MAKING A MOVIE USING A SMARTPHONE

Handout

Introduction: films for social change

Making a film basics

Pre-production

The thinking process
Audience, purpose, content, style, paper work

Shooting script

Production schedule

Production checklist

Production
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Good lighting

Using a hand grip (for smartphones) top tips

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Sample Model release form

I agree to the inclusion of my contribution to this film project, the nature of which has been explained to me. I understand that my contribution may be edited and that there is no guarantee that my
contribution will appear in the final film. I agree that my contribution may be used to publicise the project.

I understand that the images from this shoot (or any part of it) may be distributed in any medium in any part of the world.

My contribution has, to the best of my knowledge been truthful and honest. I have not deliberately sought to conceal any relevant facts from the producers of this production.

Signed

(Ask them to sign this form after the filming/interview has taken place – most people agree to sign anyway – I have only ever had one person refuse to sign)

Framing and Composition

Film grammar

Every form of communication has a basic grammar and a set of ground rules that have evolved through experience.

In filming, as with television, certain practices and techniques have been devised to ensure that the wide gap between the communicator and audience is minimised. This means that there are safe formulas for making film/television pictures effectively, though any experienced director will know that it's occasionally necessary and beneficial to depart from these practices to produce a different kind of effect or statement. There's no absolute right and wrong, only degrees of success.

The following notes are designed to give you the basic rules of film grammar. But remember, you have a responsibility to make your particular form of communication as effective as possible. By sticking to the rules you will at least have a chance of arriving at your destination, whatever it may be. By departing from them without a good reason, you could be heading for disaster.
The Rule of Thirds

The Rule of Thirds isn’t really based on any sort of scientific finding (despite a spate of studies that have been done recently), but stems from a more general sense of aesthetics. Artists once began to notice that if they placed the subject of their painting or photograph slightly to the left or to the right, it would look a little better and a bit more visually pleasing than if they just stuck it dead center. Hence, The Rule of Thirds was born. Left, right, or center. It’s that simple.

Read more at http://www.craveonline.com/site/171953-free-film-school-7-the-rule-of-thirds-which-rules#w3oM0hvwBTwoOriw.99

The rule of thirds is a concept in video and film production in which the frame is divided into nine imaginary sections, as illustrated on the right. This creates reference points which act as guides for framing the image.

Points (or lines) of interest should occur at 1/3 or 2/3 of the way up (or across) the frame, rather than in the centre. Like many rules of framing, this is not always necessary (or desirable) but it is one of those rules you should understand well before you break it.

In most "people shots", the main line of interest is the line going through the eyes. In this shot, the eyes are placed approximately 1/3 of the way down the frame.

Depending on the type of shot, it’s not always possible to place the eyes like this.

In this shot, the building takes up approximately 1/3 of the frame and the sky takes up the rest. This could be a weather shot, in which the subject is actually the sky.
Shot Types

There is a convention in the video, film and television industries which assigns names and guidelines to common types of shots, framing and picture composition. The list below briefly describes the most common shot types (click the images for more details).

Notes:

- The exact terminology varies between production environments but the basic principles are the same.
- Shots are usually described in relation to a particular subject. In most of the examples below, the subject is the boy.
- See below for more information and related tutorials.

EWS (Extreme Wide Shot)
The view is so far from the subject that he isn't even visible. Often used as an establishing shot.

VWS (Very Wide Shot)
The subject is visible (barely), but the emphasis is still on placing him in his environment.
WS (Wide Shot)
The subject takes up the full frame, or at least as much as comfortably possible.
AKA: long shot, full shot.

MCU (Medium Close Up)
Half way between a MS and a CU.

CU (Close Up)
A certain feature or part of the subject takes up the whole frame.

ECU (Extreme Close Up)
The ECU gets right in and shows extreme detail.
Variation: Choker

MS (Mid Shot)
Shows some part of the subject in more detail while still giving an impression of the whole subject.
Cut-In
Shows some (other) part of the subject in detail.

CA (Cutaway)
A shot of something other than the subject.

Two-Shot
A shot of two people, framed similarly to a mid shot.

(OSS) Over-the-Shoulder Shot
Looking from behind a person at the subject.

Noddy Shot
Usually refers to a shot of the interviewer listening and reacting to the subject.

Point-of-View Shot (POV)
Shows a view from the subject's perspective.
Weather Shot
The subject is the weather. Can be used for other purposes, e.g. background for graphics.

Cutaway
A cutaway is a shot that's usually of something other than the current action. It could be a different subject (eg. this cat when the main subject is its owner), a close up of a different part of the subject (eg. the subject's hands), or just about anything else. The cutaway is used as a "buffer" between shots (to help the editing process), or to add interest/information.

