



# EVERYTHING I USE TO PRODUCE VIDEOS

**By Chris Broad**

**The most frequently asked question I get after “how do you stay so fit and look so radiant?”, is usually about the tools and equipment I use to produce videos on Abroad in Japan. Everything from the cameras I film with and the software I edit on, to the music featured in each video. The time has come to detail everything I use and explain why I use it, in the hope it’ll be useful to any of you looking to start your own YouTube channel or dabble with amateur filmmaking.**

Before I start it’s important to point out that in terms of equipment, the bar to starting a YouTube channel is pretty low. These days all you need to succeed on YouTube is a camera phone, an internet connection, a computer with basic editing software and a fake smile. The odds are most of you already have all of the above tools to get started.

Some of the most successful videos I’ve produced on the Abroad in Japan channel were shot on a camera phone, such as the awful Samsung Galaxy S3, which I used to film the teaching swear words video. Until last year though, most of the videos were shot on a Sony Handycam (the sort of video camera your Dad uses to film your family trip to Disneyland). However, in the last 12 months I’ve overhauled all of my equipment as YouTube switched from being a somewhat out-of-control side hobby into a career path (even though I still feel uncomfortable when hearing the words ‘Youtube’ and ‘career’ used in the same sentence). But I’d like to think it’s encouraging to readers who may not yet have the budget to shell out on equipment, that it shouldn’t be a hurdle to getting started. You probably already have everything you need to start your own YouTube channel tomorrow afternoon. After luncheon.

## **CANON 70D**

From 2013 until the end of 2015, most videos on Abroad in Japan were made on a Sony handycam, a video camera which I felt I could never take myself seriously using out in public, as I looked like someones Dad out on a family holiday.

By the end of 2015, I realised if I was going to take YouTube forward into a career, I'd need to upgrade to something with better picture quality.

So I teamed up with Mr Credit Card and invested in a Canon 70D, a DSLR that has become very popular with vloggers. I'm not sure why this is - maybe it's the picture quality, the convenient rotating screen, it's tough rugged design, or the excellent battery life. (Although it's actually because Casey Neistat uses one). Either way, I love this camera as

it's delivered some superb footage this year, particularly when filming in Tsukiji fish market in Tokyo and in the series of travel videos I've made with my friend Ryotaro around Tohoku. After the footage has been colour corrected, I'd argue the footage could even pass for being broadcast quality level or usable in a short film. I'd say if you're serious about going into vlogging or amateur filmmaking, this is the camera to start off with.



If you do get one, make sure to get the 18-135mm STM lens bundled in with it. Unless you're a professional photographer, you won't ever need another lens.

**Canon 70D + 18-135mm STM Lens:** <https://goo.gl/14ZO4>

## RODE MIC

When it comes to video, sound quality is considered to be even more important than image quality. Poor image quality maybe be bad - but poor sound quality is unforgivable.

It's a well known fact that whilst Canon makes outstanding cameras, their microphones are truly awful. Audio recorded through a Canon DSLR sounds as though it's been filtered through a bucket of sand. With that in mind, I wouldn't recommend buying a Canon DSLR (for filmmaking purposes) *unless* you're able to buy an external microphone.



The most popular solution is to buy a shotgun microphone (this sounds a lot more exciting than it is), which is an elongated microphone that picks up sound remarkably well from the direction the microphone is facing. It's superb for interviewing a subject, as the surrounding sound is filtered out meaning you can pull off similar sound quality to that of a tv documentary. The most popular one is the Rode mic, as the sound is excellent and it won't leave Mr Credit Card in ruins. Having used them for over half a decade now, I can't recommend them enough.

**Rode Mic:** <https://goo.gl/Wkh5A2>

## CANON G7X MK 2

This camera is a recent addition to my range of equipment, but one that I've needed for a long time. As fantastic as the Canon 70D is, it's far from inconspicuous, particularly when the Rode Mic is mounted on top. It's meant I've had difficulty filming inside buildings and restaurants this year, as it's a bit imposing whipping out a huge DSLR with a shotgun microphone in front of a restaurant of startled and frightened onlookers. Enter the ultimate vloggers tool - the Canon G7X Mk2.

