

A Story in the Palm of your Hand: Shooting Dolby Vision HDR on an iPhone

GTC member **Kevin Augello** has spent much of his career searching out and filming stories that matter. He's no stranger to the pages of Zerb, where's he's shared various filming experiences, including tragedy on Everest and following migratory birds across Africa. In his 2016 article about power and backup solutions, Kevin mentioned he was about to document burns survivor Rob Small's Antarctic expedition, but unfortunately, the film fell through before Kevin could set off. In 2021, when Kevin wanted to reunite with Rob for a new documentary project, he reached for his mobile phone, although not to make a call...

ALL IMAGES: KEVIN AUGELLO





FilmicPro and iPhone working hand-in-hand to capture Iceland's breathtaking beauty

When I was asked to shoot an adventure documentary that would be filmed almost entirely on an iPhone 12 using Dolby Vision HDR, I thought it was going to be easy. I mean you would, right?

Well, little did I know that I'd spend more time learning how to use an iPhone camera than I've ever needed with any professional camera in my entire career. But once I'd overcome all the new obstacles, the results blew my mind; in fact, I now wonder what the future holds, given the film-making potential that lies in something so basic and fundamental to our everyday lives?

Oh no, not another Zoom seminar!

Let me rewind and explain how this project came about. Back in November 2020, I received an email from a former contact at Sony, who had since moved to Dolby, in which he asked if I would be interested in running a Zoom conference about independent documentary production that would be presented to his peers in Europe and the US.

Most of the internal networking at Dolby is done at the higher end of production but, nonetheless, a lot of independent and low-budget content creators could benefit from understanding what Dolby has to offer.

During the Zoom call, three letters kept being mentioned: HDR. Then I was asked whether I would ever consider shooting an entire production in a high dynamic range (HDR) format, which took me by surprise. I found myself squirming in my seat, because my knowledge of HDR could be written on the side of a matchbox.

I'd had no idea that Dolby, which I'd only ever associated with sound, was already heavily involved in HDR workflow, through its Dolby Vision initiative. During the first break in the Zoom conference, I quickly hopped onto the company's website to read up on what Dolby Vision had to offer. I hadn't realised how accessible this technology was to all of us. In fact, Dolby had collaborated with Apple to embed its Dolby Vision HDR technology into the iPhone 12 and subsequent models thereafter. It meant this technology was readily available to anyone and was literally right there in our palms already!

So, what is HDR?

We all know the fundamentals of dynamic range. It's best illustrated by the dilemma we face whenever we need to film

someone standing in front of a window: *"Do I expose for the window or the face?"* If you blast the subject with light to balance up and control the contrast of the scene, then you are essentially following the principle of standard dynamic range (SDR). Put simply, HDR involves the camera capturing multiple exposures: one that's too bright, one that's too dark and one slap bang in the middle. Dolby Vision then stitches these all together in real-time without you having to do a single thing. What you end up with are lighter lights, darker darks and richer colours.

Spotting an opportunity

As an independent documentary producer, my brain is hardwired to find opportunities and stories. During the Zoom call, I seized the opportunity to casually ask: *"Given that I know little about Dolby Vision HDR, if I was given an iPhone to shoot some test footage, what could I actually achieve?"* This sparked the imagination of a few people on the call, who then asked me if I could come up with a concept.

I admit, my initial thought had been that I could blag a new iPhone to keep in exchange for some shots, but it soon became apparent that Dolby was actually prepared to throw some money at this project, and I was given a free and creative hand to come up with the story. The only remit was that the production must showcase the capabilities, and highlight the workflow, of Dolby Vision HDR.



Back on the F Road again



A three-iPhone camera setup (image taken from the film's wide shot)

Rob Small

Now, knowing there was budget available to make a proper documentary, I began to trawl through my network to find the who, what and where this story could be about.

