



## TELSTRA MOBILE MASTERPIECES TROPTIPS FOR MAKING FILMS ON MOBILE

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

Shooting on your mobile is very different to shooting on a handycam. The trusty mobile phone has some advantages when it comes to filming, but they don't yet offer the same flexibility and quality of the latest handycam 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.

Don't forget to check out the winner of Tropfest NY 2008 short film *Mankind is No Island* directed by Jason van Genderen and Shane Emmett. Shot completely on a mobile phone, this captivating short film won the hearts of New Yorkers in 2008 with a montage of text and imagery shot in New York City and Sydney. This really shows us, when approached the right way, mobile short films can equally engage and connect with audiences as short films shot on film.

Remember, if your film gets short listed or selected for the festival, it will screen on a big screen at Movie Extra Tropfest 2010. You need to make your film so that it can be seen on the big screen as well as on a mobile phone.

### Story

- Story over quality – a good story will always be more engaging 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 handycams so much more difficult to keep stable. Stand with feet apart and elbows planted against your body for steadier shots.

# **MOBILE MASTERPIECES**

- 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.
- 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.

## 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.

## Be creative!

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

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](mailto:mail@tropfest.com.au) – we are here to help!

*The Tropfest Team*