

Jan 2020

# Australian Videocamera

## Special Compendium Issue

**50+**  
**PAGES**  
**AND**  
**FREE!**

- **Explained:** DOF, Aperture ISO / Motion Tracking / Audio Compression
- **Tutorial:** Titling / Shooting Motor Sport , Celestial Objects / Action Cam Audio
- **Scriptwriting:** Interview With Tony Jordan (**Life on Mars, Eastenders, Minder**)
- **Hints and Tips:** Shooting Using a Smartphone / Which Mic and When

... and much more!





# Australian Videocamera



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## EDITORIAL

### Welcome to a very special edition of Australian Videocamera!

*At Australian Videocamera we understand not all people are experts in the crafts of video and filmmaking. It's true our readership contains a large mix (we reach over 160,000 people \*) of experts in cinematography, lighting, audio, special effects, script writing etc but equally there are many, many "newbies", hobbyists, social media shooters for Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and Vimeo and of course, hundreds, if not thousands, of short film makers hoping for the Big Break who all subscribe.*

*Realising this, we put our collective heads together and thought how we could get information all in one spot that would have a broad appeal covering all these bases.*

*And so we came up with the Australian Videocamera Compendium, a collection of stories from over the years that illustrate, explain, teach and demonstrate specific examples from different areas of filmmaking.*

*From talking to scriptwriter / storyteller extraordinaire Tony Jordan (Hustle, Life on Mars, Ashes to Ashes, East-enders, Minder, , By Any Means) to tips from video astronomer Steve Massey, and ideas on shooting just like Top Gear and The Grand Tour (Clarkson, Hammond and May) to getting the best audio for your action cam footage and which mic to use and when, plus techniques such as Motion Tracking, Creating Titles, and discussing basics like Depth of Field, ISO and Aperture, we reckon there is something here for everyone.*

*We hope you enjoy this special free edition and in the 50 + pages you gain some useful knowledge and of course, also find it entertaining.*

*As always, if you have any suggestions, comments or criticisms, feel free to contact me via [david@auscamonline.com](mailto:david@auscamonline.com). And don't forget, we are also on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram! Just search for Australian Videocamera.*

### David Hague

**Publisher / Managing Editor**

\* from all our channels including, subscribers, social media and vendors



## Contact Us

**Phone:**  
+61 (0)456952227

**Email:**  
[david@auscamonline.com](mailto:david@auscamonline.com)

**Web:**  
[australian-videocamera.com](http://australian-videocamera.com)

**Facebook:**  
AustralianVideocamera

**Twitter:**  
@Auscamonline

**Instagram:**  
Australian Videocamera

### Regular Contributors

Dr David Smith  
Stephen Turner  
Denby Smith  
Graeme Hague  
Chris Oaten





On our recent trips to Exmouth and Ramada Eco Beach Resort near Broome, in conversation with fellow travellers, if we noticed one thing from them regarding cameras and camcorders etc, it was a thirst for knowledge.

*So here is a crash course (and some tutorials ...)*

**Aperture**

How wide the lens (or as someone called it, they “eye”) is open. The wider it is, the more light gets in. Oddly, the lower the number eg 5.6 or 2.8 say, the wider it is.

Shutter Speed: The amount of time the shutter is open letting light in. Think of an eye blinking if you like.

Of course, then, the lower the shutter speed (in seconds and down to fractions) the more light is getting in.

It stands to reason then, there is a balance between aperture settings and shutter speed, right? On most cameras today, you can cheat and just set the camera to automatic, and the brain of the camera will sort all that nonsense out for you.

So why did you spend good dollars then on a flash new camera when you could spend a fraction of the money and get the current version of the old “Instamatic”?

More on that later.

A lesser cheat is to choose an aperture setting (the big ‘A’ on the rotary dial on the top of the camera usually) and let the camera work out the

shutter speed. Alternatively, select ‘S’ (yep, for Shutter Speed), and the camera will work out the correct aperture. These are called ‘Priority’ settings by the way.

But here is the kicker. The camera can only work on the info it has and is certainly not infallible, so these are guides only. Many times, they will work, but not in all circumstances, so be aware of that.

Most commonly is another wobbly that gets thrown into the system, one known as “*depth of field*” or **DOF**.

In simple terms, the wider (lower number) the aperture, the lower the depth of field gets. This means that objects close to the lens are in focus and those further away are out of focus. Close down the aperture (make the aperture smaller, with a higher number) and the “*in sharp*” distance is larger. And this is another case of the balance needed between shutter

speed and aperture.

Is there a way to learn this? Why, yes, yes there is! I give you the unpatented David Hague Emu Bitter beer can method.

Setup an Emu Bitter beer stubby / can on a table in the open in daylight.

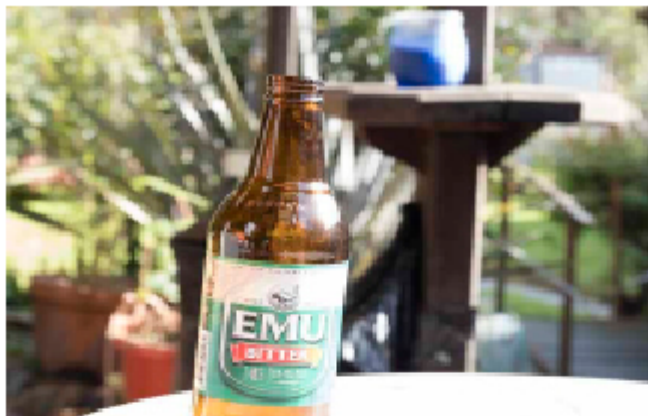
Option: *Open and drink first. Highly recommended.*

Place your camera, ideally on a tripod (when should you use a tripod? Whenever you have one) about 2 metres away. Set the ISO for 400 (more on this a little later, for now, just do it OK).

Open the aperture to its widest – probably *f*8 – and set the shutter speed to 1/60th (or 125th in very bright sunlight) and focus on the can. (Why the *f*? Each setting is called an *f*-stop. Yes, but WHY? Since you asked:







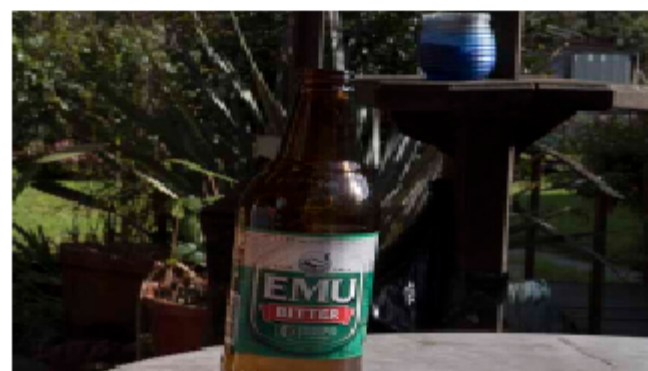
The  $f$ -number of an optical system (such as a camera lens) is the ratio of the system's focal length to the diameter of the entrance pupil. ... It is also known as the focal ratio,  $f$ -ratio - or  $f$ -stop.

Get a notepad and pencil.

Take a shot, note down the settings of aperture and shutter speed. Review the shot in your camera's pop out LCD (there is usually a 'Play' button marked as a right facing arrow head somewhere on the camera top or back. To exit playback, usually a half press of the shutter release will take you back to "take photo" mode.

Now, keeping the shutter speed where it is, change the aperture to the next highest, refocus and repeat Step 5.

Repeat Step 6 followed by Step 5, until you have reached minimum aperture (usually f22)



You will no doubt see that as the aperture decreases in size (a higher number remember), the image gets darker and darker to the point that eventually, you probably won't see anything but darkness. You'll also note that as you refocus, more and more of the background, not just the Emu Bitter beer can, comes into focus.

Now repeat steps 1-7 but start the shutter speed at 1/1000th and set the aperture to f16 and keep THAT constant. With each step, DECREASE the shutter speed to the next lowest through 1/500th, 1/250th, 1/125th, 1/60th and so on down to about 1/2 second. Don't forget to take notes for each shot describing the settings used and what you saw in the camera's LCD when put in playback mode for each shot.

This is the best way I have found to come to grips with the twins of aper-



ture and shutter speed and become used to them. Eventually, as you experiment in real life taking photos (or video as the same principles apply except you may find aperture called "iris") and take multiple shots with different settings of the same subject, rather than a one-off shot on automatic, it will become second nature to pick an average setting for say a sunrise or sunset and deviate from that average a little with a shutter speed or aperture change due to distance, bright light or some other factor. The same applies for shots over snow, in dull, overcast conditions, or with a water proof camera.

In other words, there is nothing in photography that is "average". And it is the use of these combinations that causes creativity in photography - along with camera angle, light placement, framing etc of course.

## ISO

Now before you are overwhelmed, let's just touch lightly on a term I mentioned earlier, ISO. In the "old days" of film cameras, this was also known more commonly as "ASA" and is a measure of the film's "speed". The higher the number of the ISO, the more sensitive it is to light.

In Step 2 above, I suggested ISO 400, and this is a good setting to use for every day type stuff. If the sunlight is especially bright, you might want to knock it down to 200.

But why not increase the shutter speed you ask? Simple, because then you might alter it too much for the  $f$

setting, or going the other way, and SLOWING the shutter speed, may cause a fast moving object - a flying bird, jumping, breaching whale - to be blurred.

The drawback of ISO is that with the higher film speed, while being able to work in lower and lower light, a factor called 'grain' is brought into the equation. And 'grain' is exactly what it sounds like; the image looks grainy. If you are mainly shooting every day stuff, I'd stick to ISO 400 and playing with aperture and shutter speeds along with focus to start with. You may want to up the ISO if say shooting at an outdoor night time BBQ, but as always, take a few test shots first with different settings to see what the results will be.

If you are after the ubiquitous night time star shot while parked in the middle of the Simpson desert, by all means have a play - after all that is





what it is all about. A high ISO and L-O-N-G shutter speed with an appropriate aperture can get some amazing photos (and video) any pro would be proud of.

## Summary

1. TRY and read the manual. It really is worth it in the long run.
2. Don't be intimidated by your camera or camcorder. You own IT not vice versa!

3. Don't be afraid to experiment, it's the best way to learn.
4. Take copious notes of the shot settings you have used (when you get more conversant and confident, you'll start shooting in a mode called RAW+JPG that will assist here as the settings are saved with the shot and you can view them later and even modify the shot in Adobe Photoshop or Corel

Paintshop Pro and other image editing applications).