For a long time I'd rejected the idea of purchasing a compact camera, as I'd assumed film quality would be an issue. However, the G7X Mk2 uses a similar chip to the 70D and surprisingly, seems to have better low light performance than the 70D itself. The film quality is excellent and the camera can fit right into your pocket. Perhaps most attractively to vloggers, it has a flexible screen which can be tilted and flipped over the camera (pictured,) so you can frame yourself effortlessly whilst you're sat alone in a room, filming yourself talking into a piece of glass and metal.

Recently, the camera was put to excellent use, when I used it to film in a hot spring (literally whilst sitting *in* a hot spring), as I was understandably weary about carrying a large Canon 70D into the hot spring. I've also used it to film inside countless restaurants around Tohoku, encountering far less startled and frightened expressions along the way.



If you want to start vlogging but are weary of investing in a 70D, the Canon G7 Mk2 is a better place to start in terms of price point and ease of use. You'll be off to an excellent start, with a very powerful tool at your disposal.

**Canon G7 Mk 2:** <https://goo.gl/oUG4dU>

## GORILLAPOD

Conventional tripods are large and annoying when you're filming on the go. The only time I really use one now is when I'm filming in my apartment. I now use a Gorillapod instead - a portable lightweight tripod with flexible legs that has become invaluable for filming on the go. Thanks to the flexible legs you can wrap it around almost anything and film from some pretty unique angles. For example, last week I wrapped it around a car seat and filmed a wonderfully stabilised shot whilst driving (here: <https://youtu.be/RdJMKRs7nhk?t=3m1s>).

That said, I mainly use it for basic things - filming myself in a hotel room and propping the camera up on a desk, or just holding it to help stabilise the camera when I'm walking around filming.

The Gorillapod solves a lot of problems and has made my life a lot easier since I purchased it. If you think you'll be filming outdoors often, I'd consider it an essential item.



**Gorilla pod:** <https://goo.gl/XLRRwa>

## MACBOOK PRO (15-inch)

From 2012 - 2015 I'd been using a custom built pc laptop to edit the videos on. It had one of the most powerful processors and graphics cards available at the time, and it was more like a portable desktop computer than a laptop. This was great for editing, but it also meant it was far from portable, as it wasn't the sort of laptop I felt comfortable sitting with in a coffee shop - particularly as the cooling fans sounded like a Boeing 747 and the battery life lasted a pitiful 20 minutes without the huge power adapter plugged in. So in 2015 Mr Credit Card and I teamed up once again and I went ahead and bought a Macbook Pro, having never used a Mac in my life, as I'd always been put off by the ludicrous prices and I didn't know how to use Mac OS.



At first I used to cry myself to sleep at night when I reflected on how much I'd spent on it. But after the first month, I'd fallen madly in love with the well crafted metal thing, that enabled me to edit effortlessly whilst on the move. I could be sitting in an airport, a coffee shop or an 11th century castle, then all of a sudden whip it out and start writing and editing easily. More notably the laptop seemed to handle editing better than my old laptop, crashing less often during editing footage, and with the battery lasting hours as opposed to minutes.

The Macbook Pro changed the game, by taking a profession that I felt could only be done in my apartment or at a fixed location, and giving me the freedom to work wherever I wanted. It made me far more productive and I enjoyed editing and writing a lot more in the process. So as expensive as it was, the Macbook Pro has also been one of the best investments I've made.

I still don't consider myself an Apple fanboy, but I won't be returning to PC in a hurry (video games aside). But if you're working in a creative profession or always on the move, then the ludicrous cost of getting one is completely justified. I still can't find a pc laptop equivalent that combines so much power and functionality, into something so elegant and portable. The fact that I've written three large paragraphs on this should indicate how much I love the damn thing. To my delight, I recently finished paying it off as well, so now I can afford to eat food again.

