

RAINDANCE PRODUCERS' LAB

LO-TO-NO
BUDGET
FILM-
MAKING

ELLIOT GROVE



SECOND EDITION



**raindance
producers' lab**

**To the person
who first showed me how to produce
—and get things done
Dorothy Helen Bechtel Grove**

**raindance
producers' lab:
lo-to-no budget
filmmaking**
second edition

ELLIOT GROVE

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Contents

Preface	xiii
Acknowledgements	xv
About the Author	xvii
Introduction to the Second Edition	xix
1 Nobody Knows Anything	1
Why nobody knows anything — Banks — Channel 4 — Money — Scripts — Lights — Camera — Why do you want to make a movie?	
2 The Hollywood Zoo	9
The animals in the film industry zoo — Bullies — Screamers and shouters — Snakes — Crouching tigers — Casting couch lotharios — Sharks — Ruthless climbers — Star chasers — The nice people — Saying thank you — The greeting card — The gift — The postcard theory — Developing a personal image — The three reasons you will not make a movie — Lack of confidence — Self-destruction — Procrastination — Seven essential steps for becoming rich and famous by making a low-budget film: Step 1 — Find an excellent screenplay	
3 Budgeting and Scheduling	21
Choosing a budget — The four budgets — Find the right budget for your script — Describing your budget — Talking the talk — The nine most famous words in Hollywood — The two big questions — Advantages of a 1-week shoot — Elements of a budget — How to choose your budget — How I chose a £10,000 budget — How I chose a zero budget — Refrigerator theory of budgeting — Preparing the schedule — Script breakdown — Production board — Writing for lo-to-no budget films — Moving the budget down — Strategy for producing a zero-budget film — Script strategy — Locations strategy — Talent strategy — Special effects strategy — Shooting schedule strategy — Sample £3,000 (\$4,500) 35mm shoot — Sample £1,000 (\$1,500) digital shoot — Seven essential steps: Step 2 — Find some money	
4 Originating Formats	47
No budget — Toy cameras and phones — Advantages — Limitations — Low budget — DSLRs — Advantages — Limitations — Prosumer camcorders — Advantages — Limitations — Digital cinema cameras — Advantages — Limitations — Digital Q+A — Originating on film — Super 8 — 16mm/Super16 — 35mm/Super35 — Choosing a format	

- 5 The Camera Package** 53
How film cameras work — Camera movement — Zoom — Pan and tilt — Track — Dolly — The camera — Film drive and transport mechanisms (film cameras) — Tachometer (film cameras) — Shutter speed — Lenses — Lens sharpness and contrast — Camera rental — Negotiation techniques — How camera rentals are negotiated — Requirements of a cheap camera rental deal
- 6 Sound** 61
Three sound ingredients — Dialogue — Sound effects — Music — Recording location sound — Sound crew — Sound consistency — Microphones — How a microphone works — Types of microphones — It's all just a chain — Sound as picture — Recording sound in camera — The meaning of 16-bit and 24-bit — In camera or sync sound? — Sweetening the soundtrack — ADR — Foley — Sound design — In conversation with Roland Heap — In conversation with Stephen Coates — Film sound glossary
- 7 Cinematography** 77
The production process — Pre-production — The shoot: the life of a DoP — Post-production — Film lighting crash course — The low-budget shoot — Shooting without lights — Hiring a DoP — Career route of a DoP — Lighting terms glossary
- 8 Production Values** 95
Role of the production designer — Art department — Low-budget art department — Low-budget special effects — Stunts — Sex scenes — Firearms — Screen combat and fight directing — Working with a fight director — Low-budget CGI — Keys to the special effects kingdom on a lo-to-no budget by Floyd Webb — In conversation with Joe Pavlo — In conversation with Simon Hughes
- 9 Locations and Permits** 111
Location scout — Location manager — Shooting on private property — Additional budget when shooting on location — Shooting on public property — Guerrilla filmmaking — Shooting on the street — Permissions — Risk assessment forms — Health and safety — Basic principles of health and safety
- 10 Office and Essential Paperwork** 125
The office — Location and equipment — How your office works — Answering the telephone — Staff — Other uses for your office — How to look established for next to nothing — First: Get a URL — Second: Get a landline — Third: Get a business address — Fourth: Get a business card — Fifth: The tyranny of the hotel lobby — Sixth: Get a car service — Seventh: Become an expert — Essential paperwork — Everything you always wanted to know about incorporating a company but were afraid to ask — In consultation with Sean Faughnan — Structuring success — Insurance — Seven essential steps: Step 3 — Telephone
- 11 The Shoot** 139
The seven steps to a successful shoot — Step 1 Get organised — Step 2 Hire a line producer — Step 3 Hire the right crew — The crew — Step 4

Make sure everyone knows who's boss — Step 5 Be professional — Step 6 Food — Step 7 Learn to say no — Being a runner in Soho by Oscar Sharp — In conversation with Ate de Jong — Seven essential steps: Step 4 — Saying no

12 Ten Steps of Post-production 153

The ten steps — Step 1 Pick an editing format — Step 2 Hire a picture editor — Step 3 Hire a sound editor — Step 4 Do ADR — Step 5 Do Foley — Step 6 Secure music — Step 7 Rerecording or the mix — Step 8 Get an M&E track — Step 9 Get titles — Two types of title — Step 10 Colour grading — Film editing glossary

13 Above the Line 167

Producer credits — Producer — Associate producer — Co-producer — Executive producer — Line producer — How much you get paid — How to break in — Seven essential qualities of a producer — The producer's contract — In conversation with Mark Shivas — Writers and buying screenplays — Development team — Three types of script deal — The writer's contract — In conversation with Steve Kenis — The director — Hiring a director — The director's contract — Four responsibilities of the director — Shooting a page — Qualities of successful directors — Nine routes to becoming a director — In conversation with Michael Radford — In conversation with Bernard Rose — Actors — How actors break in — How to treat actors — The actor's contract — Finding actors — Hiring a casting director — In conversation with Ewan McGregor — In conversation with John Hubbard

14 Moving the Budget Up 215

Basic considerations — Film prints and DCPs — Moving a £100,000 (\$150,000) budget up — Originating format — Moving a £250,000 (\$375,000) budget up — Originating format — Moving a £500,000 (\$750,000) budget up — Originating format — In conversation with Nick O'Hagan — In conversation with Simon Rumley — Seven essential steps: Step 5 — Savvy

15 Preparing the Marketing Plan 229

The competition — The majors — The mini-majors — The independents — Film production companies — Independent producers — Genre — Adult movies — Bollywood — Exhibitors — Who buys films? — What screenings do you want buyers to attend? — Attracting acquisition executives — Career route of acquisitions executives — Choosing your niche — Key artwork — In conversation with Graham Humphries

