

REVIEW

by Prof. Martin Venets Dimitrov, PhD, *Department of Audiovisual Production*, School of Screen Arts – NATFA "Krastyo Sarafov", major *Film Studies, Film Art, and Television (Film and Television Cinematography)*

Subject: Submitted dissertation for acquiring the educational and academic degree DOCTOR in the professional field: 8.4. *Theatre and Film Art*, major: *Film Studies, Cinema and Television (Film and Television Cinematography)*

Author of the dissertation: Boris Pintev

Thesis topic: CREATIVE AND TECHNOLOGICAL CHALLENGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE OPERATOR IN THE TELEVISION TEAM

Academic Supervisor: Prof. Lyudmil Hristov

Reason for submitting the review: Member of the Academic Panel, pursuant to Order No. 3-RC - 59/06.12.2023 of the Rector of NBU – Prof. Plamen Doynov, DSc

Brief biographical data about the doctoral student

Boris Pintev graduated from the New Bulgarian University in 2004 and as a graduate he has been invited to instruct students there for 14 years. His expertise covers topics related to television coverage, as well as the specific aspects of the camera operator's work in documentary cinema. He has been the principal lecturer in the course *Television Coverage*, with main topic: *Coverage and Documentary Techniques in Television* in two parts. One of the lecturers in the second virtual discussion from the series *The News from the Inside* – in front of his future colleagues from NBU. For over 20 years, he has been among the leading camera operators in BTV. He has shot dozens of documentaries and reports and has won several awards at Bulgarian and international festivals. He was elected *BTV Operator of the Year* three times. The research paper was developed due to the personal attitude of its author and his reactions to the topic that is for him a matter of personal interest. And it is namely due to his long-lasting professional, high-quality practical activity in TV shows, documentaries, and media coverage in his home country and abroad, that Pintev can summarize his experience in the field in his dissertation. The materials submitted by Boris Pintev include the following documents:

- An autobiography
- A dissertation texts.
- An author's summary
- A reference list of the contributions to the study

- An appendix containing interviews.

I have no comments on the documents provided.

General presentation of the dissertation

The dissertation developed by the doctoral candidate Boris Pintev, CREATIVE AND TECHNOLOGICAL CHALLENGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE OPERATOR IN THE TELEVISION TEAM is particularly up-to-date and practical.

The dissertation paper is 179 pages, containing an introduction, induction part, four chapters, contributions, conclusion, and addendum with interviews. In total, the material is enriched with enough photographs and illustrations; a bibliography with twenty-one titles in Cyrillic and five in Latin. In the introduction to the work, in its general part, the author correctly and specifically justifies the choice of the topic from the position of author-operator in the News and Current Affairs and Sports Departments. Pintev examines the role of the broadcaster as part of a cohesive team that works effectively together towards the fair presentation of an event. A common case is that a member of a film crew tries to emphasize the qualities and merits of his own profession, conveniently neglecting the other members of the group. The opposite is observed here, namely respect for each person who is responsible for their professional part – reporter, editor, fellow operator; the realization that only in this way the final product in its entirety will have the intended power and will convey the right implied message to create the desired emotional and informational connection with the viewer. The paper also discusses the author's position as a cameraman-journalist, when capturing visual content in difficult and sometimes almost impossible social and atmospheric conditions.

Assessment of the form and content of the dissertation

The research material is structured in four chapters, each with separate sections and themes.

In the **introductory part**, the dissertation author Boris Pintev correctly defines the topic, the research subject, and the main thesis of the work – to study and analyse the role of the operator in a television coverage team and how it affects the quality of the finished material. The scientific analysis is also empirically well-justified and is based mainly on the creative experience of the candidate in BTV, but also on research, through targeted interviews with fellow journalists, reportage photographers, as well as with television operators from Bulgaria and abroad.

Chapter One deals with the systematization and generalization of several types of challenges: logistical, emotional, and physical. What is mainly commented on is the responsibility of the operator to the characters in the coverage, as well as that to the members of the film team, respectively the profession and the media it represents. This section describes some general rules of action prior to any possible journalist's material.

In **Chapter Two**, *Specific Examples of The Work of The Filming Team in Covering Extraordinary Events*, Boris Pintev presents several selected personal examples of the work of the filming team in

covering extraordinary events, in particular the protests and civil disobedience in Turkey in 2023, the attack in Beslan in 2004, as well as actions in filming during the Covid-19 pandemic. The main thesis is that the journalist in the field cannot and should not take sides but is only obliged to report impartially on the factuality of the events he witnesses. Unfortunately, the events in Taksim Square and Beslan are mentioned vaguely, and the author does not go into the description of his work, neither into the substance and manner of his actions, and this information would be the most valuable here. Understandably, the emotion of the situations prevails, but it is desirable, after a period of time, for the operator to make a professional analysis of his actions, his work and how, in general, the film crew acted. The description of the work of colleagues during the Covid-19 pandemic is fundamentally different and of higher quality. There is also a mention of the Recommendations for the safe operation of the German television station ZDF, which further specifies why filming in contaminated areas is complicated for the camera operator and the photographer.