5. At the end of each day, copy ALL the shots / videos from your camera's SD card to a removable hard disk for safe keeping. Create a folder for each day. Label MEANINGFULLY.
6. This means you can go through your shots at your leisure and discard the ones that didn't work, and keep this that did, while still keeping the camera free to take more photos / video.
7. Invest in a tripod or failing that a smaller Joby Gorilla Pod tripod.

(For more tips, see our Workshop section later in this edition.

Get onto me via [david@auscamonline.com](mailto:david@auscamonline.com)



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# Creating Titles

*Titling is an oft overlooked part of video making. We spent a lot of time on the imagery making sure the visuals are top notch, continuity is perfect, there are no glitches, and all looks fabulous.*

If you are good at your craft, you also understand the importance of audio and have spent time on this also so the audience doesn't get upset at out of synch speech, jarring changes in volume, background hums, pops, squeaks and off camera coughs and sneezes.

But when it comes to titling, so often it is an afterthought, with a credit roll added, or some text added underneath an image or clip or worse (and we have all seen an advert on TV like this), the editor has used every damn font in his video toolbox and just for the hell of it, every bloody effect as well.

Titles should be subtle in my mind, but convey to the audience exactly what the content is saying. That is not to suggest they should be boring and factual. Look at the artistry of ti-

tles in say James Bond movies, or some of the clever ones used in UK TV series' in particular.

Alien had a very simple title sequence, but boy, was it effective!

In my quick study of how to create effective titles, the following "rules" were repeated by so many people, I can also suspect they are accept as universally accepted as "the way to go". Of course, no-one says rules should not be broken (my personal favourite is Kubrick's blatant disregard for the Rule of Thirds apparently shooting the focus point of every scene with the subject smack dab in the centre of screen), but these are a good place to start from.

## 1. Don't oversize the font.

Convention seems to say that a font / type-face combination that is just large to read legibly by the majority of the population is good. Anything bigger is overkill.

## TECHNIQUE

### 2. Keep the font clean and simple

Fancy font can be too hard to read on screen. In same cases they can even appear to form a different word than that intended (we have a TV ad here that should say "Hollywood Touch" but the font used makes it look like "Hollywood Tough". Not the idea intended I am sure.

### 3. Minimise animated titles.

So very 70s. Think "On The Buses" and other UK comedies and their like. Cartoonish at best.

### 4. Guides are there for a reason.

Don't rely on your eye to line up sections of titles that appear after another has gone off screen. Use the guides your NLE gives you.

### 5. Study LOTS of title sequences.

Let's face it, it's not as if inspiration is hard to find! And you can start with any number of templates that are available from different sources. In some cases, your NLE may have come with a cut down version of something like NewBlue's Titler Pro 6 program with some built in templates to use as a starting point. Or if you are lucky enough to have access

## TECHNIQUE



*Like all good non-linear editors such as Adobe Premiere , Grass Valley EDIUS, Corel VideoStudio, Final Cut X and AVID, Vegas Pro has a built in titling system. But to get the maximum flexibility and creativity, incorporating a 3rd party titler such as NewBlue Titler Pro 6 or Bluff Titler adds a great deal.*



# Titles - Vegas Pro 16 Legacy Text

to Adobe After Effects, then the world is your oyster if you want to get your hands dirty at the most basic of levels and build something yourself..

## Basic Titling - Vegas Legacy Text

I am using Vegas Pro 16 for the NLE in this story, but the basics apply equally to all editors.

The clip is from a DJI OSMO Action Cam and short at Point D'Entrecasteaux on the south coast of Western Australia at a location called "The Window" due to the "hole" in the limestone looking down to the ocean.

I kept the title sequence purposely simple, firstly pointing to the location geographically, and then a basic title across the bottom of the video window.

This was done using only the tools available in Vegas Pro.

In order, the steps to create this simple titling effect (ignoring the Google Earth zoom in) were:

1. Create an empty video track above my scenery video
2. Click the Media Generators tab and choose Legacy Text and then the preset you want by dragging it onto the empty track where a window opens. I used the default Transparent Text.
3. In the Edit section (choose Edit tab), enter the text content and select the font, size, alignment and whether it is to be bold, italic or left plain (I use either Arial Black or Impact a lot)
4. Click the Placement tab and then move the formatted text to the intended location (you can use the Preview window to line it up and I also turn on the guides). If you wish, you can also enter the x, y co-ordinates directly.
5. Click the Properties tab and modify colours and transparency options as you please along with tracking, scaling, leading parameters and kerning.

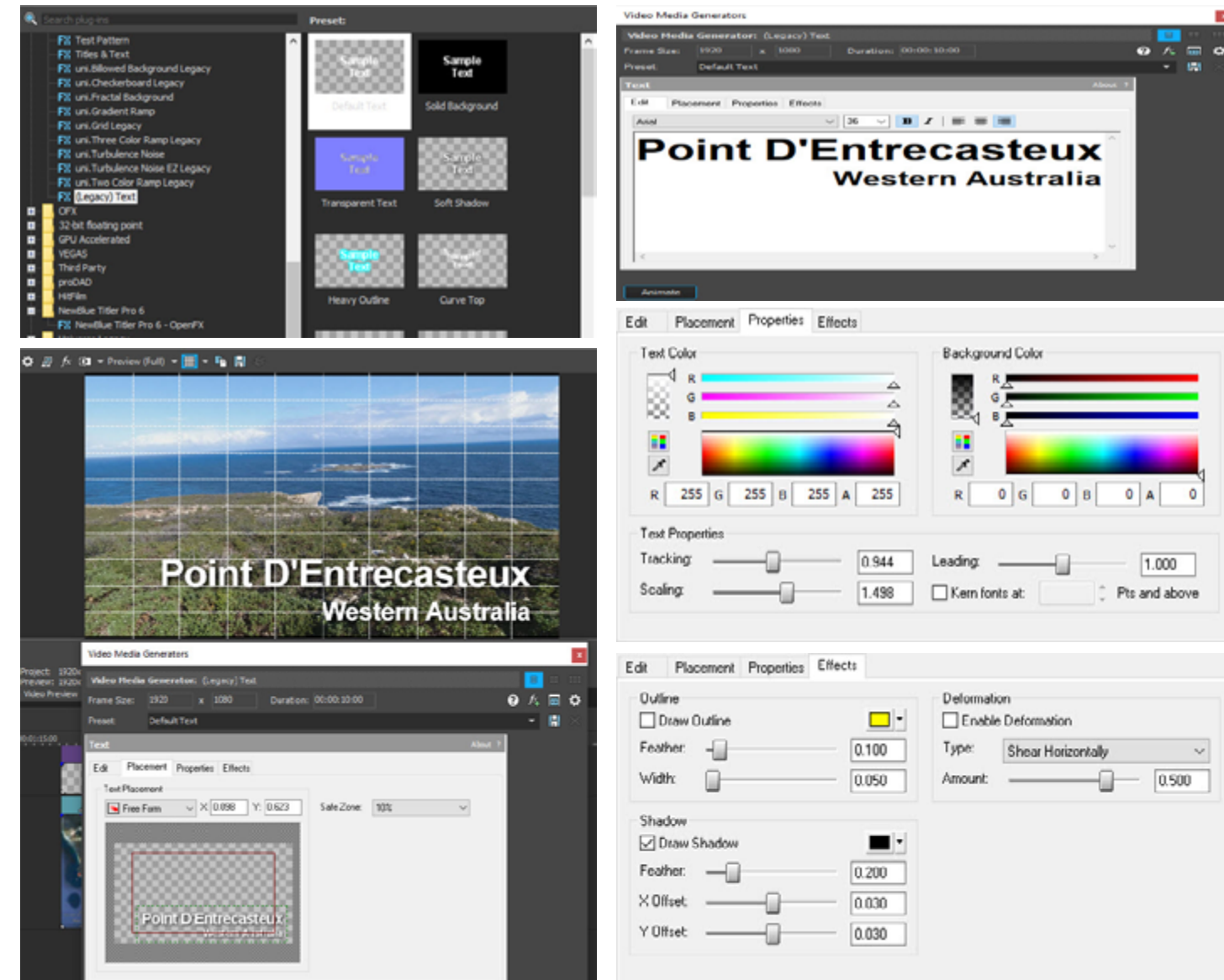
6. Click the Effects tab where different options such as selecting the text outline only, feathering, deformation, shadows etc are chosen.

7. All that remains then is to select fade in and fade out of the text if you want that effect, set the length of the title (length of clip containing it) and you are done.

Using the Legacy Text option is limited with just these functions with presets available for background transparency and colour and text shapes, position and size.

If you want a bit more to play with though, the Titles & Text option available under Media Generators includes presets for basic effects such as fly-in, bounce, split, zoom and so on.

(Right) Setup in Vegas Pro 16 Legacy Text (Over page) Setup in NewBlue Titler Pro 6





# Titles - NewBlue Titler Pro 7

## NewBlue Pro Titler 6

But if you want even more control, then a 3rd party package such as NewBlue Titler Pro 7 may be the go.

The second clip shows the same scenery clips, but this time I have used NewBlue Titler Pro 7 to add a title.

The steps to achieve this are as follows:

1. Drag the NewBlue Titler Pro FX from the Media Generator tab onto an empty video



track in exactly the same way you would with the Vegas built in Legacy Text FX.

2. The NewBlue Titler Pro 7 interface opens, and as you quickly see, there are MANY more options available to you!

3. The first thing I did was to choose a template to start use as the basis. In this case, I chose "Oceano Lower 3rd" and in the Scene tab of the Attributes pane, replaced the default text with my own (on the Variables tab).

4. The duration is already set at 10 seconds, so I left that as it was. On the Light & Cam tab is a whole bunch of things you can play with regarding camera placement and light settings. And these can all be key-framed if you wish.

