

We are all videographers now

The inevitable convergence of the photograph and video

by Julian Tait

For most photographers Cartier Bresson's mantra, '*the decisive moment*', is instilled into our photographic psyche at a very early stage. The ability to freeze a critical point in time, to capture an image that has significance and meaning above all other, is what makes a great photographer. One has to have the foresight and guile to be in the position to capture the image in the first place and composition plays no small part in that, but is the very definition of capturing a moment becoming less relevant?

A recent article in the British Journal of Photography written by photojournalist Dirck Halstead, predicts the demise of the still photographer and emergence of photographers working with video (Videographer). Relatively inexpensive video cameras can now shoot in high definition, with stills being grabbed and enlarged using algorithms that can produce images of up to 67 megapixels. The economics of having one person in the field who can capture stills, video and audio is compelling to many news organisations that dictate their news gathering policies upon return on investment and value for money.

With the advent of globalised distribution and the need for news outlets to provide 'content rich' websites where consumers can choose to access content in a variety of formats, the still image is starting to be downgraded to the position of 'poster frame' – an icon that represents the content of the video.

So, is the decisive moment a delusional concept? Richard Drew's photograph of the 'Falling Man' is a case in point. The iconic image shows a man falling from one of the towers of the World Trade Center after the attack on 11th September 2001. It could be said that this image is a decisive moment, but whose decisive moment? Drew's camera took 12 frames as the man fell and only one of those frames was chosen to represent that moment.



Richard Drew © 2001

It can be argued the camera was used as a surrogate video camera to document this moment. The image was pulled from an already stored and endlessly re-playable sequence or continuum. The critical decisions came in this case both with the circumstance the photographer found himself in and at the editorial stage. As technology allows higher frame rates per second, we are breaking down the iterations of this continuum. Will the distinction between still imagery and video inevitably disappear?

Digital SLR cameras can shoot bursts of still images approaching the speed of video; if the camera isn't restricted by mechanical processes then speeds in excess of 60fps can be achieved and up to 300 fps, as is the case of the recently developed **Casio Exilim**.

These new generations of camera borrow technology from their video and audio recording cousins. New cameras, albeit consumer models, are appearing with a pre-shot buffer constantly recording five seconds of images before the shutter is pressed. So the decisive moment will always be there, somewhere – you can find it at your leisure.



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