I remembered how, a few years previously, when I was looking for stories to pitch, I'd come across the incredible story of a chap called Rob Small, from Aberdeen. Whilst working as a diving instructor on the island of Zanzibar, Rob had been trapped in a catastrophic house fire. In the chaos, he'd become drenched in petrol, which resulted in him, horrifyingly, becoming engulfed in fire for an estimated 20–25 seconds. Having survived, it took 10 agonising days to get him any proper medical attention, during which time he received no painkillers, not even paracetamol, let alone any vital intravenous fluids.

Having suffered third-degree burns to 44% of his body, Rob's life hung in the balance. He was eventually flown back to the UK, where he subsequently spent 200 days in hospital, undergoing 36 operations to rebuild his body. Rob was told he'd never walk again but, against all odds and through sheer grit and determination, he made an incredible recovery. Amazingly, it was so successful he planned an expedition to the South Pole with the medical team who had restored his life. At the time, I'd developed a treatment for a documentary about the expedition, which I pitched to all the usual commissioning suspects, but with no luck. The only

traction we could have gained was if we'd added a celebrity, but that was never going to happen. Whilst the expedition had gone ahead, my documentary had sadly not.

So, once I realised I had a budget from Dolby, I got back in touch with Rob and offered him an adventure. Whilst it wouldn't be on the same scale as his Antarctic exploits, it would be one hell of a ride. In keeping with his character, Rob eagerly accepted – but what did I have in mind?

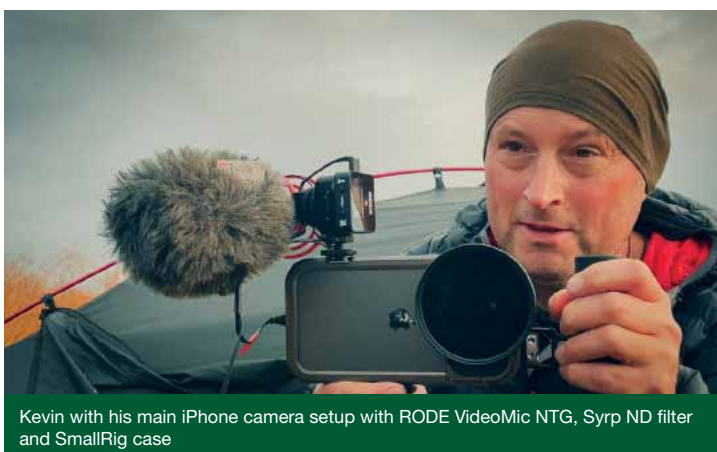
Cycling Iceland's ring road

Then, the stars began to align. Firstly, I'd always fancied the challenge of circumnavigating Iceland on a bicycle; secondly, Iceland was on the COVID 'green list to travel'. Although I have next to no experience of long-distance cycling, the project would be extremely exciting and I pitched it to both Rob and Dolby; we all agreed it would be an amazing adventure. The breathtaking Icelandic landscape of glaciers and volcanoes would undoubtedly be a great canvas on which to paint an HDR story.

At the time, Rob and I had a lot of time on our hands. Most of my work relies on international travel, so I had been sitting at home for over a year and Rob, who runs a dive school on the island of Samoa, had been closed for business for more than 18 months. We set a departure date for the end of August 2021, which would allow us four months for planning and preparation.

From the outset, we'd decided to approach the trip as a bikepacking expedition. Bikepacking has become a popular craze that involves a bespoke system of stashing all your gear all over your bike rather than using just the traditional front and rear side panniers. We also wanted to use gravel bikes which are more suitable for both off-road terrain and Iceland's 'F Road system' (a network of mountain roads, marked with an F before the road number, which are really rough and only suitable for 4x4 or AWD vehicles).

Working to our individual strengths, we delegated roles, so Rob would be responsible for logistics and planning, while I would focus on the story and work out the best way to use an iPhone as my lead camera (supplemented only by a drone).



Kevin with his main iPhone camera setup with RODE VideoMic NTG, Syrp ND filter and SmallRig case

“

After the excitement of taking the brand-new iPhones out of their boxes, I had to work out how on earth I was going to make an entire film on these things.

Excitement and head scratching

Dolby sent me four iPhones in total: two iPhone 12 Pro Max at 512GB and two iPhone 12 minis at 128GB. The Pro Max handsets would be my main cameras, and the minis would be Rob's B-roll and diary cameras.