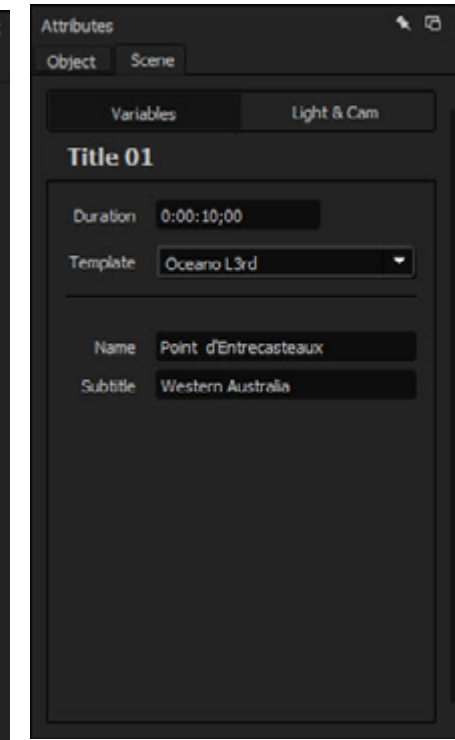
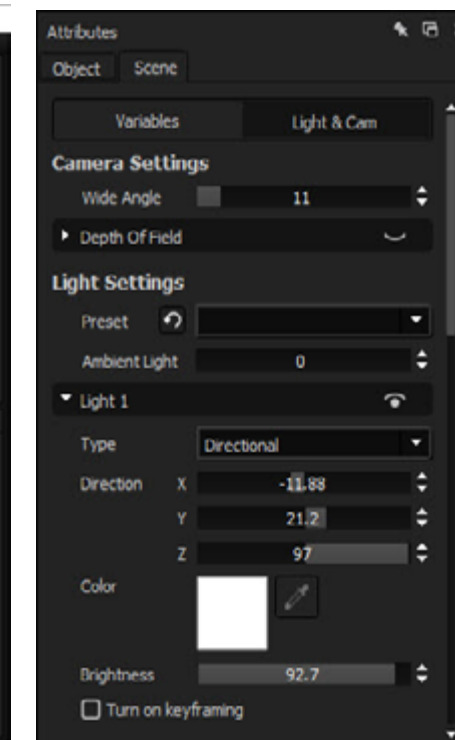
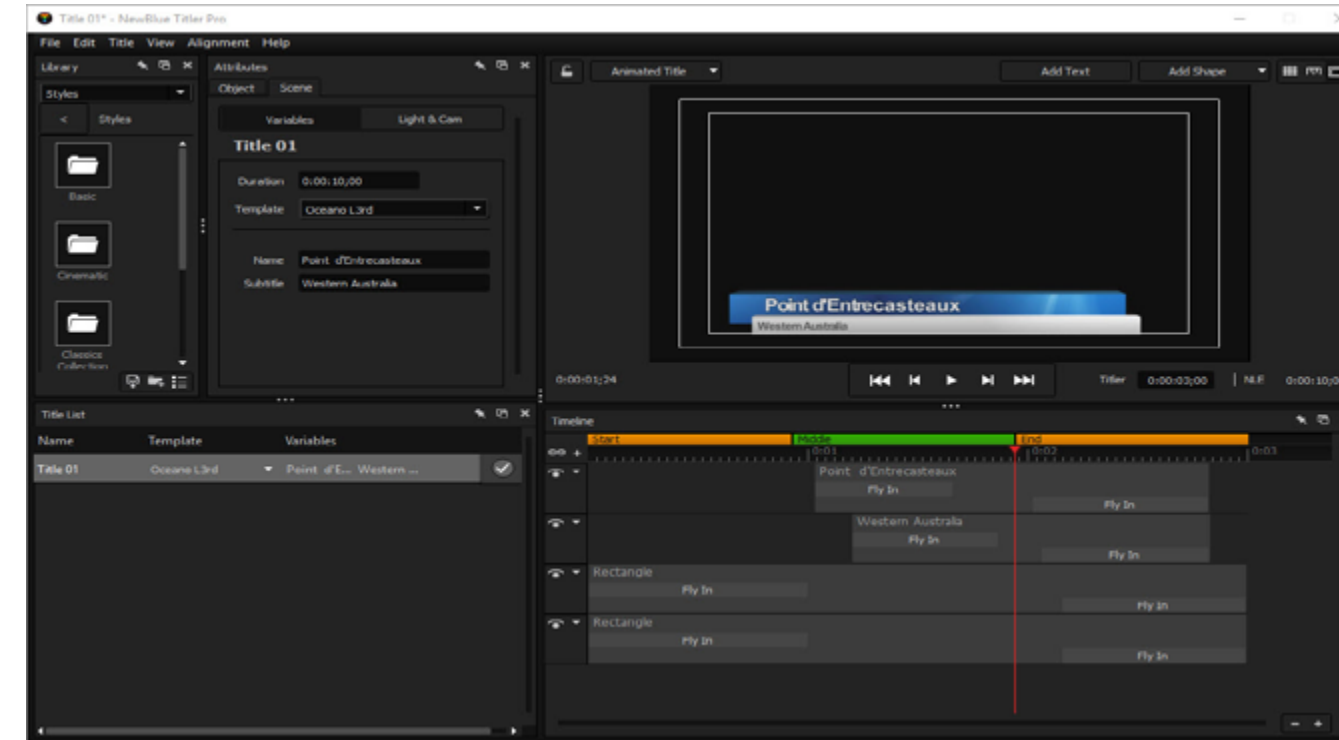
5. Similarly, on the Objects tab, are a swag of parameters to further

modify the title clip, but I am keeping this simple at this point. In fact, when you start digging into NewBlue Titler Pro 7, the depth of functionality available to you becomes apparent – and there is a lot! In this basic setup, I have only scratched the surface, and I urge you to get a trial version and have a serious play.

6. On the timeline at the bottom of the NewBlue Titler Pro 7 interface, you can use the transport buttons to make the animation play and preview what you have built.

(Left) Clip with title from Vegas & Legacy Text ([Click here](#) for non-supported browsers)

(Right) Clip from Vegas & NewBlue Titler Pro 6 ([Click here](#) for non-supported browsers)





# Introduction to Motion Tracking

## *We use VEGAS Pro to show the basics*

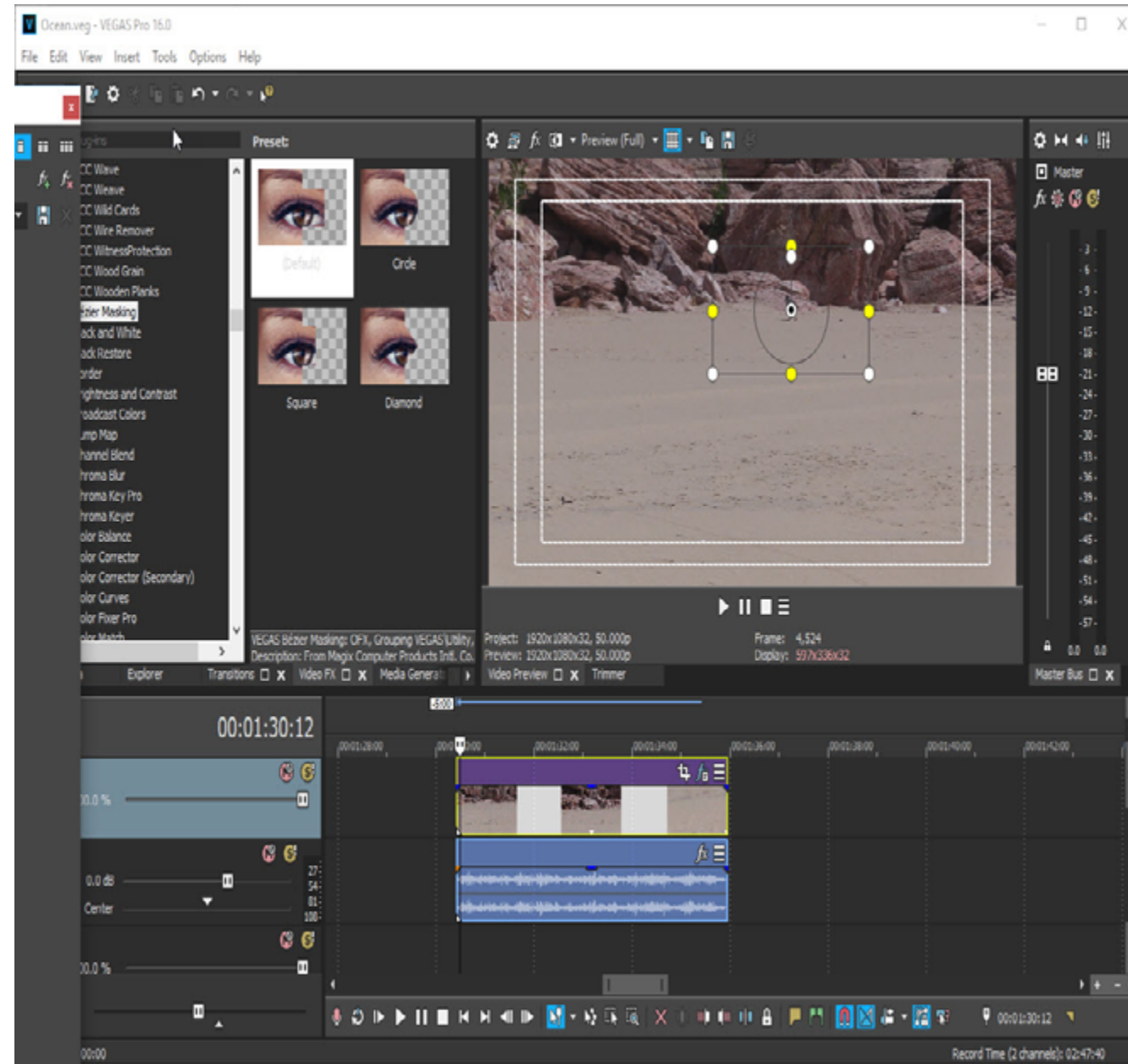
When you hear the term “motion tracking” or “motion capture”, you might immediately think of lurid green suits with dots all over them and Andy Serkis as Gollum in Lord of the Rings.

While motion tracking can do this, in its simplest form, motion tracking (capture) is the process of recording the movement of objects (or people). The result then allows the insertion of computer graphics into live-action footage with correct position, scale, orientation, and motion relative to the objects in the shot.

There are also a multitude of tasks that can be performed such as spot colour grading and pixelization (for masking out faces etc) plus many other effects that have to be applied to only a portion of the video frame so needs to follow along with the object in real time.

Another common use, as mentioned above, is to pin objects together and text following an object is a popular one seen in TV shows and movies such as Sherlock with Benedict Cumberbatch for example.

It is useful to understand masking before leaping into the motion tracking world, specifically Bezier masking which allows irregular shapes to be creating with great accuracy, and in fact, in some applications such as Vegas Pro 16 which we are using here for this primer, motion tracking is a subset of the Bezier masking tools. A good tutorial for this is at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nShiU3Hc3OU>.



