

Ten Tips for Shooting at Live Events

From Episode 204



There are many reasons to shoot video at events. Be it for promotion, marketing, livestreaming, or just showing off, shooting at live events can be a delicate undertaking. With so much going on, how can you be sure your video will look as awesome as you want it to?

In this episode, Malcolm Henderson covers ten tips in five minutes on shooting video at live events. Slight missteps or tiny environmental changes can throw any otherwise good video into chaos and make any powerful event look silly and cheap. With Malcolm's guidance, we'll see how to avoid the most common pitfalls in video production.

1 Be Sure to White Balance

When moving from room to room, ballroom to atrium, hallway to breezeway, the light will change. You'll encounter incandescent light, fluorescent, sunlight, and so on. Color temperature, the relative blue or yellowness of light changes with each kind of light. Stick a white piece of paper in your back pocket and white balance whenever you move.

2 Check Your Audio

Even if the audio looks great on the display, you never know what it sounds like until you actually listen to it. Crazy right? There could be a buzz, a hiss, a fan, the background noise could be overwhelming, or the whole thing could just sound bad. Plug in those headphones and listen up!

3 Get Some Decent Microphones

The internal microphone on your camera isn't the quality you want for good sounding audio. For on the spot interviews, invest in a lavalier or at least a decent hand-held microphone. For shooting around the event, a shotgun mic will sound worlds better than the little microphone atop your camera.

4 Use Onboard Lighting

Grand ballrooms with low mood lighting look great to everyone at events. They make people relaxed, comfortable, and receptive. However, they do not provide enough light for your camera. The solution? An onboard LED light will provide enough light for interviews and the like without placing too much attention on the camera operator. Interchangeable gels will give you the proper look and feel for your event shooting.

5 Know Everything that's in Your Shot

Look at the background, look at the sides, look up. Are there people milling around looking bored? Lose them! Are there people having a great time? Maybe keep them in. Know what you want to accomplish with each shot. And please, leave stands, wires, microphones, and the like out of the shot for a more professional look.

6 Use the Zoom Sparingly

While zooming in or out can look clean and professional, it is really easy to get carried away. So don't zoom in or out too much. And remember, a slow, controlled zoom looks much better than a quick or snap zoom.

7 Be Aware of Your Battery

Make sure you show up to the event with all your batteries charged up and ready to go. Always keep spare or extra batteries on hand because when you run out of battery life, you run out of video. Also, use the power adapter whenever you can. Shooting an extended interview? Is there an outlet nearby? Plug in. Save your poor batteries!



8 Take Lots of B-Roll

B-Roll is the supplementary footage of the surroundings and people that adds to your video. Film plenty of shots of people moving around the event, of logos, displays, booths, and so on. The more you have to work with, the better your final product will be. Got every shot you need? Shoot as little more. Have fun. Shoot something you normally wouldn't shoot, or in a way you normally wouldn't shoot it. You may discover later that extra footage is very useful.

9 Turn Off that Auto-Crap

Auto-focus, auto-iris, auto whatever it is, turn it off. Get the focus you want at the proper exposure and shoot. Subjects moving around in the background and slight variations in light might cause your auto features to jump in and try to adjust. While this can be beneficial occasionally, its always possible that your auto features may over adjust or adjust too frequently, turning your video into a jumpy mess. And who wants that?

10 Tell People What You Need from Them

Don't be afraid to tell people what you need in your shots. If you have to interrupt an interview or flag somebody down to get what you need, do it! Make sure you get all you can out of your shooting. People might become a little peeved, but press forward, get what you came to the event for, and make a smashing video.