16 Publicity 239

Creating a press kit for £1,500 (\$2,000) — Step 1 Create a folder — Step 2 Write a synopsis — Step 3 Write cast and crew bios — Step 4 Create ten FAQs — Step 5 Get publicity stills — Step 6 Include reviews and third-party endorsements — Step 7 Create an electronic press kit — Publicity strategy — Step 1 Get listed in the trades — Step 2 Create a website — Step 3 Press release — Step 4 Distribute completed press kit — Approaches to publicity — Making contacts — In conversation with Phil Symes — In conversation with Tom Charity

- 17 Film Festivals** 257
Start your own film festival — Creating a film festival business plan — Premieres, world premieres and festival politics — Staff needed to run a festival — Festival director — Programmer — Publicist/head of marketing — Print traffic coordinator — Sponsorship coordinator — Runners — Types of film festivals — Majors — Mini-majors — City festivals — Genre festivals — Mom and pop — Presenting yourself to a film festival — What it costs — Attending a film festival — Four reasons to attend film festivals — Cannes Film Festival — Routes to a screening ticket at Cannes — Routes to a party invite at Cannes — Trade show — Networking — Business cards — Getting your film into Cannes — In conversation with James Youngs — Seven essential steps: Step 6 — Bottom
- 18 Film Markets** 279
How film markets work — Who attends film markets? — How to attend a film market — Sales agents — Tips and strategies for Cannes — Have a plan — Have something on paper — Play ping-pong — The Nick O'Hagan method — The American pavilion strategy — Sellers sell — Dress code — Publicists can help you — Bring your lawyer — The Hotel du Cap — Parties — In conversation with Samantha Horley
- 19 Distribution** 295
A recent history of distribution — The traditional distribution formula — Delivery schedule basics — How distribution companies work — Preparing the distribution marketing plan — P&A budget — Marketing terminology — Distribution and marketing tools — Distribution terms — Distribution deals — Anatomy of the box office — Why films are released in cinemas — Other release windows — In consultation with Claes Loberg: Branded entertainment — Alternative buyers of your film — Branded entertainment — Is your script branded entertainment? — Censorship — In conversation with Simon Franks — In conversation with Martin Myers
- 20 Alternative Distribution** 321
Releasing in cinemas — DVD sales — VOD — Simultaneous release — Self-distribution checklist — A budget — Time — An audience — The rights — Video — Graphic design — Copywriter — Timeline — Seven deadly sins of self-distribution — Deadly sin #1: Pride — Deadly sin #2: Greed — Deadly sin #3: Sloth — Deadly sin #4: Envy — Deadly sin #5: Gluttony — Deadly sin #6: Lust — Deadly sin #7: Anger — Seven most frequently asked questions of Elliot Grove about self-distribution
- 21 Social Media** 331
Just shut up and start — Define your social media objectives — Running a website — Search engine optimisation (SEO) — Hone your tactics — The right tool for the right job — 1. Twitter — 2. Blogging — 3. Google+ — 4. Facebook — 5. Video — Who notices? Measuring your results — In conversation with TomSka — Social media glossary
- 22 Best Laid Plans** 347
Power tools for creating a business plan — Pedigree — Creating comparisons — Creating a brand — Running a business — Contents of a

professional business plan for presenting to private investors — Presenting to the private investor — Business plan mistakes — Presenting to the industry: The package — Issues you must address

23 Ten Tricks and Traps of Producing 359

1 Measure success by more than a theatrical release — 2 Learn how to use agents — 3 Presales — 4 New money vs. old money — 5 Festivals besides Toronto, Cannes and Sundance — 6 Sales agents do not advance money — 7 Big sale vs. big career — 8 Success is relative — 9 Get a sales agent early on — 10 If it ain't on the page it ain't on the stage

24 The Development Process 363

The development path — Securing story rights — Development financing — What is development money? — Typical development budget — How development finance deals are structured — Sources of development finance — Tools for raising development finance — Making your project attractive — Pitfalls to raising development finance — A microbudget case study — Love.Honour.Obey. (2013) — Commercial reality of low-budget films — The script — The director — The sales estimates — The finance model — Start date — Casting — Heads of department — Pre-production — Rehearsals — Nudity — Stunts and SFX — The location — Insurance — The shoot — Sound recording — DIT — The post-production — Timeline — In conversation with Tracey Scoffield

25 Production Financing 421

Private funding — Loans — Equity investment — Family and friends — Presales and foreign sales agents — Gap finance — Completion guarantee — Co-productions and European tax incentives — Finding a suitable co-producer — The definition of a British film — Other tax incentives — Deferrals — Equipment and post-production charge deferrals — Crew deferrals — Talent deferrals — Producer deferrals — Corridors — Other sources of funding — Soundtrack album — Music publishing — Gaming rights — Product placement — Strategies for raising finance — Three ways to derisk your film finance package — 1 The power of genre — 2 The power of talent — 3 The power of UK tax programmes — Crowdfunding — The crowdfunding industry — Crowdfunding models — Choosing a crowdfunding website — Trig's top five for a successful crowdfunding experience — Top ten crowdfunding websites — Glossary of crowdfunding terms — Seven essential steps: Step 7 — Talent

26 Resources 443

27 Endpapers 447

About Raindance — Join Raindance: Be a Raindance member! — Raindance feedback — How to claim your free premium membership — Write and sell the hot script — On the website — Showreels and film clips — Printable production paperwork — Extra information

Appendix: Top 101 Film Festivals 451

Index 459

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Preface

Just Do It

I started Raindance Film Festival in 1992 with a view to promoting independent filmmaking in London. At that time a pervasive gloom hung over the British film industry, with only six films being made that year. A once thriving British feature film industry had suffered a severe collapse with the advent of TV. At the time, I was considered misguided, and Raindance was expected to collapse quickly.

But the notion of independent filmmaking, and indeed Raindance, has thrived to the extent that we are now one of the leading film festivals in Europe and, together with the British Independent Film Awards, are a force to be reckoned with. Independent film has become one of the buzzwords of the cultural elite. Hollywood studios spend millions making films look like independent films—films like *Behind the Candlebra*, *Cloverfield* and *Chronicle* to name but three.

I have met many people who act and talk like professional filmmakers but never actually do. Why?

Partly because the barriers to making and successfully distributing an independent film remain impossibly high and partly because many merely want to claim the title of filmmaker with no real intention of actually making one. So many more become discouraged by rejection and the amount of work involved.

The only secret to my success at Raindance is that I have kept going against all the odds and at 3 a.m. with torrential rain and storm clouds gathering, I endure. Never to quit. You do it too.

Making a film is actually not difficult. It is however extremely hard work. For those of you who seriously think of making a film, I have this advice: just do it.

Elliot Grove
London, September 2013

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Acknowledgements

The film industry is a fiercely competitive industry and notorious for the hard work, low pay and broken dreams of filmmakers. It is an industry that is also full of inspiration, hope and incredible success stories. One of the best reasons for working at Raindance is the diverse range of talented and inspiring people one meets. No other job has as much to offer, no other industry is full of such amazingly talented people.