After the excitement of taking the brand-new iPhones out of their boxes, I had to work out how on earth I was going to make an entire film on these things – especially a film that would be shot entirely outdoors, totally exposed to the elements, and where we'd have no control of the set, no access to power or even any backup.

My next hurdle to overcome (which is so often overlooked) was sound: it's of equal importance to the quality of the image, if not more so. I soon realised that, whilst much thought and technology have been directed into developing the camera and the iPhone's internal processing, little consideration has gone into how you can record decent audio, especially outdoors. Dolby wanted me to highlight the potential of HDR but, of course, it's a company whose name is synonymous with world-class sound. To capture standard audio, distorted and slammed by the wind, would be beyond embarrassing, and was not an option.

So, to stand any chance of making this work, the three main challenges I had to tackle before we set off were: power consumption, backup and audio.

Powering up

We all know that mobile phones generally need to be charged by the end of the day, but this isn't normally a problem. However, Rob and I were about to head off for 30 days to circumnavigate a remote island on gravel bikes. With rare access to any form of accommodation, we'd be living out of tents about 90% of the time, and there's a finite



Rob pauses to appreciate the view at Fagradalsfjall Volcano

number of power banks you can carry on a bike, especially when you need to carry camping equipment and food as well. Some stretches along our route would lead us away from any habitation for up to 10 days at a time.

Luckily, I had a eureka moment: I'd been coming at this issue from completely the wrong direction, and the solution was staring me in the face. What do we do whenever we've finished recording with a proper camera? We turn the camera off, of course; we don't leave it switched on for hours and wonder why the battery has died. Mobiles are left on constantly; it would be completely illogical to physically shut the device down after every time we've used it. However, for this production, these mobile devices weren't phones, they were cameras and nothing else. Either powering down the devices or engaging Airplane and Low Power Mode whenever they were turned on significantly extended battery life between charges. Admittedly, it was a pain to have to keep powering on and off, but it did enable each phone to remain functional for days.

Another area that benefited from a reevaluation of the iPhone's true purpose on this trip was data storage and backing up the device. It still amuses me that none of the devices even had a phone app installed; I had deleted everything from Calendar to Safari. Doing this freed up so much space, it meant nearly all the cameras' internal storage could be dedicated to storing video data.

So, how was I going to overcome the issues around capturing sound? I didn't want to record the sound separately, as that would involve excessive fiddling about in the harsh Icelandic environment. I actually wanted to record embedded audio directly into the device. RODE mics proved to be the perfect solution and we relied primarily on three different systems from the Australia-based company.

MINI X-BOXX
880 WATTS
LI-ION BATTERY

A CINEMATOGRAPHERS
DREAM POWER SOURCE

- BUILT IN CHARGER
- LCD STATUS
- 2x XLR3 (28V)
- 880 WATTS
- 14.4V & 28V
- 2x XLR4 (14.4V)

Hawk-Woods
www.hawkwoods.com

BSC EXPO
STAND: 414

NABSHOW
STAND: C9222

...MORE THAN CAPABLE OF
POWERING YOUR ENTIRE SETUP!

“

Working with Rob was arguably the greatest pleasure of this trip. Never before have I had a contributor who was so easy to work with whilst also understanding the mechanics of filming and the levels of physicality and mental creativity required.

These all surpassed my expectations considering the inhospitable environment in which we were working.

First there was the RODE VideoMic NTG, a shotgun mic that is fully supported by iOS, meaning it can be powered on and off at the same time as the mobile phone and it also allows you to adjust the gain input and record a safety track set at a lower dB rating. We also used the RODE Wireless Go II radio mic, which became our favourite system on the trip. This smaller, matchbox-sized mic is extremely easy to use, with an incredible range and clarity of sound. The transmitter can simply be clipped onto a jacket without the need for a cabled mic, and we managed to obtain about 7 days of recording from both the transmitter and the receiver. It also offers the ability to record audio internally, but we didn't use this function in the field, because it obviously has only a finite amount of onboard storage space – 8 hours at high sample rates and 24 hours at low sample rates. It would therefore have required us to regularly extract the files – and we weren't going to cycle around with a laptop!

