

Videographers' Forum – October 6, 2015

Okay, so this was our second Forum and we had great attendance and lots of discussion. Some of it I wrote down, but to be truthful, I was listening more than I was taking notes. The whole group was active in posing questions and discussing them. Here are some I made notes on.

Q: How do we use “white balance” to get correct colors?

D: Most cameras attempt to make an automatic white balance; however, the best way to do it is by using a plain white card (card stock with 98% brightness) which you can buy at a stationary store or use a 30% grey card which you can buy from a video store. I prefer a “white” card ... it's cheap.

Have the subject hold the card in front of them, put the camera to manual white balance, zoom in to fill the frame and set the white balance. Read your camera's manual for instructions. (I once used this technique in a factory which had green high intensity lighting and the colors came out great).

Q: How to handle things when the subject is in front of windows and it is daylight outside?

D: There isn't a cheap solution, only the lessor of evils. Set the aperture to manual, zoom in to the subject and set the aperture. See your camera manual for instructions. If the subject is not moving forward and backward, set the focus to manual, zoom in and set the focus, then back off the focus to set the scene.

If the subject moves left and right, then the manual focus should still stand up. What happens when the subject stands in front of a bright background is that the subject will look good but the background will be washed out.

An alternate solution is to flood the subject with the same color temperature light as the outdoor source so the scene looks the same. Be aware that outdoor light changes color temperature during the day.

(Look up on the Internet about color temperatures associated in indoor and outdoor lighting.)

Q: What if there is indoor lighting and outdoor lighting (both have different color temperatures)?

D: This is always difficult, but the best way around this is to use a white card and manual white balance. Auto white balance may work, but experiment with it first.

Q: What does the camera “see” when the subjects are distant from the background?

D: When the camera is set to automatic focus, the camera will look at the whole scene and attempt to figure out the best focus setting. As you move the camera this may cause the subject(s) to go in and out of focus, again depending upon how the camera interprets the scene.

For best results, set the camera to manual focus, zoom in to the subject(s), set the focus and then back off the zoom to where you want the scene.

Q: Dark scenes versus light scenes.

D: In post-production you can usually draw detail out of a scene which is darker than you can if the scene is too light. Dark scenes still contain color and detail information. While this is not the best approach, a light scene contains no color or detail information. So if you are in doubt, it is better to err on the darker side than on the light. (re: Star Wars, this is the only time where the “dark side” is good).

On a personal experience I can talk about post-production color. I once videoed a seminar where the presenter was working with a slide projector (white light) and the room had fluorescent light (slightly on the green side). I expected the presenter to stay in the area of the projected image and thus set the white balance to that scene. However, the presenter was a walker, and would often walk out of the “established” area to where the fluorescent light was predominant. I remedied this in post-production by slowly changing the color until the presenter arrived in the new position, and reversed the process when the presenter moved back in front of the projector. It was a pain in the arse, but it worked.

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