This book is the result of my work over 20 years, and the meetings and associations I have had with hundreds of people. Two stand out—Peter Linsley at Focal Press, whose patience I tested several times but who mentored this book; and James Burbidge my sounding board, advisor and editor.

It goes without saying that I could not have written this without the love and support of my partner, Suzanne Ballantyne, who has nurtured and supported me throughout.

I also thank the tireless staff at Raindance, past and present, in London and in our regional offices, whose suggestions and advice enrich this book. In particular Christian Bell, Julian Chappelle, Philip Gambriel, Amy Gustin, Jamie Greco, Orestes Kousof, Daniel Kresmery, Rory O'Donnell, Raffaella Ponterelli, Martyna, Smytkowska, Jaimy Warner and Tiska Wiederman.

I also thank the thousands of filmmakers from all over the world who have submitted work to the Raindance Film Festival the products of their work, as well as the British filmmakers, actors, writers, directors, producers, agents and distributors who have supported the British Independent Film Awards. I also thank the members of Raindance who have seen us grow and who are my true audience.

To the hundreds of talented writers, directors, producers and actors who have crossed my path and offered friendship, assistance and inspiration over the years, I thank you for the wisdom and experience you have shared that has made this book possible.

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About the Author

Mesmerised by the moving image from a young age, but unable to watch TV or films until his early teens due to the constraints of his Amish background, Canadian born Elliot Grove followed formal art school training with a series of behind-the-scenes jobs in the film industry.

He worked for 9 years as a scenic artist and set designer on sixty-eight features and over 700 commercials in his native Toronto, where he developed a distaste for the wasted resources on set and union red tape that prevented filmmaker wannabes like himself from getting their own features off the ground.

Elliot moved to London in the late 1980s and in 1992, when the British film industry was drowning in self-pity, launched the Raindance Film Festival, devoted to independent filmmaking and emerging talent.

Initially, Raindance catered mainly to American independents who understood that the combination of a positive mental attitude and a pioneering spirit provides the essential foundation upon which to produce and distribute films successfully. Happily, that attitude has now filtered through to the UK; independent filmmaking, once a small organism, has become a global phenomenon. Elliot is proud of the fact that last year's Raindance lineup included over a hundred independent features from over forty countries.

Upholding the ethos of Raindance, Elliot launched Raindance Raw Talent—a production company that makes entertaining films using new talent. He also lectures on screenwriting and filmmaking throughout the UK and Europe, and in 1992 he set up the training division of Raindance which now offers over two dozen evening and weekend master classes on writing, directing, producing and marketing a feature film as well as a post-graduate film degree. Elliot was awarded a PhD in 2009 for his work in film education.

Elliot firmly believes that success in the moviemaking business is a simple matter of demystifying the process of breaking into the film industry and allowing individual talent to prosper. In 1998 Elliot founded the British Independent Film Awards to promote British talent.

This is Elliot's second book. His first, *Raindance Writers' Lab: Write and Sell the Hot Screenplay* was also published by Focal Press.

Elliot lives in London with his partner and two daughters.

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Introduction to the Second Edition

I ask every single filmmaker I meet the same question: why did you want to make your film?

The answers vary from filmmaker to filmmaker, from film school to no film school and from film to film. The most common answer is to make money. Next is fame (or to use the film as a calling card). These are pretty clearly defined goals and easy to measure the success of the filmmaker.

Then there are some fuzzier answers I get from other filmmakers. To have the film seen by as wide an audience as possible or to change the world are typical responses, which are very difficult to quantify and evaluate.

I launched the IPTV channel Raindance TV in 2007, and with this launch I have heard two more reasons why filmmakers make films. First, green issues (a very clearly defined reason with results that can be quickly monitored and evaluated). Last, and most interesting, are filmmakers who see their first short, feature or documentary as their first step to build up an audience for their work as a filmmaker, not simply an audience for a single film.

This interests me because now it seems that filmmakers are beginning to defy the traditional career routes in the industry. Until now, filmmakers have been taught that the filmmaking process is divided into three parts: pre-production, production and marketing. Traditional production companies and the so-called self-appointed 'discovery' festivals like Sundance, Toronto, Berlin, and Rotterdam have preached that all a filmmaker needs to worry about is making a film, while the marketing should be left to the experts. It is only a few production companies and film festivals (like Raindance and SXSW) who realise the importance of creating a hybrid approach to production, marketing and eventual sales and distribution. I would even go as far as to divide the process into two: Make | Sell, or even Sell | Make.

Times Have Changed

I believe there is no future for innovative filmmakers unless the filmmakers themselves understand the entire process: from script development, cost-efficient production and effective marketing and distribution. Furthermore, the traditional paradigm of script/production/distribution is often reversed, with the distribution and marketing process dictating the types of production techniques and story. From production and marketing will come story in the new age.

This new way of looking at filmmaking will also impact more heavily on European filmmakers who have become steeped in a tradition of government subsidies much like their colleagues in agriculture, health and education. The realities of the new world and especially with the cutbacks in European public funds will mean not only less finance for films, and the grants that are available will be dispersed in the old school traditions.

Filmmaking has always been a collaborative art form. This will never change. But the type of collaboration has moved from a simple combination of collaboration during the creative and production process to engaging the audience. This new collaboration, the one between filmmaker and audience, will result in a far-reaching shift with seismic proportions.

To date this has been taken as a reference to the creative and production process. In our new age, more than ever, film as collaboration means the essential relationship between the storyteller (filmmaker) and audience. The shift in focus to this collaboration between filmmaker and audience will call for huge sweeping changes which will have far reaching implications for modern filmmakers and will most likely destroy the traditional paradigms of the movie industry.

Three ways filmmaking will change

There are going to be three main casualties as the new paradigm takes over:

1 Art and commerce

The first victim, and justifiably so, will be the strong difference between art and commerce. Hollywood's money men have created the boundaries of so-called creative endeavor using a complex mix of metrics and consumer data. Money has driven every single Hollywood film. Even new filmmakers bow to the god of commerce in the annual celebrity rituals at Cannes, Sundance and Toronto film festivals. This tradition is about to be blown to smithereens by the new age of digital filmmaking and distribution.

2 The relationship with audience

Second to fall, and to fall hard, is the traditional barrier between audiences and marketing men and women. Until now, a marketer could surmount this wall and reach an audience, but only if there was a huge sum of money. The new digital age means that filmmakers can now market directly to their audience for a fraction of the traditional cost. The ability of emerging filmmakers to understand this, and utilise the new marketing approaches, will define the careers of filmmakers in the next thirty years.

3 Storytelling and scripts

The last tradition to fall will be the structures surrounding scripts and story development. Because filmmakers of today and tomorrow can engage directly with the audience, it suggests that the audience will become an important part of the script and story development process from the start of a project. By taking elements of gaming storytelling, filmmakers of the future will be able to create stories that weave multilayered story layers with a story

experience that might include apps, websites as well as other online experiences with the traditional offline cinema experience. The 1990s and 2000s saw the collapse of nearly every single media tradition. At Raindance we are already seeing innovations such as second screen.