Rounding off our trio of mics was the VideoMic Me, which was ideal for video diary capture because it simply plugs into the lightning port on the phone. It coped pretty well with wind but was a bit flimsy when in place.

Frustrations and solutions – enter FilmicPro

After considerable testing during our prep time, I was confident that all systems were good to go, at least that was until I attempted to connect to my DJI OM 4 gimbal for smartphones. This was when I realised that, thanks to the array of brands, apps and updates to wade through, there was a major incompatibility issue between DJI and iPhone regarding HDR, meaning we couldn't access all the functionality the DJI app offers, including the tracking options; HDR was completely unsupported. The gimbal could still function but purely on a manual basis. I passed this information on to Dolby and they suggested an app called FilmicPro. After some research on YouTube, I discovered that using FilmicPro did indeed unlock more functionality of the OM 4.

However, the tracking functionality was still missing and that presented us with a problem; we were going to be relying heavily on tracking whenever we attempted to film one another while both cycling. I really needed access to the facility that would allow me to track Rob on his bike and keep the camera centred on him, as I'd be cycling one-handedly at the same time as handling the gimbal – I could really do with one less thing to think about while heading down a gravel slope at 40km an hour!

As I explored the app, I realised it also solved another important issue we were facing when recording sound. FilmicPro offers options for metering, so levels can be displayed on-screen and a degree of gain control is also



possible, although quite fiddly. In fact, 'fiddly' was going to be the catchphrase for the entire production, as I will explain later.

Although FilmicPro would allow me to monitor sound visually, there was still no effective solution for monitoring sound by listening to it, primarily because the lightning connector is being used for the microphone input. There is an option to monitor sound via Apple AirPods over Bluetooth but with a significant delay of 2–3 seconds, making monitoring sound almost impossible and an unworkable distraction. I would have to rely on the monitoring functionality of FilmicPro and, indeed, I'd need to play back almost every shot where there was a piece to camera, just to ensure all the systems were good. Of course, this created unwanted delays and was an unwelcome drain on battery life – but it was essential to ensure we were capturing good-quality audio.

Another particular benefit of using FilmicPro is the ability to increase the pitch rate from 20Mb per second with Apple's internal camera app to a whopping 100Mb per second through FilmicPro. This undoubtedly would give us very welcome latitude and flexibility when bringing the finished product into DaVinci. Of course, it would inevitably use more storage space, but then, as an old BBC mentor once taught me: use your 'mental TV' to plan your shots and trust that what you have filmed will work in the edit.

Controlling exposure

FilmicPro also gave me more control over the manual settings for the camera, including shutter speed, gamma and white balance, although, of course, there is no option to control aperture – which was going to be problematic in Iceland. This issue is common to shooting on most small devices, whether it be an iPhone or an action camera, especially those that utilise lenses with fixed apertures. The camera's means

of controlling the exposure (aside from ISO) is by varying the shutter speed. However, we know that the shutter speed should match the frame rate. Our production had to be shot at 24p so, after a lot of fiddling around, I was able to mount a Syrp ND filter onto my main iPhone's camera, which I'd mostly use to capture Rob's pieces to camera. The second iPhone Pro Max would be my gimbal and 'drive-by' camera.

Mounting

Next on my to-do list was how and where to mount our RODE mics, considering they nearly all use a cold/hot shoe connection, which isn't much use with an iPhone. In recent years, I've become a real fan of SmallRig, as it makes high-quality, reasonably priced products that enable connectivity between almost any brand on the planet a filmmaker might encounter. Being mindful of costs, I didn't want to invest in cages, but SmallRig was more than happy to send me whatever I needed.

Working with brands

Dolby provided me with a fixed budget and didn't require a cost report or quote in advance, so the money was mine to use however I saw fit – a position I'd never been in before! I knew that, by its very nature, a bikepacking adventure would lead to various additional costs, not to mention the bikes themselves. So, every penny I could save through third-party collaboration would mean money in my pocket – and we all know it's not been easy to earn a living over the last 18 months!