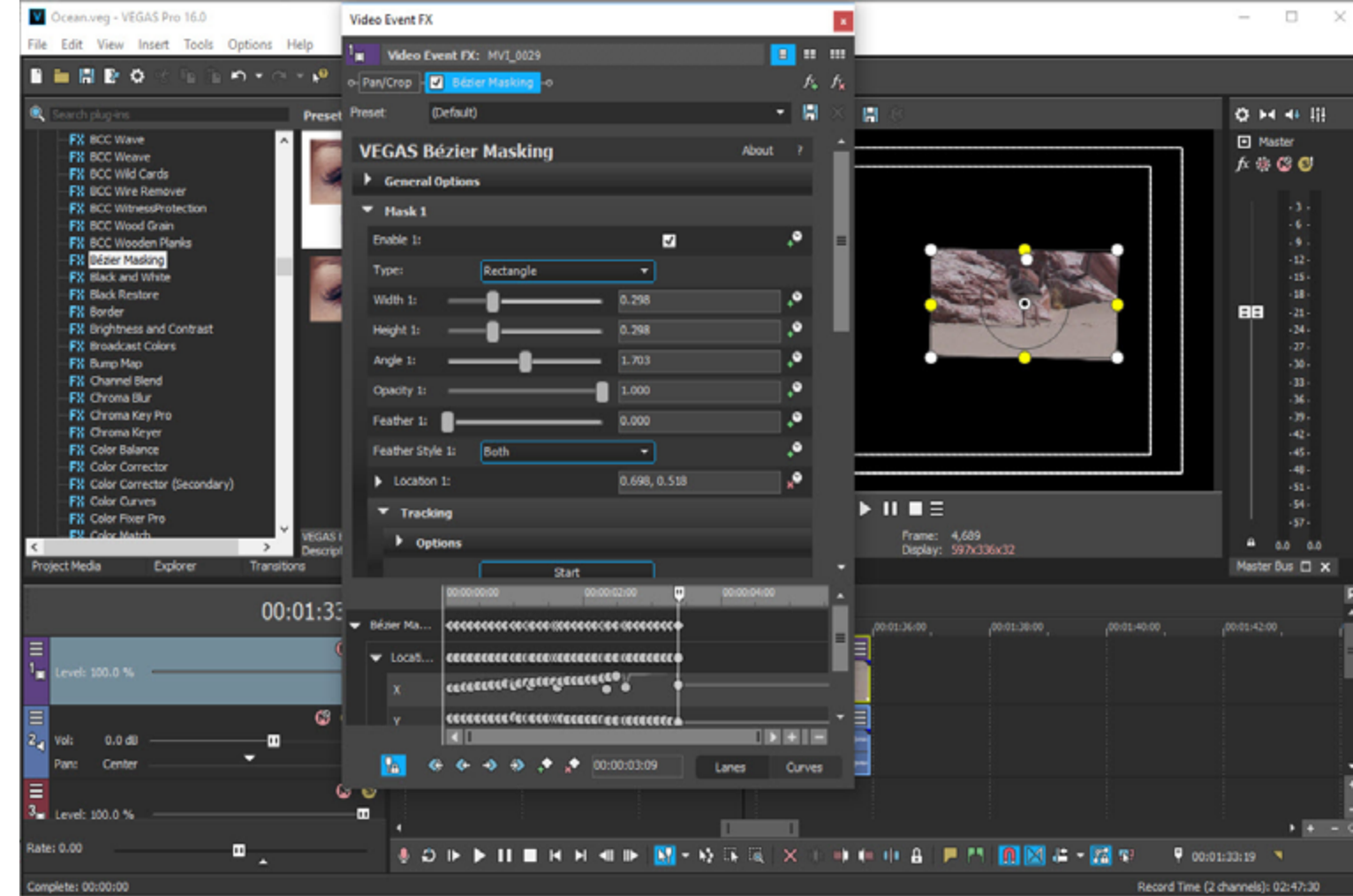
For this brief over-view, we'll be using Vegas Pro 16 to demonstrate the basics of motion tracking.

In step by step terms:

1. You create a shape over the area of the clip you want to track. With VEGAS, the edges of a rectangle are used for the tracking, so it is not necessary to be meticulous to get the shape of irregular objects exactly right. Oval shaped masks can be used equally efficiently by the way.

2. When the start tracking button is chosen, a series of animation keyframes is created to follow the object.

3. Occasionally, it might be necessary to manually move the mask if the tracking algorithm loses track of the area being tracked – if you know what I mean. This can happen for a number of reasons, but all you need do is move



the sync cursor to the point in the clip where the tracking is lost, and manually move your Bezier mask back into place so that once again the target object being tracked is inside the mask. You then click the start tracking button again.

4. At any time, you can move the cursor back to the beginning of the video event (clip) and play through and check the object being tracked stays inside the mask. You do have the option of either low or

high precision tracking using a drop-down menu. Various modes can also be chosen depending on the object being tracked – eg is it rotating, changing dramatically in size etc. Keyframe intervals can also be chosen.

5. It may take a few goes to come to grips with the best settings for different circumstances, but as they say, practice makes perfect and you'll soon pick up the best results for different types of tracking situations.

6. To add pinned text to a tracked object, VEGAS has a built-in script supplied (Tools->Scripting-> Add Text to Motion Track. When run, this will create a new track with a text placeholder

event ready to have your own text and attributes added to it.

Some more tutorials that may help are at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tUT19Yxmgoo>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7z68HLLxm3M>





**Just Like Top Gear ...**

**... or The Grand Tour**



# Using quality mounts for in-car shooting is a must.

As many know, I have an affinity for the popular TV show “Top Gear” – well to be honest, what I call the “original” with presenters Jeremy Clarkson, Richard Hammond and James May, not the current version.

Fans of the show will know the history; in the 17th season (I think it was) Clarkson apparently gave one of the crew a smack around the chops, admitted to it, was laid off and Hammond and May followed suit, stating they were a “team” and therefore couldn’t be broken up.

The trio then went on to create “[The Grand Tour](#)” after being lured (allegedly) by Am-

azon Prime, and this is now in Series 3, with a 4th in the pipeline.

For those that have no idea about the shows and these three, I suggest you check it out as despite its car-based themes, it is a very funny and politically



incorrect show that happens to be superbly scripted and brilliantly shot.

And this is where this article really starts.

Quite a few years back, I watched an episode of the original Top Gear, and in this, Clarkson, Hammond and May found what they called the “[Best Driving Road in the World](#)” – a section of tarmac from Davos in Switzerland to Stelio in Italy. Right there and then and being a car nut myself – I vowed to one day drive that road.

2 years or so later I did. Now, I wanted

to film this from the car, just as they did, and so performed some investigation of what Top Gear used to achieve the results they did, and was lead to a UK based company, that oddly and coincidentally was called [Hague Camera Supports](#).

I stressed then, and I reiterate now, they are absolutely no relation to me despite my heritage also being of the UK.

If you look at their website, and its companion site [Cameragrip](#), you can see the company makes a shedload of different types of mounts, dollies, cranes and so forth. Upon enquiry, I was advised that Top Gear used specific suction and headrest mounts, both of which I purchased, and used on the European trip.

From that point onwards, my interest in getting new and interesting shots from a car has been piqued. Since then I have taken footage from drives across the country from Queensland to Western Australia, Perth to Sydney and back again, through Victoria, up to Exmouth WA and many more. At times, I have



## Today, I have a selection of mounts, Sennheiser Memory Mic audio recording and remote control via smartphone permanently in the Monaro.







also bolted a 360° camera to the roof of Jacqui's Suzuki Grand Vitara 4WD. Doing this, we shot what we believe is the first ever 360° degree footage of the Nullarbor.

Today, I have a selection of mounts permanently in the Monaro, along with audio recording and remote controls. The original Hague suction mount is nailed on when necessary, as is a set of Kayell suction points used to mount a Joby Gorilla Pod. Audio is captured by a Sennheiser Memory Mic.

The whole lot is controlled remotely from a Samsung Galaxy 4 Note phone, and

recently, I have been playing with a Chinese knock off Android tablet (with less than stellar results it has to be said)

Cameras I use and shown in the attached photo include a [\*\*Panasonic WXF1 4K\*\*](#) (on the headrest mount) a GoPro Hero 4 on the passenger windscreen facing inwards, a GoPro Hero 6 on the centre windscreen point forwards (there is also a standard no-name dash cam which is always running), and a Sony DSC RX0 on the driver's side windscreen facing inwards.

When I use the Hague suction mount, there is a [\*\*Panasonic HC-PV100\*\*](#) attached. For 360° degree shots, we have

used a 360Fly (so-so shots) and a Ricoh Theta V (which is superb).

I also have a G clamp mount that can be attached to the rear spoiler and this has had a bunch of different cameras over time include GoPros Sony Action Cams and the Ricoh Theta V.

As well as the fun factor of creating and editing the subsequent footage, there has been a practical aspect to this exercise, albeit by accident..

A few years back on the Gold Coast, the side of the Monaro was driven into while on a roundabout near Robina, and the woman driving claimed it was all my fault. I subsequently received a very large repair bill for what was in effect a minor scratch to her 4WD.

However, at the time of the prang, I had three cameras running as a test, and they caught the whole thing! This of course proved it was not my fault at all, and the whole thing was dropped. (I also used [\*\*ProDAD's Heroglyph and Meralli software\*\*](#) to make a reconstruction of the crash to add to my case by the way).

One thing I have learned from this exercise; if you intend to take shots from a moving vehicle, don't skimp on the mount quality. It just isn't worth it when you have a precious camera as its cargo. The cheapies just don't cut it, and will cause vibration at best and break apart at speed at worst!

As such, I can vouch for those from [\*\*Hague Camera Supports / Cameragrip\*\*](#) with confidence.

And if you are interested, the image of the inside of the Monaro was taken with a [\*\*VUZE 360°/180 camera / camcorder\*\*](#), rendered using their software and then placed into Vegas VR Studio 365 to get the [\*\*full 360° degree effect you see here!\*\*](#)

As an aside, I now have all footage taken over the years neatly catalogued in [\*\*Kyno's media management software\*\*](#), so at any time I can simply search for "Car footage, Alps, Panasonic, Nullarbor 360° or Exmouth" for example.

**Right:** In-car footage from the Sony RX0 mounted on the driver side windscreen (click to play). Other images show various [\*\*Panasonic\*\*](#) cameras on [\*\*Hague / Cameragrip\*\*](#) mounts.







Image Courtesy **Ross Gibb Photos** (c)

# So You Want To Shoot Motor Sport.

*There is a lot more to it than point and click  
says David Hague*

**G**ood for you; I have been doing this (and photography) since around 1979 as a hobby and as a professional, both as a journalist and videographer/photographer.

