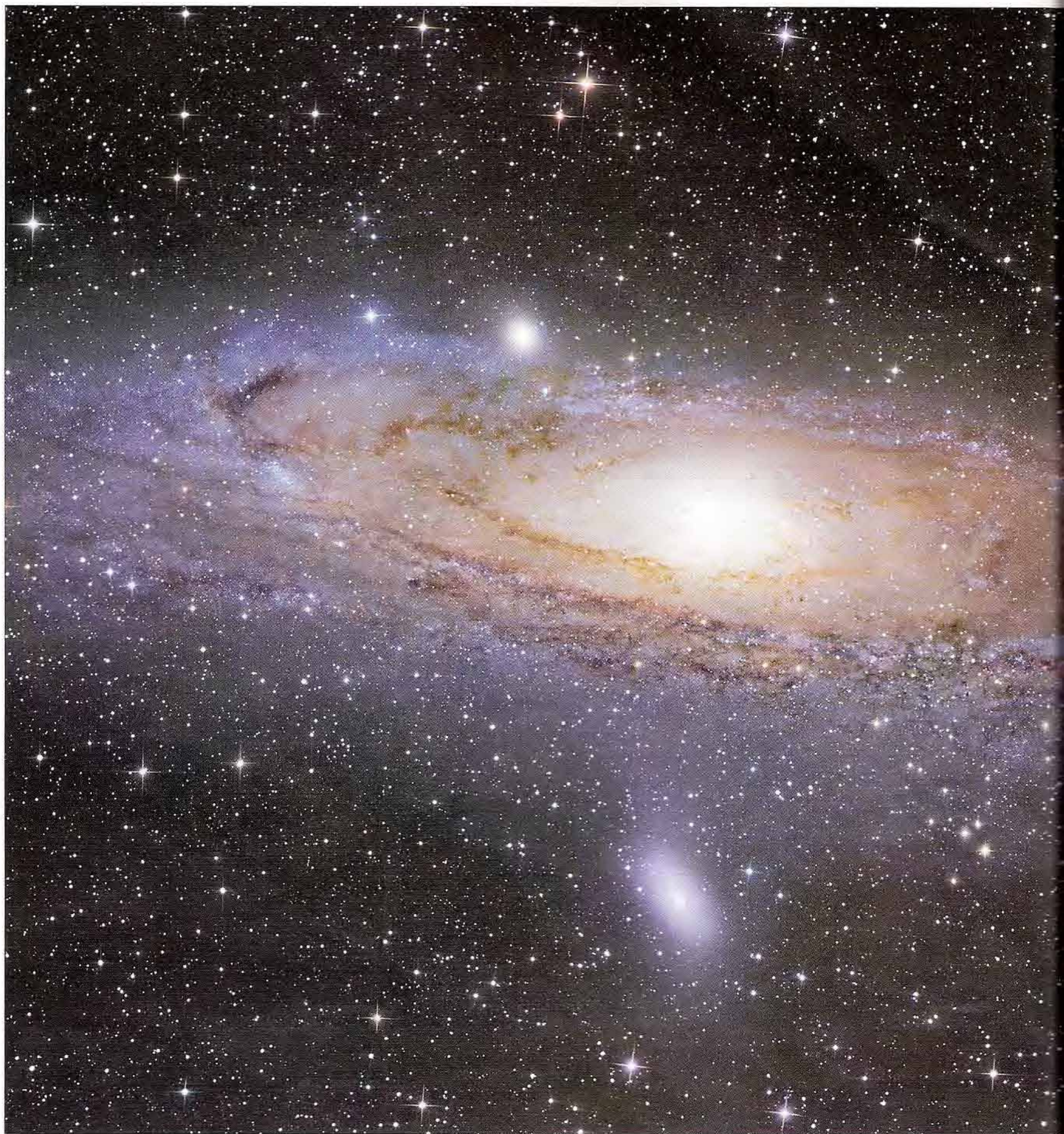


Right: An optical image of the Andromeda Galaxy (M31), our nearest similar galactical neighbour at a mere 2.5 million light years away. The image comes from the Science Photo Library, currently in the throes of launching Science Motion, a facility designed to meet both the moving and still image requirements of clients. Image © Robert Gendler/ Science Photo Library.



Two becomes one?

If DSLR camera makers see a demand for video capture, how are photo agencies tackling the convergence of still and motion images? *Julian Jackson* investigates

Are still and moving images converging? It certainly feels like it, with stills cameras capable of taking glorious HD video now appearing on the market. Canon's latest DSLR, the EOS 5D MkII, for example, can record around 15 minutes of High Definition video on a 4GB SD card, and has already been utilised by

Vincent Laforet to shoot a short film, *Reverie* (tinyurl.com/4h22sk). Nikon's D90, meanwhile, oriented towards amateur photographers, is able to shoot five minutes of HD, or 15 minutes of Standard Definition. Several commercial photo libraries are now selling moving footage as well as stills, and

many more have similar plans for the future. And while corporate giants such as Corbis and Getty Images have long been involved in moving images, medium-sized libraries, such as the Science Photo Library, are now following suit.

