



ONE MAN TO DO IT ALL

# BAND ON THE RUN

Filmmaker Dean Sherwood takes a break from his jet-setting lifestyle to give us a backstage glimpse at touring with a platinum-selling band

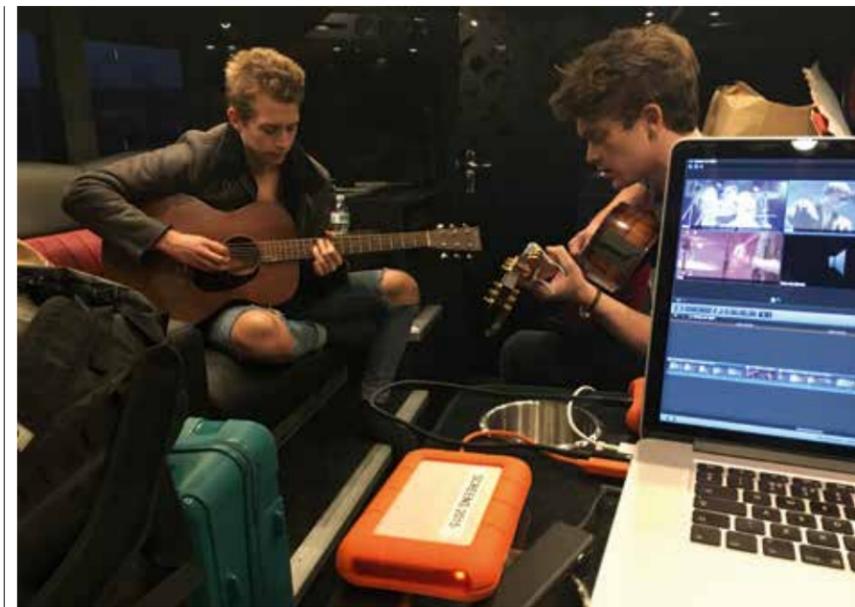
WORDS ZENA TOSCANI

**F**irst-class flights, glitzy hotels and all-access passes are the stuff of dreams for many one-man-band filmmakers but the fortunate reality for Dean Sherwood, the videographer on a worldwide tour with the hugely popular band, The Vamps. When you come across a solitary filmmaker as successful as Dean, it's hard to know where to begin – to put his success into perspective, at the time of press Dean has 127k followers on Twitter (that's more than Vincent Laforet and Philip Bloom), manages a YouTube channel with over one million subscribers and has another 152k fans on Instagram.

A familiar filmmaking backstory, Dean started out working in stills before being swayed over to the cinematic dark side, but interestingly it was his camera that won him his first video shoot. "Around seven years ago I was working for UK rock/pop outfit Feeder," he says. "Whilst on their UK tour, Grant (lead singer) noticed I had a Canon EOS 5D Mark II – as he knew a bit about cameras and knew of its revolutionary HD video mode he suggested I shoot some video for them too." While Dean had only dabbled with video before this point he knew his way around shutter speed and had gotten himself a copy of Sony Vegas Pro to edit on. "I was devoting my spare time to learning video so I guess this was the start of my one-man-band journey." The week following Grant's suggestion, Dean shot a 'day in the life' style promo for the band, who loved it. "I've no idea why!" he says. "I rewatched it a few weeks ago – it's horrible. I think I tried every camera move possible and then invented some too," he explains. Admitting that he'd also overlooked crucial things like audio, Dean doesn't regret the experience, "Without those experiences you don't learn. Without failure, you don't move forwards." Wise words aside, Dean was learning whilst getting paid so knew that he had to learn a lot in a short space of time.



**ABOVE** Frequent travel means that Dean utilises the power of Apple's iOS operating system wherever possible.



**"I just learnt how to do it all. I became a one-man band because I thought that was the only way"**

### Learning on the job

Completely self-taught, Dean found himself hooked on YouTube tutorials at the start of his filmmaking journey. "I haven't even once attended a seminar," he says. "Whether that's a good or a bad thing I don't know. I do know that getting your hands dirty, getting out of your comfort zone and analysing what you do helps massively though."

Dean also got involved in shoots with his friend, David Spearing, who was working as the day-to-day videographer for McFly. "It helped that I was already working with the band as their tour photographer," he says. However, this added an extra element of pressure as Dean was determined to produce good work so as not to let the band, or a friend, down. Aside from David's work with McFly which Dean had witnessed first hand, he was also following the work of Alfredo Flores, Justin Bieber's filmmaker on the road, and decided that this was the direction he wanted to take his career in.

"I was quite naïve at this point," he says. "I just presumed I'd have to produce/direct/film and edit, so I just learnt how to do it all. I became a one-man band because I thought that was the only way." More recently Dean's stepped into directing a little more which he's really enjoyed, citing directing three DVDs for The Vamps as the highlight of



**ABOVE** Through working with popular bands, Dean has managed to build up a fan club in his own right.

his career so far. "Directing is something I would like to go into more in the future, whether that be documentary or music videos, I enjoy both immensely. It's my life," he explains. That being said, he credits his success to a love of the entire filmmaking process, but quickly corrects himself. "No that's not right," he says. "There's a long road to success, I'm just on the road I hope," he explains.