V8s, touring cars, sports sedans, open wheelers, Indy Cars, rally, motocross, speedway and even jet boats in those narrow muddy channels are all on my video / photography CV

And you know what? You never stop learning. Just when you think you have grasped it all, someone comes along with a photo or clip taken at the same location as you, at probably the same time, of the same vehicle and it is miles better.

But unlike many other professions, in this game, in my experience at least, your peers are more than happy to share knowledge.

## Where to Start

Of course, stating the bleeding obvious, you need a camcorder. But what sort? What specs?

Over the years, I have used as large

number of different beasts in this regard, starting out with a Leica M2 I inherited from my Dad, but that sadly, considering how much they are worth now, had an untimely end at the end of the long tentacles of the Gummint due to a particularly vicious nasty called death duty that was around at the time.

In the 80's graduated from there to a variety of Pentax units, and settled eventually on Minolta kit. (Minolta is now part of the Sony empire, hence the absolutely brilliant lenses).

When I graduated to video, early in the piece I settled on Panasonic gear, primarily due to the Leica lenses used. Additionally, I also like the ergonomics, and for the occasional "gimmicky" shot, in the higher end models, the twin lens system is brilliant for capturing two angles simultaneously.

Currently I am using the **Panasonic WFX1**

**4K** unit but will be trying out the **VX series** very shortly as well.

I have used both Canon and Sony models and in



terms of specifications have no faults with them. None at all.

My main issue is that as most of my work in this area is handheld, the ones I particularly like, the **Canon HF-G40** which is HD (now the G50 which is 4K) and the **Sony AX100** (4K) are simply too heavy, especially as I have a gammy right wrist.

## dSLR or "Proper" camcorder?

Which brings up a very important point.

Yes, using a tripod in these – any – cir-

cumstances is important, but in motor sport of all disciplines, you'll find yourself doing a lot of handheld as you need to be able to switch positions at a split seconds' notice.

It's a rule of thumb that the action NEVER happens while you are looking at it, and you find yourself becoming exceedingly agile while standing on the same spot!

Because of this, I have found from many attempts, that for video, a dSLR / mirrorless will just not cut it. The ergonomics are all wrong and you'll quickly find you'll have an aching wrist and upper shoulder in quick smart time.

## Camera Necessities

Now we have established what type of camera, what features / specifications does it need? A lot of this is personal, but at the very least I would want manual focus (by a ring where possible) and aperture (either by a second ring, or switchable between it and focus). Variable shutter speed is also very useful to get slo-mo footage.



You'll need a decent optical zoom too, also by ring if at all possible – none of this digital zoom rubbish though! 32x is a good starting point I find (which is what I have in the **Panasonic WFX1**). Make sure there is 4 axis stability built in too.

It's pretty much a given most decent camcorders  
camcorder will still give excellent results by the way.

I also prefer using the viewfinder to the flip out LCD, although I might frame a tripod based shot using the LCD and on-screen guides, but this does of course mean your camcorder's LCD is up to actually being able to be seen outdoors. Many cannot be!

Variable ISO is also handy.

These basics are to be found in most camcorders in the \$800 - \$1500 range. If it were me, I'd find a shop that has a range physically in stock and go and have a play to make sure the ergonomics are spot on for your taste and all the features are there and easily accessible.

In terms of accessories, I have a **Sennheiser camera mounted mic** for ambi-

ent audio, and also carry a **Sennheiser XSD-W digital Lav set for interviews**. If I am doing a simple voice over/commentary the **Sennheiser Memory Mic** is brilliant.

I do carry a small LED camera mount light from **Aputure** and a **Joby Gorillapod tripod**. Finally I use a **WD My Passport Wireless SSD** to back up all the SD cards on a regular basis while in the field.

Everything is kept out of dust, mud and water in a Black Wolf backpack.

Don't forget the hat, sunscreen and fly repellent too, as well as a bottle of wa-

ter. Remember also that if you get accreditation (see below) sometimes you may be on the infield for a long period of time, and away from toilet access without crossing the track – which is not to be recommended during a race and



will cause the total ire of course officials, drivers and spectators to descend on you from a catastrophic height!



Image Courtesy **Ross Gibb Photos (c)**

Location is key to top shots!

## Techniques

Apart from the agility mentioned earlier, one thing you will learn as you progress, is the ability to be looking through the viewfinder with one eye, but keeping an eye on the action with the other.

A good pair of ears helps too, as often, the first sign of something spectacular is about to happen is the screech of brakes or the sound of tortured tyres! Your ears alert to this as well as offering the approximate direction and location.

In terms of pure camera technique though, learn the intricacies of depth of field backwards, with how focal length, aperture, shutter speed and ISO all relate in this regard. **My Emu Beer Can tutorial** might help those who have little knowledge in this regard. (This might look like a travelogue to start with, but trust me, persevere!)

You'll need to find a technique to hold the camcorder too, as a) it will be shooting for longer periods – perhaps up to 60 seconds – at a time

and b) you need stability.

I have the left hand wrapped around the barrel with the right cradling the camera with my fingers falling on to the controls. I am somewhat different as I am left eye dominant, so do practice to find your most comfortable method.

As your fingers need to be able to manipulate the controls almost automatically, you need to know your camera intimately, understanding what button, switch, rocker control, knob and ring does what, so you can operate them without thinking.

Spend a lot of time reading the manual and again, practising to get that familiarity is my best advice.

## Where To Go

The closer you can get to the circuit, obviously the better. I generally find during the course of a day, depending on the track and the type of racing, I use maybe three or four locations I am comfortable with that provide good action and interesting backdrops and other elements to the image.

For a new circuit, or if conditions are different to what I am used to, I'll go to the track on the Friday if possible and do a walk around to familiarise myself with the locale, obstructions, areas of danger, where the sun will be and so on. I'll then set myself those three or four locations and sit in each for a time





to  
f a -  
miliarise  
myself with  
what does / can  
happen during practice  
sessions by the drivers.

While the on-track action is of course  
the main drawcard, from a story-telling  
perspective, don't forget the other lo-  
cations such as the pits!

What can be a fun project is align your-  
self with a specific team and try and  
document their day or weekend with  
not just action shots, but shots in the pits  
of the crew and even their fans in the  
stands.

## Accreditation

The Holy Grail is to get circuit accredita-  
tion and if obtained, means you have  
pretty much open access to anywhere.  
Be aware though, in most cases, you  
need to be allied with some sort of media

or-  
gani-  
sation to  
get this, espe-  
cially at the bigger  
meetings such as V8 Su-  
percars, and you can forget F1  
or MotoGP absolutely!

Your local car club or bike club how-  
ever is often pleased to give accredita-  
tion for a meeting as long as you sign  
the indemnity forms. The trade off is they  
might want to use your footage / imag-  
es to advertise their next meeting or to  
put into the meeting program, but this  
is a good way to start and get yourself  
known.

From there, you might be able to  
sell teams and drivers some foot-  
age and start making a small \$ out  
of the hobby. At worst, you'll have a  
good time and pay for your SD cards!

## Do's and Don'ts

This one is simple. If ANY official tells  
you to do something – move, stand  
still, shut up, whatever – just do it. They  
are out for your safety, the safety of the  
spectators and of course the competi-  
tors and their crews and know their job  
well.

In most case they are volunteers and  
don't need the grief, and anyway, any  
issues will have you rapidly expelled  
from the circuit and lose any further ac-  
creditation chances.

Secondly, don't even bother to ask if  
you can use a drone to get footage. It's  
a rare Clerk of the Course indeed that  
grants this, often for commercial rea-  
sons, but mostly for safety ones. And if  
you ignore this, the fines and retribution  
are high and swift.

## Conclusion

I love motor sport video. It is both fun  
and challenging, and when you get  
that magic shot or clip, all the walking  
up hill and down dale, the dust, mud,  
smoke and smell of fuel and burning  
rubber in your clothes and hair makes it



Image Courtesy **Ross Gibb Photos** (c)

*There is more than the actual racing to get exciting action video and photos! Don't forget the pits and the crowd.*

all worth while.

You'll never make a living from it in Aus-  
tralia, but you might make a buck or  
two on the side, and have a great time  
doing it!

Above all though, stay safe. Keep your  
eyes and ears open, and if you see a

car charging towards you, the advice  
I was given, and only had to be used  
once in my lifetime, is DON'T MOVE. The  
driver has no way of guessing if you do,  
what you might do next, thus making it  
harder to avoid you.

It makes more sense of course to make  
sure you never get yourself into that sort

of predicament, and make sure there  
is always some sort of barrier between  
you and any oncoming object you can  
get to very, very quickly at the FIRST sign  
of danger. Don't wait.

*(With thanks to the best in the business -  
Ross Gibb from **Ross Gibb Photography**)*





Dr David Smith

# the good, the bad and the downright ugly

Can you recall the first time you saw a drone shot in a TV series?

Can you recall a current TV series that DOESN'T feature drone shots?

As viewers, we love innovation in the TV or movies we watch. There's a huge Wow! factor at play when a new technique or style is employed for the first time.

As film makers we all too frequently get sucked in by these same innovations, the end result being serious over use. What to do?

- **Step 1: Identify clichés**
- **Step 2: Don't use clichés**

Here are some of my pet hates from the world of cliché cinema. You'll find most of them in TV series, commercials and some feature films. Spoiler alert: once you become sensitised to them you'll never look at programs in the same way. Of course readers may well disagree with my list, in which case please

write to us and tell us your views. Here at FV^VR we love a constructive chat!

Now read on...

## 1. Moving cameras

Amateur videos follow the basic rule of 'It's a movie camera, so keep it moving'. Professionals also seem to have fallen into the trap of requiring the camera to always be on the move. Whether it be via a dolly, a crane, or a slider, the camera must never be allowed to stay put. Subtle camera movement has a genuine place in film making: the three-dimensionality of the scene is revealed by this means and there are great possibilities for revealing elements on the set by, for example, tracking the camera past a doorway to reveal action happening in a new room.

Like all good things, however, this can be overdone. Can't we just stop the camera moving for a minute and catch our breaths?

