days)

Wedding Venues
Confetti.co.uk
Hitched

It makes sense to maximise any benefits of organisations you are a member of,e.g. By completing your profile for the IOV or **GTC**, or utilising the rate cards from **BECTU** for the work you do from

Paid Referral Sources

Bark
may first hear of Bark via an unsolicited approach informing you that someone is looking for a service of the kind you provide.

New Customer Alert

Luke needs a Promotional Video Production Specialist
Nationwide
Happy to receive service online or remotely
078******** ✓Verified
l********h@t**********o.uk
25 credits to respond
5/5 professionals have responded
Last updated 12 Jan, 22:19

Of course they're not offering the lead for nothing. If you are enticed, you you enter your details and the categories of leads you are seeking and buy a block of credits to receive the relevant leads. Now you have to sort the wheat from the time-wasting chaff to make it worthwhile!

Don't forget the maths either - i.e. the cost of leads in relation to conversion rate and income achieved from those conversions. Of course if your "prospects" become regular clients, the figures begin to look a whole lot better!

Bidvine
Bidvine "help thousands of people in the UK find professionals like you. We send you customers that are a match for you."

Meet Hugo
Headquartered in Peterborough UK Meet Hugo is a B2B platform, "Save time by getting qualified leads, tenders and intel every week using our cutting edge technology." Join for 3 months £499 plus VAT with some offers to new sign-ups.

Fiverr.com
Suppliers Fiverr.com used to quote very attractive pricing to get work - even the aforementioned fiver - then build a relationship with more realistic pricing. That seems to have changed, although with care you can still commission specialist work that you don't have time for, or lack the full skillset for. Maybe you will continue to work with that person remotely over many years.

Upwork
"Our service fees are taken as a percentage of your earnings. We charge you based on lifetime earnings with each client."
Example. David H from Bristol

SimplyHired
Type in your skills, the location where you want work, and off you go, e.g. "16 video editor jobs near Manchester."

PeopleperHour.com
"Find an Expert for Anything." You can sign up to get found as a freelancer, or to find people for your project. You can source an SEO specialist to improve your website ranking,a VO artiste, a scriptwriter, pretty much anything. They could be in Surbiton or Sri Lanka!

Freelancer.com
advises you to "Read the project and let the clients know you understand their brief. Tell them why you're the best person for this job."

Shows and Events

Small operators are increasingly hesitant about taking a stand at a Trade show. The big events (when they return) are expensive and a whole lot of hassle. You will have to prepare well to make it work and have some help to set up and manage the stand as well as to talk to potential customers - and to take it all down again etc, etc! Smaller local events are sometimes worthwhile to attract wedding video and photography work.

The National Wedding Show
Covid permitting this show plans to return on 18-19th September at Olympia.

The Photography and Video Show
This show was put on as a virtual event during lockdown, and hope to be back in the physical world at the NEC from 18th to 21st September

The Media and Production Show has been deferred to May 2022.

Conclusions
Let's hope our old clients return brimful with enthusiasm and money. If they don't, or if you decide to explore new ventures, I hope this article has helped you to find some ways of doing so. It will take some thought and research, and most likely investment. Some bets are safer than others!

It's very likely that I have missed out many useful avenues, so if you spot any particularly glaring omissions please let me know:
focus@iov.co.uk

Tony Manning M.M.Inst.V.

Horrible Videos

We've all seen them. Shaky shots, intrusive wind-noise (quite embarrassing during the wedding speeches), jerky zooms and pans for no obvious reason, and no story-line (not that anyone would still be around to discover this). Mostly we watch with a mixture of horror and schadenfreude and move on. But it occurred to me that maybe there's something to learn here.

Quite possibly we will need to train people in video skills. So we need to break down the elements involved and, like any good teacher or coach, be tolerant and encouraging. Certainly we will have to select people to work with, or to cover a shoot for us. So we will need somehow to evaluate their skillset and also what they're like as people. Skilled, experienced, good, but headstrong and unwilling to listen to instructions, mmm perhaps not!