I made a list of all the things we would need plus those we would like. This included: clothing from Armadillo Merino and RAB; bikepacking bags from London-based Apidura; tents from another UK company, TerraNova Equipment; dried expedition food from Norwegian company REAL



Kevin and Rob at the Jökulsárlón Glacier Lagoon with their trusted CUBE gravel bikes



Rob on the Vatnajökull Glacier

Turmat; and bikes, helmets and all the other accessories from a German brand, CUBE. To be fully equipped with all this would have cost about £10,000. Luckily, all the brands were eager to get on board, as they realised the significance of 'organic' product placement within the film's narrative, not to mention the benefits of social media, high-resolution stills and articles about our adventure.

Getting fit

In everyday life, both Rob and I maintain a reasonable level of fitness. Whilst I had experience of working at high altitude, including on Everest at over 7000m above sea-level, I had never undertaken an expedition of this length over such challenging terrain. Personal fitness was obviously going to be essential; I'm from the UK, but I currently live in the Netherlands, which is perhaps the flattest country on Earth. That doesn't help much, considering Iceland is one of the hilliest! So my training tactic was to go for distance rather than resistance, regularly undertaking 100km cycle trips with a fully loaded bike, which weighed in at about 30kg when fully packed (the bike itself weighed just 6kg!).

A chance meeting

I am currently a freelance lecturer at the School of Audio Engineering (SAE) Film Institute in Amsterdam, where I teach film. During a Zoom session with new students, one of them happened to mention that she is Icelandic. This was clearly a production opportunity I couldn't miss, so Stina joined the team.

My initial thought had been that she could help in the edit with the pronunciation of Icelandic place names. However, it soon became apparent she could be of real value on location. In fact, we ended up staying at her family home in Reykjavik and were able to use her car to get additional landscape shots.

Preparations

We had five months between getting the green light and departure, which might seem a long time but we used every minute of it. Not only did we train ourselves up and prepare the bikes, we also practised filming on the iPhone. This might sound daft but, as professionals, iPhones definitely wouldn't be our first go-to tool in the box. From the get-go, I wanted to raise the standard of what is achievable when recording on such a device. Another reason for the five-month pre-production window was to allow myself and Rob to be fully vaccinated and, although the UK was leading the way in the COVID vaccination programme, the Netherlands and much of Europe were lagging behind and I wouldn't be fully vaccinated until at least the end of July.

When Rob and I finally met up in Reykjavik, because of various travel restrictions, we hadn't had any previous face-to-face meetings or a chance to go over the kit. So, we spent three days packing and checking, repacking and rechecking every single item on our bikes. We all know that when you go for a hike, you want to keep your backpack as light as possible, but it's equally dangerous to think you can get away with any excess weight when you're packing a bike. Believe me, you can't, especially on some of the 19% gradients and riding into the insane headwinds that would be waiting for us. Every ounce saved on the bikes would be a blessing.

An extra challenge

If you're going to make a film involving a journey, you need travelling shots. Not a problem when you have a TV crew at your disposal, but this was going to be an organic adventure and not something contrived or set up with false jeopardy as an extra add-on.

For example, to get a shot of Rob and me cycling past the camera required: me cycling 100m ahead, rigging up the iPhone, pressing record, riding back to join Rob to then cycle past the phone, hoping the shot was well-framed, before cycling back to turn the thing off. To achieve a simple, 5-second drive-by shot would take roughly 5 minutes in real-time. Not to mention the 'Can I really be bothered?' human element.

We decided to limit our days to a 17.00 finish, which would give us plenty of time to find a suitable place to camp in the wild, as the sun would set daily at around 22.00. On average, we would spend about 3 hours a day filming, setting up shots, or getting the drone out if the weather allowed us. I used a Mavic 2 Pro from, of course, DJI. I would have preferred to take a smaller drone simply because of weight and bulk, however this particular model was able to capture HDR, which would be essential when combining its footage with that shot on the iPhones.