The Future of Filmmaking

When I started Raindance in 1992, I bought newspaper ads, we showed 35mm film prints at the festival, we relied on good solid film criticism and filmmakers could expect a healthy return from DVD sales. It is hard to imagine how each of these mainstream media elements has either disappeared, or is shrinking at a rapid pace.

In with the new. We launched our first website in 1995—a four-page affair, and one of only thirty in the UK. Later that year our office in London became one of the first in the city with email. In 2003 we pioneered UGC with the famous Nokia 15 Second Shorts Competitions. In 2006 we became the world's first day/date screenings in partnership with the now-defunct Tiscali.

Filmmakers are faced with two options. The first is to bemoan the changes and whinge about the collapse of the independent film industry. The second is about filmmakers who seize the moment and are able to reconceptualise the way new media, art and movies are distributed.

Some of the new media distribution techniques, like transvergence, open up yet even more opportunities for storytellers to create stories far beyond the imagination of any cinema lover and beyond the scope of any traditional production technique.

This second edition is my attempt to address these issues.

Happy filmmaking

Elliot Grove

London, September 2013

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1 Nobody Knows Anything

LET ME INTRODUCE MYSELF. I am an Amish farm boy with absolutely no training in film. In fact, as a child and teenager I was forbidden to watch movies. Then I got hooked. I snuck off to the cinema and saw *Lassie Comes Home*. I had absolutely no idea that a movie house existed and no knowledge of the technology that made moving pictures possible. I could have landed on the moon instead of that soiled, worn, red velvet seat with springs edging out of it. As soon as I could, I left the farm and moved to London where I got a job sweeping floors and building sets at the BBC in its glory years—the final years of *Monty Python* and *The Old Grey Whistle Test* were my playground—and an ideal playground it was. I suppose I saw every star of the time, from Muhammad Ali coming in for an interview, to British and American pop stars sneaking in the gates past the hordes of screaming fans, to politicians trying to bolster their ratings.

So what gives me any authority to talk about filmmaking? Nothing at all. Despite having acquired dozens of producer credits on shorts and features, having worked as a scenic artist and set designer on over 700 commercials and sixty-eight feature films and running Europe's largest independent film festival since 1992, I have no formal film school training. Everything I have learned I have learned by watching and doing.

Hint No one can teach you how to make a film. You have to learn it by doing it. You might be better off putting this book down right now, grabbing a camera, any camera, and starting to shoot a film.

I am warning you again that I don't know anything about filmmaking. But before you go back screaming to the bookshop to get a refund, or before you start thinking that I'm just another smart-talking Canuck trying to get a few coins out of your pocket, let me explain further what I mean when I say that I don't really know anything about filmmaking. To quote a Hollywood legend: 'Nobody knows anything.'

The film industry is distinct from other manufacturing industries because of the way movies are made. Every film project is unique. Each film reaches its completed state via a different route. This distinguishes the film industry from, say, the automotive industry. In the automotive industry, if you have an idea for a car, first of all you draw it, build a prototype and test drive it. Then you fix all the mechanical flaws. Once that stage is complete, you are then able to test market the prototype. After the marketing men have their say, it's back to the

drawing board to iron out any little wrinkles. Then voilà, a car is born, and born in the knowledge that it will perform to a certain pretested financial model.

However, in the film industry every project is a prototype. There is no chance to redesign a bad movie. You either make a good film and sell it or you make a stinker. And unless you have had to face an investor in your movie asking you where their money went, you really don't know the true meaning of the word 'pain'. Nobody knows anything.

Why Nobody Knows Anything

Banks

Do you believe that you could go to your local high street bank, walk into the manager's office and a few minutes later convince the bank manager to give you a loan for the entire budget of the film? A bank will give you the money if you have enough collateral. This is where my mother has always known more about independent filmmaking than me. She always says that you can tell the independent filmmakers in the crowd because they are the ones without a real job.

My friend Simon Onworah didn't let his lack of creditworthiness stop him. Needing to raise £50,000 (\$75,000) for his first feature film, *Welcome to the Terrordome*, he got agreement in principle from Barclays Bank, Soho Square branch in London. This particular bank is a media bank and accustomed to servicing the financial requirements of film and television companies. The catch was that Simon needed to offer assets or other financial instruments to secure the loan. Perhaps the bank manager knew my mother.

In order to provide security for the loan, Simon decided to find fifty people agreeing to sign a loan agreement at Barclays for £1,000 (\$1,500) each. It was his 'Welcome to the Film Industry' plan and it went like this: 'If the film does well at the box office, you will get a percentage of the profits, if it performs poorly, you are on the hook to Barclays for forty months. Win or lose, at least you will get an opening title credit with your name down (along with 49 others) as producer.'

Unfortunately, the fifty producers had to plump for plan B after the film was unceremoniously trashed by the critics. The producers finished their 'Welcome to the Film Industry' plan about four years after the film opened to a commercial disaster. But each of those producers has something you don't have: a credit as producer on a feature film that was released in cinemas. You might think that this is a bit superficial. Let's do a quick reality check here. Have you ever told someone that you accomplished, experienced or did something that you actually didn't do? At least these people have a movie with their name on it (and a wedge of bank paying-in slips).

The point is, nobody knows anything.

Channel 4

Channel 4 owns and operates Film 4 one of the most successful film production companies in the world. Could you walk in as a director and producer team with little previous experience and walk out with over £2 million (\$3 million) for your first feature? Do you think you could do that?

This is the story of producer Jeremy Bolt and writer-director Paul Anderson, who managed to get their entire film funded. Jeremy had some experience as a line producer on Ken Russell's pictures, and Paul had made some shorts. But neither had taken sole responsibility for a feature film. In order to get the money they had to convince the then Head of Development, Jack Lechner, that they had talent. They surrounded themselves with a veteran crew, all of whom were known to Channel 4. They made the movie *Shopping*. The movie was critically blasted and did virtually no box office. However, the film showed at Sundance, where Jeremy, a masterful salesman, managed to parley this commercial disaster into a directing job for Paul on *Mortal Kombat*. *Event Horizon* and *Soldier* quickly followed. Jeremy and Paul each command top fees for their services now for the *Resident Evil* series. The lesson here is that even if the picture fails commercially, if the director has given it a 'look' it will still be good for the director's career. Terrible for the producer's career, however! Nobody knows anything.

Hint A commercial disaster may not affect a director's career at all. In fact, a film with a 'look' can enhance a director's career, although it can destroy a producer's.

Money

Do you think you could take a total of sixty cast and crew 100 miles from London, plop them down in a hotel in the seaside resort of Blackpool and shoot for 6 weeks without a penny?

Ask producer Lois Wolfe how she coped on her first shoot—*Seaview Knights*—without a penny.

