

VIDEO AND SOUND WORKBOOK FOR DOCUMENTARY
(Based on examples and practices from Studio 174, Jamaica)

Rainbow Collective & Openvizer, 2016

VERSION 1 (basic design and layout)

**This is not a final edition and is for educational purposes only,
not for commercial use.**

INTERVIEWS

The interview is one of the most common techniques in documentary film making. In its simplest form, it is a shot of a person's head, face or upper body as they give information to the audience. To get a great interview shot, you don't need an expensive camera, a studio or a lighting set up; just using a few simple techniques of content and composition in your shot and recording good clean sound can guarantee you an interview set-up of professional quality.

THE BACKGROUND

The person you are interviewing is called the 'subject' or the 'interviewee'. First, you should find a good background to film your subject against. Of course the words that the subject says are the most important part of your interview, but film is a visual medium and what the audience can see in the background can add lots of meaning. The shot below gives the viewer a real feel for the colours, textures and professions in Coronation Market, Kingston.

Remember the rule of thirds? The subject's eyes should be one third of the way down the screen and ONE THIRD of the way in from the side.



What people do with their hands says a lot about them. The lady is peeling an onion while she talks. This is actually her job and it gives the viewer an image of her everyday life. The fact that she's still working while she's being interviewed shows how busy her life is.

Whenever you can, try and show your subject in their own environment. If the interview is about their job, show their workplace in the background. If it's about their home life, film in their house, and so on.

We can see people in the background. While the lady is talking, the viewer can learn about the community from seeing people in the background. How they move, what they do, what they wear, all tell the viewer something about the interviewee's society.

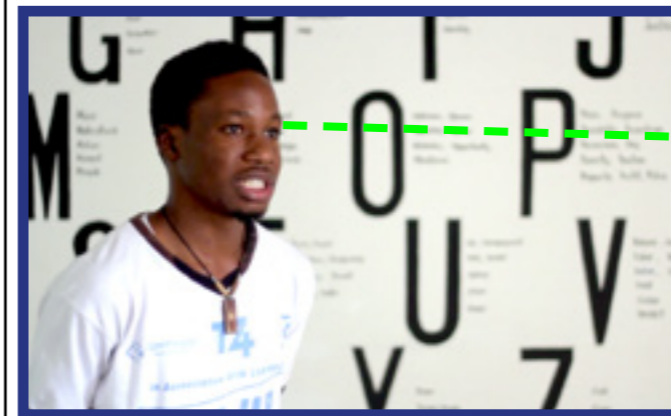
THE EYELINE

normally, your subject should be looking 'off camera' at the interviewer, rather than into the lens. The interviewer should be standing behind the camera and to one side, so the subject's eyeline goes across the big space in the frame.

This is called looking room.

Look at the dotted green eyelines in these shots and how the subjects' eyes are ONE THIRD up, ONE THIRD in and they are also looking across the frame, into the space.

To see why this makes a strong shot, look at the subjects eyes, and then follow the green arrow of their eyeline. Notice how it makes your eyes sweep across the frame, taking in the background. In the top image, your eyes pass across the monument of which Keith is the caretaker. In the image below left your eyes pass across artist Kirk's Alphabet Wall and in the image below right, your eyes pass across the textured wall of the man's home and his child standing in the background.



In this shot, Richard's eyes are in the right place, on the thirds, but he has no looking room. Notice how his eyeline is much shorter and this makes the shot look a bit cramped and uncomfortable. When we try to follow his eyeline we just hit the edge of the frame and nothing is revealed.

This could be fixed by the interviewer standing on the other side of the camera, causing Richard to look across the frame.



OBSERVATIONAL DOCUMENTARY

Observational documentary is a style of film making which observes characters or places, behaving in their usual manner, rather than relying on interviews or voice overs.

In observational documentary, the audience does not generally see or feel the presence of the film maker and they often look at very small, natural moments, which are symbolic of a bigger story. For example, 'Chad's Story' by Sheldon Green, Kirk Cockburn and Chadwick Coke, is simply an observation of a young man's morning routine, but at the same time, it shows his courage, his determination, his background and his dreams; all in 6 minutes. The secret of successful observational documentary is finding the little details which hint at a much bigger story.



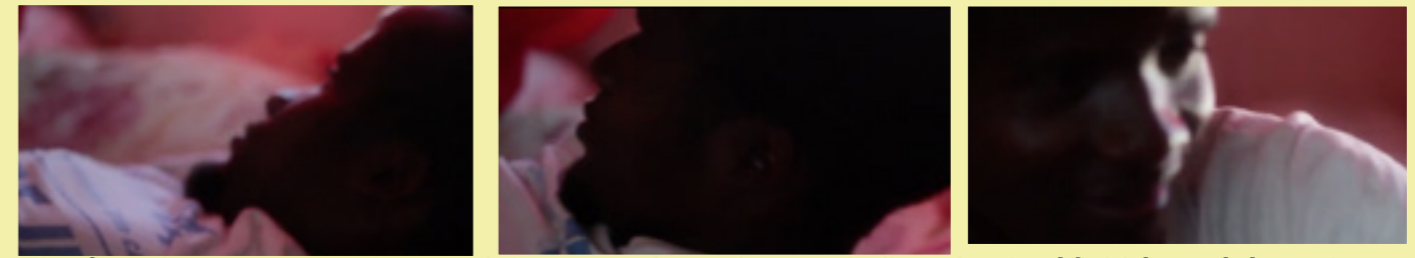
The opening sequence is made up of three shots. Each one is a strong image, full of meaning. The first is a wide shot of a young man performing acrobatic press-ups by the sea at sunset, from the very first image presenting a character with an extraordinary ability and strength. In the background is the sound of a wheel turning. We cut to a close up of a hand pushing a wheel chair forwards. Is this the same character? If so, we have now learned that as well as his great ability, he is also suffering from a disability. When we see images work together like this to create meanings, connections and contradictions we call it a 'dynamic'. Because this is a close-up, we can see the textures and details - that the hand is stained and worn from pushing the chair,

and that the chair is old and has been damaged and repaired over time.

After giving us information, the third shot asks us a question. It shows a pair of hands, moving at the same speed as the wheel chair, gently holding a butterfly, a beautiful but mysterious image. So in the opening sequence, we have been given a character, a location, an achievement, a challenge and a question, all in 3 shots and with no words.



In the next scene, we see Chad wake up, showing that the 3 previous shots were a dream. The scene shows Chad getting dressed, making a cup of tea and preparing to leave the house. Again, look at how very simple actions and details can show us a lot about a character and their life. The scene is shot on 2 cameras working together: one with a zoom lens on a wide setting (called the MASTER angle) to capture most of the action in a wide shot and the other with a tighter 50mm lens (called the DETAIL angle) getting close-ups of Chad's face, hands, expressions and actions. The shots from the MASTER angle have a RED border and the detail angle has a YELLOW border.



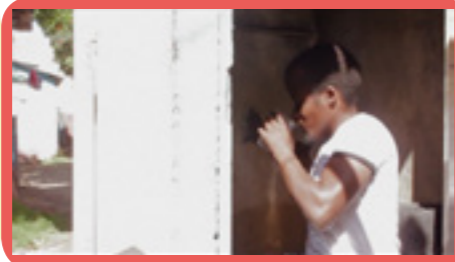
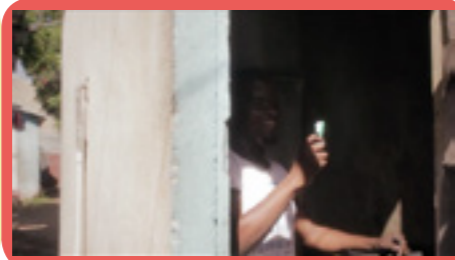
The first shots are very close and the 50mm lens gives a shallow depth of field for soft focus in the background. Chad's slow movement as he wakes up, the soft background and warm, pink colour of the scene works well to give the feeling of coming out of a dream. The camera moves with Chad, keeping his face in the frame.



Meanwhile, the master camera was waiting outside the bedroom. See how the wide lens shows much more of the background and it is all in focus. We see Chad walking from the bedroom on his hands. He is grabbed his young sibling as he walks past but an adult voice says "Leave Chad alone!" As well as seeing the textures and space of Chad's house, we have learned that he has a family, that due to his disability he is tormented by his brother, but that he has a guardian watching out for him. Getting this information is called 'character development', and the more that you can do without words, the better.



