

THE **DSLR** **FILMMAKER'S** HANDBOOK

2nd Edition

Real-World Production Techniques

Barry Andersson

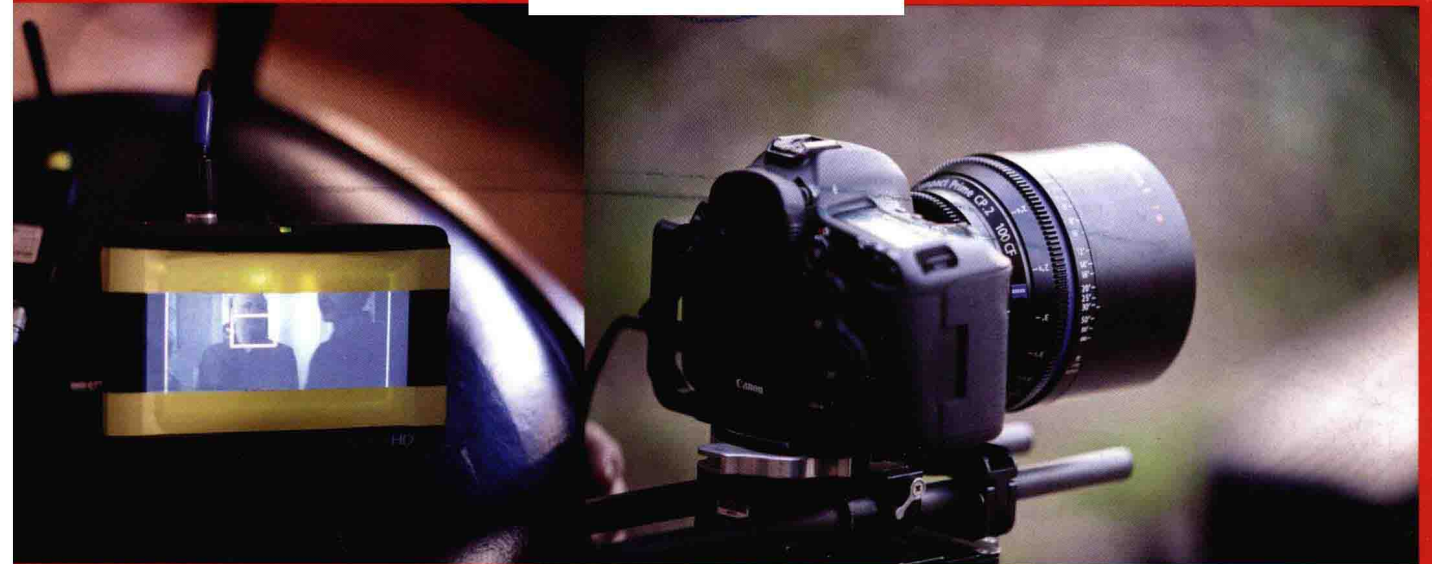
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The DSLR Filmmaker's Handbook

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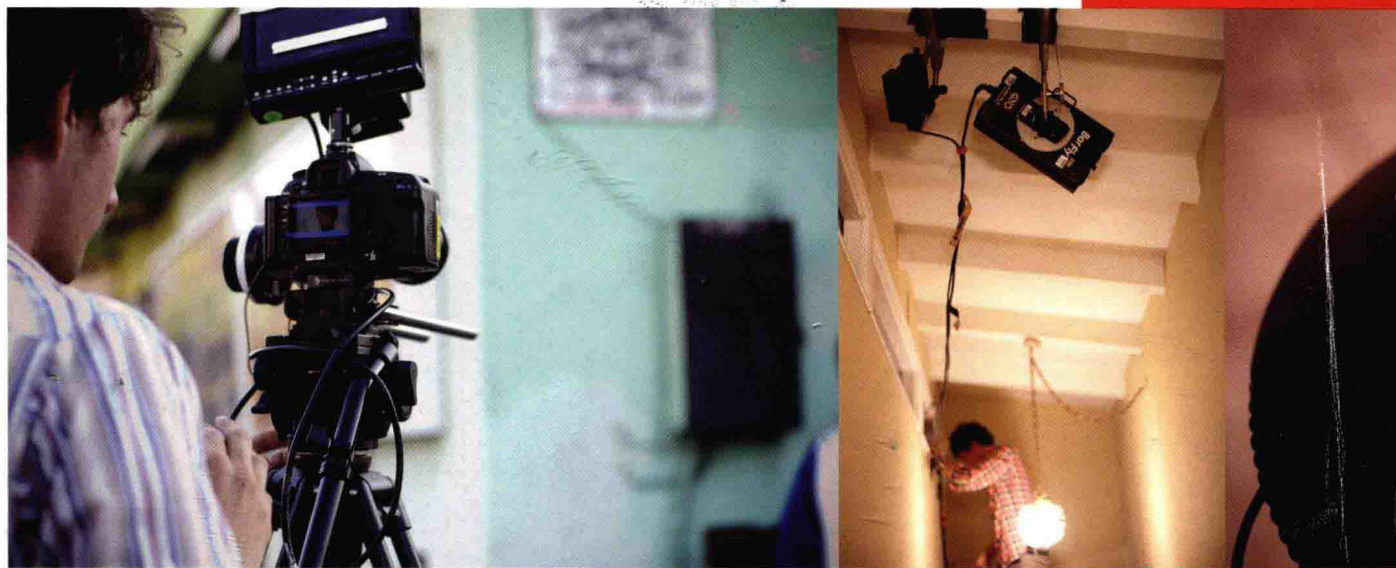
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The DSLR Filmmaker's Handbook