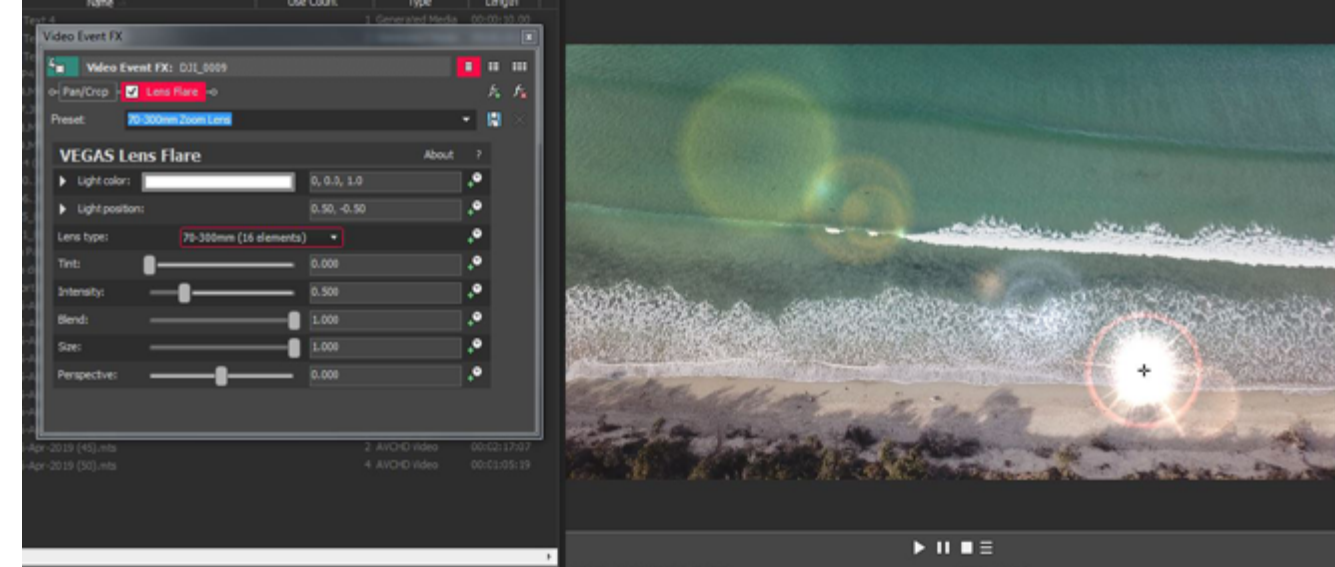
Solution: Use dolly shots sparingly when

they really add something to the story or the mood. Don't over-use them or you reduce their impact.

## 2. You must use a DSLR (or mirrorless) camera for video

This is basically nonsense. I remember advice from one of Australia's greatest wildlife film makers, Keith Taylor, who said to me "*I don't really care what kind of system I use, as long as it allows me to get the images I need.*" This was back in the days before modern miracles like GoPros and we were trying to film inside a platypus burrow using a black and white Panasonic surveillance camera. It worked – we got the shots.

All cameras have a lens and some kind of image receiver, be it film, CMOS sensor or whatever. This applies to both film and video cameras, although – strangely – there's a certain mystique about the DSLR camera that implies that it always produces superior video images. It doesn't and it can't. If you set up a



DSLR (or mirrorless) camera with a high quality fast lens – eg Zeiss f=1.4 50mm – and compare it with a full frame video camera with a high quality fast lens – eg Zeiss f=1.4 50mm – the results will be indistinguishable. The only real difference will be in the ergonomics, whereby the video camera will win hands down by virtue of its range of manual controls and ease of handling.

I lost a job possibility because I insisted on using a video camera rather than a DSLR. The client clearly didn't understand that the images I could produce would be exactly what he wanted, despite the fact that I was avoiding the 'snob value' of using a DSLR.

Solution: Use whichever type of camera

suite your needs for the shoot in question. Don't be brow-beaten by format snobbery.

## 3. Shallow depth of field is always essential

We are all accustomed to seeing dialogue between two characters in a TV series who magically come into sharp focus as they speak, then become soft focussed as the other person answers. It's actually not magic: it requires the services of a highly skilled focus puller who meticulously follows the script by focussing on each actor as they speak.

This can be very effective, but it can also become a distraction. If your eye is tracking the follow-focus gymnastics,



they've lost you: you have stopped being captivated by the story and are now thinking about the filming technique.

Of course there are many other reasons for not using narrow depth of field. Lenses all have their own sweet spot with regard to aperture. Typically this is at around f8 at which point chromatic and spherical aberration will be minimal. Having the lens wide open at f1.4 means you are operating well away from that sweet spot and some image degradation will be inevitable.

Another situation in which you want wide depth of field is when shooting landscapes. Especially when using wide angle lenses there is great drama to be had by shooting with the lens stopped down to, say f11 or f16 because everything from foreground flowers to the distant mountains will all be in sharp focus.

Solution: Use shallow depth of field if you feel the scene needs it. Don't be intimi-

dated into thinking shallowness is essential. It's your artistic call after all.

#### **4. Interviews should always cut to a second camera with a side-on view of the talent**

This is a relatively recent trend and one to be despised.

It can be very useful when shooting to re-frame from tight to wider in the gap between answers, then back again for the next answer. This makes cutting out the interviewer's questions much simpler to edit and basically works well because the subject is always speaking either directly to the camera or slightly off-camera to the unseen interviewer.

This ghastly new style has the subject speaking to the camera (or slightly off-camera) but then speaking way off camera to no-one in particular when the side-on shots are used. There is no surer way to distance your viewer from the subject's wise words. It creates a re-

ally ugly impression that the subject doesn't care about you one iota. The skill of the interviewer in getting the perfect mood for the interview is shattered by this poorly directed side glance.

Solution: Don't ever do it. Unfortunately someone did do it, everyone's copying it, and no-one seems to realise how awful it is.

#### **5. Drone aerials must be used at least once in every minute of the video**

I have a Mavic Pro drone. I have a CASA license. I love what my drone can achieve. It is an utter miracle of miniaturised technology. I use its shots minimally



#### **6. Lens flare and bokeh should always be used**

Bokeh, the artefact produced

for best effect. Unfortunately many directors are over-using drone shots to the point of being hackneyed.

Just a decade ago, if you needed aerial shots of anything, you had to rent a helicopter at around \$1,000 an hour. I spent hours hanging out of the door of the various helicopters – the doors having been removed – the only better way being to rent a special gyro-equipped chopper with a huge nose-mounted stabilised camera. Think \$10,000 per hour. Today you buy your drone for \$1,000 or even less and after that it's free for ever. We

live in magic times.

Watch any of the current bloom of home buying or renovation TV series – think Grand Designs in all its British, Aussie and Kiwi incarnations – and, just for fun, try timing the proportion of the program devoted to drone shots. You will be surprised! The problem is they look great, they're incredibly easy to film, and they're a lazy way of making a real program. Once again, brilliant new technology over-used and copied by every similar program to point of not only cliché but tedium.

when an 8- or 9-bladed iris creates coloured disks from out-of-focus background lights can be very pretty. It can also be overused. A similar thing happened decades ago when that horrible cinematic error that produced vivid coloured circles known as lens flare was co-opted into movies as an artistic device. Google them and you'll see numerous articles and critiques of these techniques. Virtually all editing software packages contain lens Flare among their video FX plugins and there are troves of online bokeh images you can



download if your camera doesn't do it well enough.

You can obviously use your own discretion as to whether to embrace lens flare and bokeh, or sack the DoP. However, always remember that if special effects distract the viewer from the story then you really have lost the plot – in both senses.

### Conclusion

I guess it all comes down to the notion of using each method sparingly. It's well known that, in the scariest horror movies, you don't actually see the monster. You hear the monster, you see people terrified of the monster and the mon-



ster music helps your imagination build a mental monster that scarier than any created by the guys at Weta or Pixar.

My personal view is that I try very hard to be original. If everyone is driving black BMWs and Audis I'll drive a bright yellow Peugeot (I do!). If every shot in a program is showing the star in shallow depth of field so the bokeh is beautifully soft and the camera is moving gracefully between drone shots, I'll probably

use a tripod and cut cleanly between shots.

Focus on your story-telling. Avoid anything that reduces audience engagement. Go for Good, avoid Bad and stay well clear of Ugly.

Dr. David Smith can be contacted via [www.imagination.net.au](http://www.imagination.net.au)



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**FUJINON**



# Audio for Action Cams ...

*by David Hague*

## AUDIO

*I love using so-called “action cameras”. You know, GoPros and models from DJI, Sony and countless “knock-off” brands.*

That’s cause I have habits of throwing cars around race tracks and dirt roads, attempting to catch a piscatorial feast in the briny or simply paddle around coral reefs with a snorkel, mask and fins (they are NOT flippers!).

But there is somewhat of an issue with action cameras in these sorts of circumstances in that audio in many cases seems to be a secondary thought.

Sure, I understand that what they are really designed for is to be a camcorder with a small form factor and a wide lens to capture, well, action, in places and angles that a “normal” camera or camcorder cannot possibly hope to achieve.

But along with that hair-raising, stomach churning, bum-cheek clenching, gritted teeth vision, is almost always

loud gasps, cheers, screams, yells and even downright terrified sobbing at times. Shouldn’t this also be captured for the posterity of the event, no matter how embarrassing it might be after the fact?

‘Cause we do!

Now, with GoPro having the majority of this market, and a snoop around various action cam type forums leading us to the opinion the general consensus is that GoPro audio sucks (not necessarily our opinion I hasten to add), we have used

this as a basis to see just what can be done about that situation, without necessarily adding a huge bulky mic to the camera, or worse, making it that it just cannot do what it is best at and being attached to things other than a tripod eg you head, arm,





chest, bike, car, go-kart, surfboard, skis, fishing rod, boat etc.

You can of course add a standard type mic to a GoPro using the available mic adaptor which plugs into the charging port, converting it into a 3.5" headphone type port, and then use something such as a **Sennheiser MKE400** or **MKE 440** shotgun mic (which actually appear on the GoPro recommended list along with some other manu-



facturers including RØDE, Sony and Shure.

For best results, we recommend using the standard GoPro skeleton mount so you can still attach the camera to one of the many

accessories available from both GoPro and 3rd party suppliers, as this leaves the ports available to use via cutouts in the mount design.

If you prefer to have a more discreet system, then a wireless lav setup might be better, keeping the mic clipped to a collar or similar, and the receiver via a cable connector to the camera.

However, a major problem exists in one area. If you want to shoot in a wet area – rain, snorkelling etc – then waterproofing is of course paramount and using any of these mics is not going to work.

This means you are stuck with using the correct housing for the camera for this environment and its native in-built mic sadly.