Chad's wheel chair is in the middle of the composition, attracting our attention. We see another of Chad's daily struggles as he pulls himself up into his chair, and as he wheels off, the camera follows, keeping him in centre of the frame

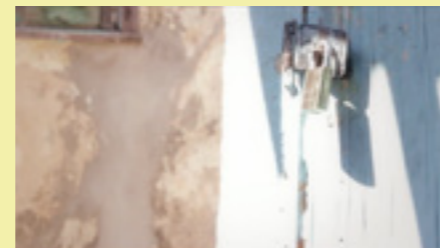


The next sequence INTER-CUTS back and forth between the master and detail camera. While the **MASTER ANGLE** remains in the same position, the **DETAIL ANGLE** is always moving. It begins on the tooth-paste as Chad picks it up, it

moves to his face as he starts to brush his teeth and as he turns to wash the toothbrush it films over his shoulder. The shot of his face is very important, allowing us to connect with him, through his eyes, as he gazes into the distance. Sometimes a subject can be nervous in front of a camera but filming daily routines can make them relax. They've done it so many times before, that even if they are nervous they will still perform the actions naturally.



Here we see the same technique as in the previous shot, but this time from the master angle. The camera pans with Chad as he wheels back to the house. It stops with him in the middle of the frame as he lifts out of his chair and stays in place as he leaves frame through the door. The final frame has the empty wheelchair in the middle of the frame, creating a good cutting point, like the padlock in the last shot.



As Chad reaches up to lock the bathroom the detail camera follows his arm movement and pans up to his hand as he attaches the padlock, then holds in position and lets his hand leave frame. Knowing when to follow the action and when to let it leave the frame is an important skill. In this case, letting the hand leave and then holding on a shot of the padlock creates an excellent cutting point.

HANDS & FACES

In all the sequences we've seen so far, the detail angle has always followed the eyes or the hands of the subject.

A general rule for the detail angle, when following a person, is that if the hands are doing something, film them, keeping them in the middle of the frame. When the hands are idle, or if you think you've filmed a certain action enough, film the face to capture reactions and emotions.

It is not only the hands themselves which are expressive, but also, through the objects which they touch and handle we are given an insight into the character. The padlock, the butterfly, etc all give us further information about the world Chad inhabits.

Close ups of facial expressions are also a key tool in telling your story. A particular expression, or change in expression can tell us far more about a character, their thoughts and their feelings than can often be conveyed in a lengthy interview.

If you notice a particularly striking expression on the face of the person you are following, allow the camera to fold on the face until the expression changes. It is often these changes which are the most powerful and perceptive.



In this longer series of images, notice how the wide master camera remains in place for almost the whole scene. The filming is taking place in a small confined space so the camera operator has found a position from which they can see the whole room, with their lens set to its widest focal length. It is always a good idea to hold your position wherever possible - even if the subject leaves the frame, it can be a good idea to wait a couple of seconds to see if they will return. It is better to allow the action to come in and out of the frame (as long as it doesn't take too long) than to be swinging your camera left and right trying to reframe, only to have the subject return to their original position. As above, allowing them to leave frame also offers good cutting points for the edit.

Meanwhile, the detail camera has found a position just out of the wide frame and although they remain mostly in the same spot for most of the scene, they are panning, tilting, standing and crouching to reframe constantly. As before, the detail camera operator is focussing on hands and faces.

There is one position shift, after Chad gets down from the counter and moves to the microwave. At this point, the master camera operator takes a couple of steps backwards and out of the door to one side.

It is usually best for the master operator to move first and for the detail operator to keep an eye out and move accordingly, always trying to judge where their edge of frame is and making every effort to stay out of the shot.

It can be useful to develop a form of communication between camera operators, using hand gestures and facial expressions to let the other know when and where they are going to move, when they are in shot, and so on.

If you work in a team with another operator regularly, you can form a strong creative bond, encouraging each other, offering support and developing a unique, combined style and forms of unspoken communication on set.

After all of the action is completed, it is highly recommended to spend a few minutes in the location, picking up extra close ups of important details. Pictures on walls, objects on shelves, utensils and appliances, all provide fascinating insights into the life of the subject. Take your time and shoot each object or at least 30 seconds. Also, try and shoot objects from different heights, not only from your natural eye-level, which can often be the temptation. Bring your eye down to the level of the object and look at it from different angles, wherever possible, finding a frame where the background also contains interesting features.

ABSTRACT/IMPRESSIONISTIC DOCUMENTARY

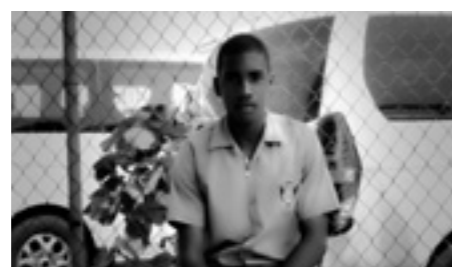
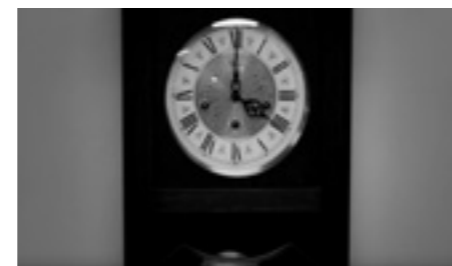
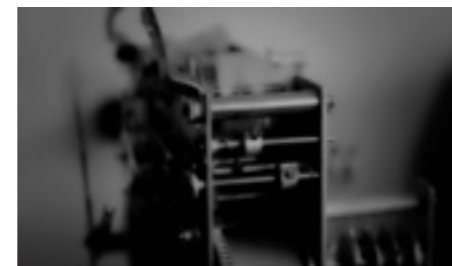
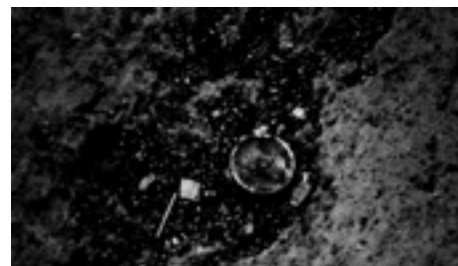
In this example, a 2 minute short film called 'Passing Time', Director Venezia Johnson chose to tell a story using textures, imagery, rhythm and soundscape, rather than conventional interviews or observation.

The result is a highly creative and effective piece which conveys a complex and profound narrative in an incredibly short period of time.

Although filming interviews and observation can seem like the most obvious approach to follow, it actually takes a lot of screen time to express a point in words. abstract or impressionistic documentary takes a more poetic approach, assigning layers of meaning not only to each shot, but to the links and connections between the shots.

Notice how Venezia focuses on progressively older faces of passers by, slowly decaying inner-city buildings, clocks and other circular compositions to encapsulate and present the aging process and the circle of life.

Creating these kinds of documentaries can be challenging and risky - you never know whether the meanings and connections in your head will translate properly to the screen, but it is this element of experimentation and going beyond your comfort zone which can take you to a next level of creative film making.



Techniques used:

- The black and white photography prepares the audience for a more stylised film. From the outset, the audience will be expecting something alternative and will be therefore be more receptive to, and less unsettled by, the unconventional structure.
- Every shot is on a tripod and holds on a single frame. This gives each image a more considered feel. The audience can see that every frame has been chosen for a reason and this encourages them to look deeper into the image themselves. The steady, locked-off frame also gives the a feel of higher production value.
- Although 4 different male subjects appear in the film, the way that they get increasingly older, combined with images of the clocks, allows the audience to see them as a single 'character' getting older.
- The use of recurring shapes gives the film a rhythmic structure and cohesiveness. The clocks, wheels and air conditioning units all perform circular motions, reinforcing the feeling in the audience of time passing.
- Venezia has chosen images with very pronounced textures and focused on this in the wide shots, close ups and character portraits, giving the camera work a richness and depth.
- In post-production a slight vignette and added contrast to the image brings out these textures even more.

Watch the full film at : https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9_f7kwa3Z6c

COMMISSIONS AND TREATMENTS

Many opportunities will arise for you to practice film making while building a client base through small video commissions.

Sometimes potential clients will approach you and at other times you may choose to present an idea to a potential partner or funder.

In any context, it is important to know how to write a 'treatment'. A treatment is a short document which outlines, in very simple terms, the content, structure and creative approach of a possible film.

Try not to go into too much detail or too many technicalities - the idea of a good treatment is that it can be read by somebody with no technical or theoretical film knowledge but they will still come away with a vision of how the finished film will look and feel.

Here is a sample treatment from a project which Studio 174 pitched to a potential client, the Grace Kennedy Foundation.