She worked like a Trojan for a year and a half, raised the money, left with cast, crew and kit on a Sunday night for Blackpool only to be greeted by a telegram from her lawyer telling her that the financing had fallen through. Her lawyer begged her to stop and send everyone home. What to do? Lois decided not to tell anyone. After all, she had everything she needed to make a film. She had the 35mm camera kit, she had the film stock and she had the crew and the cast. She started shooting, and used to call me collect from the payphone in the hotel whispering, 'I have no money!' Somehow she struggled on until, with a few days to go, she was forced to stop. She went back to London, raised the finance and finished the film a few weeks later.

I am always fascinated by what causes disaster in improbable situations like this. Obviously the lack of cash was the problem. No, it wasn't the massive hotel and catering bill or the grumpy technicians who had not been paid: it was the electricity bill at the hotel that the film's lights were plugged into that was the proverbial straw that broke the film's financial back. Nobody knows anything.

Crowdfunding

Since the first edition of this book crowdfunding websites like indiegogo.com and kickstarter.com have allowed filmmakers to raise part or all of their budget through many small financial backers rather than just a few big ones.

At the Raindance Film Festival we noticed crowdfunded movies started to appear as early as 2010, and by the time you read this about a quarter of the movies we screen will be financed through crowdfunding. Films like the award winning documentary *Jason Becker: Not Dead Yet* and *How Do You Write a Joe Schermann Song* were crowdfunded in their entirety by the filmmakers Jesse Vile and Gary King, respectively.

Established filmmakers like Charlie Kaufman and Zach Braff are also raising substantial sums so they can make their own movies outside of the traditional film industry funding models.

Self-Funded Movies

No longer are self-funded movies the domain of the so-called 'trust fund filmmakers'. The advances in digital production equipment have made filmmaking very inexpensive and movies like the German feature *Heavy Girls*—made for an astonishing €580 (\$475)—possible. This wonderful movie secured German theatrical distribution, a possibility hitherto impossible with such a miniscule budget.

Scripts

It is curious that the financial advisers to film companies know very little about scripts. Some even pride themselves on the fact that they never read a script.

Do you need a screenplay to make a film?

The answer to this is yes. Unless you are Ken Loach, Mike Leigh or Jon Jost, all of whom have developed their careers as filmmakers over many years, you will need a script. Established filmmakers like Loach, Leigh and Jost have created a new approach to scripts. They may not work with a traditional screenplay, but they have scene outlines. Starting out, you will need a script if you intend to raise money for your project, even if that money is raised from relatives. Everyone will want to see a blueprint for your movie, and that script/blueprint had better be good enough to enable them to visualise the project through to completion.

In Mike Figgis's *Timecode*, the script was written on musical staves: one for each of the four cameras. The bar lines represented the minutes. The actors all synchronised their watches, and knew by looking at their scripts where their cues were: e.g. call at minute twelve to the actors at camera number two.

Shooting with lights is good. Films shot with lights look very good. Remember that lights are expensive, and there can be another way to make a film without lights. Your film made without lights will look good too—but different from a film shot with lights.

Lights

Have you heard the phrase 'Lights, camera, action'? Do you think you can make a film without lights?

You can indeed. Eric Rohmer started the practice and developed what he termed shooting with available light. The practice is now widespread. To shoot with available light, you simply have to use a camera (or film stock) that is sensitive to a wide range of lighting conditions. If you are shooting indoors and need or want a bit of extra light to bump up an image, then you can insert Photoflood light bulbs—light bulbs that are corrected for the temperature of the film you are using. They are available in photo shops and hardware stores for about £1.25 (\$2).

The advantage of working with available light is that you can work cheaply and quickly. A big advantage of shooting without lights is that you lose the

lighting truck that needs an expensive parking bay and expensive electricians. In the UK, an electrician's pay starts at £250 (\$375) for a nine-hour day. On top of that are travel and overtime. The other large expense is food. In the UK a film caterer will start at £10 (\$15) per head per day, depending on the menu. The lighting truck itself contains up to 10,000 different items, large and small. It can cost upwards of £10,000 (\$15,000) per day to rent a lighting truck.

The other disadvantage is the quality of work achievable in a limited time on a lo-to-no budget shoot. With a formal lighting crew, not only does it take up to an hour to light and relight each angle on a location, there are at least another four people working on the set. If your scene is an intimate scene, for example, a director or assistant director screaming 'Quiet on the set' will also destroy the ambience.

A Photoflood or practical light bulb, available from any camera shop, is a light bulb colour corrected to tungsten light that produces more light than a normal bulb. A scene lit with a practical will look normal on the exposed film and not bluish or greenish as it would if shot with normal light bulbs.

By shooting with available light, it is possible to set up a shot in a matter of minutes. If the cinematographer or the director dislikes what they see through the viewfinder, the camera can easily be moved. In order to commence a take, the director works with the actors as well as the cinematographer and sound person without the encumbrance of an additional dozen lighting crew. The scenes will be done quicker and more efficiently. In addition, the director will have much more contact with the actors because of the absence of technology.

Nobody knows anything. When we shot *Table 5*, my cinematographer/director of photography, James L. Solan, lit scenes with a couple of practicals (Photofloods) screwed into gooseneck lamps. If there wasn't quite enough light, he simply put a white card on the wall (or ground). Sometimes he would bounce an additional light off the ceiling.

Hint By using a stills camera you can learn how different lighting situations affect image capture.

Camera

Who would think that a film could be made without a camera?

The American experimental filmmaker Stan Brakhage made films by scratching and drawing on old film stock. His films are enjoyed by experimental film fans around the world and do not use cameras.

What about Pixelvision? Pixelvision is the trade name for the PXL-2000 video camera made by Fisher-Price in the late 1980s. Its original marketing niche was aimed at yuppie parents of young children seeking to discover whether or not their progeny had what it took to become a Mozart of the cinema. The marketing programme was a disaster, and the camera was discontinued. Independent filmmakers discovered Pixelvision cameras. Films made on Pixelvision started showing up at film festivals. Since then, the camera has developed a cult following. The PXL-2000 records audio and video on ordinary type audiocassette tapes, fitting about 5 minutes per side on a 90-minute tape. This limited bandwidth produces an image where the overall effect is grainy, with lots of dropout and a weird, almost slow-motion appearance.

Whenever you see a movie, short or feature on TV or in a cinema, ask yourself three questions:

1. Does this show any talent?
2. How did they do that?
3. Could I do that?

Jack Lechner was Head of Development at Channel 4 in London and left to work as Head of Development at HBO. He was headhunted and became Head of Development at Miramax during the glory years of films like *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, *Good Will Hunting* and *Shakespeare in Love*. Jack didn't renew his three-year contract and wrote a fascinating book, *Can't Take My Eyes Off You* (2000), about his experiences behind and in front of the television screen. He is currently developing a series of television shows in the USA.

