



MOBILE MASTERPIECES

TROPTIPS FOR MAKING FILMS ON MOBILE

The Tropfest team has put together some handy hints to assist you in creating your short film entry for our Telstra Mobile Masterpieces category.

Shooting on your mobile is very different to shooting on a handy cam. Mobile phones don't offer the same flexibility and superior quality as the latest handy cam on the market. What's more, watching a film on the bus on a laptop, or in the park on a phone is a completely different experience to watching a film on a huge flat screen or in a cinema so preparation and pre-planning becomes even more crucial.

Like with all filmmaking, story, picture quality, picture size, sound, light and editing are all key to a successful and engaging short film. So naturally, making a short film for such devices might require more thought as well as a better understanding of the mobile phone as a tool to create an equally captivating story for smaller screens and portable devices.

Below are a few suggestions to be aware of during the preproduction of your short film on a mobile handset.

Don't forget to check out the winner last year's Telstra Mobile Masterpieces competition *Following* by Steve Baker.

Remember, if your film gets short listed or selected for the festival, it will screen on a big screen at Movie Extra Tropfest 2012. You need to make your film so that it can be seen on the big screen as well as on a mobile phone.

TROPFEST SIGNATURE ITEM is 'LIGHT BULB'

Story

- Story over quality – a good story will always be more engage than a highly polished film that is boring
- Keep it simple – there's no much time for complex narratives and shots in short film. Only include what is fundamental to the story.
- Be creative! We don't want another chase sequence or gag film we want to see new ideas and stories shot in unique and interesting ways.

Picture

- Hold the camera as steady as possible and aim for a smooth action when panning. Loss of quality will occur during rapid and fast panning.
- Mobile phones are much lighter than handy cams so much more difficult to keep stable. Stand with feet apart and elbows planted against your body for steadier shots.

- Avoid the zoom function, as you'll lose picture quality – better to move physically closer to your subject. Use close-ups and avoid wide and landscape shots.
- Use larger text – smaller text is hard to read on smaller screens

Sound

- Even with the advances in mobile camera technology, the sound recording function on most mobile cameras is limited so you should not rely on sound to tell your story. Sound and music can be added in post-production.
- The in-built microphone will pick up surrounding sound so you need to be close to your subject. The sound quality can also be affected by wind and rapid movement of the camera. An external microphone attached to the camera can be used to avoid this (most phones should have this capability) or dub audio afterwards...or a combination of all three.
- Your short film will be viewed on mobile phones and online if you are short listed or selected so keep this in mind when shooting and during post-production. Mobile phone speakers aren't the greatest quality for listening to large amounts of dialogue. Mobile films will be reviewed by the panel on DVD

Lighting

- Use soft light – mobile phones are unable to process major contrasts.
- Use the white-balance function if your camera has it.

Editing and Post Production

- Use editing software to edit your footage. This is a much easier way to finalise your film. Software such as iMovie, Premiere and Final Cut Pro can offer you this. Simply connect your phone to your computer (via USB or Bluetooth) and import your files into your program of choice then edit away!
- Take note of ratio sizes when editing on a computer. Most mobile phones record 640 x 480 pixels. Most editing software won't recognise this and will adjust/stretch your picture size.
- If you don't feel comfortable using software to edit, shoot in sequence on your phone and export the entire file to your computer.
- Also keep in mind that we screen all films at 25 frames per second (fps) on the festival night. Most mobile devices shoot at a higher frame rate than this. Be sure to change the settings on your mobile device before shooting, or request a 25fps digital beta cam master from a duplication studio.

Be creative!

- Take advantage of the portability of the mobile camera and shoot from interesting angles and locations a regular camera would struggle with.

Note, to be eligible for the Telstra Mobile Masterpieces competition, you must have shot your film on one of the following devices:

- Mobile phone devices with video capabilities
- Tablets and Telstra Touch Tab range of devices

Lastly, keep in mind these tips are not set in stone. Be innovative. Be creative. Think outside the square. The trusty mobile phone is a new and exciting medium for storytelling and filmmaking so there are no hard and fast rules. Take a chance, if you think it will work, give it a go. There is so much more to discover and explore within the world of mobile phone storytelling and often risk taking, experiments and 'accidents' produce the most interesting and unique results!

Good luck making your Telstra Mobile Masterpiece! If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us on mail@tropfest.com.au - we are here to help!

The Tropfest Team