ALWAYS make sure you send a treatment as a PDF with a letterhead rather than a word document. A PDF locks all elements in place so your document is less likely to be altered. Use the letterhead of your company or freelance name.

ALWAYS make sure you send a treatment as a PDF with a letterhead rather than a word document. A PDF locks all elements in place so your document is less likely to be altered. Use the letterhead of your company or freelance name. Make sure to include your email and phone number.

The treatment should begin with a 'slug-line', a single sentence which explains the nature of the video. Although very short in its final form, getting the wording right can take a long time and although it is at the start of the document, it can be good to wait until the end to write it. Once you have a complete treatment it is easier to summarise it into a sentence.

The 'short synopsis' is another summary of the film, but this time with more detail, and typically around 2-4 sentences.

A breakdown of the film's content and structure gives the commissioner a clear understanding of the specific elements which will make up the film and indications of the creative approach help them to visualise the style of the finished film.

A short rationale of your approach shows the commissioner that you have carefully considered their needs and worked them into the plan for the film.

An indication of the equipment you will be using gives the commissioner a frame of reference for the production value of the film.

SEE THE APPENDIX AT THE END OF THIS WORKBOOK FOR A BREAKDOWN OF HOW A SIMILAR COMMISSION WAS COMPLETED.



STUDIO 174

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A SERIES OF INSPIRATIONAL 20 SECOND VIDEO SPOTS, PRODUCED FOR GRACE FOUNDATION, WITH MAJOR JAMAIACAN ATHLETICS STARS ENCOURAGING PARTICIPATION IN P.S.O.J. EDUCATION 5K RUN/WALK/CYCLE

Each of the 4 x 20sec films will feature an athlete (Shelly-Ann Frazer-Pryce, Hansel Parchment and Alia Atkinson and sponsorship recipient Michael O'Hara) offering a short insight into their personal background and a challenge they overcame to reach their goals and achieve their dreams. They will relate this experience to that of joining in the 5k run/walk/cycle and pushing one's own goals and boundaries. They will express that through engaging in such projects, whatever your background, you can achieve your dreams.

Imagery of each athlete training, preparing, running, walking or cycling through an environment from their past will accompany these inspirational memories. These sequences will be filmed in a dynamic, cinematic style, using a combination of tight, shallow-focus close ups (focused facial expressions, stretching muscles, pounding feet, spinning bicycle chains, etc) with dramatic wide shots conveying the beauty and variety of Kingston and its surrounding area. The editing will be fast-paced and taught to build tension and to capture the power and energy of the athletes. This rapid editing style will be accompanied by a soundtrack which is at once urgent and positive and the sounds of the sequences on screen, the running feet, spinning wheels and pedals and controlled breathing will all add to the powerful and immersive feel of the films.

The final 5 seconds of each film will show all 4 athletes, standing together against an iconic backdrop of Kingston, while motion text graphics will give details of time, location and registration.

The short length and direct, punchy style of the videos, combined with the status of these household-name athletes are a perfect combination to achieve maximum impact online through YouTube and other social media, bringing a recognition and engagement with the 5K which will reach far beyond the boundaries of Kingston.

The films will be shot on Canon DSLRs with prime lenses and edited and graded on Adobe Premiere/ Red Giant Magic Bullet with audio recorded through Sennheiser microphones.

PRESSING INFO BUTTON MULTIPLE TIMES OFFERS DIFFERENT AMOUNTS OF INFORMATION ON THE DISPLAY

START RECORDING. IF DISPLAY HAS TURNED OFF, PRESS TO AWAKEN

BEFORE RECORDING, ZOOM INTO IMAGE TO CHECK FOCUS

APERTURE CONTROL. HOLD WHILE SCROLLING TOP WHEEL TO ALTER APERTURE INSTEAD OF SHUTTER SPEED

'Q' MENU GIVES ACCESS TO WHITE BALANCE, RESOLUTION, FORMAT & FRAME RATE SETTINGS

DELETE CLIP (WHEN IN PLAYBACK MODE)

SWITCH TO PLAYBACK MODE

WHITE BALANCE. ACCESS THROUGH 'Q' BUTTON AND SELECT DAYLIGHT, TUNGSTEN, CLOUD COVER, FLUORESCENT LIGHT AS REQUIRED TO BALANCE THE COLOUR IN YOUR IMAGE

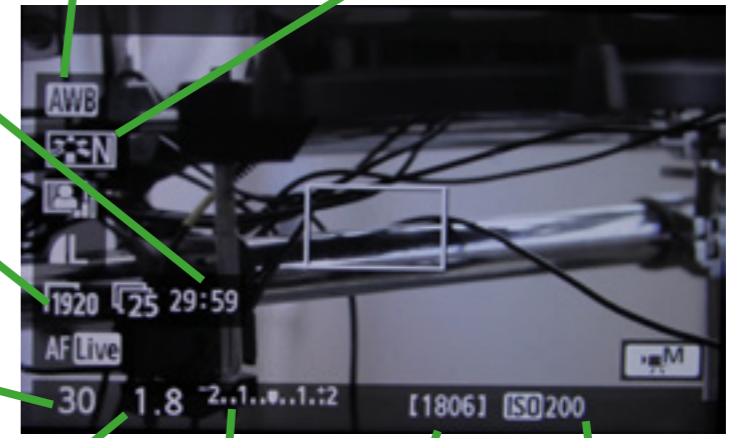
IMAGE PRESET. ACCESS THROUGH 'Q' BUTTON. ALLOWS YOU TO CREATE PRESETS FOR SATURATION, SHARPNESS AND CONTRAST

MINS/SECS REMAINING ON CARD. IF MORE THAN 29MIN 59SEC REMAINING, METER WILL ALWAYS SHOW 29MIN 59SEC AND WILL BEGIN COUNTING DOWN FROM 29MIN 58SEC.

RESOLUTION & FRAME RATE. ACCESS THROUGH 'Q' BUTTON. IF IN UK/EUROPE USE 1920/25 IF IN USA/CARIBBEAN USE 1920/30.

SHUTTER SPEED. GENERALLY TRY AND KEEP ON 30. THE LOWER THE NUMBER, THE BRIGHTER THE IMAGE. ABOVE 100 BEGINS TO LOOK STROBED

APERTURE (AKA IRIS). THE LOWER THE NUMBER, THE BRIGHTER THE IMAGE. ALSO, THE LOWER THE NUMBER THE SHALLOWER THE FOCUS (MORE OF FOREGROUND/BACKGROUND OUT OF FOCUS)



EXPOSURE METER INDICATES IF THE OVERALL IMAGE IS UNDER-EXPOSED OR OVER-EXPOSED.

ISO ARTIFICIALLY BRIGHTENS THE IMAGE. THE HIGHER THE NUMBER, THE BRIGHTER THE IMAGE. ISO100: IDEAL ISO200: GOOD QUALITY ISO 400: LOW QUALITY ISO800: VERY LOW QUALITY

REMAINING PICS AVAILABLE ON CARD

CANON 600D (REBEL T3I)

OTHER CANON DSLRS WILL BE SIMILAR BUT LAYOUT MAY VARY

TAKE PHOTO. YOU CAN SNAP A FULL-RES PIC WHILE FILMING BUT YOU WILL CAUSE A 1-2 SEC BREAK IN THE VIDEO

CONTROL WHEEL. BY DEFAULT CONTROLS SHUTTER SPEED

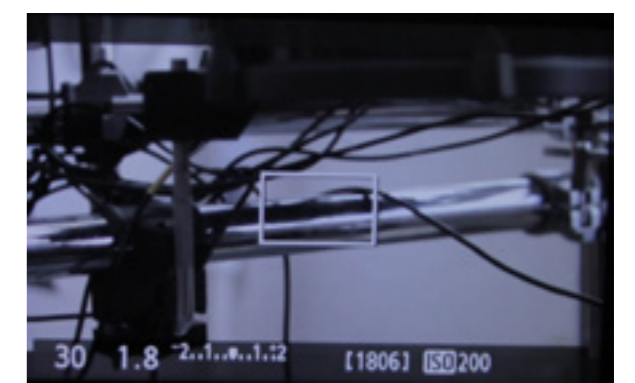
ALTER ISO. AFTER PRESSING USE WHEEL TO SELECT DESIRED ISO

SWITCH TO MOVIE MODE TO SHOOT VIDEO

PRESS 'DISPLAY' BUTTON REPEATEDLY TO SEE MORE OR LESS IN YOUR DISPLAY. USEFUL FOR FRAMING BUT YOU SHOULD SWITCH BACK TO FULL DISPLAY WHEN SHOOTING.