Lighting
Light is the "raw material" for creating visual images. Everything related to vision is related to light. Whether the medium is still photography, motion film, video or computer-generated images, light forms the basis of everything you see.

It is important to think of lighting not as something extra which is added in some situations, but as a fundamental part of all visual media production. As a rule of thumb think natural light, think daytime filming. If there isn't natural light think carefully about whether filming will be worthwhile. You could get creative and look out for Neon signs or juke boxes.
Interview techniques

Vox pops

The term "vox pop" comes from the Latin phrase vox populi, meaning "voice of the people". The vox pop is a tool used in many forms of media to provide a snapshot of public opinion. Random subjects are asked to give their views on a particular topic and their responses are presented to the viewer/reader as a reflection of popular opinion.

For video and television vox pops, the interviewer approaches people “in the street” and asks them simple questions about the topic. These people will be new to interviews and will often be nervous, flustered, giggly, etc. It's therefore important to make them feel comfortable and relaxed.

When asking people to participate, fast is best - don't give them time to worry about how they look or what their friends will think. Use a short, sharp standard question such as "Would you mind answering a couple of quick questions about genetically modified food for TV3 news tonight?". (Note: Everyone will want to know what channel you're with and when the programme will be broadcast, so it helps to get that out of the way quickly.)
As always, ask open-ended questions and avoid leading questions. At the same time, you must be specific enough to obtain brief answers.

Camera shots are usually framed as an MCU or close up. It's important to think about the guest's looking direction, and get an equal number of left-facing and right-facing subjects. These can then be alternated in post-production. Some producers go so far as to get all answers with a particular opinion facing one way, and answers with an opposing opinion facing the other way. Whether or not you think this is effective is up to you — you may feel that it is too contrived.

It pays to ensure that an accurate mix of genders and races are represented, appropriate to the population being surveyed.

Talking heads

In some science programmes extensive use is made of interviews with a succession of specialist/experts (the interviewers questions having been edited out). This referred to as 'talking heads'. Speakers are sometimes allowed to talk to camera. The various interviews are sometimes cut together as if it were a debate, although the speakers are rarely in direct conversation.

Interview techniques/questions

Most interviews seek to achieve one or more of the following goals:

1. Obtain the interviewee's knowledge about the topic
2. Obtain the interviewee's opinion and/or feelings about the topic
3. Feature the interviewee as the subject

It's important that you know exactly why you are conducting an interview and which goal(s) you are aiming for. Stay focused on questions and techniques, which will achieve them.

Do your homework. You will be expected to have a basic knowledge of your subject. Do not roll up to an interview with a band and ask them how many albums they have released — you should know this already. If you show your ignorance, you lose credibility and risk being ridiculed. At the very least, the subject is less likely to open up to you.
Have a list of questions. It seems obvious but some people don’t think of it. While you should be prepared to improvise and adapt, it makes sense to have a firm list of questions, which need to be asked.

Of course many interviewees will ask for a list of questions before hand, or you might decide to provide one to help them prepare.

Whether or not this is a good idea depends on the situation. For example, if you will be asking technical questions, which might need a researched answer, then it helps to give the subject some warning. On the other hand, if you are looking for spontaneous answers then it’s best to wait until the interview.

Try to avoid being pinned down to a preset list of questions as this could inhibit the interview. However, if you do agree to such a list before the interview, stick to it.

Ask the subject if there are any particular questions they would like you to ask.

Back-cut questions may be shot at the end of a video interview. Make sure you ask the back-cut questions with the same wording as the interview — even varying the wording slightly can sometimes make the edit unworkable. You might want to make notes of any unscripted questions as the interview progresses, so you remember to include them in the back-cuts.

Listen. A common mistake is to be thinking about the next question while the subject is answering the previous one, to the point that the interviewer misses some important information. This can lead to all sorts of embarrassing outcomes.

How To Interview Someone for a Documentary

1. Prepare your questions
2. Think ahead about the type of questions you want to ask your interviewee. What kind of information are you looking for from this particular person and what are the type of questions that will best get them to give you the information you’re looking for? No need to go crazy. 5-10 questions is usually enough.
3. Avoid “yes” or “no” answers
4. Your questions should be asked in such a way that you won’t get “yes” or “no” answers. You need your documentary interviewees to give you substantive answers that you can use in your video edits. Instead of “Are you happy with the outcome of the court case?” Ask, “What is your response to the outcome of today’s court case?”
5 Prepare, but be spontaneous. Even though you have prepared questions in advance, allow yourself to veer off from questions if the interviewee says something interesting or unexpected that you’d like to explore further. Sometimes the unplanned “spontaneous” questions & answers create the best moments.