Second Edition





Photos courtesy of Carrie Vines Photography



*To my kids, who put up with me, inspire me,
challenge me, and make me laugh every day.
I love you both more than you will ever know.*

Acknowledgments

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About the Author

Barry Andersson is an award-winning independent filmmaker and trainer. His career started with live television video production, ranging from international live interactive broadcasts to live sporting event production. About the same time Andersson started in video production, he also started to produce and direct 35 mm motion-picture short films. Working with everything from 1/2", 3/4", Beta, and high-definition video to 8 mm, 16 mm, and 35 mm motion-picture film, he has knowledge of both the video and traditional film workflows. Early in his career he shot over 100 weddings and since then has directed several award-winning short films, several television pilots, episodic television, numerous commercials, and one of the first DSLR feature films. Mr. Andersson's client list includes ESPN, PBS, Discovery Channel, NBA, Disney, Skype, and Samsung Electronics, to name a few.

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Introduction

This book is a culmination of untold long hours fiddling with cameras and trying to get a shot to work on a variety of DSLR cameras. Since the first edition, these methods have been honed and battle tested over the course of close to 100 productions ranging from low-budget to Fortune 100 companies.

The transition from shooting with film or standard video to working with a DSLR is an exciting and daunting prospect. It is a combination of technological knowledge and a lot of trial and error. This arena is constantly changing as innovations are added or new cameras enter the market. However, we are at a point where there is a DSLR core knowledge base that will provide a foundation for any project. Currently, most DSLR knowledge comes from word of mouth or from “some blog or forum that I once read.” Tips and disinformation are given equal footing, and ultimately everyone is stuck holding a camera on the first day of shooting wondering whether the information that they have been gleaning in bits and pieces is actually going to work. This book cuts to the chase; if it’s in here, it’s going to work. This book attempts to cram that core knowledge of DSLR video into one volume.

It offers information on every subject that you need to be aware of to shoot a DSLR project. This book addresses the practicalities that a filmmaker needs to know to actually be able to complete a DSLR project or that a videographer needs for a shoot. You will find out how to pick gear, set up the gear, and choose and manipulate lenses and various tools to improve your shooting. As you plan all aspects of your shoot, the book will give you direction to ensure that you have your bases covered. Whether you have never worked with DSLR video or you have DSLR video experience, we cover how to create a professional, high-quality project from start to finish and help you avoid pitfalls that might hurt your final project.

Obviously, at times, further knowledge or proficiency is necessary. For example, we can tell you about a Steadicam rig, but you will need to practice using a rig or test your motion needs with an operator in order for it to function correctly. We can highlight various editing workflows, but when you get your footage, you will need to have a working knowledge of editing in order to edit it.

This book is for anyone who wants to shoot a DSLR project whether it be a feature film, a wedding, or any other production. This book does not cover film theory, ways to break into Hollywood, or how to start your own wedding videography business. What we do cover are ways you can best use DSLR cameras, lenses, and other accessories to help you create a professional-looking project.

Who Should Read This Book

As the title implies, this book is intended for people who own or want to shoot video with DSLR cameras. However, we strive as much as possible to make most of the information as camera platform neutral as we can. Much of this book can be used regardless of the camera

platform you end up shooting with. However, people who want to shoot with DSLR video probably fall into two basic groups:

- Independent filmmakers trying to get the “film” look on an affordable budget
- Photographers who are looking to start shooting DSLR video but have never worked in the video world or the motion-picture film world

We are making certain assumptions regarding the reader here:

- You are familiar with using a video, film, or still camera.
- You are interested in diving deeper than the factory settings on the camera to achieve a certain look for your video.
- You have a rudimentary understanding of movies and the visual language of movies.