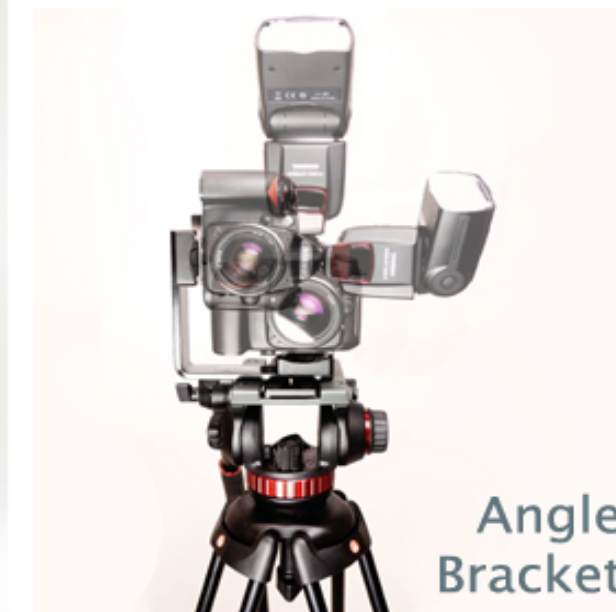
But!

If you can get your hands on a GoPro



Hero 4 Silver via ebay, Gumtree or wherever, then Sennheiser do make a dedicated mic for this camera that is waterproof called an **MKE 2 Elements** that costs around AUD\$80. The **MKE 2 Elements** has an interface board that allows it to become a part of the main camera body and is very effective.

Just make sure if you order one, you specify the word "Elements" very clearly as the MKE 2 without the "Elements" is a very different beast entirely!







***At some point in time you are going to need a microphone.***

The problem lies in the question, which one? Shotgun mic, radio mic, highball or lav? On-camera or off-camera, hand-held, on a boom – there are so many choices. So where to start?

Well we decided to ask an expert so got in touch with Sennheiser Australia to ask their thoughts.

Firstly though, let's work out what microphone type should be used under different circumstances. For example, if you are filming a landscape and simply want ambient noise, that is a totally different microphone than you would use as say, interviewing a person in a closed room.

Similarly, if you are filming a live band at a music concert, that is different again and so another type of microphone might be used depending on whether you're indoors or outdoors.

## Shotgun Mic

Shotgun microphones are ideal for several different things on the production set. They are very directional so you simply need to point the microphone in the direction sound is coming from. As a result, a shotgun microphone is ideal for capturing dialogue of a scene (as against a person), and avoid any ambient sound and Foley effects that may be happening. Shotguns are also commonly the mic used at the end of a boom where you see a sound assistant holding the long pole with the microphone on the end of it and over the top of the subject, but out of shot.



## Lapel Mic

Also called a lav which is short for lavalier, a lav is designed specifically for capturing dialogue and so is used often on interviews for television documentaries. If you are not familiar with a lav, the next time you're watching someone being interviewed, notice that on the lapel they will often have a small black object - perhaps two of them. This is the microphone and can be either wired, usually to a small transmitter attached to a belt, or more commonly these days uses wireless transmission. The signal is sent via a transmitter to a receiver often located on the top of the camera. Sometimes a lav is placed underneath the clothing and held in place with a tiny bit of gaffer tape. Of course it stands to reason that when applying a lav mic to someone you need to be courteous and professional.

## Video Mic

These are an on-camera microphone with a direct connection into the camera for recording audio to the recording medium, whether it be tape or SD card. They are probably the most common microphone in use and if you're looking at buying a microphone and just want a general-purpose unit, this is the way to go as a starter.

## Handheld Mic

As the name suggests this microphone is held in the hand and is most commonly used by reporters in the field and connected directly into a recording device or to the camera. They are also often called a reporter mic.

## Smartphone Mic

These are a new breed of microphone and designed specifically to be used with a smartphone where the phone is being used as a recording device, whether it be an iPhone or Android based. In the basic form,

they act a little bit like a reporter but more sophisticated units such as the [Sennheiser Memory Mic](#) we gave an award to last year also have on-board memory, can work wirelessly and even have phone-based software for later editing and syncing.

## Which Model?

As mentioned, we spoke to the experts at Sennheiser to ask them what model they would suggest for each of the above categories. For the on-camera shotgun mic, the [MKE 440](#) is the suggested model and if the microphone is to be a boom, the Sennheiser [MKE 600](#) is considered ideal.

For a (reporter) microphone, a choice of two models depending on application was put forward. The [HandMic digital](#) can be used with smart phones as it has a USB connection as well is a Lightning (iPhone) and micro USB port. For more traditional use, the [MD 46](#) is a high-quality dynamic cardioid microphone designed for live reporting and broadcast environments.

For a lav microphone, Sennheiser suggests a wireless unit such as the [EW 112P G4](#). This is an all in one wireless system with broadcast quality and comes with all the gear you need including microphone, receiver for mounting on camera, a transmitter for the talent and cables. It has a range of 100m which is plenty, and the batteries are said to last for up to 8 hours. Importantly it is easy to setup and use unlike some others I've played with!

## Budget

Of course, a lot depends on your budget, but never underestimate the quality of your audio. This is one area where going cheap is not a good option. Sennheiser is not a retailer, so we checked around and got our prices from Melbourne-based [Videoguys](#).

»	Sennheiser EW 112 GP4	\$759.00
»	Sennheiser MKE 440	\$422.00
»	Sennheiser MD 46	\$272.00
»	Sennheiser HandMic	\$268.00
»	Sennheiser MemoryMic	\$321.00





# Audio - Compression

One of the most misunderstood audio issues is “Compression”. If you are not sure what this means and how it applies to audio, you may have come across it in the never-ending argument that TV commercials have their volume purposely boosted.

For the record, they are not. What is done is that the compression of the audio signal is altered so it seems louder.

Technically, according to the website Music Tuts Plus (<https://music.tutsplus.com>), compression “is the process of lessening the dynamic range between the loudest and quietest parts of an audio signal.

This is done by boosting the quieter signals and attenuating the louder signals”.

The website goes further to explain:

The controls you are given to set up a compressor are usually:

- **Threshold** - how loud the signal has to be before compression is applied.
- **Ratio** - how much compression is applied. For example, if the compression ratio is set for 6:1, the input signal will

have to cross the threshold by 6 dB for the output level to increase by 1 dB.

- **Attack** - how quickly the compressor starts to work.
- **Release** - how soon after the signal dips below the threshold the compressor stops.
- **Knee** - sets how the compressor reacts to signals once the threshold is passed. Hard Knee settings mean it clamps the signal straight away, and Soft Knee means the compression kicks in more gently as the signal goes further past the threshold.
- **Make-Up Gain** - allows you to boost the compressed signal as compression often attenuates the signal significantly.
- **Output** - allows you to boost or attenuate the level of the signal output from the compressor.

If you want more information on this, the Music Tut Plus website also has examples of differing compressions on different instruments and how they can be applied and achieved.

This may give you a better idea of how you can control the compression for better audio on your projects.



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The great Science Fiction writer **Arthur C. Clarke** once said that any "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic".

And so it may seem to many with audio.

Just how do you get rid of that air conditioning hum, the sound of low flying aircraft or add “warm” an ambient background tone?

Even, “I want to make a character sound like a Dalek!”

Our friend's at **Sennheiser** have a whole bunch of fantastic tutorials on audio, and here is just one of them. We'll publish more per edition, or you can go to their **YouTube Channel**.



Saturn

Jupiter

# Shooting Celestial Objects

## TECHNIQUE

*Back in 2016, Australian amateur astronomer-extraordinaire, Steve Massey, gave readers of Australian Videocamera some tips on shooting celestial objects; this bullet list is a reminder of what you need to do.*

If you want the Moon to appear large in your shot, make sure you have a focal length (zoom) set to the camcorder's maximum. This reduces the angle of view and thus only shows the Moon in the shot, bypassing the landscape.

- Use a tripod. Repeat, USE A TRIPOD!
- Do NOT put the camera on 'Auto'. Use the manual settings, especially focus, and manually set the shutter speed, aperture and ISO settings.
- For video, if after sunset (which for most it will be) recommended settings are:
- Aperture: the maximum aperture

possible when combining telephoto lens and teleconverter (f/4, f/8). You need to collect as much light as possible, in the shortest time possible, to prevent your main subject to appear completely blurred.

- Shutter speed: when shooting a video, use a shutter speed that is twice the video frame rate (fps). For example, if the video frame rate is 25 fps, shutter speed should be 1/50. When shooting a picture, use a shutter speed of 1/50 or faster. The key point here is to avoid blur.
- ISO: Its value should be around 400. Don't forget, the moon is brighter than you may think (it's reflecting the sun!) and a high ISO won't be of much benefit.
- As mentioned, make sure the auto focus is turned off as otherwise the camera will try to focus continually and potentially ruin the shot.

- If you are shooting through a telescope and adaptor, this is especially important as the camera will focus on the smallest small speck of foreign matter on the telescope lens. Set the focus manually to infinity.

You'll have plenty of time so experiment with the settings as time goes by and check each clip.

Write down the ones you view after shooting and note their file names and settings used.

These notes act as a useful reference when editing and for later shoots.

For more information or to purchase the bits you need to get the best shots (telescopes, adaptors, filters and the like), visit **BINTEL**.





# Interview: Tony Jordan



*Who remembers the actor  
“Robert Vaughn?”*

Older readers may recollect him as Napoleon Solo in “The Man from U.N.C.L.E. along with David McCallum who played Illya Kuryakin. The TV show ran between 1964 and 1968 and was about a super-secret organisation involved in secret international espionage and law-enforcement.

It was a sort of US version of the BBCs ‘Avengers’ I suppose, and in my research, I also discovered that James Bond’s creator, Ian Fleming, had a hand in the development and scriptwriting of The Man From UNCLE.)

50 years on, most people however would now remember the (now sadly, late) Vaughn as ‘the roper’ in the BBC series ‘Hustle’, a show about a group of con artists who ‘ethically’ relieve rich and often nasty or unscrupulous people of their money.

Hustle ran for 8 years – a good run for a drama-cum-comedy (or maybe light hearted might be a better

## INTERVIEW

description) and focuses very much on the group’s ingenuity, planning and downright cheek in reaching their goals.

So if you haven’t watched the program, I urge you to as it is entertaining TV at its best don’t be too surprised to see shameless ‘grifting’ as it known to sell the Houses of Parliament in London, attempts to steal the crown jewels, or return the Ashes to Australia by somewhat nefarious means.

Sadly, the final series was put to bed by the BBC in February 2012.

Or was it?

I have long admired the work put out by writer and show runner for Hustle Tony Jordan, so, when the opportunity came to have a chat, I grabbed it with both hands.

As a primer, Jordan started his writing career at the age of 32 when he submitted his first unsolicited script to the BBC.

