

# AV Notes RE Camera Kits

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*Kits: **Oscar & Billy Holiday***

## Condition on receipt

When I received the kits, I inspected the contents and tested them. Here are highlights of the initial inspections.

### Initial Inspection Results

#### Oscar

- 1 32GB card missing
- Missing lapel clip for lapel mic
- No mini display to VGA adapter (optional)
- No Gaffers Tape (don't think a roll would fit in the case)

#### Billy Holiday

- 6 SD cards total (2 extra)
- lapel mic missing windscreen
- 2 earpieces missing foam pad (maybe they didn't come with them?)
- mini HDMI to HDMI adapter (extra)
- mini USB to USB adapter (extra)
- 5 9V batteries
- 1 mini display to VGA (1 missing - optional)

### Equipment Test Results

On receipt, I performed the following tests.

- Set up camera on tripod
- Connect wireless lapel mic and test from at least 30 feet
- Record 5-second test using lapel mic
- Play back snippet using camera monitor and earpiece

All of the tests worked, except I was unable to secure Oscar's (I think) horizontal rotation on the tripod, so it was a little wobbly. That may just have been user error.

## Equipment Purchased

Following is a list of equipment purchased

- 3 XLR to 3.5mm patch cables
  - We patched into a venue soundboard for sound input
  - I added the cables to the kits
- 2 mini display to VGA adapters
- 1 lapel mic windscreen
  - I bought another windscreen and clip, but they turned out to be the wrong size (the lapel mics were different sizes)
- 6 9V batteries

## Notes From the Venue

### Lapel Mics

We planned to use the lapel mics, originally, but found that we couldn't really use them at the venue.

- I couldn't get the clip for one in time
- Another's gain was too low for some reason when connected to the venue sound board
- The third kept picking up a hum from speakers in the room

In the end, we decided to forego the lapel mics, and use the wireless hand-helds provided by the venue. I think the issue here was simply that these are consumer grade, and not really optimal for using the way we wanted to. When I plugged them directly into the camera (as advertised), they seemed to work just fine.

### Tripods

As mentioned, one of the tripods seemed to be broken (or user error), and was wobbly. I had a difficult time getting it to level horizontally.

On reviewing the footage after the event, I found that I also managed to be off on leveling the other two cameras (total user error).

### Video Quality

Something that turned out to be a much bigger issue than I thought while videoing was the contrast between speaker and projection screen. I'm not sure what I could have done about this, so I'd love some advice.

The projection screen was in the middle of the stage with a podium to the side, and speakers were free to move (although most stayed at the podium). For better or worse, I chose to keep the whole stage in frame and leave it. I was the only person

operating 3 cameras simultaneously. One stage had lighting for the speakers, and seemed fine, but the other two didn't, and in some cases ambient light was very dim compared to the screen.

## Conclusion

In the end, I think we got what we paid for, and I don't disparage the kits at all for the issues I experienced. The camera kits are consumer grade equipment that lead a hard life, used by (certainly in this case) novice, volunteer videographers. ...And that's just fine! Part of the spirit of WordCamp is to provide low-barrier opportunities to be more involved, and the kits help make that happen. IMHO, it wouldn't make sense to provide higher quality equipment as loaners in this context.

If WordCamps want better quality video, we need to apply some of our funds to renting the equipment or hiring professional videographers.

I did AV for 2 WordCamps this year. The first camp's videos came out just fine using the kits. While we haven't tackled editing yet on the recent camp, from what I can tell on the raw footage, you can clearly hear the speakers, and I think we'll be able to get the video quality to a reasonable level in editing. I'm not holding out for any awards, but they should work for online educational purposes.

## Suggestions

### Camera Kits

#### Checklists & Signoffs?

This may be overly bureaucratic, but something that may help is to ask people to use equipment checklists. It may help people to be more responsible if, when they receive a kit they see that whoever sent it to them has inventoried the kit and signed off (with their actual signature) that the kit was complete when they sent it.

Then when a user is finished with their kit, they run through the checklist to be sure it's complete, and sign off as well. If something is missing, they can replace it, make a note, and/or send a message about it.

### Education & Videos

Yes please!

As a novice, I would welcome as much as folks are willing to post. Following are some ideas (apologies if you already have help posted, and I just missed them – feel free to point me in the right direction!).

Of course educational videos are always great, but blog posts, and links to references are a great start, too!

- Specifics of how to set up and use each camera (each may be a little different): tripod, mics, etc., too.
- Best practices: How to set up your equipment for the best effect.
  - What if you can't operate your camera? What's the best way to leave it?
  - What if you DO have someone to operate the camera?
  - Do we try to capture the screen with slides?
- How to edit
  - What are some of the things you do when editing, and what are the best ways to do them?
  - Different apps? (shortcut, imovie, premier)
    - Which is best to use and when? Advantages/Disadvantages?
- Best Practices: Editing
  - When should I splice in slides?
  - When does it make sense to edit out the projection screen?
  - What are the best settings for contrast, etc.
  - Are there any video/sound filters I should use? When?
  - What's the best way to get hum and noise out (which apps to use?)
    - Novice vs advanced approaches?
  - What settings should I use when rendering the video?
  - Suggestions for archiving the raw footage and projects when done?
- Instructions for how to work with the team as a volunteer
  - Workflows and best practices

One great thing about being so ignorant is I have no shortage of ideas for educational opportunities. 😊