

REVIEW

by Assoc. Prof. Encho Naydenov, PhD, *Photography and Videography Programme,*
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Of

The dissertation paper for acquiring the academic degree DOCTOR in professional field: 8.4,
Theatre and Film Art, major Film Studies, Cinema Art, and Television (Film and Television
Cinematography)

Author of the dissertation: Boris Pintev

PhD Title/Theme:

CREATIVE AND TECHNOLOGICAL CHALLENGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE OPERATOR IN
THE TELEVISION TEAM

Academic Supervisor: Prof. Lyudmil Hristov

Justification for submitting the Review: Member of the Academic Panel, pursuant to Order
#3- PK- 59/06.12.2023 of the Rector of NBU, Prof. Plamen Doynov, DSc

Boris Pintev is an operator with extensive experience and is known to the public from his numerous films and materials for the national television BTV. His creative career spans over more than twenty years. He has earned a multitude of awards. He graduated from NBU in 2004, with a master's degree in film and television *Cinematography*. He has also been a part-time lecturer at our university for almost fifteen years, teaching courses on *The Coverage and Television Documentaries*. From the brief biographical data mentioned, it is obvious that Boris Pintev is a professional in the field of television coverage and television documentary. Therefore, it is obvious that the experience of the candidate is closely connected with the topic and content of the presented dissertation.

Boris Pintev's paper consists of four chapters, a section listing contributions, a conclusion and an appendix, the latter being a large and important part of the entire work. In the introductory chapter, he clearly defines the object and subject of this study: the role of the operator in a television team (and in the creation of the television product as a whole). All examples, summaries and conclusions come from his personal experience, which is one of the most valuable qualities of the dissertation.

Boris Pintev also reflects on what investigative journalism is. According to the GIJN, the basic parameters of systematic, in-depth, and personal exploration of a topic, are often connected with the disclosure of facts unknown to the public. There are several parts in the paper, dedicated to discussing the role of the preliminary preparation and the studying of the topic. That includes not only finding sources and working with people in the field, but also, at the same time, the role of the journalist in the objective presentation of facts. How the journalist is supposed to remain impartial to the subject (although this is emotionally impossible) and

how to find the 'objective' environment. This is also what Ivan Georgiev, duly included in the Appendix, talks about: *I always strive to be objective and impartial, but at the same time, understanding and sympathetic to what is happening around me on site.* Nikolay Doinov offers a similar reasoning: *...when you are the aim of the crossfire from both fronts and from all sides, this is the best litmus test that you have done your job.*

In general, the topic of objectivity and credibility of communicating information has been a leitmotif throughout the work and the subsequent interviews with leading journalists. Nowadays, anyone can generate news, even fake news, people can hardly distinguish one from the other. According to the author, the answer to these challenges is, as follows: *The traditional media, unreplaceable as it is, is here to stay, precisely because of the growing need for quality and objective journalism at a time when we are flooded with fake news.*

Social networks have created a new type of “presenters”: vloggers and influencers. Boris Pintev talks about the emergence of the multimedia reporter – a person who has no office and no workplace, who can shoot video and photographs, transmit directly from the scene of the event, something like a universal fighter in a rapid reaction corps (the definition here is mine). But the big difference is that since the traditional reporters very often intend to entertain the audience, the multimedia reporter first informs people and obeys the rules of journalism for the objectivity of the information offered and the quality of the content. This is what multimedia reporter Ladislav Tsvetkov says about his work in the attached interview: *I take photos, shoot a video in parallel, and at some point, I even stream the event live... I often send photos or video while the event is still running. I can edit the shots anywhere, even in the streets. My mobile "office" keeps me on the street much longer than in the newsroom, which is extremely useful for any reporter.*

I will not discuss the content of each chapter, because it was more interesting for me to read and draw conclusions about the way of thinking, preparing, and completing the tasks set. Also, there is a very clear comparison with another field of creative shooting – advertisements (with which I have experience). And based on this comparative analysis, I will outline the content and the main positive qualities of the proposed work.

Boris Pintev points out the fact that, the technological advancements are changing the industry: *"... everyone is both an operator and a photographer."* This is seen in all aspects of photography and video shooting. The fact that modern technology has enabled practically everyone to shoot and to make technically acceptable footage, creates the illusory idea that they are photographers or operators. I also share his opinion that, technically, a good frame, as such, has no particular value if it does not carry the information "who, what, where, and how" or does not tell a story.

