



## MOVING IMAGE MASTERCLASS

Shooting cinematic footage with a DSLR has never been easier, but turning it into a gripping story is another matter.

**Francesco Zizola** of NOOR tells you how



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**I**t's easy, and tempting, to make videos where everything is obvious and predictable, but this kind of storytelling is boring. I'm always looking for a new visual language that allows me to question what we know. My videos can be disturbing and difficult, but I want to create videos that will stay with the viewer.

To engage an audience, especially online, you need to look for an original point of view. Always try and find something new and different and aim to surprise. Even though I have a wish list of shots in mind, my stories are open – I'm not shooting fiction, I'm shooting reality, and the structure of the narrative can change at any point.

I always keep in mind the rhythm and pace of the story. Remember that you need a lot of footage just to make a short film 3-5 minutes long, which is a good length for publishing online. That takes a lot of preparation as well as work in the field.

Sound is really important, too, and adds another layer to the narrative. For my short film *In the Same Boat*, I filmed refugees being rescued from crammed

boats. While I was shooting, I realised that the most interesting aspect of the sound wasn't the noises on the rescue boats, but the distress calls made from the sinking ships to the coastguards. That was where the action was, so I used these, which makes the final film very powerful.

For a film I'm making about Italian fishermen, the *tonnaroti*, who use a 2000-year-old method of sustainable tuna fishing, I wanted different angles and perspectives to engage the viewer with the action. I shot from three points of view: the fishermen, the fish and the seagulls. It made for a complex narrative, using stills, moving images and sound, that questions human habits in terms of food and nature.

I'm constantly aware of the visual language that I'm expressing. For example, during interviews I'll stabilise the camera with a tripod or use a gimbal for camera movements, but when I want to take the viewer right inside the action, I film without any stabilisation to show an unstable perspective. I also pay a lot of attention to colour. I use the white balance to subtly change the mood of a sequence.

But it's important when you're making a film to have a unified style. Despite using techniques such as a handheld camera or different white balances, the final film needs to be coherent. There has to be a reason why you use a tripod with some images

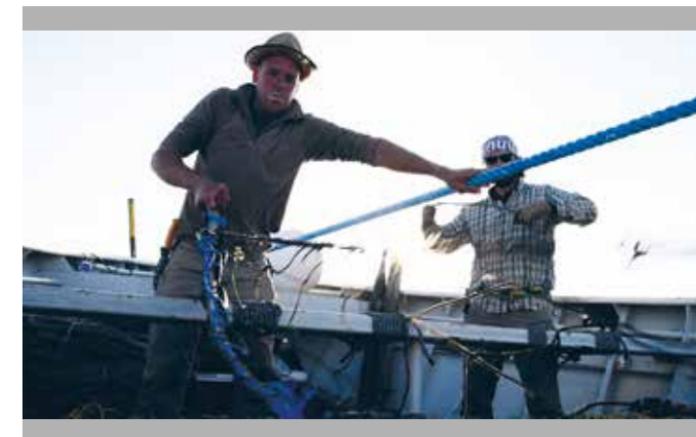


and not for others, a rationale for why you fine-tune the colour, and you need to be in complete control over these elements.

New technologies have tremendous potential for photojournalism. They offer so many new ways of communicating and experimentation. For online audiences, you can mix stills with moving images, sound, graphics and statistics. The narrative is not strictly linear anymore, but interactive.

A camera such as the Nikon D850 helps you to find interesting and dynamic perspectives for telling your story. Using one means that you can capture high-quality stills, sounds and moving images of cinematic quality. Previously, a significant budget, and perhaps a crew, was needed for a professional movie production. Today, it's within the reach of most photographers with just a small, discreet camera.

Now is the time to try out video. You have no excuses, really. The only limit is the size of your imagination. Be courageous and you'll get the chance to look at the world with fresh eyes. As your audience, I want to be surprised by the stories you tell. ■



**above** Five images from *In The Same Boat*, in which Zizola uses stills, captions and moving image to tell the story of migrant rescue in the Mediterranean in August-September 2015

**below** From Zizola's work-in-progress film, shot on a Nikon D850, about tuna fishing off the coast of Sardinia, Italy

## A STORYTELLER'S TOOLKIT: MAKING GREAT NARRATIVE

### RANGE WIDE

The D850 is the best video DSLR out there at the moment. Full frame 4K, plus great compression rate and sound. The sensor is great and has a brilliant dynamic range, which allows for a wide range of looks.

### PICK NEW ANGLES

I use my D850 in full-frame mode and, unless I'm in the middle of the action, an external microphone. The articulated screen allows me to catch new and original angles.

### USE FULL SPECTRUM

Use focus peaking to check focus. I also set the white balance manually, although the D850 has several different colour setups. With 4K footage it's easy to modify colour in post-production to achieve an organic, unified style, even in different lighting conditions.

### BE NIMBLE

I take a wide range of lenses to an assignment, but leave most of them at my base to travel light, only taking the lenses relevant for the footage I'm going to shoot on a given day.

### OPEN YOUR MIND

The learning never stops. Keep up to speed with the latest tech and techniques and explore new ways to use them. Have complete control over your tools and use your brain: it's the most important tool of all.