MEDIA UNIT 3 – PRODUCTION EXERCISE 2

Miss Asbury

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FORM: 12D

INTENTION:

What are you intending on focusing on during this exercise. This might include any of the following:

- *aesthetics and/or structural capacities and/or characteristics of a media product to be explored*
- *technical equipment to be operated*
- *applications used to be applied to develop particular skills to present specific ideas to achieve particular effects*

For my second production exercise I am intending to test sound recording with multiple different devices to achieve the best audio possible. In the past I have struggled to achieve close-to-perfect sound – that is, audio that is free from static fuzz in the background. To ensure I maintain a high quality documentary I need to have the clearest and most consistent audio possible throughout. This is difficult when recording onto a DSLR and not a separate recording device, but I am aiming to test a number of recording methods to identify which produces the best sound and the least audio distortion.

I have access to three methods of recording to my camera – a Sony lapel microphone with an XLR cable and converter, a Sony lapel microphone with a jack cable and a Sony wireless boom/radio microphone with an XLR cable and converter. The only time I would use the internal recording of the DSLR would be when I am recording something that I most likely won't need audio for. This could include when I am using the Steadycam, in which case I would not use a microphone, partly because of the weight limit of the device and partly because typically when I am filming with the Steadycam I won't require audio (ie. b-roll footage of Melbourne city, animals playing etc). Because the internal audio recording of my Canon 60D is so poor, I don't intend on testing it. In my production exercise I will be testing the most effective audio recording method between the wireless boom mic, the wireless lapel mic with a jack input and the lapel mic through a XLR to jack converter. I also need to take into account the fact that during interviews if I use lapel mics they will most likely be visible in frame (unless we try to hide them under the interviewees clothing).

I will be using a XLR to jack converter for the boom mic and one of the lapels as the Canon 60D does not accept XLR cables and both microphones have 3-pin XLR inputs. For the other lapel mic I will be using a jack cable that goes directly from the tuner to the camera (no converter is required), to see if this makes a difference in comparison with the other lapel with a converter. I am interested to see whether going from XLR to jack with a converter will be better quality audio than the jack to jack, or whether it will lose quality.

In conclusion, for this production exercise I will be testing the audio recording quality of the following devices into my Canon 60D DSLR:

- Sony UTX H2 wireless handheld boom microphone with XLR cable (using converter)
- Sony UTX B2 wireless lapel microphone with XLR cable (using converter)
- Sony UTX B2 wireless lapel microphone with jack cable (not using converter)

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EVALUATION:

Explain how the completed exercise realises the stated intention. This should outline the extent to which the intention/s were realised. Outline what possibilities and limitations you have discovered with the technical equipment.

Sony UTX H2 wireless handheld boom microphone with XLR cable (using converter)

From what I can hear, this microphone recorded the worst sound quality out of all of the mics. While my voice was quite crisp and clear, the grain/fuzz/static sound was the worst in this recording out of all of the microphones. I later noticed that I was holding the microphone relatively close to myself and that it would probably be further away in an interview in order to stay out of the frame, which means that in fact the background distortion may be even worse in some interview situations.

From this I have concluded that I would not use this microphone during interviews. Having said that, it may be a good back-up microphone that I can place close to an interviewee during an interview (recording onto my laptop), in case for some reason my other audio recording in the DSLR fails.

Sony UTX B2 wireless lapel microphone with XLR cable (using converter)

This recording was a small improvement on the previous microphone. While the level of fuzz was probably very similar, when I was speaking the microphone seemed to pick up my voice better and cancel out more background distortion. This may be attributed to the closer proximity between my mouth and the microphone in comparison with the handheld microphone.

This is better than the previous mic because at least there is minimum static whilst the individual is speaking, and the fuzz that is present during the pauses I could potentially edit out in postproduction. Regardless however, the sound quality of my voice was again very clear.

Sony UTX B2 wireless lapel microphone with jack cable (not using converter)

I believe this was the clearest and highest quality sound recording out of the three microphones. While some distortion was still present during pauses, my voice was the strongest and clearest tout of all the microphones. This surprised me because I thought that if anything, the lapel with the XLR cable with a converter to a jack input would be higher quality that the one with just the jack cable, but it appears that the converter may actually cause the recording to lose quality.

A major benefit of this method of recording is that it records onto two channels and not just one, which also reduces background noise as the microphone is primarily capturing the nearest audio available. This also means I can delete the channel/track with the most distortion and replicate the best one. It is for these reasons I intend to use this microphone (and cable) during all of my interviews.

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CONCLUSION:

All three of these microphones recording fairly well and would be a worthy recording method for my film. However, the two lapel microphones were more ideal because of their close proximity to the interviewee's mouth allowing for a clearer, crisper sound and a reduction in background distortion. In all honesty, each of these microphones produced a quality sound and not many people would be able to hear the background distortion unless told to focus on it.

To trial this, I played the recordings to 3 individuals of a range of ages (and most likely hearing qualities), and only 2 of them could clearly hear the background fuzz even when I asked them to listen for it. From this I have learnt that while I believe the background distortion is extremely obvious, it may just be because I've done video work in the past and are therefore used to identifying any audio distortion.

The Sony UTX lapel using the jack cable (without a converter) was the best, and thus I can assume the converter caused the other lapel microphone to lose recording quality. The production exercise allowed me to identify this as the best microphone that I have access to, which I now plan to use for all of my interviews.