

## **“Producing a Music Video”**

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Music videos now dominate all other forms of entertainment distribution as a direct result of the mass acceptance of the Internet. Audio without video is simply not enough for most artists attempting to appeal larger and more geographically diverse audiences. Creating a music video is becoming easier and more financially feasible everyday with the development of new software and hardware. This project will outline the steps needed to produce a music video (Wikimedia Foundation Inc. 2010).

### **Choosing the artist**

I highly recommend choosing artists to work with on your initial projects that you really like. You'll be spending a lot of time with them so it's important that you enjoy spending time with them! Your first few projects will be full of stumbles and surprises so choose artists that understand the ups and downs of the learning process. Of course they will reap the rewards of this journey, as well!

### **Picking the song**

Sometimes the artist will already have a song in mind for their video. If you are included in this discussion, here are a few concepts that you could add:

It can be very helpful if the song has imagery in the lyrics that can be recreated in the video

- Be realistic – you probably don't have the resources for fancy graphics or elaborate sets right now!

Marketing gimmicks still work. Can a song utilize any of these simple marketing buzzwords?

- Sex
- Free
- Fun
- New
- Yes
- You

## **Use the lyrics for ideas / concepts**

The imagery of the lyrics often forces the ideas and concepts for the video. For example, if a rock and roll song, sung by a man, is about a hot chick the video should have a good-looking woman in the video! If the lyrics paint a scene in an office that morphs into a bar search out these two shooting locations.

## **Analyze your resources**

This is the time in the pre-production phase when you lay out all of the resources that are available to you. Knowing what resources you have access to will influence your options from here forward. We will continue to follow the example of a band making a video about a woman in an office that morphs into the bar.

### *Casting*

Casting plays a critical role in your music video. For our band, who is the hottest chick they know? This example can easily refer back to the important marketing ideas and buzzwords discussed earlier.

### *Locations*

Locations help set the mood and tell the story of the video. Choose spaces that are available to you. Maybe one of the bars the band plays in would be open to letting you shoot there during a weekday.

### *Lighting*

Effective video shoots require control of lighting. There are many resources available for learning about general lighting (Jackman 2010) as well as online resources that give practical examples of lighting techniques used in music videos (polcan99 August 28, 2009).

### *Cameras & accessories*

Multiple cameras provide more options but will cause more work in the editing process. (Jacobson 2010). Scott Simmons, a video editor and blogger in Nashville, TN, writes a blog titled "the EDITBLOG on PVC" which often discusses multiple cameras for music videos (Simmons 2010). Examples of music videos shot with two-cameras are abundant online (Caligiuri June 8, 2010).

Single camera shoots are much easier to setup and execute. Resources are available that discuss shooting techniques for single camera setups (Musburger 2010).

Using different brands of cameras can create different moods. The rock band might consider using a nice HD camera for the mains shots and a Flip camera for

artsy shots (Cisco Systems 2010). Camera accessories to consider for your inventory would include tripods, dollies, jib cranes and related cabling.

The delivery format can influence the choice of cameras. If the band hoping to distribute this on Blu-Ray Disc which supports resolutions up to 1920×1080 (1080 lines), they will need an expensive camera that shoots natively at higher resolutions (Wikimedia Foundation Inc. 2010). Will the video only be uploaded to YouTube? An old Hi-8 or Flip camera can work well for this format.

When choosing a camera or cameras, you can now take into consideration digital SLR cameras like the Canon 5D. These high resolution still cameras are able to shoot high quality video with exchangeable lenses, providing great results at an affordable price (Simmons March 03, 2010).

### Makeup/Hair

Video and photo shoots always look more professional when there is a makeup and/or hair specialist available. Perhaps the rock band can pool his or her personal resources for someone to fill this roll.

### Sponsors

Finally, consider including a product angle or concept that can entice a sponsor to help offset the cost of video production. The rock band shooting on location in a bar could contact beverage companies for sponsorship.

## **Storyboard**

A storyboard is a series of rough sketches that help the director to visualize each scene. This visual map will help the director arrange the *key shots* for each scene or action sequence. Software is available like StoryBoard Quick to help create an professional storyboard (Storyboard Software 2010).

Creating a storyboard can help decide in what order you will shoot the action of the music video. You can shoot the action continuously, from start to finish. The action can be shot in sections or scenes with one complete action sequence at a time. Finally, the action can be recorded as a series of separate shots that shoot part of the sequence (Gerald Millerson 2010).

## **Search locations**

Now that you know how you want each scene to look, search through the pre-defined locations to find what you're looking for. Try to visit the location at the time of day and day of the week you will be shooting to avoid unplanned traffic, noise, lighting and ambient sound problems. You are looking for cost-free location near

parking, power and sanitary facilities. It is important to verify your power needs, especially for the lighting, as it tends to draw the most electricity. You should also verify that the location's loading and parking is well lit and under some security.

Be sure to measure each room or space to be used and plot a scale drawing indicating location and sizes of windows and doors, the furniture placement and placement of walls and power sources. Identify possible locations for performers and cameras and include this on your location map.

When visiting the location, let the site authority know how the site will be used, what changes will be necessary, how restoration will be handled and what access the production crew will have to the location. Confirm these details with the owner of the location in writing well before the shoot.

### **Finalize the budget**

Estimating the total time for each phase of the project is a difficult task, especially the first time you create a budget. The budget should be broken into three initial phases of the project:

1. Pre-production
2. Shoot
3. Post-production

Be sure to include any equipment rentals necessary as well as catering or food delivery. Taking care of the cast and crew on the day of the shoot will lead to better results every time.

Delivering a well-organized budget to the client for approval at least a month before the date of the shoot is the first step in getting the project approved. Once it is approved, you should ask to at least 50% of the total estimate no later than a week before the date of the shoot to cover initial costs and lock the deal into place.

