

How to

MAKE YOUR OWN RC VIDEO

Ready, set, ACTION!

WORDS & PHOTOS **JOHN CARY**

All day long you comb through the Internet looking at all sorts of RC videos only to find some good, some bad and some you're still asking yourself "What was THAT all about?" If you are new to the whole videography scene, it can be a little intimidating especially when you get a glimpse into what other people use in order to create videos. For the most part, videos aren't all that hard to accomplish because all you really need is a little bit of imagination, video gear, maybe a little bit of help from some buddies and the drive to tell a story. Here at *RC Car Action*, we post videos daily about all things RC related. I'd like to showcase a few steps that we use to create video content that people enjoy watching in hopes of getting you inspired to create your own future videos.

THE GEAR

Don't be fooled by expensive gear; great video can be done on the slimmest of budgets; even most of today's smartphones have decent video capabilities. What it really boils down to is having a good idea and the drive to create great videos. Yes, higher-quality cameras do afford you greater capabilities, but what you really need to focus on is your composition, lighting and editing. Eventually, the gear will follow. If you are looking to purchase video gear, focus on the lenses of the cameras more than the camera itself. Optics are everything. We use a mixture of DSLRs, small HD sports cameras, larger studio-type cameras, and even our smartphones. You may even want to consider handicapping yourself by only working with a particular medium; for example, only shooting with a smartphone or a smaller HD camera. Photographers do this all the time by using various still cameras in order to get a desired effect. Video cameras can be used in the same fashion.

Grab one, grab all and create your next video.



KEEP IT STEADY

No one likes to watch a wobbly video, so spend a couple extra dollars and purchase a basic tripod or mono pod. Mono pods are quick, easy to set up, and allow for all sorts of added movement. The flip side to that is, they still require at least one hand to hold upright. A tripod on the other hand, is the opposite of that. It's fixed in its location, making it much easier if you're acting as both the cameraman and driver. If you're going to get a tripod, try to get one that allows you the ability to flip the main head upside down, which allows you to get the camera as close to the ground as possible without it touching. For low static shots, you can also use a beanbag or sandbag to act as a camera stabilizer.

Tripods are a necessity when it comes to shooting video. Remember, always try and get a tripod that can support more than your camera weighs.



FRAME IT UP

Ever notice how painters take their time to compose paintings? They spend a great deal of time doing this because they're only dealing with one frame at a time. Shooting video should be taken with the same amount of care even though you're dealing with 30–60 frames a second (depending on the camera). Consider your surroundings and keep an eye out to see what's around you, look to see what you can either add or take away from your composition in order to help breathe life into your shot. Always remember to be aware of people and objects around you. Even though you're attempting to build cinematic ecstasy, don't do it at anyone else's expense.

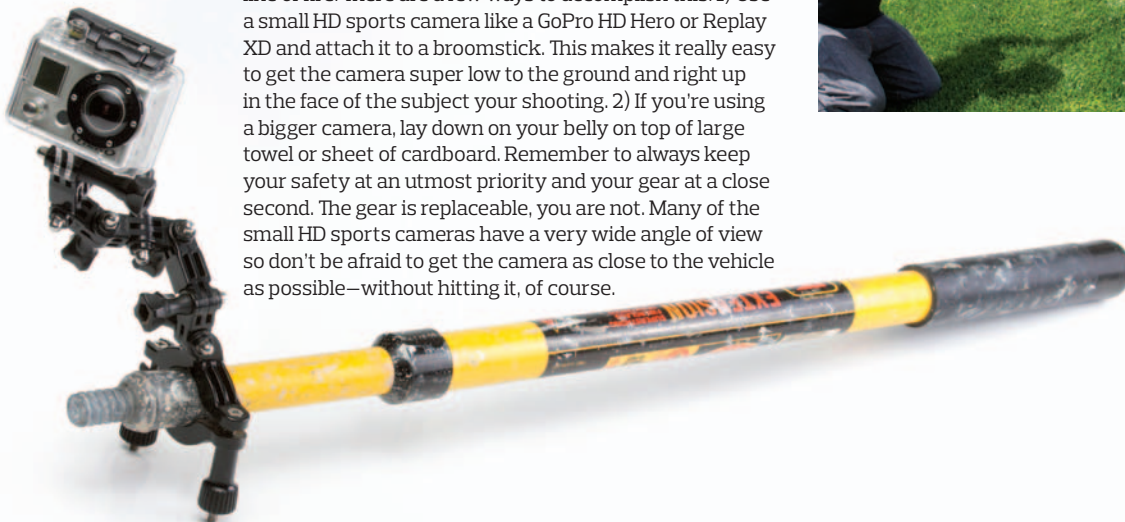
Before you press the record button, frame up the shot through the camera so you can see exactly what you're recording.