That road seems to have been a high-speed highway from the outset though as it only took a year for video to completely →



**DEAN'S KIT** 1 Sony FS7 2 3x 2TB Lacie Rugged Thunderbolt drives 3 Sigma 20mm f/1.4 4 Sony 16-35mm f/4 5 SmallHD 502 Monitor 6 RØDE NTG-3 Mic, 7 Ricoh Theta S Camera 8 Sony A7R II 9 Sony A7S II NOT PICTURED 3x 128GB & 4x 64GB cards, Sigma 35mm f/1.4, Sony 55mm f/1.8, Canon 70-200mm f/4, Canon 24-105mm f/4, Macbook Pro 15in Retina maxed out, Miller Tripod



**IMAGES** Dean spends a lot of his time with a camera in his hand or locked away in an editing suite.

take over from photography as Dean's main source of income. "It's crazy when I look back at just how quickly that happened," he admits.

Naturally, Dean's kit needed to adapt with his evolving business, though this was a slower process. "I stuck with the 5D MkII for quite a while, only changing to go down the Blackmagic Pocket Cinema Camera route a few years ago," he says. While he loved the image quality of the Blackmagic and the scope to pull it in the grade, it didn't meet all of his requirements for documentary shooting. "I soon realised that I needed to buy gear based on my needs rather than the image it produced, so I moved to the all-in-one package offered by the Canon C100." Dean enjoyed using the C100 for a few years before switching to his current Sony system, choosing the FS7 as his primary camera for a number of reasons. "Being able to switch into 150fps for slow-mo is great fun for starters," he says. He's also enjoyed being able to put 4K videos for The Vamps fans online. "I think they enjoy the higher quality screenshots of their idols!" he explains. "It's a beautiful camera, almost perfect for me."

Working in dark, uncontrollable environments following a band on tour



**ABOVE** Dean utilises the stylus of the iPad Pro to create digital lighting diagrams that can be easily shared and saved.

means Dean invested in the low-light favourite Sony A7S II as well (see our test on page 107). "Generally when I get to a venue I'll do three things gear wise," he explains. "Get my FS7 ready and strap my A7S II and A7R II or Fuji X-T1 (for stills) onto my MoneyMaker Hold Fast Gear Strap and I'm good to go." With his A camera in hand, B camera for low light and a stills camera ready to go, Dean's able to work as quickly as possible. "These boys live a fast, hectic life - I can't be fumbling around with cameras, I'd miss everything," he explains.

When it comes to glass Dean has a couple of utility lenses like the Sony 16-35mm f/4 and the Canon 24-105mm f/4 which he describes as "machines" though he's very much a prime user when he can be: "I prefer the soul and life of a prime and have almost the full range of Sigma Art lenses," he says.

**Work, work, work**

Often referred to as 'music's hardest working filmmaker' it's hard to dispute this claim as Dean classed sitting down on a flight as the answer to my questions about time off. To clarify further, in the three years he's been working with The Vamps he's averaged a video upload every five days to the band's YouTube channel with an average length of just under five minutes - a huge amount of work even before you factor in directing three DVDs.

"The part of my job people often forget about is the editing process," he says. Though Dean tries to edit on tour as much as possible, he's conscious not to miss any filming opportunities which often means he's locked away editing when the team comes home for some rest time.

"If I'm not careful I'm working 24/7," Dean says. "Learning how to speed up my workflow, across my business, helps no end. It keeps my relationships with my girlfriend, family and friends alive." One of the ways Dean speeds up his workflow is by being a 'full-time geek' (his words). An avid user of iOS and OSX, I lost count of the number of apps Dean recommended. Primarily, he uses his iPad Pro for quick Instagram videos for the band. "I can send movie files straight from the A7S II to the iPad and there I'll do a quick edit in iMovie and grade in Chromic before uploading to Instagram," he explains. "In total that'll usually take me about ten minutes which is amazing."

Aside from Dean's core responsibilities of image making, he also looks after

**"I prefer the soul and life of a prime and have almost the full range of Sigma Art lenses"**



**DEAN'S TOP 6 APPS**

- iMOVIE**  
"Although not designed for pros, it's great fun to edit with and is actually pretty good and on the iPad Pro."
- CHROMIC**  
"Chromic offers cool grades and grading videos isn't something that has been fully utilised on iOS yet."
- PAGES**  
"This stock app syncs over iCloud so I can easily send invoices from any device from a saved blank template."
- DAY ONE**  
"I use this as a journaling app so I can remember what I did and where. It's important to keep memories."
- DROPBOX**  
"I can access documents, pictures and even some important compressed video files on the road."
- BUFFER**  
"It's important to keep your social media up. In today's digital age, being 'active' online is so important."

The Vamps' YouTube channel and sends photos/videos to press outlets, record labels and TV stations the world over - somehow he still finds the time to write a blog on his own website. "My blog gets quite a lot of traffic so I do my best to keep it up," he explains. A lot of this traffic comes from his massive social media following, which he admits has grown in part as a result of working with popular bands. "While I do get a lot of 'fangirl' interactions, the majority of my interaction is to do with my job and I love that," he says. "I just wish I had more time to reply to people!"

If you looked at Dean's life through a social media tinted lens it would be easy to say that he's living the dream but there's clearly an immense amount of hard work necessary to reach and maintain this kind of success. The glamour of worldwide travel and paid-for flights and hotels is easily balanced by the number of hours spent hidden away in an edit suite or with a camera in hand. Though Dean's job centres on presenting the bands he shoots in a particular way, he has also done a great job in transparently showing what it takes to be where he is. There are no secrets, just vision, dedication and a boatload of hard work. Oh, and an unwavering love of the App Store. **MM**

**» More information**

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