Mindset

Nike's catchphrase is *Just Do It!* Presumably this is intended to capture the spontaneity of youth – active, unconstrained, free-spirited.

Web videos (millions of them) seem to work from this principle: you don't need to know what you're doing, to plan, rehearse, or even know your way around your gear.

Surely the motto should read Practise – and then Do It! Having Done It see what mistakes you have made and learn some more to do it better next time!

This aberrant Mindset is catching, especially when there's a trend to value quantity over quality, i.e. the more content you have up the better.

Rick Macci is a renowned American tennis coach rightly famed for his work with the Williams sisters, Andy Roddick, Maria Sharapova… you get the point. So he's a Big Name. So why does he allow so many poor videos of his work to circulate? Clearly, he hands a camera (or a smartphone) to an assistant with no experience, or gets the parent of the junior being coached to do the work.

Examples

Here's one example, and there are many. Rick Macci Speech on Life Lessons He had some important things to say. But what were they? It's not as if Mr. Macci doesn't know better. He does! Spot the difference

I don't really want to pick on Rick Macci. After all his knowledge and therefore potential content is completely worthwhile. That's what I find frustrating. It brings up an important point too, about how we can educate – or encourage – our clients to know that there are better ways!

Take another of my personal interests – guitar tuition. Plenty of competent tutors have lots to offer but their videos are so-so. It's not until you see the truly professional efforts of Edgar Davids or the now huge site Truefire that you remember what is possible, partly the technical - lighting, sound etc, - and largely the personal, how the person connects with his or her audience. They look so at ease, so natural – because they've worked hard to achieve that.

On the opposite page I've set out a table in order to examine typical problems (or should that be "excuses"?) in Horrible Videos. So much of this is about thinking and planning, although a range of production skills are in there too. The planning includes the confidence to explain to a client how best to approach a project, and occasionally the willingness to walk away!

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PROBLEM	SOLUTION
I'm busy with other stuff so I asked some guy to film it.	Your gig - you're responsible!
I/we didn't know what to expect.	Plan, consult, recce. Most things can be anticipated.
Weather conditions, e.g. it was windy. You can't fight nature!	Weather happens. In extreme situations you postpone. Otherwise you prepare.
We don't own a tripod.	Use a wall, lean on a tree, learn to shoot hand-held, buy or hire a tripod and practise setting it up and using it.
The sound doesn't matter that much does it?	It absolutely does, bad sound in its many varieties really puts people off! A speaker who is intended to be heard must be heard!
Camera movements give some energy to the video!	When carefully planned, and in the hands of an expert, that's true. Wobblecam just gives you a headache!
Traffic noise, aircraft, a fairground started up.	Local knowledge will assist e.g. choose a different time of day. Shoot away from the noise source.
If you can use a garden hose you can use a camera.	It's true that some people have a natural gift. Most don't. Everyone has to learn how to think visually and to know their kit well.
We only have one camera.	It's perfectly possible to shoot a good video with a single camera. You will have to plan, shoot similar scenes from differing vantage points, and shoot plenty of B-roll.
So who's going to see it?	Yes, an important question to consider before Record is pressed. If it's your family that's one thing, if it's an elite audience, or YouTube, that's another!
Never mind, we can fix it in the edit!	Sometimes, possibly, to some extent. At other times it's like to trying to uncook a burnt cake!
We don't want to spend the money.	You might wish you had!

Have you seen online videos that demonstrate truly high production values?
Or others that make you cringe? Why not write and tell us what you have learned from either the Good - or the Godawful?

Tony Manning M.M.Inst.V. © 2021

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OBJECTS OF DESIRE

Here's a quick rundown of some items of video-related kit that have caught our collective eye. Some sharp observers may note that some of these items were briefly reviewed in recent episodes of Focus TV. In terms of price-range and level of specialism there's everything from the practical and affordable to the well, aspirational!

Aputure Lightstorm

Light Storm LS 1s will output up to 10,000lux at a distance of 1m, almost matching the luminance of a traditional 1000W tungsten light.

Forged from aircraft-aluminium, the LS1s' fanless, heatsink design makes them ready for any film set.

