



The Music Man...

an interview with director **Paul Dugdale**

At only 36, Paul Dugdale is less than half the age of rock legend Sir Mick Jagger – but on The Rolling Stones' tour of South America, which culminated in a huge free concert in Havana, Cuba last year, Paul was the director selected by the band to document this historic trip. Paul, who started his career in the camera department, spoke to GTC Exhibitions Manager Sally Garrett about Cuba and his path into directing music documentaries.

I first met Paul in the early 2000s at BBC Television Centre where we were both working as camera assistants. While I went on to become a camera operator, Paul became a multi-Grammy nominated director, whose latest venture saw him following The Rolling Stones on their tour around Latin America. I connected with Paul recently to ask him a few questions about how he transitioned from the camera department to becoming a director.

Did you always know you wanted to be in TV/film?

Well, my father [GTC member Mike Dugdale] is a camera operator, so from a really young age, I guess six or seven, I was in and out of the local studios where he worked in Maidstone – or waiting at the dinner table for dad to get home and tell us about his exciting day. He's always been incredibly passionate about cameras and the way TV is made.

I remember driving along in a car with him when I was really, really young and a song was playing on the radio. He asked me whether I could imagine what sort of music video would suit the song and I knew immediately what I would do.

It felt very natural to me and 'seeing' music somehow made sense. It sounds a bit silly and pretentious when I write this but that really did have a big effect. Other than that he was a huge influence on my pursuing a creative career. Photography is his passion so that left a massive impression on me.

The spark for me was, when I was about 16, I worked as a cable-basher for my father on stage at the Brit Awards. Dad had me practising 8-ing a cable with the hose in the garden the night before! I think, as a teenager, once you go to something like that and see how the team works, and the incredible sense of camaraderie (which we perhaps later on take for granted), not to mention being surrounded by most of your musical heroes, it seems like a pretty astonishing job. It all seemed so enticing and from there on I guess I just fell completely in love with it.

What made you change from cameras to directing?

Being a camera assistant and camera operator were some of the best years of my life so far. I made amazing friends and shared incredible experiences filming all around the world.

“

When I was about 16, I worked as a cable-basher for my father on stage at the Brit Awards. Dad had me practising 8-ing a cable with the hose in the garden the night before!

Previous to that, I had been to art college at Central St Martins and studied fine art. The most striking lessons I learnt there were to have confidence in your own ideas and the commitment to execute them. From there I wanted to do my own shoots, but I needed to train first. As a camera operator I was able to learn from the best directors in the world and listen to them over talkback. I was incredibly lucky. I loved operating cameras, but I also wanted to make the shoots my own – and to do that I had to get in the director's chair.

Do you think people with a background in cameras make better directors?

I think it really depends what you're directing. I can't imagine directing and not having worked in cameras for what I do, which at the moment is mostly live music. Getting the camera plan right is absolutely vital because you only get one go at it and having that experience makes it quite intuitive for me to know what a camera op needs in order to get the best shots. I'm familiar with what the gear can do and which lenses work where and so on. However, there are many different ways to approach directing – it's not just about directing camera operators, many times you need to direct the performance as well and being in cameras might not help you with that, so you have to learn in other ways too.

Do you remember the first thing you directed?

I made a music video for my band when I was 17. It was really odd, but I'm quite proud of it. It got played on MTV and we went to the studios in Camden and got interviewed. That was my first taste of directing a music video!

Is it only music you direct or could you see yourself going into TV dramas, LE or even feature films?

Yes, 100% I would like to do that. For me the buzz is in exploring emotion and heightening it. Music is that in its most raw form, but I'd love to explore other avenues in the future, certainly with regards to drama. Documentary is the current focus. That's really exciting to me as well.



In an unusual arrangement, the gallery for the Havana gig was underneath the stage!



The massive Havana venue for the free Rolling Stones concert, which was attended by 700,000 Cubans

You've recently filmed two Rolling Stones DVDs. The first, *Olé Olé Olé!*, follows the band across Latin America as they set up and pull off a once-in-a-lifetime gig in Cuba. What cameras did you use and how easy it was to film in Cuba?

We shot the main documentary single camera with an ARRI Amira. When we were filming the live shows on the tour we upped it to six but still shot 'documentary style' all handheld to maintain a cohesive aesthetic.

Cuba is a challenging place in which to shoot and a number of different issues arose. Most of the technical resources we required are simply not available there, so all the equipment had to be shipped in. This alone was a complicated process; the logistics and paperwork of bringing so much equipment into the country, which had until very recently been subject to a strict embargo, was pretty complex.

Another challenge was accommodation. Out of the blue, Barack Obama had chosen to visit on the very day the concert was scheduled, meaning the band had to reschedule under fairly fraught circumstances. They managed to overcome this hurdle but then finding suitable accommodation for the entire Stones crew plus the film crew on new dates at such short notice was a nightmare and meant relocating hundreds of tourists, which we were unsure would even be possible. At one point the Stones were going to charter an entire cruise ship to dock in the bay that could act as everyone's quarters, but in the end this proved not to be necessary.

An event of this scale had never been attempted in Cuba before, so there was no previous blueprint for the locals on how to achieve it. This in itself made planning understandably daunting.

As with much of Latin America, Cuba works at a pace we might not be accustomed to, the phone signal is often poor and internet access can be patchy or non-existent, so whereas you might normally ping off an email and have a platform built half an hour later, this project required rather more delicate planning. It's important to note though that, despite these challenges, the Cuban people we worked with, especially the local production company, were incredible and without them working closely with our UK team the project literally couldn't have happened.



