



Following “The Calling” With The New Canon EOS C700

DIRECTOR TYLER STABLEFORD’S HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE WITH
PROTOTYPES OF THE CANON EOS C700, CANON’S NEW 4.5K
FLAGSHIP IN THE CINEMA EOS LINE // BY DAVID ALEXANDER WILLIS

Over the past few years, demonstration films for new equipment, particularly for new digital cinema cameras, are reaching new heights in production values, scope and scale. If you haven’t seen it yet, take a look at Canon’s new short film, shot with its flagship Cinema EOS C700 4.5K camera, called, appropriately enough, *The Calling—A Portrait of Life in the High Country* (youtu.be/XcUP-fJW6Aw).

At the behest of Canon, director Tyler Stableford teamed with Academy Award®-winning Director of Photography Russell Carpenter, A.S.C., in Colorado, to shoot *The Calling*. The pair led a production team that was armed with two prototype C700 cameras to document moments throughout the typical day

of a real-life working cowboy, a pair of rock climbers and a master distiller. The end result is a beautiful, visually evocative study that nicely skirts the territory between high-end documentary and narrative short. The C700 footage itself, the first publicly available from the new camera, also reveals Canon’s now revered color science and an organic, pleasing image. With the C700, Canon enters a crowded market segment, though, and it remains to be seen if the new camera, along with their short video promoting it, will allow Canon to break into the television episodic and Hollywood narrative markets that camera is intended for at a price point of \$23,000.

Canon’s existing line of cameras is familiar to many users, ranging from still photographers to

cinematographers, but besides new codec options and the sensor’s 4.5K resolution, we wanted to know what the new C700 brought to the user experience that had not been available before in a Canon camera. The camera is also the only one in its class equipped with Dual Pixel Autofocus, enabling autofocus during capture, which will come in handy for many small-crew, run-and-gun-type projects. We sat down with Stableford to hear his impressions on directing and shooting *The Calling* with the C700.

“I’ve used all of Canon’s DSLR cameras, as well as the 1D C, the C300, the C300 Mark II,” says Stableford, “but I had not used the C500 before. I’ve also used pretty much every other popular kind of high-end cinema camera over the past few years while

directing TV commercials. While I really like shooting with cameras like the C300 Mark II, the C700’s menu options and form factor are just better for me. The C700 is a real cinematographer’s tool. I had less than 30 minutes’ training on the C700 on our tech scout day and then, the next morning, I was operating it. The menus are so much easier to navigate, understand and to customize. To me, the camera is very intuitive and operates as it should.”

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// Tyler Stableford**

The *Calling* was shot with two of Canon’s three C700 prototype cameras: one with a PL mount and one with Canon’s own EF mount. “We used a range of Cooke prime lenses, both regular and anamorphic, and we also shot with a set of the Canon Cinema Primes. We wanted to do some very ‘wide-angle’ shots, so we used the Cooke S4/i 12mm T2.8 lens, which was a bit wider than Canon’s 14mm prime. We did a test with the Cooke 12mm, and it vignetted a bit, but even after cropping out the vignette, the image still ended up wider than the Canon 14mm image, so we used the Cooke for those shots. We used this wide field of view for a few key scenes, like the shot when the cowboy was coming up this small hill with a big sky in the background and also a lot of the rock climbing scenes, where we’re under the rock climbers’ feet.

“We also had an array of the Canon Cinema Zoom lenses. Russell and I would decide who would man each camera for each scene. We would often shoot a master with a prime lens, and then the other operator would be set up with the Canon 30-300mm zoom lens, picking off tighter details. That lens is pretty big, but, boy, is it versatile; it’s incredibly sharp at all focal lengths. It was my first time working with that lens. I loved it! We also used Canon’s 100mm Macro EF-mount lens to capture that shot of the water droplets coming off of the still at the distillery.”

Anamorphic shooting has made a comeback in digital cinema shooting. On the C700, anamorphic lenses can also be used to give images the characteristic big-screen/widescreen aesthetic of anamorphic, a

first for the Cinema EOS line. For preview, the EOS C700 electronically de-squeezes the image in the viewfinder and on connected monitors. It also takes advantage of the camera’s full 4K resolution by using 1.3x squeeze anamorphic lenses that will be able to cover the full 16x9 area of the EOS C700 sensor.