Taking the iPhones diving in between tectonic plates

With the Mavic's remote controller fitted to my handlebars, I was able to use the drone's active tracking facility to follow both Rob and me through the landscape. Of course, this was multitasking in the extreme, as not only was I trying to cycle, mostly on gravel, but I also had to keep one eye on the shot and the other on any obstacles in the drone's path – constantly worrying whether it was flying high enough to avoid everything. It had to work because, let's face it, anyone who makes films nowadays has to have a drone!

O.M.G!

One of the first elements we filmed was a dive sequence at a location called Silfra. This is renowned as one of the most dramatic and exciting dive sites on the planet. As a professional diver, it was certainly on Rob's bucket list. The dive site is basically an underwater rift that's fed with cold glacial water and what's unique about this particular rift is it's the physical join between the North American and European tectonic plates.

There simply isn't anywhere else on the planet where you can dive in between two continents – and we were going to capture this entire sequence... on an iPhone. The device is rated up to 6m for 30 minutes max, but we pushed the boundaries to 8m for up to 45 minutes, in water temperatures as low as 3°C. Wearing a full protective dry suit, all Rob could do was point the iPhone and leave it recording, not knowing whether it would survive, let alone whether the sequence would be successfully captured. As soon as he surfaced, I grabbed the phone from him and quickly pressed play, all the while filming my initial reactions for social media on another iPhone. I couldn't believe that the entire 40-minute sequence was captured in one continuous take and that the phone survived. Rob assured me that the rendition of underwater colours, without the use of filters, matched what he'd seen by eye.

“

To achieve a simple, 5-second drive-by shot would take roughly 5 minutes in real-time. Not to mention the 'Can I really be bothered?' human element, which I constantly had to overcome.

Fingertips not working

I mentioned earlier that there are levels of camera setting controls that can be achieved through using FilmicPro. This works perfectly well in a controlled environment, such as a low-budget film or perhaps a constructed documentary; however, using an iPhone and its touchscreen functionality in driving rain whilst being wind-blasted with volcanic sand is a very different matter. Operating a ridiculously small menu and control options with cold fingers is impossible, but the combination of rain, wind and volcanic sand that covers the entire island played havoc with our fingertips to the point where the touchscreen functionality no longer worked.



The end of the road at the Glacier Lagoon

I kid you not, I have never operated a camera with the tip of my nose before, but that was the only way I could operate the iPhone when the screen wouldn't connect with my damaged fingertips!

The other frustration I had, although partly my fault, was that my strategy to save power by turning the phone off became problematic with regards to the app. I have fed this back to FilmicPro's developers, but whenever you turn the phone off, the app doesn't save any of your settings, so each time I turned the device back on, I had to reset the shutter speed, gain and white balance. This, combined with using the tip of my nose, became a real challenge and an extreme annoyance, to say the least.

Rob's persistence

Working with Rob was arguably the greatest pleasure of this trip. Never before have I had a contributor who was so easy to work with whilst also understanding the mechanics of filming and the levels of physicality and mental creativity required. Rob also undertook many of the mundane but necessary day-to-day routines, such as bike maintenance and route-planning, enabling me to focus on the primary goal of making the film.

Considering this guy had spent more than 200 days in hospital and has an artificial hip, he was able to complete the challenge with virtually no physical problems. For probably 95% of the time he would cycle in front of me and he would also get off his bike and chase my lens cloths, which constantly seemed to fall out of my pocket, regardless of how careful I was to zip it up. That's what friendship is all about... having a personal lens cloth chaser :-)



Kevin and Rob grab the opportunity for a selfie en route

Fuzzy image?

During testing, I kept noticing that the iPhone camera's image, simply put, looked fuzzy – there was no other way to describe it. After some head-scratching, I realised this problem wasn't in the sensor, the processor or, indeed, Dolby Vision, but something much simpler. We all know that a fundamental rule of photography and filmmaking is that you never touch your lens with sticky, greasy fingers – indeed, why would you?