### **Schedule the shoot**

The last phase of pre-production is the most critical and requires fine-tuned communication and organization skills. You should verify all locations, dates and times by phone with everyone involved. A list of contacts might include:

### **Crew**

- Production/Stage Manager
- Production Assistants
- Camera operators
- Lighting Director
- Makeup/Hair
- Cast (band, actors, extras)
- Could have many more in the crew

### **Locations**

- Location Owner
- Site authority

### **Rentals**

- Equipment companies
- Catering or food delivery

Finalize an itinerary for the day of the shoot. This timeline should include:

- Load-in
- All crew on site
- Full Crew Meeting & Full Rehearsal
- Show Call
- Video Shoot
- Strike and Load-out

Create a *shot sheet* that includes list of all shots, location and the order in which they are to be shot. Focus on the most efficient use of cast, crew and equipment.

Finally, create a list of equipment and props required for the shoot and verify with camera operator. After completing these various communication and organizational tasks, consider uploading this information online and sending the link to everyone involved.

## **Execute the shoot**

Arrive at the shooting location and setup the power. Position the crew to their pre-assigned positions marked on the camera map. Setup the lighting, tripods, dollies, jibs, cable runs, etc.

Build and match the cameras in a multi-camera shoot by conforming the cameras to achieve a consistent, specific look. This is achieved by matching the color, brightness, contrast and white balancing of each camera. Often video and film

shoots will include a special video monitoring screen or screens for the director to verify that the camera settings are achieving the desired effect.

Audio playback for a music video shoot allows for the musicians and actors to follow along with the music, many times lip syncing with the track. Speakers must be available for audio monitoring while recording.

## **Timecode and Sync**

Timecode is a sequence of binary coded decimals generated at regular intervals and used to label individual frames of video or film with a unique address consisting of the hour, minute, second and frame number. It enables the synchronization of editing and camera switching equipment (Wikimedia Foundation Inc. 2010).

The clapboard slate has been the standard sync system for filmmakers since the 1920s when filmmaking with sound began. When you clap the slate shut, the video and audio can be synced to that moment (Wikimedia Foundation Inc. 2010).

The Apple iPad has emerged as an ideal replacement for the clapboard slate, combining digital timecode with many other features like audio playback, Bluetooth sync to other devices for multi-cam sync, shot log and notebook (PureBlend Software 2010).

While storyboarding is a surefire way to get the creative juices flowing, the realities of the shoot may force you to change your initial ideas in favor of getting the right shots (Webb November 24, 2003). The Internet is a great resource for tutorials about general videography and lighting techniques for your video shoot (Hyman 2010) (Pixel Corp 2010).

## **Post-production**

Post-production begins with transcoding the video into the computer editor of your choice. Today's top nonlinear editing systems include Avid Media Composer, Apple Final Cut Pro, Adobe Premiere Pro and Sony Vegas.

Most music videos involve many takes of the same sections of the song, recorded over and over in different locations, lighting, etc. These different takes need to be synchronized to make switching between them effortless. You can use timecode to synchronize the recordings or manually attempt to lineup the various takes.

An external program called PluralEyes has the ability to synchronize video from multiple cameras by analyzing their audio tracks. This would be an effective solution for synchronizing lots of takes when editing a music video (Singular Software 2010).

## Editing

Each step in the process of producing a video is an art form and editing is no different. Video editing is generally done on a computer using one of the aforementioned nonlinear editing systems. Various techniques are employed in the editing of music videos including switching scenes or camera angles simultaneously with the beat of the music, smooth transitions between scenes or camera angles that loosely follow the structure of the song as well as rapid switching. Editors can take into account the pacing of the song, building their edits to the song's climax. (Pearlman 2009).

Each nonlinear editing software has different ways of dealing with multiple cameras and takes. Final Cut Pro, for example, has a feature called "multiclip" that combine the various takes into one single take, making it easier to switch between them (Ozer June 15, 2010). Mastering these techniques can greatly speed up the editing process as techniques like the "multiclip" are frequently employed in music videos.

The best resource for learning the art of music video editing is to critically observe a lot of music videos. Some of the most viewed videos of all time on YouTube are music videos from Lady Gaga, Justin Bieber, Miley Cyrus, Timbaland and Susan Boyle (YouTube 2010). Online resources for viewing music videos include:

- <http://new.music.yahoo.com/videos/>
- <http://www.mtv.com/music/videos/>
- <http://www.vh1.com/music/>

The final stage of post-production before creation of deliverables is color correction. Effective use of color correction can improve your storytelling, deliver critical emotional cues and add impact to your videos (Hullfish 2008).

## **Deliverables**

Deliverable formats in 2010 can mean anything from a podcast to a broadcast. Verifying the proper formats for delivery is critical to the final success of the project. If going to major video delivery websites like YouTube and Vimeo, be sure to verify their compression guidelines for submission (Google May 26, 2010) (Vimeo 2010).

## **Archiving and Backups**

Only near-to medium-term solutions exist for archiving digital data – the long-term solution is still 35-mm film. FireWire drives have high failure rates after a year or so. Other drive formats need to be exercised on a regular basis. Optical is still too small and slow for most high-value productions. Taking this into account, logical

solutions to archiving large amounts of data include RAID systems, Network Attached Storage and tape backups.

### **Additional Resources**

Artists like Pomplamoose are championing the "VideoSong" where each audio recording is simultaneously video recorded and synced together (Pomplamoose Music 2010).

The Music Video Database is an extensive resource for researching information about music videos with over 56,000 videos in the database (Garcia 2010).

Deep searching popular video user forums can provide practical information about creating timecode synchronization for use in music videos (CreativeCow.net April 9, 2009) (REDUSER.net March 26, 2010).

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