The first time I saw a Pixelvision movie was with Jack Lechner of Channel 4 at a London arts organisation. At that time, in addition to his production and development role, he was also able to suggest films to Channel 4 for purchase. He knew about my passion for independent film and video and invited me to see the work of an outrageously talented young New York filmmaker, Sadie Benning. As we watched the film, Jack kept commenting on the film's dramatic and witty dialogue, the incredibly hip musical score and the interesting camera movements. The film, a short, concerned the filmmaker's first sexual experience. Suddenly Jack went quiet, as the camera moved in on the actress's mouth and chin (played by Sadie Benning). While she was discussing her emotional sexual encounter, it appeared as if she was sucking a penis. Jack immediately commented that he didn't think that the British public was ready for such a scene. Suddenly the camera zoomed back and we could see that the girl was in fact sucking her thumb. The filmmaker had used the terrible image quality to her advantage. A few scenes later it appeared that a wrecked car was abandoned in the middle of what us non-New Yorkers would call a stereotypical New York park. Suddenly a giant hand shot into frame and moved the dinky car out of shot.

Hint Make a film with what you have, not with what you want.

But even Pixelvision uses a camera. What about a 35mm feature film made with no camera at all?

This is the true story of a friend of mine from my hometown, Toronto. Lucy used to cycle through downtown Toronto on a Friday night, past the back doors of all the major film editing companies. Toronto is a major centre of film production. As she cycled by, she would look for the off-cuts and rejected reels from all the big budget commercials, pop-promos and features being shot and edited in Toronto. Friday nights seemed to be the time that all this redundant material was discarded. When she got home, she would preview the material on a Steenbeck. She then assembled scenes cut from dozens of different productions and wrote a script. Actor friends were drafted in to do the dialogue. Lucy recorded the soundtracks and did the final mix. When completed she had a narrative film with some of the best production values of anything you would ever see. Certainly the lip sync was a little off. One film I remember shows a female model leaping out of the latest luxury sedan as an Air Canada jet screams overhead. The woman's voice was camp, and very masculine. Lucy Byrne died an untimely death in 1994.

Hint The film industry has certain rules. Learn them and then discard them. Remember that nobody knows anything.

Why Do You Want to Make a Movie?

You are reading this book because you want to make a movie. You might not know exactly why you want to. As moviemaking is such an intense experience,

before you actually embark on this journey, it would be useful if you could ask yourself, and answer, the following questions. Try and answer as honestly as you can.

1. Why, exactly, do you want to make a movie?

Hint Realising the exact reasons why you want to make a movie will enable and empower you to position yourself in the marketplace.

2. Do you have a unique message you want to get to an audience?

Hint If it is a unique message, are you certain that a feature film is the best medium? Have you considered other media like television, radio or the web?

3. Do you want to make money with your film?

Hint Making feature films for profit is an incredibly risky venture. If making money is your only goal, have you fully considered other forms of business?

4. Do you crave celebrity status?

Hint The movie industry is very glamorous and seductive. But it is also fiercely competitive. Are you sure you can handle the vast amount of rejection that can come your way?

5. If you were trading on the stock market, you would be asked for your stop price, the point where you cut your losses and run. Do you have a fallback position, or a level where you might decide to abandon your project and start something else?

Summary

1. The whole point of this book is to make a film not with what you want to have, but with what you have.
2. Watch films and watch them again.
3. Successful filmmakers build their careers with resourcefulness.

Before we start the actual planning for your film, let me introduce you to some of the characters you will meet in the Hollywood Zoo.

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2

The Hollywood Zoo

THE FILM INDUSTRY is populated by several stereotypical groups of people—animals even. Understanding who these are and how they operate is one of the elementary tasks for anyone trying to break into the industry. With this information you can develop a survival strategy.

The Animals in the Film Industry Zoo

Bullies

Just like in school, there are many bullies in the film industry. They try bullying tactics to get their own way and usually resort to humiliating and degrading tactics and comments to do this. Comments like 'only someone stupid would think/do that' are not uncommon.

Hint When dealing with a bully, remember that they are basically cowards and operate out of insecurity. If you stand up to a bully, they will run away. Or just ignore and avoid them. Don't take what they say personally—they can't help themselves.

Screamers and Shouters

Something about the film industry attracts people who like to communicate at levels in excess of 90 dB. This is another form of bullying, also based on insecurity. Either avoid these people, or join them at the same decibel level. They may enjoy a mutually loud conversation for a change.

I had a case recently in London where a passionate filmmaker always insisted in having our meetings in a local coffee shop. 'I'll buy,' he would say flashing his loyalty card at the till. What would happen next is a ninety-minute meeting where he would literally shout down the entire joint, glaring at me and stabbing the air like the conductor of a jazz band. I would slowly slide down my chair and gesture apologies to the rest of the establishment and wait for him to blow himself out.

Snakes

Has someone ever stabbed you in the back? It is certainly one of the most painful and soul-destroying things that can happen to you. It is very easy to become known as a snake yourself. You become known as a snake by making negative comments about others. The film industry is a very small, compact group of people. Word spreads fast. Never say anything negative about anyone. Even if you have justifiable excuse to criticize someone, don't do it.

Hint No matter how badly you have been treated, keep it to yourself or confront the villain in person. If you don't then you run the risk of being labeled a snake yourself.

Crouching Tigers

Crouching tigers lie in wait for prey, camouflaged and well hidden. When an unsuspecting person comes along, usually a naïve filmmaker spouting off ideas (which cannot be copyright protected) they spring and run off with the kill.

Hint Be wary of who you tell your ideas to until they are protected.

Casting Couch Lotharios

Every industry has its version of the casting couch. The threat of failure, or the chance of promotion linked to sexual favours, is as old as the entertainment business itself. The casting couch scenario works like this: usually, the young intern, or lowest person in the art department, is coerced into a sexual relationship with the promise of a better job next time around. If they hesitate, then they are threatened with the phrase 'you'll never work in this town again.' If you are presented with this situation, you should remember that jobs on a film crew last three to four months. The likelihood of meeting and working with the same people again is remote. If this doesn't work for you, then seek the counsel of someone you can trust.

Men are equally at risk as women. The prevalence of women in top jobs has made this as likely to be a problem for men as for women.

A close friend of mine (male, married with two children) was presented with the following dilemma. In order to get the dramatic television series he really wanted as a director, he was told by the head of the television company that the job was his, if only he would sleep with her. He called me for advice. He reasoned that I was the one person to know how much his family meant to him and how important his career aspirations as a director were. My advice

was to talk it over with his wife. Needless to say, he lost the directing job, but he has often told me that it was the best decision he ever made.

Hint Never allow yourself to be forced into a position where you feel uncomfortable or used. If you are confronted with this situation, confide in someone you trust and seek their counsel.

Sharks

Sometimes you will be minding your own business, doing your job, when suddenly you hear a whooshing sound from behind, and before you can react, a shark rips part of your shoulder off and all you can hear as it rushes away is the sound 'sue me, sue me, sue me.'

This typically happens to first time writers. In the heat of the moment they forget that their first payment is due. Or they are too timid to mention the breached payment deadline as the sets are built and the actors arrive on location. The shark/producer tells them they have just been too busy to get to the bank. Suddenly the first day of principal photography arrives, and the money still hasn't come through. The writer is on the set, completely dazzled by the whirlwind of activity, and is too timid to confront the producer about the missing payment.