(CLEAR DISPLAY)



(50% DISPLAY)

EXPOSURE

There are 3 primary controls to dictate the exposure (brightness of your image)

APERTURE

SHUTTER SPEED

ISO

To give your image the correct exposure, you will have to create balance these 3 settings.

with experience you will begin to prioritise which of these controls you will use to set your exposure but, to begin with, it is a good idea to use the order above. This is because you will generally want to keep your shutter speed at 30 and your ISO below 400 to preserve optimal quality. ISO affects image quality as well as exposure while shutter speed affects movement quality as well as exposure. Aperture does not affect quality at all when adjusting exposure.

APERTURE

The aperture is the opening in the front of the camera, in between the lens and the sensor. By making the aperture (also known as the iris) bigger, more light is let into the camera, creating a brighter image. Likewise, making the aperture smaller lets in less light and makes the image darker. This should generally be the first exposure control you use.

Aperture can be set at the following values:

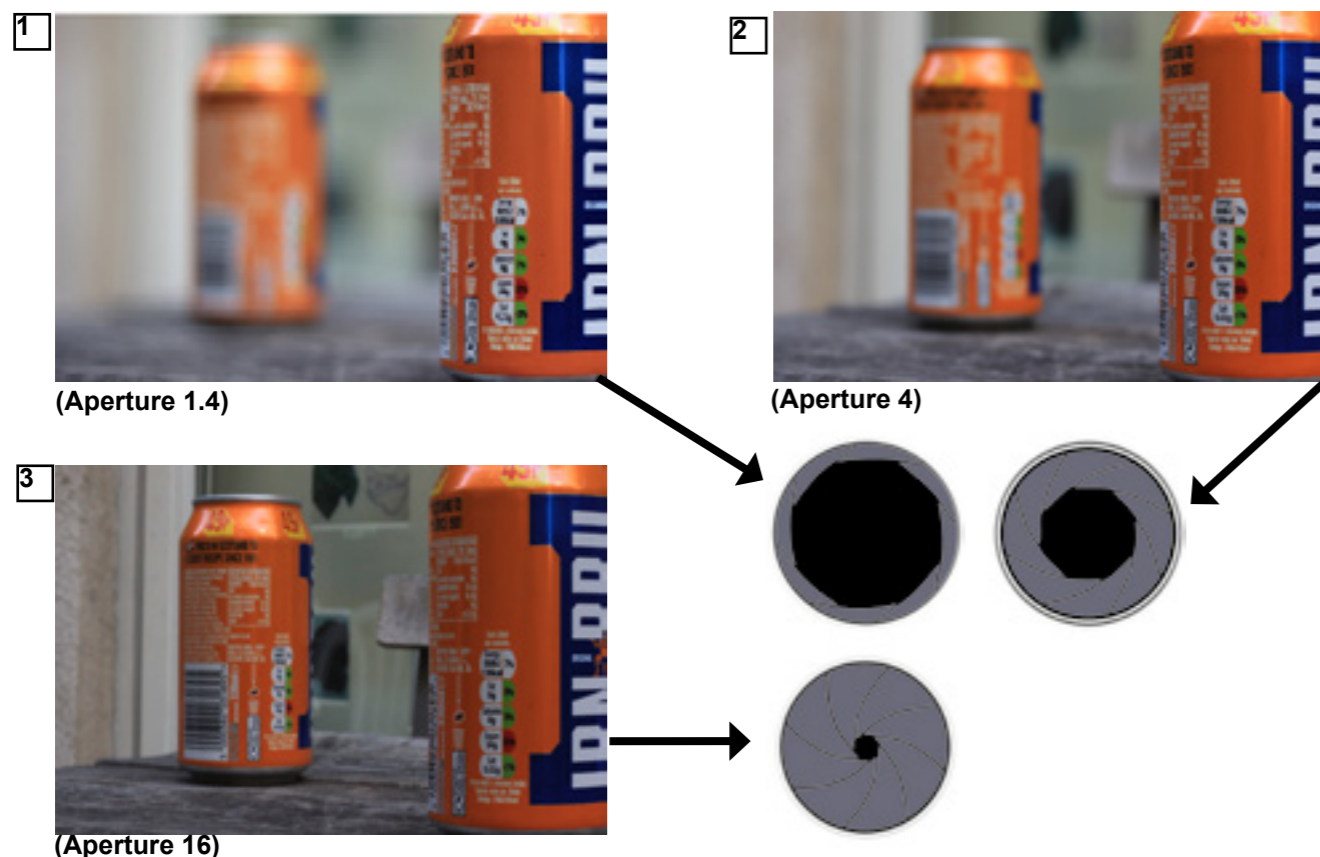
1.4, 2.8, 3.2, 3.5, 4.0, 4.5, 5.0, 5.6, 6.3, 7.1, 8.0, 9.0, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22

The lower the number, the bigger the hole and the brighter the image. It is important to note that different lenses have different ranges of aperture, ie. some can open wider and others can close smaller. However the intervals between the numbers will remain the same. For example, a lens might only be able to open between 4.5 and 18, offering apertures of 4.5, 5, 6.3, 7.1, etc.

The other important variable with aperture is the depth of field. As well as making the image darker, a high number and small hole also provide deeper focus, meaning that more of the image is in focus.

Likewise, a small number and large hole provide a shallow depth, throwing the background out of focus.

In the examples below, different apertures are used to alter the depth of field and the exposure is then balanced out using the shutter speed



SHUTTER SPEED

This is the most difficult to grasp of the three controls, but with practice it will begin to make more sense. The shutter speed indicates how long the shutter is open for each time it is released. In the US and the Caribbean, among other places, video is shot at 30 frames per second, known as the frame rate. The shutter speed should not be confused with the frame rate.

If your frame rate is 30 fps (frames per second), you are effectively taking 30 photographs every second. The amount of time that the shutter is open for is not constant, however.

A shutter speed of 1/30 means that 30 times per second, the shutter is open for exactly 1/30th of a second. You could also choose to have the shutter open 1/50th or 1/100th of a second 30 times per second.

The slower the shutter speed, the more time there is for light to get through the aperture, providing a brighter image.

Likewise, a slower shutter speed allows less time for light to get inside the camera, providing a darker image.

Shutter speed can be set at the following values:

1/30, 1/40, 1/50, 1/60, 1/80, 1/100, 1/125, 1/160, 1/200, 1/250, 1/320, 1/400, 1/500, 1/650, 1/800, 1/1000, 1/1250, 1/1600, 1/2000, 1/2500, 1/3200, 1/4000.

The lower the number the brighter the image. Be aware that some cameras may show your shutter speed as a number rather than a fraction (30, 50, 60, 80, 100, 125, etc) and, also, some camera may have the capacity to shoot at much faster shutter speeds.

Be careful when using your shutter speed to darken your exposure, as an excessively fast shutter speed gives the movement in your shot a harsh, strobing effect. This can be useful for dramatic action scenes, when the fast shutter speed almost appears to speed up the image or when filming water, when the fast shutter speed shows the droplets in each frame frozen in place. Be creative, but also aware of the effects - you often cannot judge the movement reliably from the camera's LCD screen.