6 Get the interviewee comfortable. When the video camera rolls, ask easy questions to warm them up. Ask them what they had for breakfast, where they are from, how many kids in their family, anything to get them talking and comfortable. This is a key interviewing tip.

7 Don’t give out specific questions in advance. I cannot stress this point strongly enough. It’s perfectly acceptable to give someone a general idea of what the interview will be about, but do not give them your list of questions. If you do, they will try to memorize their answers in advance and you will lose spontaneity and freshness. Your interview will end up feeling stale, unauthentic and rehearsed.

8 Have them repeat your question. This is a great idea, especially if you plan to have no narration for your documentary. Get the person to repeat back your question in their answer. This will help you with the video editing and storytelling later during the editing process. For example, you ask, “How are you feeling?” The interviewee says, “How am I feeling? I’m feeling excited!”

9 Proper positioning of interviewee. If you are the person both shooting AND interviewing, the person may end up looking into the video camera, which gives the feeling of a personal and direct connection with the person talking. However, the off-camera approach is most common. The interviewer sits or stands right next to the camera so that the interviewee is looking just off camera. You get your best results if the interviewer (you) is standing right next to the camera, that way you can see the full face of the person you’re interviewing and not a profile, which can be unattractive and distracting to the viewer because you can’t see their eyes and facial expressions very well.

10 Keep your mouth shut. Stay quiet when the other person is talking. You don’t want to hear yourself in the background. (Watch out for the “hmmmm”, “Oh right…”.) Just ask the question and then keep quiet. It’s good to nod, and make gentle facial expressions, just no sound. Unless of course, YOU are part of the story and the camera has both of you in the shot.

11 Ask for final comment. Here’s a great video interviewing tip: at the end of the interview, always ask the person if they have any final thoughts. Ask them if there was anything you missed. This can sometimes bring out some great information you hadn’t thought to ask about.

12 Don’t stop filming when the interview is “over.” Especially when you have someone who is nervous and never got quite comfortable with the interview. When you’re done with your official questions, say “OK, that’s the end of the interview.” Make sure the camera continues to roll at this point because often the conversation will continue. Psychologically, the person
no longer feels the “pressure” of the interview and will loosen up. This is the time I have often gotten the best quotes of the interview!

Bonus Interviewing Tips

Have Energy!
If you are bored and reserved, your interview will emulate you and you will end up with a boring interview. So create energy within yourself when asking the questions and your energy will rub off and help create a more dynamic interview.

Ask How They “Feel”
The best part about a film vs a book or article is that you can “see”, “hear”, “feel” what’s happening on screen. You are not completely utilizing the film medium if you are just relaying FACTS. Film is about sharing an emotional ride with your audience. So when you’re interviewing your subjects, make sure to include questions that get to the emotion. “How do you feel about...” “What's in your heart about this issue...”

Be Curious & Open
Your ultimate goal with your interviews is to get the subject to “perform” at their best. What does that mean? You want them at their most “natural” “authentic” state where their true selves feel comfortable to come through. They need to be relaxed and “in the flow” and not self-conscience. Don't come at them with a judgmental spirit or hard-core agenda.. try to be genuinely open to understanding where they’re coming from. Even if that person's beliefs or values are completely contradictory to your own, you MUST approach that person with a genuine, warm and open heart that will make them feel “safe” giving you their most personal insights. If you can achieve this atmosphere of trust and human connection, you will get amazing interviews.

Follow these simple interviewing tips and you’ll be on your way to making great documentaries!

Using your smartphone to make a film
Equipment

Smartphone
Handheld grip (as in picture above approximately £50 – not necessary but handy)
Smartphone film editing software
For pro’s
Lenses
Film pro app (additional features for the professional film maker)

#5 tips filming on smartphone

1) Good natural lighting
2) Quiet space (get up close for sound)
3) Fill the frame with your subject (hold frame for 10 seconds on all shots)
4) Always film horizontally
5) Don’t use zoom ever
6) Shoot in airplane mode (save battery power)
7) Beware of low temperatures (as affects battery life)
Editing apps for smartphone

Ten of the best video editing apps recommended by www.stuff.tv

iMovie

Considered a benchmark release on iOS, and impressively similar to the Mac desktop version, iMovie should be on every iOS device. The app makes it ridiculously easy to splice together shot footage, but there's a lot more to it than that. You can also use it to add titles, music, voiceovers and photos to your work of art - and if you want to cheese it up, take your pick from a bunch of TV-style templates and movie trailer themes. With the latest Apple kit, it’ll even deal with 4K. (£3.99)

Read more at http://www.stuff.tv/features/10-best-video-editing-apps-mobile#eX6CedR4ijHVODif.99

PowerDirector

Android often ends up second-best when it comes to creative fare, but that's not the case with video. PowerDirector in many ways echoes iMovie, providing a user-friendly but powerful editor.