A few weeks later the picture has wrapped and the editor and director are secluded in the post-production process. The writer either can't find the producer, who's off on the next big deal or is involved in the completion of the film. At this juncture it is not uncommon for a shark/producer to enquire if the (unpaid) writer is available for the Cannes Film Festival, using the argument that the film is 'just that damned good!'

Soon the picture is released and the box-office receipts roll in, and the writer still hasn't been paid. Whenever the writer has the courage to breach the subject, the producer will use the phrase 'sue me.'

The shark knows that the writer has an airtight case and will win in court. But s/he also knows that in order to be represented in court the writer will need legal advice, which could easily run into tens of thousands, money which the writer might not have. The litigation attorneys will need a retainer as well. And even if they do win it is likely that the writer will be unable to collect because the shark/producer can easily hide behind myriad shelf companies and UPVs (unique project vehicles) which can easily be bankrupted by creditors and leave no legal liability for the owners to pay. Another tactic is for the shark to appeal the decision, thereby adding many more months to the process. At some point the writer will probably be offered a small percentage of the originally agreed price to 'walk' from the threatened litigation. And most writers I know who have been in this position accept the derisory payment knowing that it is at least better than absolutely nothing.

Reservoir Dogs was swamped by litigation following its release. The four producers, Quentin Tarantino, his friend the actor Lawrence Bender, Harvey Keitel and Monte Hellman, all had shares in the profit of the film. Some four years after the film's release, a bank account in Los Angeles contained \$6 million

of the film's profit, which was denied them by the sharks who distributed the film. At this point, Quentin Tarantino's career had taken off along with Harvey Keitel's. Lawrence Bender had become one of the most successful producers in Hollywood, with pictures like *Good Will Hunting* and *Pulp Fiction* to his credit. But Monte Hellman was desperate. Newly married to an acquaintance of mine from London, Emma Webster, Monte was waiting for another film of his, like his classic 1971 film, *Two Lane Blacktop*, to hit. Meanwhile creditors were threatening his home. The offer on the table was for a mid-five-figure sum. The sharks knew that Tarantino, Bender and Keitel were financially secure and likely to be willing (and able) to fight on and on. But they also knew that Monte was getting desperate. The shark hopes to save money by waiting for the other side to cave in.

Hint Check out the people you work with. Contact other filmmakers for references. Bad reputations travel fast in the film business.

Ruthless Climbers

Talking about ruthless climbers is very painful to me. I have been accused of this myself. A ruthless climber is concerned and obsessed about one thing only: their career. Any topic of conversation, no matter how emotionally charged for others, will be deemed as totally irrelevant if it has nothing to do with their career. This total selfishness has no place in the lives of successful people.

A simple test to ascertain whether or not you are with a ruthless climber or not is to ask the individual a question concerning the day's current events: the volcanic eruption in Africa, news of the famous personality's death—anything. As you ask the question, look into their eyes and see if they glaze over. Another trait of a ruthless climber is their total lack of loyalty and their ability to forget when they owe you a favour.

Hint In order to prevent yourself from becoming a ruthless climber, hope that you have someone in your circle of friends who is not afraid to kick you very hard in the shins and bring you back to earth.

Star Chasers

The film industry attracts a whole army of people who are easily impressed by a name. While not exactly groupies, as in the music business, star chasers rely on rubbing shoulders with the people who have already made it in order to justify their continued pursuit of their dreams. Often, star chasers put themselves in the unfortunate position of being used, and in extreme cases, suffer delusions that require the strong arm of the law to keep them away from their idols.

Hint Star chasing is really a form of lack of confidence. Remember that the only difference between you and the star is not talent or opportunity; it's just a moment in time when your box-office gross (or lack of it) is being compared to theirs. Don't despair—your turn will come.

The Nice People

I have worked in property and the computer industry, I have friends in most of the arts—ballet, music, literature. I can truly say that the willingness to share information in the film industry is unparalleled by any other. The generosity of spirit and the readiness with which seasoned professionals spill their trade secrets constantly amazes me.

Saying Thank You

What you have to do, however, is learn how to say thank you. Taking from people without saying thank you can quickly earn you the reputation of being selfish, inconsiderate, or even worse, a ruthless climber.

At Raindance we are constantly bombarded with telephone calls from people starting out, asking us the most taxing questions. Often we are able to refer people, which reaffirms my belief that private companies like Raindance are usually better equipped to give advice than the overstaffed and overpaid publicly funded agencies. Equally amazing is the fact that so many people do not say thank you. They most usually mumble a 'thank you' into the telephone, but that doesn't really count at all. And it doesn't count because there is no thought or effort behind it.

How you say thank you is important. Be elegant and unambiguous.

The Greeting Card

A written thank you is best—and not by email. If you want to thank someone properly, purchase a greeting card and inside it write a simple thank you. It is a great way to tell the person who helped you that the information you received from them was worth all the effort it took you to go and get a card, sit down and write it, find a stamp and mail it.

Hint Saying a simple thank you will certainly get you noticed because so few others do it.

The Gift

Sending someone a small gift is another way to say thank you. Perhaps you are working on a movie and you have t-shirts made for the production. T-shirts

and baseball caps make excellent gifts, although the recipient could decide that you are on ego overload and trying to dress them up in your branded gear. If someone does you a really super favour, nothing works as well as a bottle of champagne.

I like getting gifts of film magazines from other countries, sample script formats (I once got one from New Zealand) and articles of interest from magazines and newspapers (cut out and photocopied).

The Postcard Theory

Part of the saying thank you exercise (along with good manners) is getting noticed. Developing a novel technique for saying thank you will get you noticed even more.

Richard Holmes' credits include *Eden Lake* (2008), *The Abduction Club* (2002), *Waking Ned* (1998) and *Shooting Fish* (1997). His first film *Soft Top Hard Shoulder* was made on a miniscule budget in 1993.

One of my favourite British producers is Richard Holmes. Hugely successful now, and with films that have done over \$100 million international box office, Richard and I started out at the same time in London. One of Richard's traits was to always say thank you, and he did it with such panache. He was renowned for sending old 1950s black and white postcards that he found in various flea markets. Do Richard a favour, or even bump into him on the street, and a day or two later, one of these funky postcards would find its way into your letterbox with 'Thanks, Richard' scrawled on the back.

Hint The film industry is fiercely competitive and you must do anything possible to be noticed.

Developing a Personal Image

The film industry is all about entertainment. You can be certain that everyone you meet will be looking at you and sizing up how you look. Learn to use your attributes in a positive way, no matter what shape or size you are. Remember that the old adage—beauty is only skin deep—is true in all walks of life. The most important aspect of your personality is a clear, positive mental attitude. If you are able to couple that with passion for your project, you have developed your image terrifically.