ISO

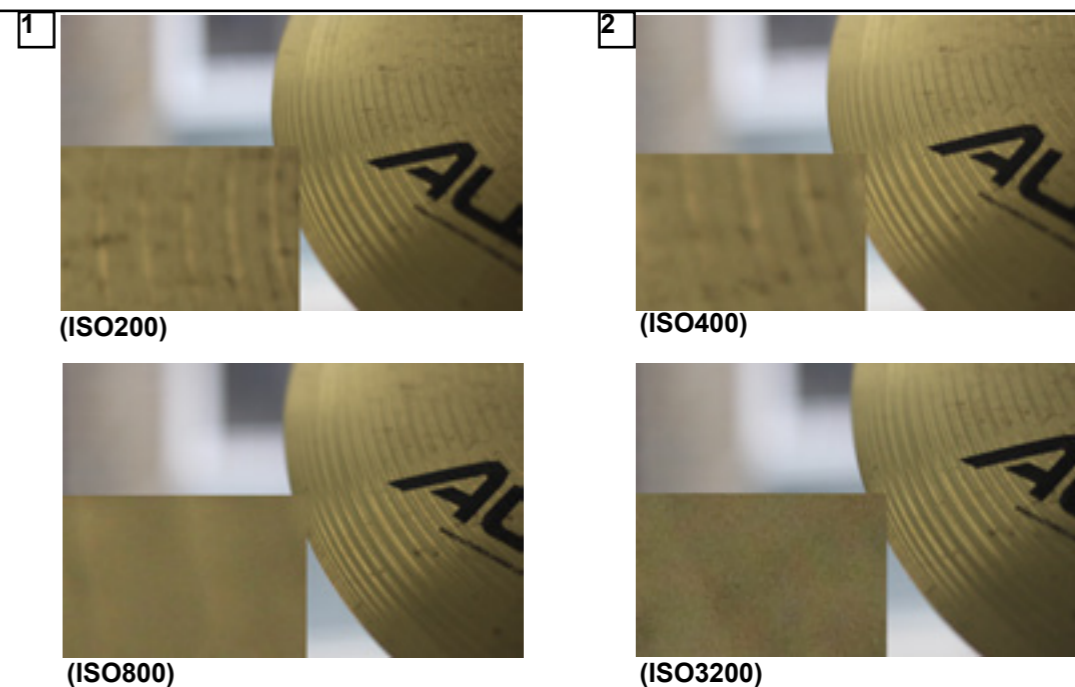
ISO is the final variable which you should rely on as it has the greatest adverse effect on your image quality. ISO (also known as 'gain' on certain video cameras) is generally used as a last resort to add brightness to your image when shooting in low light. The negative impact comes from the camera trying to calculate what colour each pixel should be, especially in areas of shadow. This results in a grainy image and lack of detail with many pixels displaying the wrong colour. This is less of an issue in black and white camera work, when a certain amount of extra grain can look very effective.

As a rule of thumb, you should ideally shoot at ISO200. Although ISO100 is optimal, you need a great deal of light to get a good exposure.

If shooting in colour, you should try never to go above ISO400 and in black and white never above ISO800. ISO800 is usable for colour photography but will not look good when viewed on a large screen.

In black and white, ISO800 is still grain.

In the examples below, a corner of each frame has been blown up to show the increasing grain appearing with increasing the ISO. Remember that you cannot see the grain on your camera's LCD screen so you may not notice if you have accidentally set your ISO to 3200 until you get into the edit, so always check before you shoot.



LENS SIZES

Your choice of lens greatly effects how your shots will look. The most noticeable difference in lens sizes is the wideness of the image, although there are a couple of other very important variables.

One of your first choices will be whether to use prime lenses or a zoom. A prime lens is one with a fixed 'focal length' or shot size. They generally give a better quality of image, due to having less pieces of glass through which the light must travel, but they are also less flexible and do not allow you to zoom in and out. They also tend to have a wider maximum aperture, making them better for low light conditions and shots with a shallow depth of field.

Unless you are spending a large amount of money, a zoom lens will generally not be able to open its aperture as wide and will give a lower quality of image than a prime lens in the same price range. Their flexibility is key, though, and they are particularly useful for observational documentary filming where you need the freedom to change your shot to accommodate the action.

As a rule of thumb, if you are filming an interview or a static shot, a prime may well be your best bet, whereas if you are following a subject, you should go with the zoom.

Lenses can come in many sizes, but some common examples are:

200mm, 135mm, 100mm, 70mm, 50mm, 35mm, 28mm, 12mm, where the smaller number represents a wider lens.

Focal length, or lens size, does not only affect the width of the shot, it also has a large impact on the depth of field. The shots opposite are all taken with the same Aperture setting (f6). Notice how, despite having the same aperture size, the tighter/longer shots have a much shallower depth of field than the wider shots.

The way that distance appears is also affected by the focal length. Notice how the tape boxes seem closer to each other in the 70mm close up than in the 17mm wide shot. A wider lens stretches distance, making objects appear further apart and a tight lens compresses distance, making objects appear closer together.

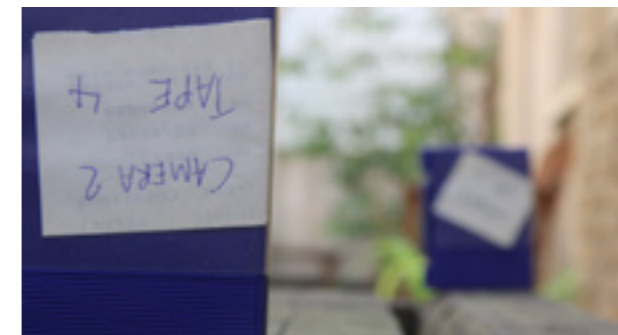
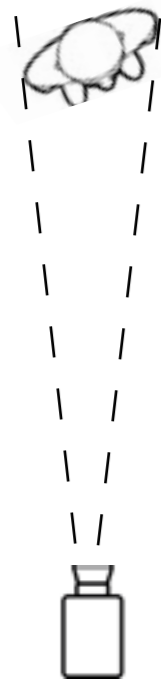
This is much more noticeable when filming faces or portraits. In the examples bellow, notice how although the subjects face is the same size in both frames, the tighter shot, taken from a distance with a 70mm lens is much more natural than the wider shot.



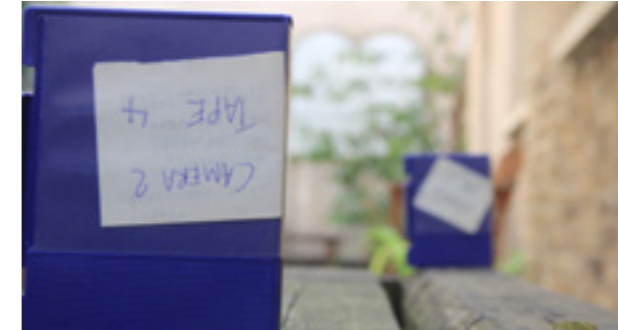
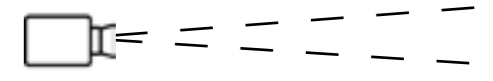
(70mm lens)



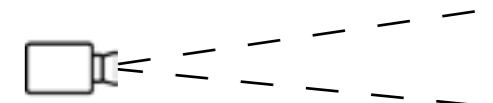
(17mm lens)



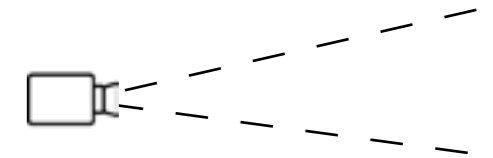
(70mm lens)



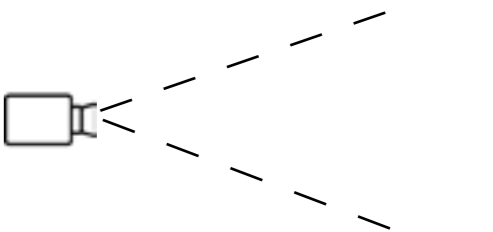
(50mm lens)



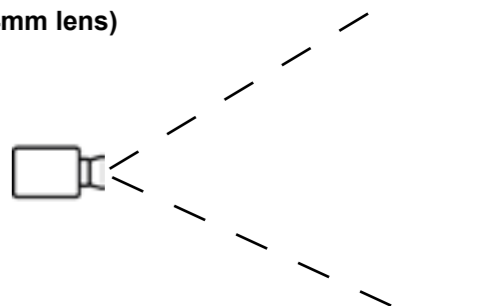
(35mm lens)



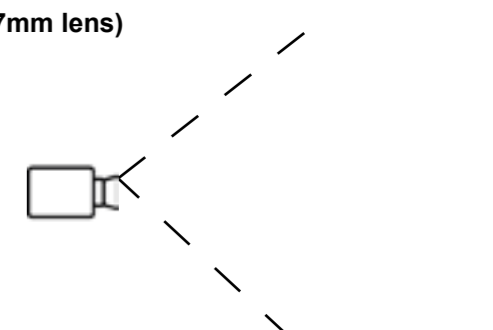
(28mm lens)



(24mm lens)



(17mm lens)



(illustrated angles are aproximate)

AUDIO

Recording clean audio is essential for a successful film. Even if you plan to build most of your sound scape in post production, it is still very important to record high quality sync sound whenever you can.

Although the advent of DSLR cameras in the independent film world has offered affordable, high quality visuals on a low budget, the major drawback with the format is that you cannot record sound through the camera. DSLRs were originally built for still photography and their audio functions have not caught up with the number of videographers using them. Most DSLRs do have an audio input in the form of a mini jack socket, it is relatively common for the audio to simply not record onto the card. Your camera will also feature a built in microphone but this should only ever be used as a guide, rather than as your source audio.

Also, a mini jack connection is not really of high enough quality to capture professional level audio recordings. The cable which you should be using for all microphone and sound recorders is the XLR, the industry standard for broadcast audio as well as live performance and studio recording.