CRI Guarantee

These 1536 diodes have been manufactured carefully to cast a naturally accurate light, with a CRI value of over 95.

No More Multi-Shadow

The LEDs on our LS 1 lights are arranged in a way that reduces the multiple shadow effect from straight rows of LEDs.

https://www.aputure.com/products/ls-1s/

Benro Polaris Tripod Head

As the world's first electric tripod head with camera interface controller, Polaris enables remote precision - whether you're adjusting the composition of a photo - or programming the geared head and camera to capture a series of photographs to create a high resolution motion timelapse. The head also supports WiFi or Cellular connection - preview, review, and download files quickly and from anywhere.

Fujifilm GFX 100s

As one of the first large format systems to have in-body stabilization, and providing filmmakers with a way to push the limits of wide format 4K/30p motion capture, GFX100 is not only reshaping how images are being made, but it is also redefining large format for the world's next generation of image makers.

Body 30% smaller and 500g lighter than the original Fujifilm GFX 100

Updated IBIS and shutter mechanisms
UK price c. £5500

https://fujifilm-x.com/en-gb/global-news/2021/0127_3929332/

https://www.dpreview.com/reviews/fujifilm-gfx-100s-initial-review

Sony FX-6

Cinema Line full-frame camera with Fast Hybrid & Real-time Eye AF, 4K (QFHD) high-frame-rate 120fps, 15+ stop dynamic

range and S-Cinetone™ colour science.
Pre-order £4,995 plus VAT (plus lens/es)
Sony.co.uk

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DaVinci Resolve 17

DaVinci Resolve 17 is a major new release with over 300 new features and improvements including HDR grading tools, redesigned primary colour controls, next generation Fairlight audio engine including Fairlight audio core and support for 2,000 real time audio tracks.

Adobe updates The latest version of **Adobe After Effects is version 18**. Improvements include:

Motion Graphics templates that have replaceable media; the Composition panel toolbar has been reorganized and displays options dynamically; more fluid and efficient Cloud-based collaboration.

Premiere's latest is **version 15** complete with all new Captions workflow.

Canon EOS C70

The **EOS C70** is a new generation RF Mount Cinema EOS System camera featuring Canon's 4K Super 35mm DGO sensor.
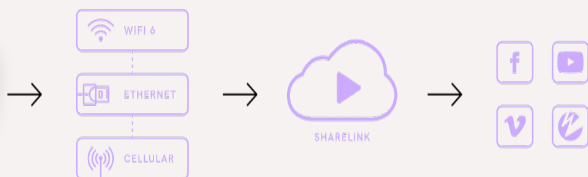

With 4K 120P Slow Motion, HDR and Dual Pixel CMOS AF in a compact body, it takes the RF System into a brand-new era.

Filmmakers can now benefit from accurate and reliable autofocus with subject tracking and face detection.

UK price c £4800 body only

Vidiu X

Go live anywhere — in 1080p and in a matter of seconds. With HDMI video connectivity, Vidiu X integrates seamlessly with cameras and switchers to deliver crisp live video to your viewers, all for a great price.

https://www.teradek.com/pages/vidiu-x

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SONY firmware update

Around two years old now, Sony's PXW-Z280 4K handheld camcorder remains a very reliable and well-featured 4K camera, popular with news teams and events videographers. Latest firmware updates bring the camera bang up to date. In late January 2021 Sony released version 4 firmware for the Z280 and Z190 adding the ability to stream directly to platforms such as YouTube or Facebook.

In addition HDR modes are adjusted to bring them into line with the latest cameras with HLG [Hybrid Log Gamma] Natural and HDR Live. Read this if you really want the lowdown!

For more information see TechRadar News

Blackmagic Ursa

Blackmagic's URSA Mini Pro 12K (above) is the company's flagship model, priced at a little over £8000 plus VAT (body only), and suitable for your next big budget release.

More realistically, its baby brother, the URSA Mini Pro 4.6K G2 (below) combining an incredible 4.6K image quality with the features and controls of a traditional broadcast camera, will set you back a mere £6,621.66 (ex VAT) (ProAV's basic bundle) with a Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8L II USM Standard Zoom Lens adding a further £1400 plus VAT.