The development of equipment and technology has led to several important changes. First, it is the reduction in the size and weight of the equipment, especially because it does not reduce the quality of the material captured, just the opposite. The lighter equipment is an indisputable advantage for the operator in the reporting team, literally lightening their task. More universal cameras allow for more complex work – photos and video shooting with good sound. This in Bulgaria leads to a decrease in the number of people in the teams. In relation to that, Pintev observes: *The operator in the newsroom is responsible for the sound and the editing, as well as for transforming the video shots for television.* He compares the

work of their small team (2 people) with the significantly larger foreign teams, reflecting on whether having more people is beneficial in the first place, and whether it improves the quality of the team's work. Similarly, in advertising photos, most people lead to "unloading" part of the team from side duties and they can concentrate on the essential part of their work. But both approaches are valid, and our practice here, the practice of having smaller teams leads to greater fatigue and exhaustion, which he mentions several times in his paper.

The description of the organization and logistics in his work resembles almost entirely that of any other type of photography, both the problems and the mindset are very similar. The difference may come in the size of the team and the amount of equipment needed, but the principle remains the same. Here is the confirmation: ... *The preliminary organization plays a crucial role in performing one's professional duties.* We all know that good preparation is half the job done. Perhaps this contradicts the common belief that a reporter simply goes to the scene of the event. But in reality, their involvement and duties begin long before that. Here, too, the preliminary preparation resembles other types of photos, including commercial ones. I fully agree with the author's thesis: *We are lucky when preparation meets chance.*

Perhaps the biggest difference with another type of photography is the emotional challenge for the camera operator. How do you manage to remain insensitive to the tragedy in Beslan? The author himself shares: *The Beslan tragedy is one of the most emotionally and professionally difficult extraordinary crisis event.* This is very different, and few can handle it. Here we realize how the coverage of all these events leaves an unfading mark in the minds of journalists. *The challenge here is to manage to detach professionally from the event and the people involved.* At this point the author gives the example of Kevin Carter, who receives a Pulitzer for his photo of an exhausted child that is being stalked by a vulture. A highly impactful shot, for which the author receives criticism for taking pictures instead of helping the child. And this is a profound human dilemma, whether to help or to show the world the touching scene. A choice that few can make or would like to be in a position to make. *Only a few months later Kevin Carter commits suicide.* This example shows the most significant difference between the filming work of the operator in a reporting team and all other types of photography. And once again we realize that those people, subjected to such a strong emotional distress, only to ensure that we are informed, deserve great respect.

Here is the time to reflect on another aspect of their work – safety. Everyone in commercial photography regularly hears the phrase "safety first". But in the operator's work, these words take on a radically different meaning, as these professionals are literally in the hot spots of the world, where their lives are literally in danger at all times. We often see reporters heavily equipped for war. Boris Pintev's photographs are no exception, he has worked in some of the most dangerous places in the world. I will agree with the author that no photo is worth the life of a camera operator.

The paper also examines another crisis that poses a real danger to the reporter's life – the coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic. Watching TV, most of us don't think about how these images reach us, what had to happen for us to see them. As Pintev himself says, many people have switched to working from home, but this is not possible for the reporters – they are on the front line just like the doctors. With all protective measures and daily disinfection of each piece of equipment.

Boris Pintev devotes a significant part of his paper to teamwork and to the fact that the final product results from the efforts of each and every member of the team. He talks about the communication between an operator and a reporter, about how important it is for them to understand each other and be on the same wavelength. And that everyone relies on the other in every situation. I completely agree that in a team all people are important, and they all contribute to the final shots. This is the case in all types of shots, regardless of the genre. The author states: *...it is crucial to be in a team of like-minded individuals, with whom you get on well.*

Boris Pintev also shares that on a personal level, the profession of the reporter is not like other jobs, because: *Difficulties and deprivation are everyday life for television workers; also, weekends and working hours are very relative concepts.*

A big plus of the job discussed is going into small details, such as the ability to shoot selectively on two cards to hide the real footage from the observing censors. Such details can only be known by people who have been in a similar situation, and this contributes greatly to the authenticity and usefulness of the writing.

After analysing the new technical possibilities provided by the equipment, as well as the new multimedia reality, I think the most valuable aspect of the proposed dissertation remains the general conclusion that Pintev makes: *Whether you shoot the subject with a photo camera, a video camera or even a phone, the important thing is what you show and if it fits in the context of the story you tell.*

The brief overview of the doctoral thesis shows how deep and multi-faceted the topic chosen by the author is. Also, the quotes show his serious knowledge of it, not only in theoretical terms, but also with first-person stories as a participant in the mentioned events.

This work has the necessary qualities for a dissertation.

I propose to the esteemed academic panel to award Boris Pintev the academic and educational degree DOCTOR.

I vote Yes!

25.1.2024

Sofia

Signature:

Assoc. Prof. Encho Naydenov, PhD