IN THE LINE OF FIRE

You'd be hard pressed to find a person who doesn't like those low-angle action shots that make RC cars look like full-size vehicles, especially when they're blasting around a corner or kicking up all sorts of dirt. The best way to do that is to get down low and put yourself in the line of fire. There are a few ways to accomplish this: 1) Use a small HD sports camera like a GoPro HD Hero or Replay XD and attach it to a broomstick. This makes it really easy to get the camera super low to the ground and right up in the face of the subject you're shooting. 2) If you're using a bigger camera, lay down on your belly on top of large towel or sheet of cardboard. Remember to always keep your safety at an utmost priority and your gear at a close second. The gear is replaceable, you are not. Many of the small HD sports cameras have a very wide angle of view so don't be afraid to get the camera as close to the vehicle as possible—without hitting it, of course.

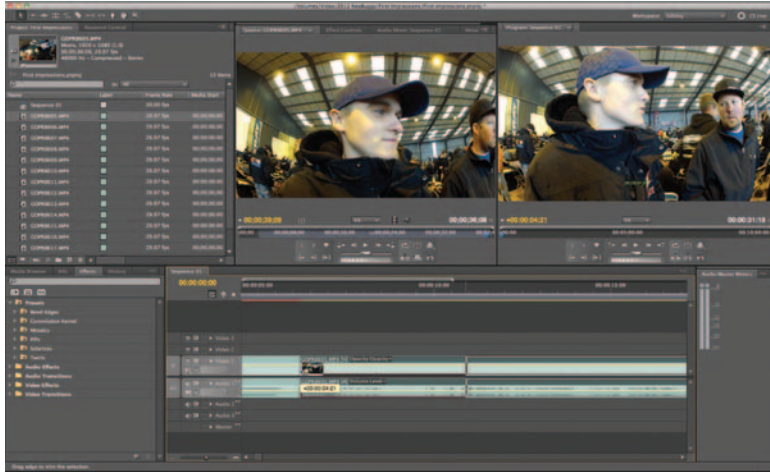


For the up-close shots, the camera on a stick idea works great.



TRIM THE FAT

How many times have you watched a video where the majority features nothing happening for the first three minutes and all of a sudden, action for 10 seconds and the video is over? Don't be that person; trim the excess footage and get to the meat and potatoes of your video. Most of today's video editing software is extremely easy to use even if you're not computer literate. Smartphones also have easy-to-use video editing software. Don't get me wrong, there's nothing wrong with a little lead in to build anticipation, but keep it short and to the point. Having two minutes of dead air while your trying to start your car or waiting for something to happen isn't exactly going to build a following of people waiting to see your next video. Besides, it's always better to have everything ready to go before you start shooting.



Trim the excess footage away and get to the meat and potatoes of your video.

SETTINGS, WHAT SETTINGS?

It's safe to assume that most video cameras have multiple shooting resolutions from which to choose and each has different effects on how the video will look. There are two important settings you need to be concerned with; resolution (480p, 720p, 1080p) which is your actual size of what your camera is shooting at, frame rate or know as "frames per second" (24fps, 30fps, 48fps, 60fps). If you can, always try to shoot at a higher resolution as much as possible. Yes, it does take up more space on your memory cards, but you are getting as much detail as possible in your video clips. As for frame rate, higher frame rates offer higher resolution and the ability to make slow motion action clips. You can use slower frame rates (sub 30fps) for slow motion but the end result will not be as effective as a higher frame rate (60fps and above). An ideal starting point for shooting resolution is either 1080p/30fps or 720p/30fps, both of which will offer great resolution and they are web friendly.

Have fun and keep an eye on what you're filming ... try not to get caught up in who has the best gear.

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