Image source: www.provideocoalition.com

Avid

What's New in Avid Media Composer
The **020.12** update offers welcome features, including a new audio mixer, allowing you to mix dialogue, sounds, and music faster and more easily than ever before; H.264 decode and export, so you can work directly with HEVC at up to a 50% smaller file size, and; improvements to the ever-evolving (and always controversial) Titler+.

See Avid website for details

 Uppbeat is a pioneering, free music platform for YouTubers and content creators that guarantees no YouTube copyright issues or demonetization of content.

Uppbeat is the brainchild of Music Vine, a leading music licensing platform for professional filmmakers, based in Leeds. SFX "coming soon." https://uppbeat.io/

See **YouTube** Video here

New Pocket Cinema Camera

The newly announced **Blackmagic Pocket Cinema Camera 6K Pro** includes additional features such as built in 2, 4 and 6 stop ND filters, adjustable tilt HDR LCD with a bright 1500 nits that's ideal for use in bright

sunlight. It also includes two mini XLR audio inputs and a larger NP-F570 style battery.

Also featured are built in CFast and SD UHS-II card recorders, and a USB-C expansion port for recording direct to an external media disk. You can use regular SD cards for HD or higher performance UHS-II and CFast cards for native 4K or 6K when using Blackmagic RAW.

Imagine capturing over an hour of full resolution 6K images on a single 256GB SD UHS-II card! The ProRes and Blackmagic RAW files work with all video software. You can even mount the media cards on your computer and start editing directly from them using the included DaVinci Resolve Studio software!

Listed by **ProAV** at £1,879.00 (ex vat) You will want to add various items, including a Battery extender and hand grip and a decent lens.

Make It Look Like Film!

FilmConvert introduces **Nitrate** with a new set of features to give you even more power and control over your colour grading.

All plugins with Nitrate Upgrade $199
https://www.filmconvert.com/nitrate

Forza 300B

offers precision optics and state-of-the-art bi-colour LED technology to achieve a fully tuneable

(from 2700K to 6500K) even beam.
http://en.nanlite.com/products/detail-217
UK dealer: www.kenro.co.uk/products/lighting/

Lights – Camera - Cloud!
Frame.io encapsulates the modern video workflow (re)defined.

The days of handing over physical media and then waiting…. are over! This technology enables seamless handover from camera to cloud – C2C - an acronym that will become part of our language! 3 Oscar-nominated films used **Frame.io** to keep production moving. Find out more - it's a game-changer: **Frame.io**

Techniques *of* Visual Persuasion

Reviewed by Tony Manning M.M.Inst.V.
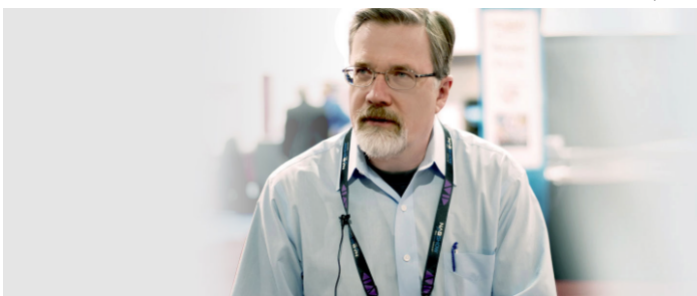
Who's Larry Jordan?

The Final Cut Pro guy. To a lesser extent the Premiere Pro Guy. A prolific writer with a regular series of webinars. An editor, a producer-director. Mostly (my opinion) an educator. Which brings us to this book, his tenth, and a long time in the making. The book brings together what the author considers to be key elements in the visual creative process from a lengthy career teaching a broad range of university students in California and elsewhere.

The Book and Its Audience

How best to describe this book? A compendium covering a vast range of the Visual Arts? A basic primer for students before they specialise in anything from marketing to photography from script writing to business? Yes, that fits the bill - it's best understood as a curriculum, and ideally for students running Apple's Final Cut Pro X.