Chapter Three deals with the *Techniques, Equipment and Challenges of Filming*. There are valuable reflections on the preparation of filming equipment abroad, as well as the need for specific documentation. Ignoring this specific aspect may lead to not having the opportunity to take photos, thus generating loss for the media represented. A curious element mentioned are Pintev's decisions (especially for the state of Bihar, India) about what technique to choose and how to photograph. It would also be interesting to share how he handled the sound, as the work of the cameraman-journalist abroad, and especially as a part of the team of a Bulgarian TV broadcaster, is quite burdensome and this person is not only responsible for the image, but also for the characteristics of the sound. The result in the complete documentary "Workers", presented at various festivals and highly appreciated, is impressive – proof that even as an independent creative unit, Boris Pintev reacts adequately to any challenges and delivers the necessary quality.

In the last, **fifth chapter** - *Visual Moments from The Creative Process of The Filming Team in The Coverage of Extraordinary Events*, the doctoral candidate turns to himself and views the operator Pintev as a person who observes and analyses the world around him. With a quick reflection on his surroundings and a critical look, he manages to respond accurately and responsibly to capture the event in the most accurate and professional way. In terms of informativeness the Appendix with interviews of the candidate with our prominent television journalists from various Bulgarian televisions is extraordinarily valuable. A professional conversation with colleagues, like-minded people and practitioners who objectively reflect on the subtleties of the journalist's profession in different situations around the world.

Scientific and applied contributions of the dissertation work

In summary, the contributions of this dissertation are as follows:

- Through his personal professional experience of 25 years, the doctoral student summarizes

and analyses the work of the film television team in the TV coverage in complex filming conditions.

- He also systematizes and studies numerous examples of work in "hot" zones around the world by reporting news from the point of view of a Bulgarian TV team.
- He provides valuable interviews with active Bulgarian broadcasters and journalists who support and complement the thesis of the academic research.

Impact of the dissertation on the external environment

No information on publications on the topic has been provided.

Critical remarks, questions, and recommendations on the theoretical work

I have no critical remarks. As Boris Pintev writes: "*This scientific work summarizes the categorized challenges and their possible solutions with real examples of field work would serve as a guide...*", but in this form it is rather the emotional attitude of the operator, as a journalist. As a recommendation, I think it would be interesting and educational for the doctoral student, given information from his personal experience, to share information about more specific decisions he has made. A valuable aspect of the work is the sharing of insider data from "*behind the scenes*" by a practicing responsible operator in many reports and documentaries; in difficult shooting conditions, it is important to find professional information – what visual decisions he had made and why he made them; even in the direction of how to make white balance in a difficult environment, how he handles both image quality, lighting, sound, editing, live air, battery charging. An example of magnificent work is the description of the use of a hidden camera in India. When shooting in Turkey, during the riots or the events in Beslan, more attention is paid to the atmosphere and emotion of the events than to the specific actions of the camera operator. For example

"*You take a technique you think you'll need*" – how is it judged? What technique was taken for this particular case? Are there adequate clothing, shoes, medicines... Information from an operator in a hotspot - how they cope with shooting by hand, how they amplify of the video signal in case of insufficient lighting, what optics they use, what is the composition, how they work with the focus, etc. - is valuable. It is also particularly important to analyse the difference between shooting with a TV camera and with a digital camera to achieve a creative, high-quality image and its specific features for a news report. Another crucial question is what changes with the picture, the sound work, the ergonomics. Also downloading the material from the camera, backup... Have there been situations where a person does not cope and why, in purely technical terms. In other words, a personal self-analysis would be an additional quality of this dissertation. My recommendation is the following: before a possible publication of this work in the form of a manual, more details should be added practical references to the mastery of technological challenges, entirely aimed at future operators-journalists.

I would like to clarify that these are only my suggestions and they do not reduce the quality of my colleague's reasoning and the presented dissertation.

Summary conclusion and opinion

The monographic work **CREATIVE AND TECHNOLOGICAL CHALLENGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE OPERATOR IN THE TELEVISION TEAM** is an independent and meaningful piece of shared personal practical experience. The conclusions drawn rest on routine practice with decent information, as well as on foreign literature. A great illustrative material has also been added. There is a match between theme and content.

The presented monographic work is a high-quality and worthy dissertation – with factual credibility, personal emotional attitude, and correctness in the presentation. The dissertation reveals a promising researcher with good abilities for academic activity.

My proposal to the esteemed academic panel is to award Boris Pintev the academic and educational degree of DOCTOR.

I categorically vote Yes!

25.1.2024

Sofia

Signature:

Prof. Martin Dimitrov, PhD