

GTC WORKSHOPS



STUDIO CAMERA OPERATIONS THE LONDON STUDIOS

Pictures: Max Hodgetts and Mark Howe

The London Studios building was originally planned to be used as a hotel but thanks to David Frost became LWT's HQ instead. It now houses the busiest studio centre in the UK.

Thanks to TLS Head of Cameras and supporter of the GTC Chris Owen, Guild members were given priority access (for the second time in 4 weeks) to their cameras and support equipment.

Our classrooms for the day were Studio 1 (home of all major chat shows currently on terrestrial) and the small studio 5 with its permanent set for 'Good Morning Britain'. We spent an equal time in each place being instructed in Ped setup and use, Jib operation, Steadicam and studio handheld techniques.

Interestingly, The London Studios made the decision four years ago to go with Sony and so any camera can now be patched into any studio panel. They also decided on Fujinon lenses on all cameras.

Freelance operator Mike Scott brought along his two Steadicam rigs and

cheerfully strapped in all takers with a spirit reminiscent of Len Goodman urging on new dancers with an encouraging "GO ON my son! Give it your best!" The first and only time I previously have used a Steadicam rig was as a ridiculously keen trainee in 1978. 'Not as easy as it first seemed' is my current assessment after trying Mike's rig for just 15 minutes!

So this was a great day for those not used to TV studios and in particularly peds. Dudley Darby (reminiscing about early 'Blue Peter' days) was of course in his element!

Chris Owen's crew of assistants and senior ops could not have been more hospitable and encouraging as we manhandled their kit. Many thanks to all those guys for giving up their Saturdays at home ('Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway' has finished) and well done to Clive North for setting it up.

Mark Howe



The Diary of a Young Cameraman

Dan Brown

Middlesex University

Pictures: Chris Bell

Date: Saturday 20th June 2015

Time: 10:30am - 4:30pm

Venue: GTC studio camera workshop at ITV TLS in London

Upon arrival at the ITV reception area I was greeted by Chris Owen head of cameras at TLS. We had a brief chat and talked about what I was currently doing and the plan for the day. We went through the security barriers and headed to the canteen area where we could have drinks and snacks.

I went to find a seat and introduced myself to some of the guys. Eventually, we were greeted by Darren, (head of cameras at 'Good Morning Britain'), who took us to Studio Two which was being lit and rigged by the sparks. There was no set in place so it was interesting to see the empty space where you would normally see the sets of the 'Graham Norton Show', 'Ant & Dec' and 'Surprise Surprise'. We all sat down and Chris gave us a short history lesson about the building and what had gone on inside it over the years. He then did a quick Q&A and briefed us on the safety procedures.

We walked through to the 'Lorraine' set



where there were seven cameras including five pedestal cameras with box lenses and autocue, a handheld camera with a wide-angle lens and a 9ft Jimmy Jib with a wide-angle lens on the front. Before we got to work with the equipment we were greeted by Mel who works for the Vitec Group that supply pedestals and camera support systems to the industry. He gave us a talk on the health and safety aspects of gassing a pedestal and what to be aware of when operating the pedestal such as the speed of the pedestal rising and falling.

We were split up into two groups, one stayed in the 'Lorraine' studio whilst the other went upstairs to the 'GMB' studio. Later on in the day we would switch over. We worked in teams of five to practise on one particular piece of kit whether it be pedestal, jib or handheld. I started off with the jib as they fascinate me and I wanted to get hands on and experiment with creative shots and angles. Nick was the man who



was the specialized jib operator, so he gave us a run down about the specs, how to operate them, and some of the safety aspects. He was a really nice guy and a pleasure to have met. We took it in turns to operate it and I tried to imagine I was on a live show in order to try and feel the pressure and adrenaline rush I would encounter during it! I did my swoop, tracking in and out shots, slow beauty shots and the all important money shots. I even got praise by some of the other members, Nick and Chris, for my operating which was really encouraging and hopefully showed I had a flair for it.

Chris explained the history of the Jimmy Jib and how the camera department designed certain parts to suit the operators better. I could have done it all day, I loved it! We all rotated and I wandered over to the handheld zone. Steve was the specialized handheld operator and he gave us a rundown on the basics of the operations. I knew some of what he was saying as I had experience in the past doing FACS checks and other roles whilst doing jobs with Telegenic and CTV on outside broadcasts such as International Rugby Union and the London Marathon. We took turns to have a go and as the camera was hooked up to a monitor on wheels via a SD/HDI output, we could see our output on a colour monitor.

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Steve showed us a video of a handheld operator on the BBC 'One Show' in a music piano sequence where there were no cuts, just a four minute long handheld shot which could have been mistaken for a Steadicam shot.

The last piece of equipment to try was the pedestal. All the pedestal cameras in the studio had a small box 22x lens with autocue, LED camera number on top of the autocue, and a camera output monitor on the bottom via a SD/HDI output. I practised my pedestal up, pedestal down, crab around, track right, left, in, out, back focus pull and a variety of shots - all done on a cardboard cut out of Ed Miliband! After an eventful morning it was time for a lunch break.

Just before the end of lunch, I headed back into the studio where I found Steve practising some handheld moves and so I got back on the Jib to get some more practise and satisfy my passion and creativity by doing some more shots. When everyone came back and just before we headed upstairs, Chris said "Don't worry Dan, there's another jib upstairs" which we laughed about. We then switched with the other group and

headed upstairs to the 'GMB' set. I was surprised how much smaller the studio was in reality than it appeared on TV. I had a walk around the set then made my way to the jib and because it was a news set we were shown some different moves and things to try which I really enjoyed. However, because this studio was considerably busier than the other one, I could not swing the jib as far and so I had to settle for 45 degree swings high and low, whilst keeping aware of the people around me and the lights above.

After the jib, I went onto a pedestal camera and practised my focusing, zooming, pedding, crabbing and tracking whilst pointing at cardboard cut-outs of four politicians including David Cameron and Nigel Farage. We had a short break before being given a shot list sheet or a band recording on the Graham Norton Show. This was quite hard to follow as the PA was calling the next camera number, timings to the next camera shot and the beats before the cuts. The thing that surprised me was that Chris said this was a fairly straight-forward sequence - I



would not fancy being a PA on a more complicated sequence! We then watched it again and I followed it better.

Before the wrap, we got on a camera to do a mock recording of the desk start, over to the chat area and finally to the music area. Whilst we were getting shots called to our camera number by the director (Darren), we had to stay in focus, not collide with another camera or the jib and keep still. It was a challenge but really enjoyable!

Overall, it was a great experience to see behind the scenes of some famous sets, sharing stories, meeting GTC members, working on a variety of camera systems and testing my creativity on them. I'd like to thank Chris Owen, Clive North, Darren


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