The 2.0x squeeze anamorphic lenses that cover a native 1.2:1 aspect ratio on the sensor can be used as well, by employing a cropped area of the sensor. Canon requested that the crew shoot anamorphic to show what could be done with that aesthetic, so Stableford and Carpenter bookended the short film with anamorphic opening and closing shots using Cooke 2.0x de-squeeze anamorphic lenses. The shooting scenario for *The Calling* didn’t allow for weeks of exteriors to achieve the perfect lighting, either. The production had to shoot quickly, often during some of the more challenging times of day in very harsh, high-altitude lighting conditions.

Stableford was pleasantly surprised with how the C700 was able to handle the challenge. “One of the camera’s strong points is its incredible range of latitude. Any time you’re shooting outdoors, you want to use a camera with amazing dynamic range, because you may not always have a big crew and a ton of grip and lighting gear. Even when we were shooting at 11 a.m., the images were always pleasing and held a ton of detail in the highlights. We did some shots of our cowboy with long pans as he galloped on his horse with both snow-covered and shady-covered mountains in the background. This was all at 8,000 to 9,000 feet in elevation, where it’s so bright, and we didn’t even come close to exceeding the camera’s dynamic range. He and the horse were very backlit; you obviously couldn’t easily add a lot of fill in such a shot, and the image held up beautifully.”

If you look at the physical layout of the C300, the C300 Mark II and the C500, Canon has made quite a departure in the form factor and design of the C700. While the other cameras in the EOS Cinema line are quite tall, the C700 goes back to a more traditional “box with a lens” type of design. This is notable for several reasons. The top and bottom of the camera are covered with cheeseplates with dozens of different tapped and threaded holes for attaching cinema accessories pretty much anywhere on the camera you would like.

Says Stableford, “The ergonomics are great. You can put the top handle on, and you can quickly throw a shoulder mount and handles on it very easily. The camera is well balanced.”



Canon has teamed with Codex to equip the C700 with an optional Codex RAW recorder at the rear, which was used for recording some of the imagery for *The Calling*.

Stableford’s firsthand experience with recording and posting with Codex RAW footage brought home the practical advantages of shooting RAW.

“Not only does the camera have 14 or 15 stops of latitude to capture a large range of light,” he explains, “but you also may want or need to push the image in post. In our case, I needed to bring up some of the shadow areas in a few sequences in specific areas, like in the saddle on the horse or on a darker face in backlit scenarios. We were able to manipulate those images in the color grade and bring up those portions of the image another stop or a stop and a half with absolutely no breakdown of the image. That is definitely not always the case with other top-rated cameras that I’ve worked with. It means

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there’s a lot of shadow detail in the image, even beyond the 15 stops you’re getting right out of the gate.”

Shooting at high ISO settings seems to be another bone of contention that’s often heard from DPs. Stableford reports that high ISO shooting with the C700 exceeded his expectations. They were able to take the camera up to high ISO levels of ISO 3200 and 6400 in low light, but he says that the images still looked great.

“I can’t think of many other Super 35 cameras that perform as well at high ISOs as this camera,” Stableford says. “It’s difficult to shoot with any camera at ISO 3200 to get good results. This camera does that very well.”

As he had carte blanche, Stableford was equally as excited to work alongside Oscar®-winning cinematographer Carpenter, who’s historic in the industry for his win on the film *Titanic*.

Cinematographer Russell Carpenter, A.S.C., and director and Canon Explorer of Light Tyler Stableford tested prototypes of the new Cinema EOS C700 cinema camera in Colorado. Some of the challenges were to highlight the considerable dynamic range and low-light capabilities.



Stableford composes a scene through the new Canon EVF-V70 OLED viewfinder, made especially for this camera.

“It was a real thrill for me to work with Russell,” says Stableford. “I know it was important to Canon to have a top-level DP working on this project, and they certainly achieved that with Russell—someone who could fully test the camera beforehand and push it to its limits and to speak truthfully about the camera. There was never any directive to brush aside any shortcomings or to not talk about this feature



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or that feature. Everyone from Canon told us, ‘Push it, test it and put it through every pace that you can, and then talk about it honestly and relate your experiences with it’. For me, working with Russell was a real dream. He brought an amazing level of precision, craft and mastery, but most importantly, he brought a lot of heart and joy to the process. Russell was a great collaborator, and he had a contagious, boyish enthusiasm for the project, at every step in the process. It was really fun for all of us.” //

See more of Tyler Stableford’s work at >> stablefordstudios.com

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