It also doubles as a handy revision reference for existing creatives (a "refresher course") reminding them of key concepts they may have forgotten over the years.

So, is this book aimed at video pros? No, not really. Photographers? Not them either. It's more the Everyman guide to understanding Visual Media. Everyman is not a specialist, just someone who will at one time want to create or commission some work but has yet to consider how it will look, and what will go into making it look great.

For example, writing is just writing isn't it? Not really; how it will look when it reaches its audience will rely on layout, choices of typeface, use of images and illustrations, and a number of other factors. Oh, and the writing itself, taking into account style, brevity and an awareness of your audience. Larry's book is itself exemplary in this respect (as it should be!)

You can probably find a greater level of expertise and depth of information on any of the 16 subjects covered in the book elsewhere. The difference in Larry Jordan's book is that you will find it all in one place, even if some of the subjects are covered with a broad brush stroke.

If Everyman learns from Larry's book they will make better clients for the professionals, and probably better crew as well.

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One of the dilemmas for an author tackling such a broad subject area is, of course, what to leave out. More could be said about audio and at since we know that audio (and music) works with picture to persuade. Likewise lighting and its use to create a mood is covered only briefly. And yet there's 16 pages on the choice of type-faces. Again, Larry's call. The book can't cover everything, and after all runs to 387 pages!

The binding theme is, or is supposed to be, our use of the visual image, whether still or in motion, to persuade. This theme is strong at the beginning, but at times the book meanders and rather loses its way, going up side-roads about, for example, fairly basic Photoshop techniques.

Some of the end-of-chapter pieces, while interesting, also do not stay strongly connected with the theme. To me at least, chapters that take the reader on a quick tour of specific tools such as Final Cut Pro X and Apple Motion are unnecessary diversions and of little use to those without that particular technology. Yes, it might make sense in a fully-equipped university seminar room where students can follow along. Some of the tips (and Larry is always generous with tips!) are useful, including the admonition to experiment, to play with the programmes long before you are exposed to the serious business of making them pay.

The Ethics of Persuasion, Visual or otherwise.
It's true that Larry references the misuse of communication tools, especially in the past few years in the U.S. However, he quickly moves on, and that's his call of course. Personally I see the ethics of persuasion as a fundamental subject that ought to be addressed fully, especially in an era of Post Truth, alternative facts and fake news. Any of his students can be employed to play their part in promoting information that is

misleading or worse. To put it baldly any technology that can be used for harm will be. In a book that is as much about philosophy and human perception as technique it seems a strange omission.

The Look of the Book
Given the book's intentions it is important that its layout and design, and particularly its use of colour, is beyond reproach. In this the author succeeds. It is an attractive book
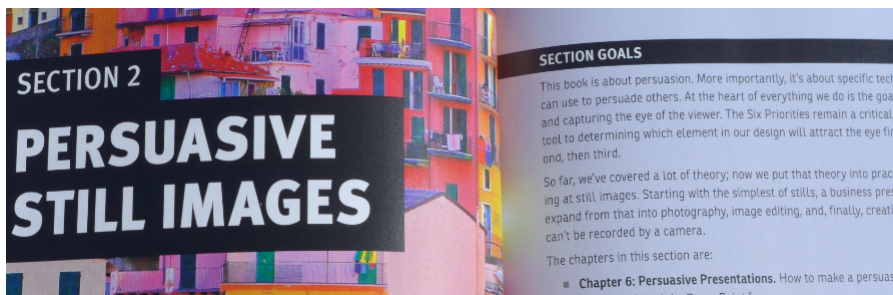
and easy to read. Each of the three sections has a full page colour image, with its title in white capitals against a black box background.

Every chapter opens with a full page in blue with a relevant quote in a large serif font (Palatino I think). The same blue is used for section headings as well as for key points beside the main text.

Pale green boxes contain simple concepts or author tips such as The Camera's Field of View (P31) and Plan Your Location (P149). There are also some light blue boxes with further advice. Mostly it's good, but sometimes a little too busy.