Clips can quickly be arranged and trimmed, titles can be added, and you get a decent set of transitions to experiment with. Pay the one-off IAP (£3.94) to rid your movies of watermarks and export at up to 1080p. (£free + IAP)
While iMovie is great at what it does, it’s clearly geared towards casual use. If you want to take things to the next level, try Pinnacle Studio. This long-established editor - the desktop version has been around since the ‘90s - provides a wealth of powerful features.

Although editing is fast and intuitive, you get plenty of control over speed, transitions, picture-in-picture, pan-and-zoom, audio edits, and titles. It’s the closest thing you’ll get to a desktop-style video-editing app on your iPad. (£9.99)

Read more at http://www.stuff.tv/features/10-best-video-editing-apps-mobile#eX6CedR4jHVODif.99

One of the most impressive things about this Android video editor is that it’s so simple to use even on quite a small smartphone. It uses screen space remarkably well, making it a cinch to arrange your clips, add additional layers (captions, images, and even ‘handwriting’), quickly import extra footage, and play around with effects. It’s just a pity the developer saddled it with a restrictive subscription payment model rather than a one-off cost. (You can get 30 days for £4.02, or start subscribing for £2.91 per month.) (£free + IAP)

This one shows that Windows Phone at least has the potential to match Android and iOS in the app stakes.

It’s a generously featured video editor that works much like iMovie, allowing you to make frame-by-frame edits, join clips up with neat
transitions, add titles and soundtracks, and export the results as HD movies. It’s fast, well behaved and powerful = (£free + IAP)

REPLAY. Designed for Instagrammers, but suitable for anyone with pics and videos sloshing about on their iOS device, Replay is about creating videos — fast. You decide on a selection, pick a theme and — BAM! — there’s your masterpiece.

You can make a few tweaks — style; pace; font; filters; cuts. For the most part, though, this is all about letting an app take the strain, turning a pile of photos into a promo, or random baby videos into something guaranteed to make everyone blub. (£free + IAP)

If you want a bit more control over your iPhone videos, but don’t fancy delving into the likes of iMovie, Clips is where it’s at. After importing videos and optionally selecting background music, you end up in the edit screen. You rearrange clips by dragging them up or down, and trim them using grab handles. Split, speed, crop and dissolve commands are a swipe or tap away, and completed movies can be shared or re-edited.

It’s just about perfect, which is why it’s hugely annoying Google’s bought out the developer and put its apps on life support. Grab them all before February 2016, iOS users! (£free)
Given its impressive feature-set, you might sit down with Splice and wonder what the catch is. This entirely free (and ad-free) app enables you to import and arrange your clips, each of which can be individually edited.

You can add text, transitions, and filters; speed can be adjusted; and there are three audio tracks (including one for voiceovers). Destructive trimming within clip edits is the only real niggle, but otherwise Splice is great for quickly editing movies on your iPhone.

With Premiere's pedigree on the desktop, it's a bit odd to see the name used on mobile for such a comparatively simple product. But Premiere Clip gives you a straightforward means of arranging clips and exporting the result.

It's designed for speed, so isn't particularly feature-rich, but is a decent download for anyone heavily immersed in Creative Cloud — or Android owners wanting something quick, simple and free. (iOS owners should instead first check out the superior Splice.) (£free)

This app comes across like an automated editor for anyone who considers using Replay a bit much effort. Point Magistro at a bunch of images and photos, pick a theme and some music, and then have a cup of tea. When you're done, Magistro will be too, and you'll have a highly animated short, based on the content you provided.

For free, movies are limited to a minute long. Pay for premium (from £3.99 per month) and you can create longer movies with more clips, and get unlimited downloads. If you only want to save the odd movie, you can do so at 79p a pop. (£free + IAP)
Free stock footage

creative.bfi.org.uk/titles
Splice some rare archive black-and-white into your project
video.google.com/nara.html
Everything from marines raising the US flag over Iwo Jima to footage of Nasa test rockets
cchannel4.com/fourdocs/rush
Heaps of free documentary footage
open2.net/creativearchive/azlisting.html
How about an aerial shot of cooling towers?
or lorries being x-rayed at customs?
teachers.tv/video
Need a doctor's explanation of particle physics? This is the place
spacetelescope.org/videos
Does your sci-fi epic lack shots of Andromeda or black holes?

Credits for use of materials above

Interview tips: desktop documentaries.com/interviewing-tips.html
Application reviews: Read more at http://www.stuff.tv/features/10-best-video-editing-apps-mobile#eX6CedR4jHVODif.99