However, the very nature of handling a mobile phone, even just pulling it from your pocket, renders that impossible. It became almost a shot-by-shot requirement to at least give the lenses a quick wipe. The touchscreens would also become extremely grubby, dusty and covered in watermarks from the rain. None of this was difficult to overcome; it just meant a little bit of maintenance and not dropping your lens cloth in the rain – even if Rob would fetch it!

Storms

We knew of Iceland's infamous bad weather, due to its geographical position within the North Atlantic. However, we were not prepared for the strength of wind we would encounter, which almost always seemed to be a headwind, regardless of our direction of travel. We endured three consecutive storms, each one becoming progressively stronger. The first had gusts of up to 55 km/h, which proved extremely difficult to cycle in, especially if they changed direction and became sidewinds.

The second storm presented gusts of up to 70 km/h, which made camping pretty challenging to say the least and yet we still endured. However, the last storm was to be our nemesis and cost us the circumnavigation. With wind speeds gusting up to 128 km/h, it became almost impossible to stand, let alone cycle! However, as we all know, a touch of genuine jeopardy adds value to a film and it did allow us to get off the bikes and document the unfolding story.

Narrative style

From the start I decided the only way to do this film would be in a participatory style, meaning I would be in the film alongside Rob. This saved Rob from doing long monologues to camera and enabled genuine interaction between the two of us. This was made even easier by the nature of selfie filming to which many of us have become accustomed. We quite often had chats about the day's events and would film each other doing so. This was an approach I'd pitched to RODE and SmallRig as it meant they would get the benefit of some product placement within the film.

Data management

My greatest concerns throughout the shoot were around how I could create backups of the footage, and how much recording could I get away with. I had four iPhones in total, with a combined recording capacity of approximately 1.2TB, and I needed to be able to capture the entire adventure without the need to delete any files from the devices at any stage. The solution was for us to meet up with Stina every 10 days or so and she would bring my laptop with her, meaning we could create two backups.

So, by keeping all of the footage on the iPhones themselves, we created a 'master back-up'. Copying the files from the iPhones was quite easy, especially within the FilmicPro app. On a MacBook, all I had to do was connect the phone, click on the iPhone in the Mac's Finder, select files from the option list and then select FilmicPro. After that, it was just a simple question of dragging and dropping the images onto an external SSD. Job done!

Post-production

An extra level of excitement for me was that I was also going to edit the film entirely myself. This would be another challenge, because everything I knew about Final Cut Pro X could also be written on (the other side of) a matchbox!

However, I have spent many hours as a producer working alongside an editor who knows all the ins and outs of every edit platform. I chose FCPX because I was tired of paying a subscription licence to Adobe. Although FCPX's developers did lose the plot a while back, I think they've regained respect now and much of the functionality you would expect from other edit platforms is certainly achievable within FCPX. It is, of course, worth mentioning that working in a traditional SDR environment is very different to an HDR environment. But, provided some simple tick boxes were selected in settings before the material was imported and, with the



Rob recording the voice-over at Dolby's recording studio in London's Soho

help of multiple films on YouTube, working in HDR wasn't an issue, although you do need to understand some basic principles to be able to get going.

With an additional budget made available by Dolby, my picture-locked edit would be passed on to a professional grader for five days of polishing in DaVinci. Of course, with Dolby's superlative reputation for quality sound, the film will also undergo the full Dolby Atmos treatment. I'm extremely excited about this, as there are plans to spend five days at the Dolby studios in London in early 2022.

Plans for the film

We are aiming for one of the big streaming platforms to take the final film, and there is one particular channel that would seem to be the logical home for a film that's been shot almost entirely on an iPhone – fingers crossed they will bite! However, if there are no takers, then Dolby is more than happy for this film to go live on my YouTube channel, which is obviously agreeable to me too. I have to say, Dolby has been the best client I've ever had in my 30+ years in the industry. Its team's flexibility, understanding and freedom have allowed me to be a filmmaker rather than just another pawn for a large corporate organisation.

Would I shoot on a phone again?

Simply put, yes; especially considering the steep learning curves I've already experienced. Ironically I had already made a film for my YouTube channel about the West Highland Way in Scotland. When the weather was terrible and push came

to shove, my Nikon Z7 went back in its bag and out came my iPhone. I think it's only a matter of time before something we carry around in our pocket will surpass the mainstream cameras we are accustomed to.