The Structure of the Book
There are 16 chapters covering three sections. Those sections are:

Persuasion Fundamentals – the Core Concepts

Persuasive Still Images – the process of creating effective still images

Persuasive Moving Images the skillsets (audio, video and motion graphics) to create compelling moving images.

Each section has its set of goals as does each individual chapter. The chapters close with a list of key points, a set task "PRACTICE PERSUASION" (is that a verb or a noun?) and an end-piece called PERSUASION P-O-V which is essentially an example from real-world experience. For example the piece by Joe Torina (pp19-21) hammers home the chapter point about the Call to Action.

All of this is classic presentation – Tell 'em what you're gonna tell 'em; tell 'em; tell 'em what you've told 'em! Some might find it rather teacherly, but that's a matter of taste I guess. Certainly as presentation material it's exceptionally well-organized and easy to digest.

My Overview
This is not a book for media professionals. It was never intended to be that sophisticated. But for many people, particularly those just starting out, it brings together a solid foundation to appreciate many of the elements involved in achieving a creative vision.

After the appreciation, if a real interest is sparked, such a person will want to try things out, to learn more. They might be keen to produce an impressive blog or vlog. Now they have some clear guidelines about

what they must do - and not do - to fulfil this task well - very well!

Because this is a book about excellence, about making (or commissioning) something that looks so good that your viewer wants more. As well as looking good, your message

gets across. Let's hope that message is an ethically sound one.

Does a video pro need this book?
Some will certainly value this book for its comprehensive overview of the world of the visual arts. For the most part the definitions and instructions are pitched at beginner level, such as Defining Basic Video Terms.

There are useful reminders around project planning, mapping out a simple workflow, while reminding the reader that the gremlins will always be there!

Larry provides his tips on interviewing, and he certainly has a great deal of experience. He sets out a structure while also emphasising the need to listen, to tolerate silence at times, and essentially to bring out a story that people will care about.

Experienced people may have their own preferences but Larry's advice remains sound.

Thorough as ever Larry also looks at that other chair - in a section called "Ten Simple Rules to be a Good Interview Guest." This includes avoiding the pitfalls of crass statements such as "We provide a one-stop shop…" which translates as "We do a whole lot of unrelated things not particularly well!"
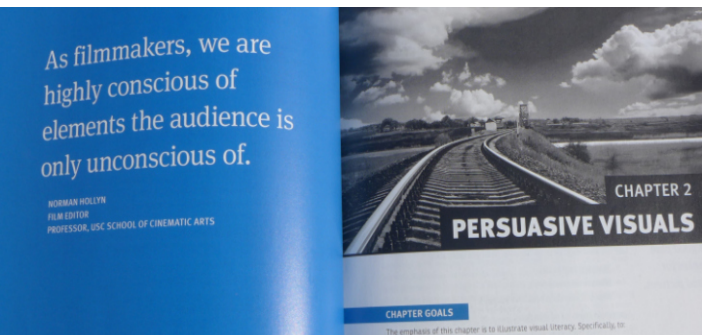
Would I buy Larry's Book?
Well, I did buy the book - with the intention of reviewing it. Now I have it, do I value it? Yes. It has its weaknesses, but maybe I'm not its main target audience.
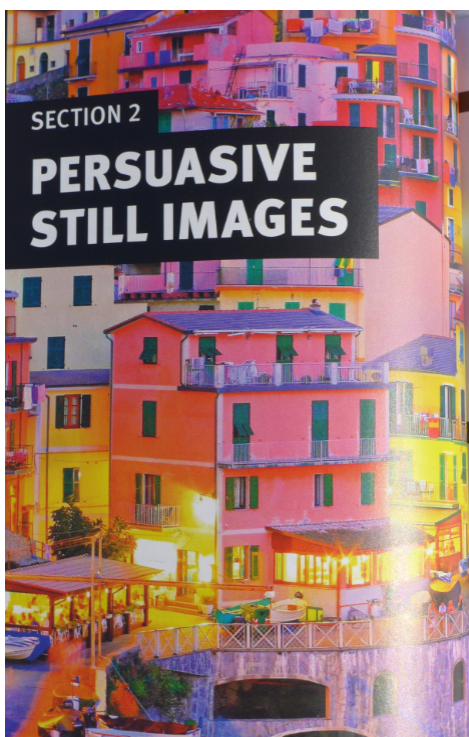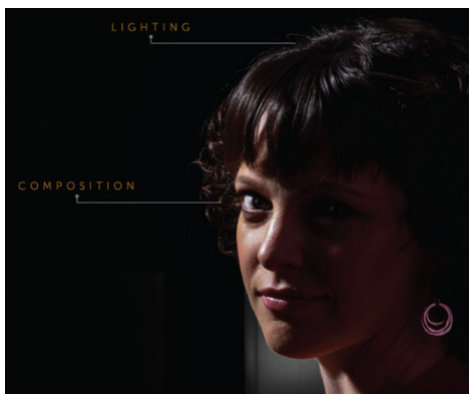
Beyond individual reading and learning I can imagine a whole vista of training opportunities that could develop from Larry's book. Pick any chapter - my book just opened at "Persuasive Writing."

