

Oriol Porta, director of Àrea TV

‘Technology has led to the democratisation of production possibilities’

Oriol Porta Tallada is a documentary director and producer. Born in Lleida in 1959, he has worked as the executive producer of numerous documentaries, including *Argentina: 4 Caras de un País sin Fondo* (2002) and *Orwell: A Contracorriente* (2004). He also directed the full-length documentary *Hollywood contra Franco* (2008).

What is the profile of a good audiovisual communicator?

First, a methodological base is needed, which nowadays is provided at university. Then, you have to be a person with curiosity and sensitivity about the entire audiovisual language in order to understand how to read images.

What are the most highly-valued competences?

Our sector is one where one day we have to do a documentary about history, about a subject that we might not know anything about, and another day we have to do an institutional video about high technology at a company... it is good to not plan it all out too strictly. You should have good research and search abilities. In this regard, the Internet has really revolutionised our work. Despite this, you need an open, yet structured, mind.

What are the trends in the audiovisual communications sector?

We could say that it has opened up greatly. Technology has led to a democratisation in production possibilities. With all the digital formats, technological costs have dropped enormously and have provided great quality. There are increasingly more people, more professionals and more companies and there are also more clients, perhaps more suppliers and, therefore, all of this is an undeniable asset.

So, is this a good time?

I believe we are in a period in which the sector is maturing and, on the other hand, there are opportunities that are increasingly unimaginable and that are done extraordinarily quickly. In this regard, the paradigm is Internet, and YouTube concretely, and everything that can be posted there. The fact that you have the chance to do something and can launch it, that you have a distribution channel, generates a lot of possibilities. Because they are spaces that have millions of viewers that can definitely be a showcase for talent and, therefore, of opportunities. These are very interesting times.

Is the crisis affecting the sector?

Unfortunately, we are experiencing a crisis that has involved us all, although it is a sign of the times and is affecting the entire world. But we have to be optimists and everything that I tell students of audiovisual communications, I truly feel it. I believe that they can consider themselves lucky, compared to how difficult the world is and how difficult everything can be. In other words, there are opportunities but that doesn't mean they will be handed to you on a plate.

The proliferation of DTT, videogames and mobile phones... are they also all opportunities?

Undoubtedly. Earlier, I said that the greatest paradigm was YouTube but, obviously, they are all opportunities. But we don't have to intoxicate ourselves on it. Ten years ago, it seemed like cable was the panacea, and then... But even so, many doors have opened. Before, you were this tiny being at a company and you had to scale an impregnable castle, which was television, and you didn't have anything except a rope. Now, maybe through the experience you acquire on local television, with something you create on a mobile phone, with something you make on DTT or that you could have made on cable... you are supported and you are closer than before to this castle that I said was inaccessible. Your climb is somewhat more assured.

What specific characteristics are involved in documentary creation?

It has two sides. Everybody thinks this job is the panacea, but at the hour of truth, resources are extremely limited, management is tough. It isn't hard to sell, it takes some work to make it, it takes great effort to be able to bring together what they call the financial plan, it is hard to obtain money, really hard. It is terrain in which there are huge differences, in which small sailboats and transatlantic ships are both in the water! It is a sector in which it is very important to have some muscle, in other words money and endurance... And that is often more important than talent, imagination and initiative.

What advice would you give to future audiovisual professionals?

That they take advantage of every opportunity. That they don't stray from the road. That if they have the chance to work with any producer, to do something that they aren't excited about and don't want to do, but that gives them an inroad, that they do it. And starting from there... Because they have an opportunity from inside to be able to show what they value and what they can do. And that life is a long calm river, but to take advantage of the opportunities, because they are out there.

Noteworthy quote:

'There are opportunities, but that doesn't mean they will be handed to you on a plate.'

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