

CAPTURING AUDIO WITH A BOOM MIC

On a shoot, the soundman can be the least-appreciated staff member, but in reality he is the most important member of the production crew. Very few are willing to watch a silent movie anymore, and even with silent movies there was usually a piano or organ playing. Let's face it, even though there might be 20 people on your video team and one lonely audio guy, his/her job matters.

One of the common tools an audio specialist would have in their rig is the boom mic system. The system consists a boom microphone (or shotgun mic), a boom pole, a zeppelin (cool name for a wind blocking device that looks kind of like the Goodyear blimp, hence its name) and a microphone cable.

Boom mics are useful on a shoot for three reasons:

- Boom microphones are designed to be very focused on the sound directly in front of them. Sounds originating from the sides and rear are greatly diminished. The focused sound affords clarity.
- Boom mics can pick up dialog from 2 to 6 feet away, allowing for various mic placements.
- In a scene with, let's say four actors, the boom mic operator can move the mic to follow whoever is talking, allowing one microphone to be used to pick up all four of your actors' dialog.

Connecting the shotgun mic to the boom pole gives the operator the freedom to move with the talent whether walking, running or even changing from a standing position to a seated position while maintaining a good audio recording.

Always use headphones with a boom mic, especially if there is more than one actor in the shot. Actors tend to speak at different levels, so you may need to move the mic higher and lower depending on the person. The height of the actor can also play a part. The closer the mic is to the actor, the clearer the sound will be. The only thing to be aware of when moving the mic is the video frame. Have good communication with the cameraman to ensure you are not lowering the mic into the picture frame. As long as that doesn't happen, the audio on your project will sound great.