For the purposes of this book, an independent filmmaker is not only a filmmaker as in Hollywood movies but also a videographer who creates or wants to film documentaries, music videos, weddings, commercials, or corporate videos. As for still photographers, we assume many will have little to no knowledge of video, editing, and the effects that motion will have on the lens choice in the final image. If you are a photographer with more exposure in this arena, then you are ahead of the game, but there is still plenty of practical advice, tips, and tricks you can benefit from before you head out on your shoot. If you are an aspiring filmmaker, then you will find out what you need to successfully prepare and shoot, as well as what problems to watch out for before you start your next film.

With *The DSLR Filmmaker's Handbook*, we aim to provide a clear overview and pitfalls of the DSLR video workflow. We will touch on various camera types, lenses, and more, but on the whole there are practical advice and tips regardless of what camera and/or equipment you use. We hope this encourages people to dive in and test the DSLR video capabilities and not be discouraged with any limitations of the technology. Use the new technology as a challenge to create the very best video possible, and feel free to learn from our mistakes and successes.

As with any technology, DSLR cameras will continue to evolve and change. You can contact me directly with your questions via Twitter or my website at www.MophoRentals.com. Additionally, I am a guest blogger on my friend Mitch Augner's website at www.Planet5D.com. Make sure to stop by to keep up to date on any new cameras, equipment, or workflows that evolve after the printing of this book.

What Is Covered in This Book

Here is a glance at what is in each chapter:

Chapter 1, “Fundamentals of DSLR Filmmaking,” is key. Whether you are a person familiar shooting with standard video cameras, a still photographer, or a filmmaker, there will be overlap in equipment and vernacular. However, there are some unique processes, gear, and workflows that apply specifically to shooting video on DSLR cameras.

Chapter 2, “Gear and Recommendations,” helps you decide what camera is the best fit for you, tells what gear is available to help shoot your next film, and offers our recommendations for what you should use for your next project.

Chapter 3, “Testing and Custom Settings,” helps you control the look of the image, which is a first-order goal of the filmmaker. Accurate color, the ability to create a “look,” and the proper way to set up the cameras are all part of the DSLR workflow.

Chapter 4, “Cameras and Lenses on Location,” covers cameras and lenses since the DSLR platform has exponentially expanded the number of available cameras, lenses, and formats that a filmmaker can work with. It is now more important than ever to understand the tools and be aware of the available choices and the reasons to choose your camera and lenses.

Chapter 5, “Camera Motion and Support,” covers not just equipment but also a method for adding movement and motion to your shots. See what type of equipment is available, explore best practices for creating the motion, and learn how to plan for the equipment you will need in order to get the shot you want.

Chapter 6, “Lighting on Location,” covers lighting, from available natural light to full-on professional lights and lighting setups. Check out best practices and things that will help you achieve a better image.

Chapter 7, “Sound on Location,” provides suggestions for working with DSLR cameras, which is totally different from working with traditional video cameras. DSLR cameras should be treated much more like film cameras, where the best option is to record audio on a separate device for maximum quality.

Chapter 8, “Organizing and Storing Data in the Field,” covers how to handle your data. With a little forethought and planning, you will save tons of time and headaches later in post-production. Don’t skip what might seem like a boring chapter.

Chapter 9, “Troubleshooting,” helps you be aware of the common issues when shooting DSLR video and that there are problems and limitations (but nothing that you can’t work around). Knowledge is power in this sense, and the more you know, the easier it will be to craft the way you shoot your film so you can be successful.

Chapter 10, “Converting and Editing Your Footage,” shows you how (and when) you need to convert your original footage, best practices for backing up your footage, and how to get organized for the edit. If you are unfamiliar with editing, this will get you started (but is not a comprehensive how-to on editing).

Chapter 11, “Audio Crash Course,” covers everything from syncing audio and video all the way to how to ADR lines that you didn’t get or didn’t turn out in post.

Chapter 12, “Color Correction and Grading,” covers not just the look of the movie but also correcting color problems and creating a seamless image that is technically satisfactory and ready for you to show to an audience.

Chapter 13, “Compressing Your Film,” looks at how you can compress your film so it looks as close as possible to the uncompressed version you edited and so it can be viewed in the best-quality compressed version no matter whether you show it online, on a DVD, or in a theater.

Chapter 14, “Post-Production Looks,” covers many common problems that come up during shooting that need to be fixed in post. We look at the top issues both for DSLR video shooters and for video in general.

Chapter 15, “Workshops,” covers some tips and tricks for shooting underwater, for shooting in or at a moving vehicle, and for changing your video speed to achieve the cinematic look you want.



How to Contact the Author

I welcome feedback from you about this book or for suggestions about books you'd like to see from me in the future. You can reach me by writing to barry@barryandersson.com. For more information about our equipment rentals, for consulting inquiries, or for questions regarding hiring me for work, please visit www.MophoRentals.com and/or www.barryandersson.com.

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