(XLR CABLE)



(XLR SOCKET)

In most cases you will be recording your audio onto a ZOOM H4N recorder, using either radio mics, boom mics or sometimes both at the same time.

Always have a good pair of headphones in your kit and never presume that the audio is fine. A dedicated member of the team should be wearing the headphones throughout every recording and, if this is not possible, then the camera operator or director should step into the role.

Your audio kit is made of lots of small parts so, using the checklist, make sure you have double checked everything before you leave on your shoot - it's very easy to leave a small but essential part behind. Try and connect all audio kit and run a test before leaving for the shoot, as you may have a problem with a cable or connection. Also, make sure that you have plenty of AA batteries, as the recorder and the microphones use up a lot of power.



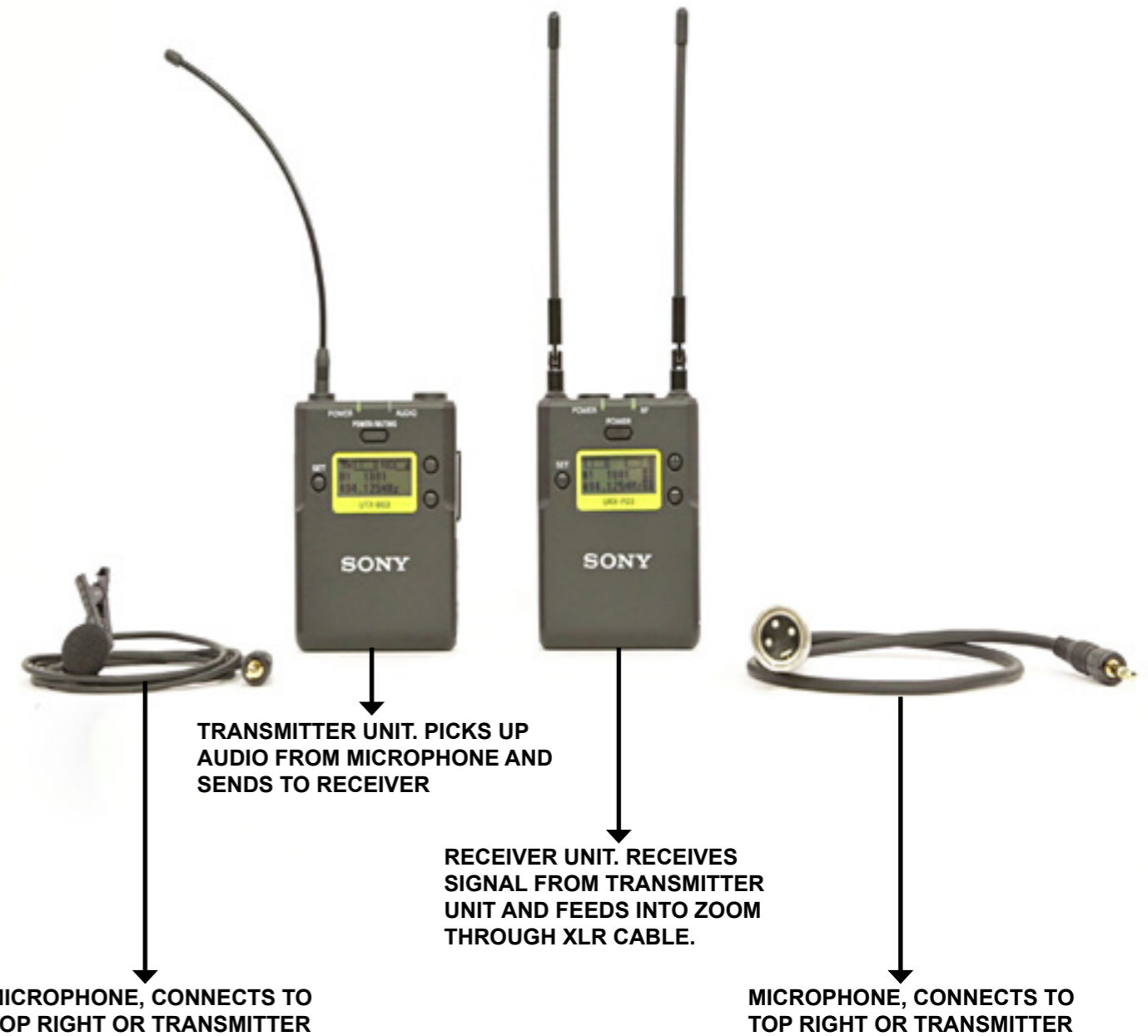
(Boom mic)

WILD TRACKS AND ATMOS

Before wrapping a particular location, make sure that you record at least 60 seconds of silence or background noise, known as an 'atmos' track. When you are editing your film you will find that your different audio recordings will have varying levels of background noise, drawing attention to the cuts between shots. This is one of the most common issues with low budget films and,

although the audience may not notice the jumps on a conscious level, it breaks their concentration and makes the cut appear to be in the wrong place. Laying a quiet atmos track under the entire scene smooths out the cuts, particularly during dialogue or interviews.

A 'wild track' is similar but is a recording of a specific sound. If you are filming by a river, for example, wait for an appropriate time and take a close-up recording of at least 1 minute. Before you leave the location, take a walk and focus on all the sounds you hear. When you identify a sound which is particular to that location, make a recording, remembering to say out loud what what the sound is. It might be obvious to you, but your editor will have a hard time identifying the different tracks.



RADIO MICS

Radio mics are an essential part of your kit. As well as allowing you to record your subject without the need of a boom operator, the small microphone only picks up sound very close to it, eliminating a lot of unwanted background noise. You have to make sure that you're well stocked with batteries though, as they eat through them.

The microphone should be plugged into the top right of the transmitter, which should be placed in the pocket of the subject. If they have no pockets, use the belt clip but try and ensure that the unit is out of sight. The cable should then be fed up through the front of the subjects shirt/blouse/etc and the microphone clipped to the collar, or as close to the mouth as possible while remaining invisible. Be careful of the microphone being positioned where it can brush against clothing or jewellery, causing distortion and rustling which cannot be removed in post production.

Be sensitive and considerate when fitting a subject with a radio mic. For example, wherever possible a female member of crew should assist with a female subject or interviewee.

The receiver unit is connected to the zoom recorder using the short mini jack to XLR cable, with the mini jack plugging into the top of the receiver unit and the XLR plugging into the bottom of the Zoom recorder.

Switch on both units and ensure that their screens display the same frequency number. If not, frequency can be matched using the 'set' button and arrow buttons.

If you are filming for long periods, check the battery levels on both units every 15 minutes or so. Once the meter is down to the last of its 3 battery bars, you should change the batteries (AA size) to ensure that the units do not shut down midway through a shot or interview.



ZOOM H4N

The Zoom H4N is a professional, broadcast quality audio recorder with 2 XLR inputs and 2 built-in microphones. In an emergency, you can use the on-board mics but it is not recommended, particularly in noisy areas. The mics are not very directional and will pick up a lot of background noise. If you are recording general sounds, or conversations between 2 or more people, you should think of using a boom mic, connected through the XLR inputs at the bottom of the unit. If you are focussing on a single character, it's probably best to use the radio mics.

Use the 'input select' buttons to choose between the built-in mics or XLR input 1 or 2. Before starting, navigate the menu system to the 'mode' sub menu and set the unit to 'stereo' mode. A red light near the top of the unit will indicate your mode.

If you are not yet confident with sound recording, it can be a good idea to set the recording level to 'auto' for your first couple of shoots. It's not ideal as it can sometimes focus on the wrong sound so as soon as you're comfortable you should move to manual recording. The automatic function can be found in the 'record' sub menu.

When auto record is not enabled, you must control the audio using the 'record level' buttons on the right side of the unit. Do not confuse this with the volume buttons on the left, which look very similar and can seem to be having the same effect through your earphones. The volume control is only for the output and does not effect the recording level. If you are filming an interview or a dialogue scene, take a moment before shooting starts to test the sound levels. Ask the interviewee to describe something general, like what they had for breakfast and, while they talk, use the 'record level' buttons to alter the level until their voice is peaking between -6db and -12db.

When you first turn the Zoom recorder on, you may not hear any audio coming through, or see any levels on the screen. The signal only comes through once you have pressed the record button once. This puts the unit into stand-by mode, allowing you to set levels and trigger the recording by pressing the record button a second time.

In stand-by mode, the light around the record button will be flashing red and will turn into a constant red light only when recording has started.

Always make sure that you have a solid red light and not a flashing red light before the camera starts filming.