Martin Keene, group picture editor of PA Photos, has long

encouraged his photographers to shoot video as well as stills, to provide footage that can be used online. His staff and freelancers carry the small, lightweight Canon Powershot S3/S5 or Sony HDR SR12 in addition to their normal stills bodies, and he's always on the look out for new models that offer a combination



Above: Screen grabs from video footage of flooding in Morpeth in September last year. Photographer John Giles took both video and stills that day. Image © John Giles/PA Photos.

of high quality with portability.

He's excited about the potential of the forthcoming Scarlet camera, currently being developed by the manufacturer behind the Red Ultra High Definition professional video camera. The groundbreaking Red camera has taken the cine world by storm over the past couple of years, but its smaller brother would be more affordable (in the \$3000 dollar range) and is scheduled for launch in early 2009.

Job in hand

Keene believes the degree of convergence between the two disciplines depends on the particular job in hand. 'Flooding and bad weather are good examples

of how it can work, because in both scenarios photographers have enough time to shoot stills and moving pictures,' he says. 'A bad example would be photographing someone going into court – there is only one chance to get a shot and so fiddling around with a two cameras would not be a good idea.'

Hugh Pinney, director of editorial photography at Getty Images, echoes Keene's words, pointing out that 'some situations lend themselves to video coverage, others do not'. But he adds that in some areas moving images are quickly becoming essential, for example, in the red carpet entertainment sector, which has become an important strand of Getty's business.

In fact, Getty (and Reuters) both advised Canon on the EOS 5D II's video function, proving

how seriously all three companies take it. 'Everybody is feeling their way towards multimedia video, and nobody knows what final form it will take,' says Pinney.

Supply & demand

The Science Photo Library, meanwhile, recently unveiled a new Science Motion arm, which is being rolled out softly right now and will be fully launched next year.

'I have spoken to several photographers who are interested in moving over and learning the ropes,' says Ben Jones, head of motion at SPL. 'I suspect that the increased availability of good quality consumer and prosumer cameras will encourage experimentation, which will lead some to make the leap.'

Jones believes that more and more libraries will start to offer video, because mushrooming broadband and compression rates mean that more and more of their clients demand it. SPL's customers use moving images for everything from e-learning materials to DVDs, web TV and online videos on personal sites and, even better, moving images garner 'substantially higher' licensing fees than stills. 'Given that, and our reputation and contacts, video capture represents a good opportunity with great potential,' says Jones.

Pinney agrees, arguing that video 'adds value to shoots'. 'It's a tool that brings new life to the old photo essay,' he says. 'Video works well if it is packaged around stills, bringing a narrative specific to moving images to back up a still photo shoot. It is a way for a photographer to tell a story better, and video with ambient sound has the ability to provide the atmosphere of an event.'

Risk worth taking?

But it's not all roses, and Keene is frank about the difficulties. Television sets are getting wider and wider, for example, which could cause problems for the traditional upright and horizontal photo format. As he points out: 'You can't turn a video camera on its side!'

This issue aside, he has three main concerns with video cameras: making sure the batteries are fully charged if the kit hasn't been recently used; the need to record on SD cards or hard drives (he believes digital videotape is too cumbersome); and good sound, which can be as vital as the pictures. The Powershot doesn't have an external micro-

phone socket, for example, which he says is not ideal.

Another technical disadvantage is the lack of interchangeable lenses on HD video cameras. The design spec for the Scarlet camera, for example, has shifted over time, and the final model may not have the built-in zoom proposed in the original prototype.

And Keene is also concerned about photographers' skill when handling what is a very different medium. 'Video is about telling a narrative around an event,' he says. 'These are not impossible skills to manage, but certain elements must be taught, such as cutaways or changing the camera position between takes.'

Added to this, the initial investment is prohibitively high for many, as Jones points out. 'Cameras are coming down in price, but a model capable of recording uncompressed HD footage, the current standard, is still tens of thousands of pounds, and that's before buying sundry kit and a computer capable of handling it. Out of our video contributors, most have been working dually with stills and video for a number of years, rather than having taken up video recently as a move on from stills.'

'The risk to the cameraman is probably higher, due to the costs involved. The familiar stock photography model of shooting material unbidden and unpaid is practically unheard of with video. The costs of arranging a shoot are too high, and everyone I've spoken to wants to be paid up front, or at least an advance against royalties.'

'But with the stills market continuing to look gloomy, it is a risk that I'm sure many will be happy to take, and it will pay off for some of them. I wouldn't say it's easy, but what is? It is a challenge and could be a rewarding one. We look for a good eye, a steady hand and patience – and anyone with the patience to have made themselves a professional photographer will likely have those skills already. All that's needed is a creative mind.' **BJP**

Onlinet

gettyimages.com
paphotos.com
sciencephoto.com/
sciencemotion
vincentlaforet.com
Julian Jackson's latest
ebook, *The Photobuyer's
Handbook*, is available at
julianjackson.co.uk