

CAN BUYING A MEDIUM FORMAT CAMERA SYSTEM IMPROVE YOUR BUSINESS PROSPECTS? FIND OUT WHY TWO ACTION PHOTOGRAPHERS THINK IT'S BEEN A KEY COMPONENT IN THEIR SUCCESS...

By Michael Roscoe

Ditching your DSLR may sound like career suicide for a sports photographer, but making this decision proved pivotal for two French practitioners.

Alexandre Chailan and David Piole are based in Nice and Le Mans respectively, but travel around the world photographing motorbike races including Moto GP events. This fast-paced premier championship of motorcycle road racing may seem an unlikely place for a medium format camera to be utilized, but this photographic team are not interested in following convention.

"We don't like to do things like other people," David explains. "We want to be different. When we arrived on the scene, we were new and we didn't know anybody, so came with a fresh approach and decided that we'd deliver less quantity and more quality. And that's when we decided to move to medium format."

The team set themselves a tight budget and bought two Mamiya 645DF camera bodies, two Mamiya DM22 digital backs and an array of new and secondhand lenses. They also invested in some powerful battery powered flash lighting and started working as a team to light and photograph the motorcycle riders. Their technique and presence soon meant they were noticed, as their approach was contrary to the way other photographers captured images.

PHOTOGRAPHER



"In the beginning, the other photographers laughed when they saw us using the lighting and [medium format] camera. I think they thought we were completely crazy - and not in a good way," recalls Alexandre. But it didn't take long for their images to stand out from the competition and for some prominent clients to hire their services. These include the Moto GP organization, which now uses the duo to shoot portraits of each rider and images of every bike and helmet.

A CLEVER INVESTMENT

The pair soon upgraded and invested in two IQ series digital backs. They were attracted to Phase One Backs because of the

open platform system, the high-resolution touch-screen and the quality of the full frame (645) sensor. The pair claims that since the purchase, the investment has more than paid off by increasing their business twofold. Marketing their images and services with the higher yields more releated to advertising commissions has received a positive reaction from prospective clients. "People see the files, they see the way we work, they see this is medium format and this is different. The customer's vision has changed. We're really lucky that we decided to do it. Now we have a lot more work. Customers choose photographers for different reasons and using medium format makes us different and makes us stand out from the competition," David enthuses.

The pair also added some leaf shutter lenses to their photographic armory and they now utilize the fast flash sync capabilities. "One customer asked for a picture with a really blurred background. It was at midday in bright conditions but we used 1600/sec shutter speed sync and a wide-open aperture setting and it worked really well. It's really amazing and is like discovering something new."

FORGET THE IDEA
THAT THE PHASE ONE
CAMERA SYSTEM
IS JUST A STUDIO
SOLUTION. WE SHOOT
IN THE DESERT AND IN
THE MOUNTAINS.

Asked whether making the switch was difficult after using a DSLR, Alex and David are in complete agreement.

Alex explains, "The camera is really easy to use, I've got nothing bad to say about it in all honesty."

David concurs, "Forget the idea that the Phase One camera system is just a studio solution. We shoot in the desert and in the mountains. We used it recently to shoot freestyle skiing during the X Games."

Other photographers have now accepted Alex and David's initially unconventional approach and subsequent success.

"We don't compete with the other photographers," Alex explains, "we have created our own market and they are happy with



this because we are not fighting with them for the same shots. Most of the other photographers appreciate a good picture and they've been impressed by the quality of the images we shoot." David adds, "In the beginning there was a little bit of stress between photographers. But now there is no problem. Our vision is different because they work for newspapers. They shoot everything. They might shoot 10,000 or 20,000 pictures per race while we might take one image for a specific use in advertising. Each approach compliments the other. We respect other photographers and now they respect us too."

CLIENT APPROVAL

While attaining respect from your peers is important to any practitioner, it could be argued that it is what clients think that is really vital. When asked what reaction they get from their customers, David laughs and says without missing a beat, "Usually we make sure they are sitting down... Once they see the quality, they call for others to come and have a look. This is a typical reaction."

Alex recalls a recent shoot, "We shot a woman's portrait and we enlarged her eyes on the screen to see the detail. Everybody, in the media center, gathered round, even the other photographers who had DSLRs with millions and millions of pixels were impressed with the quality that we could produce. There is no comparison." David continues, "Clients have learned about medium format because we have told them about it. We show some examples and people understand because there is a real difference. Then they are proud to have something different with amazing quality."

There is no doubt that this Gallic duo's unconventional approach and distinctive style has played a key part in their success. But how much credit do they put down to their medium format gear?

"We would not be at the same point now," Alex states as a matter of fact. "I think our style is very different, but if you had said to me three years ago, 'You can keep your style but cannot use the camera,' I would have said, 'No way.""

www.photos-ad.com



FIND OUT MORE...

- DISCOVER MORE ABOUT LS LENSES AND THE FAST FLASH SYNC CAPABILITIES.
 www.phaseone.com/leafshutter
- > WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF AN OPEN PLATFORM CAMERA SYSTEM? www.youtu.be/iYKWv-aj-fw
- INVEST IN THE BEST FIND A PHASE ONE PARTNER NEAR YOU. www.phaseone.com/partners