EUROPEAN PRESSPHOTO AGENCY / ALAMY

“

I see filming music as ‘easy to do but hard to do well’. I love feeling blown away by the crew’s skill and the accuracy of execution. It lifts my game too.

The other DVD, Havana Moon, was a multicamera shoot – can you tell us more about that?

The Havana finale used 14 Sony F55s and we supplemented these with three more Amiras and a RED. The different formats worked fine together – I often mix formats on my shoots and with a good colourist on board it doesn’t tend to present too many problems. The hardest cameras to match in were those filming deep in the crowd, because of the lack of available light out there, but in general the different formats balanced really well. Virtually all my work for DVD/Blu Ray/Cinema is 4K and shot with film lenses and large-sensor cameras; although, of course, one is always guided by the budget. All the gear had to be shipped in, so logistically it was a real challenge but the team absolutely smashed it. Simon Fisher was producer and Bolke Lautier was on board as the technical director. He and his Dutch team are such a pleasure to work with; the impeccable technology and unbounded spirit made the whole thing a really efficient machine.

How did The Rolling Stones films come about? Did you have to tender for the job or was it because you had directed things for them in the past?

I first met the band in 2013, when we filmed a show in Hyde Park. On that occasion we cold-called. With this one the existing relationship meant they told us Cuba was on the cards a good eight months prior to the trip, so I wrote a treatment outlining a potential documentary. The Havana gig naturally felt like it would make an amazing climax to the film, so it was just a matter of working out the narrative that would lead up to it.

Where did the ideas for the DVDs come from?

Olé Olé Olé! is my fourth feature-length film for The Rolling Stones. The ideas are really guided by whatever scenario we

are entering at the time. I wrote *Olé Olé Olé!* with producer Sam Bridger. We devised the structure and themes we wanted to explore, what sort of people we wanted to meet in each location and the ambitions we had for band access. I wanted to make a film that wasn’t your average tour diary, which meant we had to cram in a lot of casting and development before principal filming began. We were green-lit just before Christmas and the first shoot was in early February, so it was a period of intense research, but we knew what we wanted so we were able to be pretty efficient with our searches and, again, we had an incredible group of people helping us.

Do you always use the same production crew, cameras, sound etc.?

Not exclusively, but I really enjoy having a tight team. With each film we make, our communication on the next one becomes more shorthand, which in turn allows the process to be more efficient and means you can get more done. The majority of my work is with production company JA Films. I’m lucky enough to work with some really extraordinary people.

What is your process of choosing camera crew?

Well, of course, it starts with the supervisor. I love discussing and developing a camera plan, exploring options and new technology. It’s so crucial to get this right with a performance-based show, because once it’s going you can’t stop it and make changes. For the wider crew there’s a number of factors that guide my decisions, though for the most part I choose people I know will give me amazing variety and creativity. Filming music isn’t rocket science, but if you have a camera op who gives you constantly new and creative shots, it adds so much texture and interest to the overall cut, and can transform the final product. I see filming music as ‘easy to do but hard to do well’. I love feeling blown away by the crew’s skill and the accuracy of execution. It lifts my game too.

Do you think as a director there is a gender divide within the media and especially the camera department? Do you use any female operators?

I can only speak from experience and, if I’m honest, I don’t know about the wider media, but certainly there are more men than women in the camera department. I expect to see the profession becoming more even now that the world of



Spotted in a samba float graveyard in Sao Paulo during the Brazil stage of the shoot

television is becoming much more accessible and stereotypes are slowly breaking down. It’s absurd to imagine women not getting the same opportunities as men. I use female operators but hugely less than men – but this is purely because there is far less choice.

We all know that working in the media involves long hours and frequent trips away from home; you’ve recently become a father – have you found this has had an impact on your work, either positive or negative?

Yeah, travel can be tough. Time becomes so important and being away a really different experience. It’s funny, both myself and the producers, Sam Bridger and Simon Fisher, all have kids under two. We were saying that, no matter how long and arduous a day’s work is, after you have kids it feels like a day off! It’s hard being away but it does make you cherish the time you spend with your family all the more.

“

I remember driving along in a car with my dad when I was really, really young and a song was playing on the radio. He asked me whether I could imagine what sort of music video would suit the song and I knew immediately what I would do.

What’s next for you – anything you can talk about?

I’m currently developing a documentary scheduled to go into production early in 2017. I can’t wait to get started. I have another two large projects on the go too – one for MTV in Rotterdam, the other for VH1 in New York.

Thank you so much for talking to us for Zerb, Paul.



Fact File

Havana Moon was released worldwide on 11 November 2016 on Blu Ray/DVD and *Olé Olé Olé!* was broadcast in November 2016 on Channel 4 with a physical release due in 2017.

The trailer for *Olé Olé Olé!* can be found at <http://www.dugdale.tv/film/the-rolling-stones-ole-ole-ole-a-trip-across-latin-america-trailer>

Find out more about Paul Dugdale at www.dugdale.tv, where you can also find links to his other works including the One Direction ‘making of’ in Milan and Coldplay ‘making of’ in Los Angeles.

The future of remote cameras has arrived...

ARC360 Agile PTZ Camera

- Designed for multiple applications – wildlife, sport, concerts, live events
- Built for extreme environments
- Waterproof with integrated wiper blade
- Condensation and fog free
- Precision presets and driven horizon
- Simple locking base-mount for easy and safe install



For full specifications or to discuss our other products please get in touch:

phone +44 (0)2392 412044
email hello@agileremotecameras.com
web www.agileremotecameras.com

Agile Remote Cameras
The Tack Room, Stansted Park,
Rowlands Castle, Hampshire PO9 6DX