

Wireless technology

## MAKING LIFE EASIER FOR PRESS PHOTOGRAPHERS

Photographers at Scanpix are always working to tight deadlines. The web editions of newspapers are constantly hungering for news pictures that are hot off the press. So photographers must be able to send pictures direct from the camera.

TEXT AND PHOTOS MAGNUS FRÖDERBERG



Camera, transmitter, computer, 3G-modem and mobile are essential for sending pictures.

Most daily newspapers in Sweden subscribe to Scanpix pictures. But several also have other subscriptions and they pick the first picture that arrives following a news event.

Even if Scanpix photographers were the only ones to cover an event, newspapers still expect fast picture deliveries. "During the traditional budget walk to the Swedish Parliament with the Finance Minister, I walked for fourteen minutes before I sent the first pictures. Yet still a few of the newspapers thought that the pictures arrived 13½ minutes too late," says Henrik Montgomery, photographer at Scanpix.

Henrik is trying out new techniques for sending pictures faster and more efficiently.

### **Mobile even back in the 40s**

Sending pictures from the field has been an everyday aspect of the press photographer's job for many years. The first mobile telephoto transmitter was developed in the 1940s, and it was mounted in the boot of a photographer's car.

When travelling, the photographer had an entire mobile darkroom with him, which was set up in the hotel room's toilet. First of all the film was developed, and then the pictures would be copied onto photographic paper before being sent via telephoto. Hasselblad's 25 kilo telephoto transmitter arrived in the 1980s. It could read the negative direct, which saved time.

In the 1990s, photographers travelled with laptop computers, scanners and developing equipment. The pictures were sent using GSM phones, which often took 15 minutes per picture.

Even after the advent of the digital camera, slow GSM phones were still required in order to send back pictures when there was no broadband available. But now with 3G and Wifi transmitters for cameras, a new age is dawning for professional photographers in the field.

### **Premiere at the Nobel dinner**

“We carried out our first job using wireless technology at the Nobel dinner last year. Nikon had released its new D3 camera and WT-4 transmitter five minutes before we were about to leave for the dinner,” says Henrik Montgomery. Henrik uses various techniques, depending on how urgent it is to get the pictures to the editorial offices.



Henrik Montgomery at Scanpix uses Nikon D3 with the WT-4 transmitter.

#### HENRIK MONTGOMERY

Profession: Press photographer at Scanpix since 2000

Equipment: Nikon D3 with several lenses. Nikon WT-4 transmitter. Nokia phone with WLAN. Apple MacBook Pro with Telia 3G modem

Software: Photo Mechanic to sort, title and send pictures from the computer. The FTP programme Transmitt is also used. The programmes Captain FTP and Crows Nest are used to send pictures direct from the camera via the computer. The programme Joiku Spot in the Nokia mobile is used to send direct from the phone.



Scanpix used wireless technology for the first time at the 2007 Nobel dinner. The Royal Household allows five selected photographers to take photographs for 1 minute on each side of the table of honour. The Royal Family, Nobel laureates and ministers all need to be photographed during that one minute. Henrik took two exposures at the end of the table. By the time he was 10-15 metres away, the pictures had been sent to the editorial office.

“With accidents, as a rule we send from the car using a 3G connection via the computer. The car is never far away. It’s more of a rush when a major news event occurs, and the newspapers are about to go to press.

“If Telia Homerun is available, we can send direct from the camera to the picture server at the editorial office via Nikon’s WT-4 transmitter. I select the best pictures on the camera’s display, which a picture editor can then make the final adjustments to using Photoshop and supply with the correct text information.

Scanpix has negotiated with Telia so that we can send the pictures direct using Telia homerun, without having to log in.

”We’ve asked Nikon to enter our user names and passwords direct into the camera, so that we can also use the cameras in other networks when we are abroad,” says Tobias Röstlund, Director of Administration at Scanpix.

It takes around 20 seconds to send a picture via Telia Homerun direct from the camera.

The process is a little quicker from the computer, since Photoshop can compress down the picture files more than the camera can.

### **Direct from the mobile**

“We can also send a picture from the camera to the computer via WLAN. The picture then travels from the computer via 3G connection. Two programmes work together in the computer, so that the pictures can be sent on when they have arrived in the picture folder. The process takes about 3 minutes per picture,” says Henrik Montgomery.

Henrik Montgomery and his colleagues must always have their computers with them while out on assignments, since Telia Homerun has no where near the same coverage as the 3G network. But Henrik has now come up with a new solution.

“With my Nokia phone, I can send the pictures from the camera transmitter to the phone via WLAN. Then a programme called Joiku Spot sends the pictures on from the phone.”

Still, a fair number of gadgets and wires are required.

“Why not 3G connection direct in the camera?” wonders Henrik.

### **Video in the near future**

Scanpix is also looking at simple ways of being able to send video films from the field.

“With 4G and the standards that follow, we’re hoping to be able to send back high quality video clips from the field in real time,” explains Tobias Röstlund.

But photographers may need to take video film before mobile technology has developed that far. The beginning of autumn saw the arrival of the system camera Nikon D90, which can film in HD quality.

“We’ve tried out the D90, but the sound wasn’t good enough. Canon Eos 5D mark 11 is more promising with the mike input, but we only use Nikon. That’s why we’re hoping to be able to film when the professional Nikon D4 camera comes out,” continues Tobias. For the moment, wireless technology is fairly awkward and can seem stressful, but it still makes life easier for the photographers.

“I can now send off a couple of pictures straight away, so that the papers have got something for their online editions. Then I can devote more time to finding better pictures, without having to dash off to send from a computer,” says Henrik. ■