

Improve your DSLR video with two add-ons



December 18, 2013

by Doug Bardwell

Today we are talking with Perry Goldstein, Director of Sales and Marketing from **MXL Microphones** and Shlomo Cazary, Camera-Top Monitors Marketing Manager from **Marshall Electronics** about shooting video with your DSLR. It's an area most photographers are just starting to experiment with; but, what most people are finding is that while the video quality is outstanding, the audio is usually lacking, and often times it's difficult to see what you are filming when using the built-in LCD display.

Perry, I guess it's just common sense that that tiny microphone hole on the camera body isn't going to get the best audio. Are we talking about a huge investment to add an auxiliary microphone?

Not at all. There are mics for around \$100 that would do a great job.

With all the different types of photographers out there, is there a particular type microphone that would be the best "all purpose" mic, or do they all have very specific purposes?

There is no such thing as an "all purpose" mic. Each mic has a specific application. If you could only have one mic, I would say that a camera top shotgun would be as close as you can get to an all-purpose mic; but ideally, you should have an arsenal of mics.

Tell me about using wireless microphones. Are they hard to set up and use?

Not at all. Wireless mics these days are easy to use. The toughest part of it is pairing the transmitter and receiver. Some of the more expensive mics that have multiple channels can be confusing for the first time user. But there are single channel mics that solve that problem. The most important part of using a wireless mic is battery management. If the unit has a built-in rechargeable battery, the user must be sure and have it fully charged before going out on a shoot. If it has interchangeable batteries, make sure and bring extras. The worst thing is to be in the middle of a shoot, and run out of battery on your mic.

I see a lot of serious videographers wearing headphones when they shoot. Is this necessary?

Not necessary, but highly recommended. Live, real time audio monitoring is crucial. Imagine spending a whole day shooting, only to go back to edit and finding out there is no audio, or poor quality audio. You basically wasted a day of shooting. And, if the shots are unable to be replicated, the project is dead.

Perry, any final thoughts for those just starting to capture video with their DSLR's?

Make sure and plan your audio needs well in advance, and bring along your mic collection. An audience will accept poor quality video. Grainy or shaky video, while annoying, is still watchable. If the audio is bad, people will shut off the program. For sure, the built-in mic in the camera is probably not adequate, especially for professional use. The least expensive way to make the biggest difference in a video, is improving the audio with an external mic.

Turning to Shlomo, It's hard to see the small LCD screen on my DSLR (especially when I'm outside), and I usually have to download my video to the computer after the fact, to see how it came out. I've noticed that Marshall Electronics has some camera top monitors on the market which may help me know what's happening with the image and be easy on the eyes. What kind of investment would I be looking at to get into one of them?

Prices on Marshall's Camera top Monitors start as low as \$270.00

Can you tell me a little about what features I should look for on one of the entry level prosumer models?

The prosumer monitor offers a number of features, but primarily they are compact and light

weight. Ours are powered by a DSLR battery, camcorder battery, or AA batteries. You also want to look for a built-in speaker. You'll also want to make sure you have the right inputs to attach to your DSLR. Today most cameras use HDMI.

Can you give me an idea of a few applications where you feel that a camera top monitor would make a huge difference for me?

Any application is going to be better when using a 7" monitor compared to a 3" LCD screen. That said, any time you want to shoot from either high or low angles, it's extremely valuable. Table-top photography is another application people don't think about. Did you ever have to climb a step stool to see your viewfinder when it's way above the subject? Some photographers swear by them for portrait, landscape and architectural photography as well.

Shlomo, any final thoughts for those just starting to capture video with their DSLR's?

Camera top monitors are a great tool for both the beginner and advanced photographer/videographer. Like Perry mentioned, many shots can't be retaken. If the shot is out of focus, you need to know while you are still on site. Monitors not only make it easier to see, they make sure that you get the shot you wanted.

Thanks Shlomo and Perry. We'll suggest that people that want to learn more might check out your gear at [MXL Microphones](#) and [Marshall Electronics](#).

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