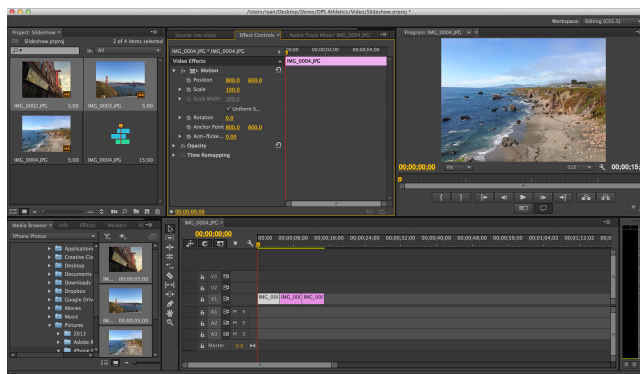
**Macbook Pro:** <https://goo.gl/dE4mUx>

## ADOBE PREMIERE PRO CC

I've used Adobe for almost ten years now. I started off with the consumer level Adobe Premiere elements and self taught myself how to edit over a period of years, through making silly amateur short films with friends.

Then in 2012 I moved up in the world and started using Adobe Premiere Pro. These days Adobe Premiere Pro is all operated in the cloud; in the past, you'd have to fork out about \$500 a year for the latest version of Adobe,

only for it be outdated 12 months later with the new version. However, Adobe Premiere Pro recently re-branded itself to Adobe Premiere Pro 'Creative Cloud' and switched to a monthly



subscription model (\$19 a month), whereby you download the software on to your computer and then receive regular upgrades and updates throughout the year. To be honest I prefer this, as it's cheaper and I never feel like I'm using an outdated piece of software.

I also have Final Cut Pro X, but after using Adobe for so many years, I've found it difficult to switch over to Final Cut. Whilst Final Cut is easier to use though for newcomers, Premiere Pro has more options and some truly outstanding colour correction capabilities, and seeing as I enjoy spending a lot of time colour correcting Canon 70D footage, I've stuck with it.

If you're new to editing and you're serious about vlogging, then Adobe Premiere is a worthy investment. You could learn the editing basics in a matter of days and there's a fantastic amount of online video tutorials on both Adobe and YouTube that'll get you editing in no time. If you're completely new to editing and a bit intimidated by it all, even Windows MovieMaker is genuinely enough to get by though.

**Adobe Premiere Pro:** <http://www.adobe.com/products/premiere.html>

## **POND5 | Royalty Free Music**

When it comes to using decent soundtracks, I find it to be one of the most underrated things amongst YouTubers, with many just using the free (and often awful) tracks that come with YouTube itself. And who can blame them, given buying soundtracks for YouTube videos is irrational and often too costly to justify. However, I've always prioritised using high quality music in my videos and in my view, it's one of the things that's helped the Abroad in Japan channel stand out over the years. In the past, I've often spent more money buying soundtracks for the videos, than the videos have actually made back through YouTube ad-revenue (I subsidised the cost with my teaching job at the time).



I've never told anyone where I get the royalty free music from admittedly, as I didn't want anyone ending up using the same music in their videos. However seeing as you and I are friends, and seeing as it's such a crucial aspect to having a good video, I'll share it with you just this once.

In the last 4 years, 80% of my royalty free music has come from a website called Pond5. I find tracks are priced far cheaper than most stock footage/audio websites, and you don't need any subscriptions to use it. And whilst the quality can vary heavily and you'll have to spend a million years going through the catalogue of music, trying to pluck out the best tracks you can find, it'll be worth the time investment. Few things can rival the satisfaction of finding the perfect soundtrack that matches your video.

- Except crumpets.  
Crumpets rival everything.

**Pond5:** <https://www.pond5.com/>