The next challenge

Rob and I are planning to use our Icelandic adventure as a stepping stone towards concluding the original storyline of our documentary on Rob's horrific house fire and his injuries. We aim to return to Zanzibar to visit the scene of the fire and then to travel on to Kilimanjaro to summit its peak. The dream of the mountain climb was something Rob used to keep himself mentally alive whilst in the darkest of spaces.

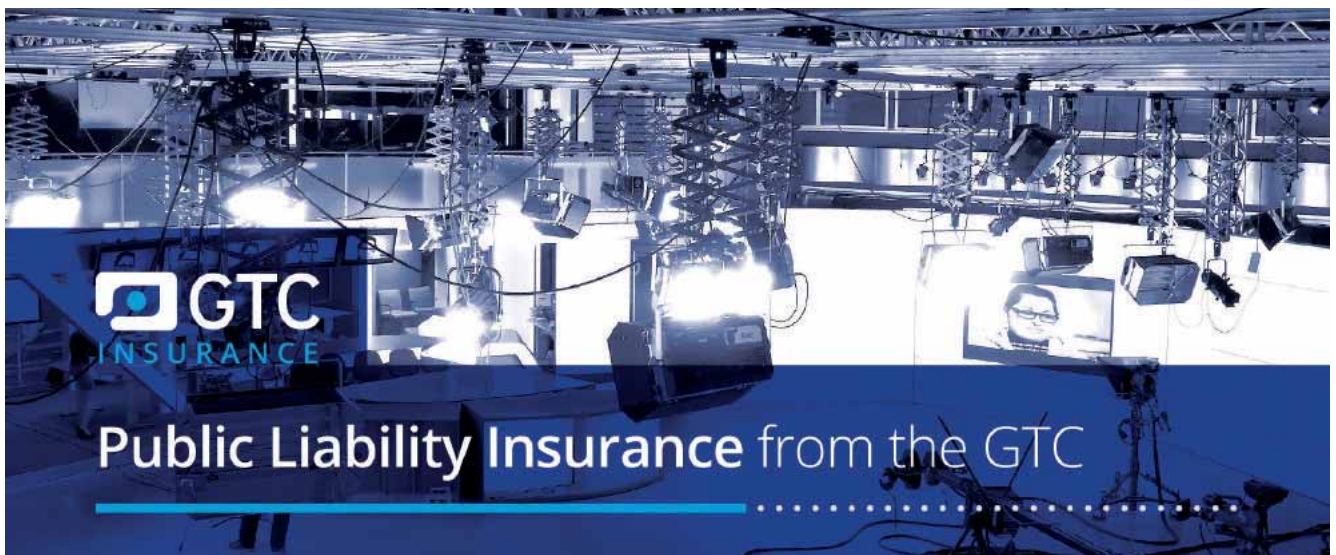
If it goes ahead, I would certainly love to share that adventure with you all, and it's possible we may capture that story on an iPhone 13, or whatever model appears in the future.



Fact File

Having spent more than 20 years working as a producer, director and cameraman for a variety of broadcasters, **Kevin Augello** is now focusing his attentions on building his 'Kevin Augello: New Earth Films' YouTube Channel. You can follow his adventures and pick up useful tips, visit his channel and subscribe to keep up to date.

YouTube Channel: youtube.com/channel/UCADyFdL4Lcnb2wDaSKphag



GTC members are able to benefit from a public liability insurance facility. This facility, offering competitive rates, is provided by Performance Film & Media Insurance and underwritten by one of the UK's largest insurers. It is only available to fully paid-up members of the GTC based in the UK.

More details about the policy can be obtained by contacting Performance on:
gtc@performance-insurance.tv

The current contract period runs from 1 May 2021 to 30 April 2022. Applications for May 2022–23 will open soon but until then it's still possible to get cover on the current contract if needed urgently. Application/renewals can be made via the GTC website:

www.gtc.org.uk/members-area/insurance.aspx

