



photo: Section Pole

HARDER BETTER STRONGER FASTER

In the modern age of Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, having a camera with you at all times is highly recommendable. How else would all your eager followers be able to become jealous of your every move? For action sports, where you're prone to miss out on action every millisecond you're not paying all your attention, it almost seems mandatory to have some sort of image capturing device strapped to yourself. Action sports cameras and not to forget their range of accessories have built up to a considerable chunk of consumers' spending. Anna Langer finds out what's new.

Report by Anna Langer

CAMERA TRENDS

'Harder better stronger faster' is not only an anthem for fans of electronic music, but also an ethos for the development of electronic devices that strive to deliver faster while working harder and becoming ever more tough. The new GoPro Session is packed down to the size of its lens, while still delivering highest quality imagery that is sharper than your eye will be able to realize. "Hardware is getting smaller while quality and resolution is growing" as GoPro's European Senior Media Relations Manager Isabel Pakowski sums it up. Garmin add information on speed and location through their G-Metrix and Sab Jhooti, Founder of Drift names "mobile live streaming, higher video resolution and frame rates" as well as "smaller sizes" as their main innovations for 2015, while at the same time there is also a clear "desire to make it easy for people to share their video footage," add TomTom, with easier-to-use camera interfaces, LED remotes and LCD displays.

HIGH TECH

HD Filming is already a standard, even for entry level models and most high end cameras are equipped with 4k resolution filming, with up to 30 frames-per-second on the GoPro Hero4 Black. For 1080 resolutions, you can get up to 120 fps from Sony, sized down to 720 there's even as much as 240 fps possible, "meaning that the user can easily show super slow-mo footage which is incredibly impactful," says Alexandre Devulder, Product Manager of Cameras Europe for Sony.

Garmin take it even further by adding GPS information to their video footage through the already mentioned G-Metrix, that uses an integrated motion sensor (G-Sensor), a barometric altimeter and a GPS receiver to collect data on speed and height, affecting gravity forces and much more. The ANT+ interface even allows a connection with additional sensors to measure heart rate, pedal frequency and so on. "All of this can be displayed in the video with various widgets" Markus Müller of the CRAFT – GARMIN customer service explains.

But the most amazing footage in the very best of image quality is still not enjoyable though if all you see is a shaking screen. Hence image stabilisation has become more of an issue, that can very successfully be addressed with accessories as you'll learn a bit further down, but Sony also try a more direct approach to that issue. "The advances that we've made in Steadyshot technology are incredibly important for sports users who are often filming in high speed situations where camera shake can turn a great piece of footage into something that is un-watchable," says Alexandre and continues: "Picture quality and ease of use are what sports users are demanding most from manufacturers. When we have launched new models, we have paid special attention to the image stabilisation technologies that we deploy in new models with the specific goal of helping users get end results that they are proud to share."

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DISPLAYS & REMOTES

Displays and remote controls can also play a role in producing something to be proud of and happy to share. Displays make it easier to navigate and adjust the camera to fit the current conditions. "The TomTom Bandit Action Camera has a very energy efficient display, maximizing battery life, and allowing users to easily setup the settings on their camera." If the display includes a video preview like the Drift Ghost-S colour LCD with video preview and playback, it can be used for framing as well and thus help generate even nicer footage too. Holders of cameras without preview displays should not worry though, as this feature is also available through camera supporting software, such as the Garmin VIRB App or the GoPro mobile app. They also work as remote controls, as most brands only include such extra devices for their most high-end models. New kids on the camera block Rayen are even teaming up "to bundle world-class editing software free of charge to our customers with each Rayen camera purchase," tied in with the release of their new Gold Edition Camera, says Donovan.

USER-EXPERIENCE

Displays and remotes can already enhance users experience with their camera a lot, letting them switch between settings in an easily understandable manner and making mis-framed footage of heads in the clouds a view of the past. TomTom take it even further, offering "the easiest way to edit and share video highlights." In detail, they explain: "A few years ago action cameras were mostly for professional athletes, but now the market is opening up to a completely new audience. And that's where we think we can make a difference: for the people who don't want to spend hours and hours editing their footage on a high-end computer, but simply want to share their adventures in minutes."

Drift also expect a "general move away from standard POV footage only", speaking drones, monopods and gimbals, making accessories more important. Rayen have an answer to that with their new Gold Edition that "will feature a waterproof RF remote, 360 Degree lockable quick clip mount, 1.5 inch LCD, and be bundled with over \$50 of prime accessories, offering simply the best value for money in the market!"

ACCESSORIES

It looks like the importance of camera accessories and the choices available in this segment are growing with the same speed and vigour that camera possession is spreading through the action sports population. Just a camera, no matter how amazing its technology is, won't achieve the same wow-effect as a distinct angle or unique perspective.

The SP Smart Mount is catering for exactly that with a myriad of possibilities to fix your camera to almost anything you like. For everyone taking their action to the water, they've just extended their Floating Section System, that, you guessed it floats. "Both of them are unique modular systems that can be adapted to cater the needs of the customer. We will extend the range of both new systems in the next months," explains Rob Mathera, Marketing & Communication at SP.

Other examples include the new Jivo GoGear neoprene shoulder mounts with Velcro fastening, or their neoprene wrist cuff with 360 mount; the new Garmin bike mount for camera and GPS; the GoPro quadcopter that is expected in 2016; or the TomTom 360 Pitch Mount, that "uniquely positions the camera lens very close to the mounted

surface minimizing vibrations" which is very valuable especially for footage of sports in action, as already mentioned above. "The accessory market is moving towards more multi-function based accessories" says Keith Bannon, Business Development at Jivo and continues: "also, personal comfort is being concentrated on, to ensure the users experience is the best possible." Jivo address this with their GoGear Cuff that launched in August and "is not only a wrist mount, but also has 360 degrees lockable mount."

Action cam accessories veterans Xsories, are rated number one seller of poles in France according to Global Marketing Manager Ryan Roberts, and the brand address the issue of steady imagery with their new X-Steady Electro 1 Axis, a single axis electronic camera stabiliser that works with phones too. "Our HorizonDrive ensures your horizon stays where nature intended, significantly reduces shaking and allows you to follow dynamic subjects and focus on them, without the hassle of focussing on your camera's orientation instead. Best of all, there's no external wires, it's really easy to set up and balance and it's been tested by us, in the real world - not a donkey on inline skates."

"Future cameras will be waterproofed and have no need for additional housing, sound recording quality will be improved, and live broadcast will become standard.

-Rayen's Managing Director Donovan Marais

With smartphone cameras topping up on quality with every version, mobiles easily become action sport cameras as well, offering the huge advantage of already being in everyone's pocket all the time anyway. Hence SP are working on the "integration of cell phones into our line of products," says Rob, "we believe that modular systems as ours will be the future." New accessories company BlackEye directly address this with their Twister+, a "superfisheye lens with screw on attachment, developed to capture awesome fisheye video when skateboarding, snowboarding etc." explains Marketing Manager Joni Granath.

OUTLOOK

With the sheer number of high tech gadgets available to the average Joe these days, it can sometimes feel like the future is already here. And in a way, it already is, as the GoPro Hero4 Session shows: "It benefits from a durable waterproof design that eliminates the need for a separate housing and features simple one-button control to make capturing immersive photos and video quicker and more convenient than ever before," says Isabel, confirming Donovan of Rayen's vision that "future cameras will be waterproofed and have no need for additional housing, sound recording quality will be improved, and live broadcast will become standard." 📷

HIGHLIGHTS

- Small & light
- High Resolution
- Easy Editing
- Steady Images