The zoom records onto SD cards but they do not have to be the same high speed as those used in a camera - anything above class2 will be fine. Make sure to check that you have enough space on your card before you start shooting. Time remaining is shown on the screen

AUDIO TROUBLE SHOOTING

CAN'T HEAR SOUND THROUGH EARPHONES OR SEE LEVELS ON THE SCREEN:

- Check both radio mics are switched on
- Check both radio mic units are on the same frequency
- Check recording level is not set to 0
- Check that stand-by mode is enabled (flashing red light around rec button) by pressing record
- Check that XLR is plugged into the correct socket (number on the socket should match lit input button)

HEARING INTERFERENCE:

- Radio mics should not be too far apart, try and move them closer
- All mobile phones should be switched off
- Check for electrical appliances in the room. Try and move the units further from the appliances.
- Check that the microphone is not brushing against clothing
- If the interviewee/subject is wearing dangling ear rings, the rattling can sound like interference.
- Check each cable an connection one by one
- Check all sockets are clean and free of grease and dirt

FINDING A SUITABLE PLACE TO RECORD VOICE-OVER

- Avoid tiled rooms, which can create an echo
- A place with constant sound (eg humming air conditioner) is preferable to changing sound (eg traffic)
- Request all crew to remain silent while recording
- If appropriate, call for all people in the location to remain silent. Make sure to thank people afterwards
- If no quiet or non-echoing space can be found use a sheet or blanket to cover the subjects head and shoulder and record underneath. This actually works!



BY 5PM ON THE DAY BEFORE YOUR SHOOT MAKE SURE YOU HAVE:

- Charged camera batteries (at least 2)
- Memory cards for camera (at least 32 GB)
- Memory cards for sound recorder
- Bought or charged batteries for sound recorder
- Bought or charged batteries for microphones
- Backed up/Checked old footage on the cards
- Switched on and recorded 30 sec on each camera/sound recorder
- Tick off each item on your kit list and pack up
- Contacted all crew and given call time and meeting point
- Contacted the person at the shoot location (if there is one)
- Arranged transport to location (If needed)
- Received cash budget (If authorised)

PREPARE CALL SHEETS

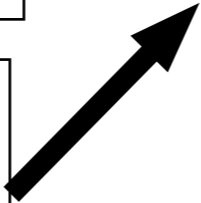
Before each shooting day, the Producer or production manager should ensure that every crew member has a copy of the call sheet. This is a short document which contains schedule information for the day, details and contacts for all crew, location addresses and info and weather forecast.
Opposite is an example call sheet from a Studio 174 shoot in Portland.

TAKE TIME TO RELAX

The build-up to a shoot can be stressful. It's a good idea to take some time out on the evening before your shoot to relax and make sure you have the vision for your film clear in your head scene by scene or shot by shot.

By now, everything should have been arranged and checked so try and clear your head of all distractions. You never know how your shoot will turn out, but if you have a vision of how you'd like it to be that you can run through in your head, you're doing well.

If you still have difficulty visualising the finished film, try talking to a friend or family member not connected with the project, and describing the film you hope to make the following day. Sometimes explaining it out loud to someone new can make it more solid in your head.



PRM (Working Title)			
Unit Call Time: 07:00		Weather: Temp: Sunrise: Sunset: Humidity	Chance of rain Highs of 23 degrees 05:06 20:50 60-70%
Main Production Contact		Name & Number	
Producer:	Rozi Chung		
Director:	Leroy Alvaranga		
Director:	Venezia Johnson	817 02 66	
Production Manager	Jamilla Chung	417 98 35	
Cinematographer:	Rushard Heat	864 90 79	
Sound:	Shyheim Campbell	343 58 32	
Sound:	Horace Smith	448 67 40	
Facilitator:	Richard York		
Facilitator:	Hannan Majid		

Preliminary Schedule - Subject to change		
Time	Action	
08:00 - 1600	Leroy to Edit at Great Huts Horace to create soundscape at Great Huts	Unit Wrap Time: 16:00
08:00 - 16:00	Venezia and Rushard to shoot: Nurse Driving shots playing games (lots of people) cooking eggs Computer lesson Shots from beach more shots of environment PICK-UPS: Wide angle of chickens, low angle inside cage Static shots in ladies dorm	
08:00 - 1600	Shyheim to record sounds of: Games Beach cooking eating (sounds of plates/forks/etc) Silence in different rooms (called Room Atmos)	

The following example is a breakdown of how to film a commission similar to that outlined on pages 14/15. The document was provided to students at 174 to prepare them for the job.

ANALYSIS OF SPORTS AID VIDEO FOR STUDIO 174

00.00>00.07 The first three shots, like most of the film, are all shot on the fixed 50mm lens, giving that shallow depth of field. It makes the close ups look more cinematic and on the second shot, which is wider, it really separates Chenice from the background.

Notice how each of these shots is a different size, an extreme close up [ECU] of Cherice's face, a medium close up [MS] of her sitting in profile and a regular close up [CU] of her hands, but they have not used the zoom lens. Instead they have physically moved the camera closer or further from Cherice to achieve their desired shot. This gives a consistent feel to the film as the camera does not jump between wide angle and telephoto style shots.

The first shot is very quick but is taken from a much longer shot in which Cherice is swinging her arms back and forth in a warm up. They have set the camera up on a tripod, close to cherice and loosened the head so that with the tripod panning handle they could add small movements to give the shot a dynamic, edgy quality. After holding on her face for maybe 15 seconds, they would then pan down to see her shoulders swinging, holding this shot for another 15 secs, then panning down to her arms swinging for another 15 secs. They then kept rolling and did similar movements but faster [head for 5 secs, pan to shoulders for 5 secs, pan to arms for 5 secs, etc]. This gave them options in the edit, allowing them to decide the pacing and rhythm from a big selection.

Notice how she moves out of focus. This is not a problem and it is a good idea, if this happens, to hold your same position and focus because, chances are, she will move back into focus, which is a nice effect. If she moves out of focus and stays out of focus for more than a few seconds though, you should try and alter the focus on your lens in a smooth movement.



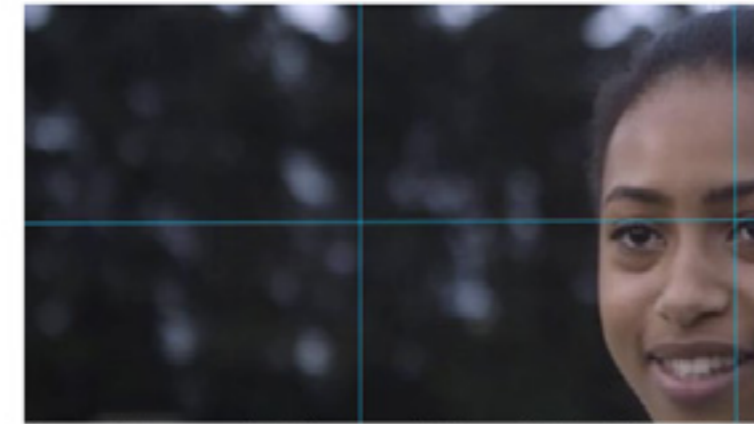
For the second shot, they will have simply asked Cherice to sit there looking thoughtful. Sometimes you might want to suggest a motivation to your subject. For example, ask her to remember her first race, how it felt to run in the Olympics, something like that. This can make the subject feel less awkward and the whole situation less forced.

Once the subject has done their own thing for something like a 30-second shot don't be afraid to start giving direction to add variety. If she has been sat with her chin in her hand for more than 10 seconds, maybe ask her to hold her hands in her lap, if she has been staring ahead for a while, ask her to look down, then to look up again, and so on.

BUT MAKE SURE ONLY ONE OF YOU IS GIVING DIRECTION TO THE ATHLETE.

This is very important because these athletes will be used to working with the media and they know that there should be one director in charge on the shoot. If you all start shouting out suggestions, they will see you as inexperienced and unprofessional, which will make them take your shoot less seriously. Keep your assigned crew roles at all times while on set. The more professional they think you are, the more professionally they will act for you.

After holding on this wide shot for maybe 2 x 30 second shots, cut your camera and move the tripod into a closer position, while asking the subject to remain in place. Pick up shots of hands, CU of face looking straight ahead and down, etc. Notice the lens flare flashing across the shot. This is fake and has been added in post production. Looks quite nice though!