Some might think, "I'm a camera op, why would I need to study Persuasive Writing?" Well, lots of reasons: a well-written and succinct pitch; a web page or blog that hits the mark (probably with a well-chosen image or two), etc. Also when you set yourself to write something, you learn something, even

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if it's only checking your facts, or those assumptions you thought were facts! Larry takes you through the basics, including spoting errorrs.

So there's a half-day course of real value to anyone who wants to put something out there in the digital world. If we do it Larry we'll speak to you first and sell some copies of your book/s!

If you're still thinking, and yet to be persuaded, here are some quotes from other reviews, Larry's book having been well received across a broad spectrum of media.

Whether you buy this book for yourself or someone looking to go into multimedia creation, "Techniques of Visual Persuasion" deserves to be on the shelf next to the great books of post, like Walter Murch's "In the Blink of an Eye" Brady Betzel

An unexpected, and welcome, inclusion is a chapter on Persuasive Presentations. Personal Presenting is a skill I continually strive to improve, so I devoured that chapter and will take a few new skills to my next presentation. Philip Hodgetts

Techniques of Visual Persuasion is a like a college film program condensed into under 400 informative pages. All of it written in a very engaging manner. I found that it's not only a good first read, but useful to have around for a quick reference, whether you are just entering the field or have been in the business for years. Oliver Peters

Pearson Education 2021; £22.99 (Amazon)
Buy it here: https://amzn.to/3pWKTIf
All images used are acknowledged as © Larry Jordan

REVIEWED BY *Tony Manning M.M.Inst.V*

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Worth a L👀K ...

Click Heading Below to view link

Time To Buy A New Camera – What To Do With The Old One?	"…time to put your business head on, rather than allowing any emotional attachment to a camera … to influence your decision making."
Sony Ambassadors	Sony plans to bring together some of the most talented current and future generation filmmakers. Passionate about how they create visual stories that resonate with their audiences, they share their perspectives with other professionals and amateurs alike.
Olympus Demounts	Olympus sold out - brand name to continue pro tem with JIP (Japan Industrial Partners) Olympus, once one of the world's biggest camera brands, is selling off that part of its business after 84 years. The firm said that despite its best efforts, the "extremely severe digital camera market" was no longer profitable.
Whatever happened to Local TV?	10 years ago Jeremy Hunt told us that TV channels for towns and cities around the UK would "transform lots of communities." Most new stations struggled, even before Covid, and truly local content is minimal.
Lockdown Film Challenge	NoFilmSchool.com set up a 60-second film contest during self isolation. *The Top 10 Horror Films From The 60 Second Film Festival* Plenty of others to choose from on YouTube!

NEXT TIME

Working to Camera: Improve Your Presentation Skills

WRITE FOR FOCUS

We welcome new and old - *(or should I say, former!)* contributors with something relevant to say about the world of video production.

In particular we emphasise practical knowledge and skills.

Stories from experience, including funny ones, are welcome.

Remember, when you write something you learn something!

You never know who you might reach!

Please call Tony on 07960 719520

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