

2 Minutes of Your Time

Cromer and Sheringham Community Film Project

GENERAL TIPS FOR MAKING FILMS ON MOBILE PHONES

Introduction

Shooting on your mobile is very different to shooting on a handycam. The mobile phone has some advantages when it comes to filming, but doesn't offer the same flexibility and quality of most video cameras. Watching your film on a small screen is completely different to viewing on a large screen, so preparation and pre-planning becomes even more crucial when originating on a mobile. As well as needing a good story line, picture quality, sound, light and editing are all key elements for a successful film production.

Storyline & Concept

Story over quality – a good story will always engage the audience more than a highly polished film that is boring.

Keep it simple – there's not much time for complex narratives and shots in a short film. Only include what is essential to the story.... Be creative!

Picture

Hold the camera as steady as possible and aim for smooth action when panning.

Picture quality drops dramatically during fast camera moves.

Mobile phones are much lighter than handycams & more difficult to keep stable.

Stand with feet apart and elbows planted against your body for steadier shots.

Use any available walls, lamp posts etc. for support.

Avoid zooming, you'll lose picture quality – best to physically move closer to your subject.

Use close-ups, they'll be fairly crisp & detailed.

Avoid wide and landscape shots, they'll be soft and lacking in detail.

Keep your horizons and any verticals straight in the frame.

Sound

The sound recording function on most mobile cameras is limited, so don't rely on this sound to tell your story. The in-built microphone will pick up surrounding noise so you need to be close to your subject to cut down the background sound.

Sound is also affected by wind and rapid camera moves. If you can attach an external mic. this will give better quality... or dub the audio later ...or a combination of all three.

Lighting

Mobile phones are not able to handle major contrasts, light & dark, aim for soft lighting.

Use the white-balance function if your camera has it.

Editing and Post Production

Transfer your footage to computer (via USB, Bluetooth or memory card) and import your files into an editing programme. Basic software such as Windows Moviemaker or Apple iMovie are easy to use, and most DVD burning software also comes with editing functions.

Convert your file type to AVI, MOV. or MPEG for editing & finalising. There are many file converters available for free download, find one to suit your system & editing programme.

Ratio sizes: Most mobile phones record 640 x 480 pixels. Most editing software won't recognise this and will adjust/stretch your picture size. Try a test sequence first.

Be creative!

Take advantage of the portability of the mobile phone - choose interesting angles & locations a regular camera would struggle with.

The camera-phone is an exciting new medium for storytelling and filmmaking, experiments and 'accidents' can often produce the most interesting and unique results!

Take a chance, if you think it will work, give it a go, and enjoy the experience.