00.07>00.10

A classic style interview shot. Again, it is shot on a 50mm fixed lens, the camera is probably set up around 4 meters from Chenice and she is framed up with her eyes two thirds of the way up the screen and one third in from the side, facing the direction with most space. If she was facing to the right instead, the shot would look wrong as

she would have no 'Looking room'. I've added a grid here to demonstrate our old friend, the rule of thirds. Make sure that when you record the interview you are using either a radio mic or a wired boom mic. **THE BUILT IN MIC ON THE ZOOM RECORDER WILL NOT SOUND GOOD ENOUGH FOR THIS JOB!!**

Your films are only 20 seconds long so really you're just looking for 2, maximum 3 short comments. So rather than a conventional interview, try and figure out the comments with them first. For example, you could let them know that you'd like one short comment mentioning one of the biggest challenges they've faced (for the start of the video) one short comment about how they overcame that challenge (for the middle of the video) and one short comment telling the audience that they can meet their challenge by joining in the 5K (for the end of the video). It would be a good idea to write to them in advance and ask them to email you these comments. This would make it easier for you to plan appropriate locations for that athlete's shots.



00.10>00.11

In this shot we see again the technique of allowing the subject to come in and out of focus, but this time it is set up deliberately.

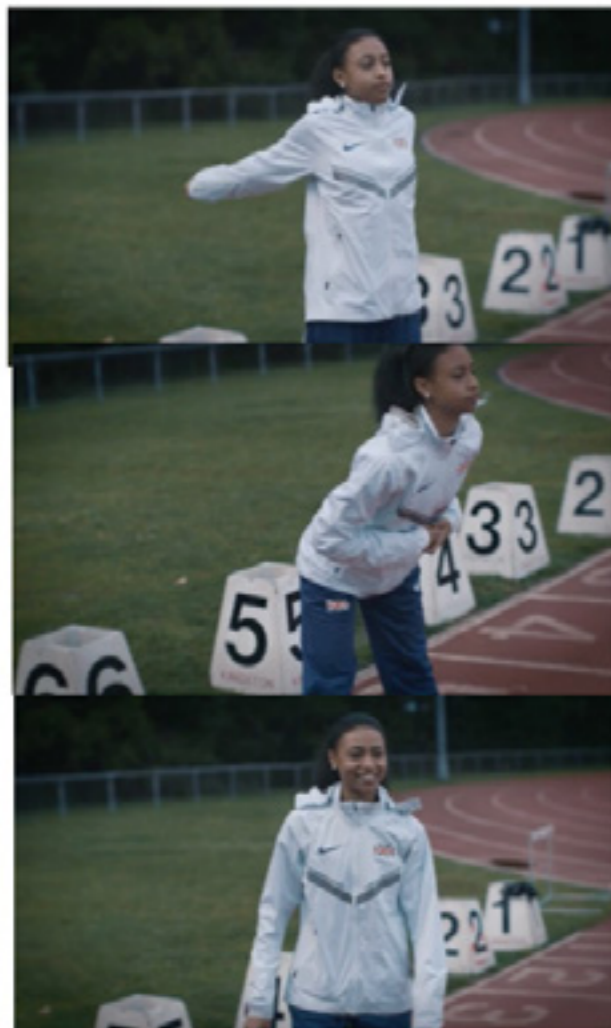
They have used their trusty 50mm lens again here but will have had to move their camera about 10 metres back from where Chenice is on this picture. They will have first asked her to start to stand in this position, set up the

focus and then asked her to start running from just before the bend and to continue running past the camera. The focus is softer if your APERTURE a.k.a your iris is more open. A MORE OPEN APERTURE IS A SMALLER NUMBER, and goes in increments like 1.4, 1.8, 2, 2.8, 4, 5.6, etc. So to get a shallow focus, try and have your aperture set to 1.4, 2.8 or 4. If this makes your shot too bright, you can balance this out a little by altering your Shutter speed, which goes up in increments of 1/30, 1/60, 1/120 up to 1/1600 or 1/2000. Try to keep the number on your shutter speed below 1/300 though, because faster than that will give you jerky, jagged movement in your shots. In this shot, notice also how as well as framing up the athlete in the shot, they have made sure that the background is also a really nice composition, with the curve of the track, the fence running along the middle of the frame and the solid backdrop of trees in the far background.



00.15>00.18

Chenice has now been asked to spend a couple of minutes warming up against a fence. During this time the cameraperson will have moved into 4 or 5 different positions. Here we only see 2 of these, a CU of the hands gripping the fence and then a CU of the leg swinging. They will also have filmed a CU of her face here, maybe one of the hip and also a full body wide shot (WS) from a further distance. We don't see them here but will probably turn up later in the video.



00.24>00.33

Another warm up but this time in the middle of the field. This time they have used 'Jump Cuts' to chop out pieces of a longer shot and put them together making Chenice appear to jump around the frame. This keeps the edit interesting, rather than always following the routine of an interview shot followed by 2 or 3 different close ups followed by an interview shot followed by 2 or 3 different close ups etc. Notice how at the end of this sequence they've used a moment where she has finished and smiles at the camera, almost like an out take. This works nicely here and shows that you should always keep rolling your camera for a few seconds after the action because you never know when you'll get an engaging moment or connection with your subject.

Notice also the strong composition of the background again, this time with the numbered blocks in the background. Always try and look for elements like this, which really give some interest to the shot.

From these compositions, I would also guess that the sky was too white that day, so they have always shot at a bit of a downward angle to frame out the sky. **THIS IS IMPORTANT – IF THE SKY IS BLEACHED OUT ALWAYS TRY AND FRAME IT OUT OR MAKE YOUR SHOT DARKER UNTIL YOU CAN SEE CLOUD DETAIL.** Nobody likes a bleached out white sky in their video!



00.36>00.38 This shot is from the same set up as we saw earlier where Chenice ran into focus. The difference is that here they pan the camera with her as she runs past. They will have filmed various versions of her running on this piece of track and repeated the action until satisfied that they had enough variety. Again, notice how there is a slight wobble to the camera movement, although it is still on a tripod, because of the loosened pan and tilt screws on the tripod head. This fits with the

fast cutting style and flash effects between the shots.



00.38>00.44 This medium close up (MCU) shot is from the same set up as the earlier sequence where we saw Chenice on the benches with her chin in her hands. At the same time as getting those earlier shots, they will have moved into a frontal position, about 3 metres from Chenice and repeated the action several times of her lifting her head to look straight into the camera. They will have tried different speeds of movement, different expressions, ranging from serious and focussed

to happy and smiling, and different shot sizes (CU/ECU) from the same angle. Definitely one variation I would have done, which does not appear in this video, would be a really close ECU, from less than a meter away, with her eyes pretty much filling the whole frame as she looks up. This would only be possible though if you can still focus. Every lens has a different minimum focus length, usually between 30cm and 1 metre if your camera is closer to the subject than this, your lens will not be able to focus.

This is also a good time to remind you about keeping sharp **FOCUS**. Whenever you set up a shot, before you roll the camera you must press the magnifying glass button on the camera to zoom into the point you want to be most in focus. If it looks sharp when you're zoomed in, then zoom back out and shoot immediately before positions have a chance to change.

WHEN SHOOTING CLOSE UPS ALWAYS ZOOM RIGHT INTO THE EYES TO CHECK FOCUS. Although the shallow focus of the 50mm lens has an attractive look, it is also very easy to mess up the focus so make sure you get enough takes to be sure.



The shots in the remainder of the video are just variations on shots from the earlier set-ups.

See if you can identify which of these 4 shots are from each of these 'SET-UPS':

CHENICE SITTING IN THE STANDS

CHENICE RUNNING THE CURVED TRACK

CHENICE WARMING UP AGAINST THE FENCE

CHENICE WARMING UP WITH NEXT TO NUMBER BLOCKS

CHENICE WARMING UP NEXT TO TRACK

So, really, all they filmed was a short interview and 5 quite simple set-ups, with 5 or 6 shots captured in each set-up.

As a final exercise, watch the whole video through, slowly and for each of the 5 set-ups, write out the shot list which they will have used, including the shot sizes.

For example:

SET-UP 1, CHENICE SITTING IN STANDS:

MCU Chenice in profile with chin in hands

CU Chenice's hands

MCU Chenice lifts head and looks up into camera

etc

etc

SET-UP 2, CHENICE RUNNING THE TRACK

WS Chenice runs into focus and past cameraperson

WS Chenice runs towards camera and camera pans with her as she passes

etc

etc

Hope that this is helpful guys, if you have a read through and do that final exercise, I think we'll just be one phone chat away from you guys having a solid plan for your shoot!

(Images used with kind permission of Maxwell Gutteridge/Kinamo)