He became a scriptwriter for BBC 1’s EastEnders, writing almost two hundred episodes. He became lead

writer and series consultant in the series heyday when it constantly hit audiences in excess of 20 million.

During his time at EastEnders, Jordan was not only responsible for some of the most successful storylines in the show’s history, he also created many of its most iconic and well-loved characters including the Slater family and Alfie Moon.

Since then Jordan’s career progressed with such iconic shows as Minder, Life on Mars (which in my opinion has the best ever ending in the finale of Series 1), Holby Blue, Moving Wallpaper and By Any Means. There are many, many other titles to Jordan’s credit, but sadly, to the best of my knowledge, none have as yet been seen in Australia. (Are you listening Auntie ABC?)

For a complete biography and his works, a good place to start is Jordan’s Wikipedia entry at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tony\\_Jordan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tony_Jordan).

But back to our chat ...

I was curious initially as to his modus operandi with his writing so I asked did he have a complete storyline

worked out in its entirety when it’s a series such as Life on Mars, or episode by episode as in Hustle and By Any Means?

*“I don’t think you can start telling a story unless you know where you’re going; it’s a bit like the North Star for sailors, it gives you a point to aim for, to guide you through the journey”* was his reply and continued with, *“This applies both episodically and a series arc. I’m not saying you can’t change or adapt it as you go along, as new ways of telling the story emerge, but without an end point, how do you know where the beginning is?”*

I also wanted to know if, out of the plethora of material he had created, he had a favourite. By any stretch of imagination, Jordan’s output is prodigious and ranks him up there with the late Enid Blyton, famous for The Famous Five, Secret Seven and hundreds of children’s novels, and Agatha Christie so this had to be a toughie I thought.

*“I think EastEnders represents a huge body of work for me, a hundred hours of drama, it may not all*



be brilliant, but taken as a whole, it's hard not to feel proud of it. But I'm equally proud of everything I've done I think, if I wasn't I would never have allowed it to be aired with my name on and there are plenty of things I've taken my name off in the past.

I think the thing I'm most proud of is the range of material I tackle. That I can write a comedy like *Moving Wallpaper*, but also write *The Passing Bells*, a five part mini-series about young men of the first world war due to air in the UK in November. That I can write *Hustle*, but then write *The Nativity* about the birth of Christ.

A few weeks back I wrote a small piece on the general lack of penetration overseas shows had gained in the US, with many UK shows (and indeed a number of home-grown Aussie shows not seeing their way to a second season. Just recently, we saw Australian Rove McManus' TV show in the US being axed (but then again, so was that pap about some women thinking they were dating Prince Harry, so maybe that's not exactly a good example).



I was keen to know of Jordan's experiences in this area, and his thoughts. He was suitably neutral as would be expected, reminding me that the US version of *Hustle* did very well, and the ABC (US not Australian) did a remake of *Life on Mars*. Jordan told me "For me, the secret to making it work is to not to just copy a format, that's lazy and unimaginative. You need to take the essence of an idea, the soul of it and use that to make a version that fits your culture perfectly".

And as to that question of *Hustle* now dead and buried?

"We've flirted with the idea of a *Hustle* movie. Maybe one day. I think I have so many TV projects waiting in the wings, I'll think of movies for when I retire. Just sit in my garden shed and write a movie a year.

That's all very well, and that would be fantastic, but closer to now? Any hints, clues?

"I think of *Hustle* as "resting", it's a format you could always bring back".

Fair enough.

The last show we saw in Australia from the pen of Tony Jordan was *By Any Means*, a series following the escapades of a clandestine unit that exists in the grey area between law and justice. Living on the edge, they play the criminal elite at their own game. If not, would he give us any insight into projects in the gestation stage or even a little further down the track.

(I have since discovered he also has a hand in the very popular "Death in Paradise".)

When asked about the possibility of a second series, Jordan replied, "The BBC cancelled *By Any Means*, I don't think it was the smartest decision they've ever made, but there's not much I can do about it."

Personally I'd love to see an episode of *Dr Who* penned by Jordan (A body of work completed by Jordan and aired in 2010 on the BBC is *The Nativity*, a new version of the nativity of Jesus story starring Peter Capaldi, the new Dr, who is to have his first episode screened in late August

of this year). What are the odds?

"I've been offered *Dr Who* a couple of times in the past, but it never happened and they stopped asking. Maybe one day. I'm currently working on a Musical Drama idea called *Stop! In The Name of Love*, a story about a group of women trying to find their place in the world and using the music of Motown to tell the story, then I move on to *Dickensian*, a BBC1 project where I bring all of Dickens' characters together in one place".

I was also interested in his thoughts on piracy. Australia was recently singled out as a major player in the illegal downloading of TV shows and movies, so with being the creator of such popular titles, had he been affected?

"People are always going to nick stuff. Do I think they should? No. It's a problem that will only get worse for our industry as more content is streamed online. It's tough to protect material once it's out there".

My last question was about that art of writing. As a publisher, I have seen

words on paper from a multitude of people, some of it good, some of it bad. I also am aware that getting published in any shape or form can be a soul destroying past time, with the risk of rejection after rejection. A famous example of this is J. K. Rowling who was overlooked 12 times before a small publisher picked up, taking her from being on social welfare to billionaire status in a matter of years.

Jordan's reply to this question seems a good way to end an interview, giving some wisdom to be mulled over.

"Keep writing. Don't be put off by rejection. *Life on Mars* was rejected for seven years before it was made, *Moving Wallpaper* took twelve years to get made. There's a quote by screenwriter William Goldman in his book, "Adventures in The Screen Trade", where he says that "Nobody Knows Anything", that's the biggest truth I can pass on.

Wise words from someone who has been there and done that.





# Shooting Smartphone Video:

## 11 Tips and Tricks

*What is the best camcorder to use?*

The correct answer of course is the one you have with you at the time, and these days, for many people that means their smartphone – Android or iPhone in 99.9% of cases (I do know of someone who STILL uses and swears by a Microsoft phone!)

The biggest factor in people using smartphones for video (and photos) is convenience. It is usually immediately accessible and easy to use. However, due to the nature of the beast, there are some “gotchas” you need to be aware of to get the best out of your smartphone for shooting video.

The biggest issue is the sensor / lens type. Despite the hype of the various vendors (and some commentators sadly), there is just no way a smartphone can equal or surpass a dedicated camcorder or camera. The technical aspects, specifically sensor size, just won't let it.

This leads to other areas of deficiency, particularly when dealing with light. And let's face it, without decent light, there is simply no imagery.

Another concern is audio quality. A tiny little microphone designed for picking up a voice for a phone call is not going to compete with a proper mic designed for video such as a **Sennheiser MKE440** or **MKE600**.

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A lack of viewfinder is also an issue with most smartphones; yes you can frame your shots using the LCD, but be honest, in bright sunlight can you REALLY see your smartphone's screen in order to properly compose an image?

Finally there is stabilisation. The shape and ergonomics of a smartphone are just not suited for a stable image via handheld. Although electronics have come a long way in this area, holding a smartphone for an extended period while shooting is just not one of the nicer things to do in life.

So in summary, here is a quick checklist of do's, don'ts and tips if you must shoot with a smartphone.

### Don't shoot vertical.

Firstly, those ugly black bars on the left and right of the image detract from the content. Second, you don't watch your TV sideways do you? Horizontal video is shot that way for a reason (and your video will fill the screen as a bonus.)

### Use a tripod or gimbal.

No-one likes shaky video. A trend towards making video this way only occurred by accident when the footage shot for a particular music video in the 80s was so bad the editor decided to exaggerate it and make it a “feature”.

### NEVER use digital zoom.

In fact, use any sort of zoom on any camera sparingly. If you want a close up of something, shoot one scene at a distance, stop shooting, walk up to the subject and shoot again. Digital zooming only expands the pixels, not the image. It's ugly. So again, NEVER.

### Be aware of the composition (just what IS in the frame?)

Even experienced people get this wrong on (embarrassing) occasion. Tales of telegraph poles in scenes from Robin Hood, and a freeway in a western movie are not just “stories”. Nor was the Starbucks coffee cup in Game of Thrones. Before pressing the

“go” button, carefully examine what is actually in the scene. Also check for things like trees growing out of people's heads and the like.

### Be aware of backlighting.

Also an easy one to miss with the most common being shooting into the sun and therefore the subject's face being totally in shadow. In fact, as per 4. Above always check your lighting and see where shadows fall and the subject(s) are properly lit. Some stuff can be fixed in post yes, but you cannot put light in that wasn't there in the first place.

### Don't overuse effects.

Better still, don't use them at all (eg Instagram or Snapchat ones). Nothing yells amateur like cheesy effects and transitions. If you don't believe me, watch any movie by a “master” such as Hitchcock, Cameron, Kubrick, Lucas, Spielberg etc.



## Learn the smartphone camera / camcorder controls.

Point and shoot is all very well, but if you take the time to learn the basics of video (and photography) including exposure, aperture, ISO, shutter speed and so on, you'll get much better imagery and as a consequence, be better able to tell your story (which is after all what you are trying to do!). With video and photography, you NEVER stop learning, and the best place to start is your smartphone / camcorder / camera manual. And there are thousands on thousands of online tutorials to help as well (but try our website first of course!) And you can also join any one of a number of Facebook groups for instance, that will cater for your personal taste in video making such as nature, sport, weddings, horror or social issues for example.

## Don't forget the audio!

People often forget just how important the audio is in even a silly home video. Viewers will forgive a jumpy video, but out of synch or bad audio is an instant turn off. Be aware of background noise overwhelming someone talking, or audio that clips or causes distortion. The best way is to use a separate audio recorder such as those made by Zoom. Our own favourite which is affordable and works with your existing smartphone is the **Sennheiser Memory Mic**. Audio recorded this way can be later synched up to your video quickly and easily.

## Remember The Basics – SD card, battery, clean lens.

Whether it be an inexpensive smartphone or a top-of-the-range Panasonic VariCam, the basics still apply. Make sure the lens is clean, you have enough space on your SD card for the shoot and have spare cards just

in case and make sure the battery is fully charged (and again spares available if necessary or carry a re-charging "brick")

## Have fun!

It is not meant to be a chore so take your time, look for different and interesting angles to shoot from and do another take or more if necessary (and possible). Enjoy the process as the end result, whether a great little home movie or a fully blown documentary or short film destined for a festival, is a very rewarding and satisfying experience.

## Know when to stop.

Nothing is ever perfect and if you keep trying to make it so, you'll get frustrated and bored with the whole process. So know when to stop the shoot, edit or whatever, and move onto the next thing. I speak from experience here!