

## LAVALIER VS. SHOTGUN (BOOM) MICS

Bad audio can ruin even the best video. When selecting microphones, the question always arises, what is the best mic for a particular job? All microphones capture sound, but when you are selecting a mic consider the following realities:

Lavalier microphones are used a lot in a talk show type environment. They are also popular with dance and exercise instruction videos. The microphones can be either wired or wireless, which offers a lot of flexibility and usage. The mic can be placed close to the audio source (the talent's mouth) which may make you believe it's the perfect mic. It is good choice, but not always the perfect choice.

The placement of the microphone is important. The closer the mic is to the throat, the more bass tones the audio has. The farther it is from the throat, the thinner the audio becomes. To get great sound, the audio engineer needs to adjust the mic carefully to find the right balance. Everyone speaks at different volume levels, so you need to always be listening.

Body and clothing noise also can cause problems. A lavalier mic is clipped to the talent's clothing, so if the shirt being worn is made out of thin material, the shirt might not be a good support for the microphone. When the talent moves, the movement may induce a rubbing sound, which is caused by the microphone bouncing off the talent's shirt and hitting the chest. Just something to consider when choosing a mic..

One of the advantages of lavalier mics is that when the talent moves, the mic moves with them. This is why lavalier mics are used so much in reality TV. But when the talent turns his or her head to the right or left, the tone and volume of the microphone changes.

The last thing to consider is visual. Lavaliers may be common on a talk show sets, but not in a movie. Just seeing the mic on a person's body can cause the scene not to work for the audience. Out of sight is best for this kind of shoot, which brings us to shotgun mics.

Shotgun or boom mics are used a lot on film sets. You don't have the visual problem of the mic in frame, which is perfect for movies or television. The microphone picks up signals from a good distance, which also tends to give you a more natural, ambient, true to life sound. But it's not perfect either.

The boom microphone is attached to a pole, which is held by an operator. From the beginning you will probably need at least one more person in addition to yourself to operate it best. The boom pole operator must hold the mic above the actor without lowering it into the picture frame or it will be visible in the shot. This means communication between the camera and the boom pole operator is important. If two actors are in the scene the operator must turn the microphone to face to person who is speaking. Knowledge of the script (if there is one) is a great help. Boom mics are usually not wireless, which means you need to be concerned if your actor will be moving and know where your cables are to avoid accidents.

All in all, both of these microphones create great usable sound. Understanding which microphone to use for each situation is the key to audio success.