Designing a distinctive wardrobe for yourself doesn't need to cost a lot of money or make you look like a ridiculous fashion victim. An American filmmaker friend of mine wore earrings fashioned out of long pieces of silver. Although they looked like coat hangers, everyone she met would remember them, even if they forgot her name. Another, a Canadian living in London, wore farm breeches and lumberjack boots—a rarity in London. Both of these filmmakers dressed in what they deemed to be comfortable yet distinctive clothes, and fortunately they both had real passion for their projects.

Needless to say, basic grooming is always essential. I have met many new filmmakers who are so pongy that meeting them in person is uncomfortable. Although this type of personal grooming makes you memorable, I don't think this is what you want to be remembered for.

Stephen Woolley is one of the producers I admire most. Although British, and based not far from the Raindance office, he is equally at home in LA. As a chairman of BAFTA, he transformed the insipid BAFTA Awards into the British Oscars. Maybe I am jealous. Who wouldn't be proud to have his five dozen producing credits, including *Carol* (2014), *Great Expectations*, (2012), *How To Lose Friends and Alienate People* (2008), *The Honest Thief* (2002), *Purely Belter* (2000), *The End of the Affair* (1999), *Little Voice* (1998), *24/7: Twenty Four Seven* (1997), *Fever Pitch* (1997), *Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles* (1994), *The Crying Game* (1992), *Absolute Beginners* (1986)?

Stephen Woolley, producer of many hit British films including *The Crying Game*, once appeared at a Raindance panel discussion and nonchalantly rode his bicycle up the centre aisle of the Electric Cinema in front of a hundred people and leapt on stage wearing baggy shorts and sandals.

The Three Reasons You Will Not Make a Movie

There are only three reasons that you will not make a movie. I base this on the hundreds of filmmakers from many countries I have met at Raindance and have analysed what has contributed to their success and/or failure. The three most likely reasons you will not make a film are:

Lack of Confidence

You will simply not believe in yourself to the point where you will be crippled by lack of confidence. You must always remember that nobody knows anything in the film business. Some typical ways that new filmmakers destroy their confidence include:

- Using their inability to operate camera equipment (or other technical issues) as an excuse for not getting their film made
- Listening to the persistent questions from one's friends and neighbours, like 'Why don't you get a real job?' or 'Why are you wasting your life?' or even 'For what you spent making that short, we could have had Steven Spielberg come and give a lecture'
- Letting a lack of knowledge of how the industry operates create an apparently impenetrable mystique
- Being overwhelmed by financial pressure from family and landlords

Self-Destruction

The less said about this the better, but the human species is unique on the animal planet in that each of us has an individual, 100 per cent original method of self-destruction, whether it is chronic lateness for meetings, irresponsibility to coworkers or your landlord or diet and substance abuse. Common means of self-destruction include:

- Tardiness
- Failure to say thank you
- Being a ruthless climber (see above)
- Financial irresponsibility
- Failure to keep verbal commitments

Procrastination

This seems to be a consistent favourite. Common procrastinations begin 'I will start filming when . . .'

- The rest of the money is raised
 - I have learned how to (insert: use a camera, edit etc.)
 - Everything has calmed down
 - Harrison Ford has committed
-

Hint How to avoid the three common reasons you will not make a film? Figure out how to point a camera and expose it to actors. After all, that is what filmmaking is really about.

Summary

1. Research the careers and reputations of those you meet and want to do business with.
2. Remember to say thank you in a creative way. It is, after all, the entertainment industry.

You will need some money. Find out how much in the next chapter.

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Seven Essential Steps for Becoming Rich and Famous by Making a Low-Budget Film

Producer Andrew Macdonald started off working as a film runner in Scotland. While there he met a wannabe screenwriter, John Hodge, who was a medical doctor. John had an idea for a movie that Andrew liked, and so he paid John to write the screenplay. The first stage was a treatment—which John delivered handwritten on the back of NHS hospital entry forms. Over the next eighteen months Andrew and John worked over the script. The finished film was *Shallow Grave*. The next project Andrew found was a published novel for which the screenplay rights were still available. All other film producers deemed the project to be unfilmable. Andrew loved the book, and purchased the screenplay rights and hired John to write another screenplay. The result was *Trainspotting*.

Step 1 Find an Excellent Screenplay

We are not going to have time in this book to discuss the elements of a great screenplay. Suffice to say, there are only two types of screenplay: the terrific and the terrible. There is no in between. By an excellent screenplay, the film industry means that the script is so good that everyone agrees there should be no changes. The shooting can start tomorrow. If the script is a comedy, it is so funny, that the first time you read the script, you set it down because you are laughing so loud, look for your telephone and call your best friend to tell them the joke. A comedy script that you sort of half smile at is not funny. Similarly, an excellent horror script is so creepy that you are afraid to turn the page. Screenplay is so important that I spent a lot of time thinking and writing about this in my first book: *Raindance Writers' Lab: Write and Sell the Hot Screenplay* (Focal Press 2001, 2008).

When I gave the unproduced writer Mark Rogers's *Love.Honour.Obey* script to the cult director Ate de Jong (*Drop Dead Fred*) he called me the very next day to say it was the best script he had read in 30 years. He also wondered why I wasn't sending the script directly to David Cronenberg. This is exactly what I mean by good feedback.

Your first task is to learn how to identify, find or create the great screenplay that will launch your career. A great screenplay may mean one of three things:

1. An original screenplay you have written, purchased or optioned
2. A novel, play or short story for which you have purchased the screenplay rights
3. The rights to a person's life story

See Chapter 24 for more on finding and developing a terrific script.

Hint Film careers are launched with excellent scripts.

Financing Completed	Begin writing period
6th week	Research and treatment completed Begin first draft screenplay
14th week	First draft screenplay completed Begin second draft
18th week	Second draft completed Begin polish Begin casting Begin crew allocation Begin location scouting Lock production schedule Allocate equipment, props etc. Begin and/or ready sets
22nd week	Casting completed Locations secured Begin rehearsals Equipment, props, costumes secured
24th week	Begin shooting Begin editing
27th week	End shooting, start post-production
29th week	First cut completed
37th week	Second cut completed
41st week	Fine cut completed Begin sound cutting Begin music composing
47th week	Score music
49th week	Sound editing completed Mix sound
50th week	Transfer to optical track Begin negative cutting
51st week	Negative cutting completed Time and begin first trial answer print
52nd week	Screen first trial composite

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3 Budgeting and Scheduling

A BUDGET IS A LIST of all the equipment you need for your movie, plus a list of all the people you need for your movie and a summary of the money you need to get that equipment and those people. A schedule is simply a timeline spreadsheet of when and where you need the equipment and the people.

Budgeting is the operation where each of the scenes of the script is broken down and analysed followed by a financial assessment of the total cost of each scene. The total financial requirements for the filming become the sum of the budgets of each scene. This budget is used to attract finance and is scrutinised by investors. During production, it is the yardstick whereby the producer, the crew and the investors can gauge the progress of the production and determine whether the costs of the shoot are within or over the amount of money budgeted for the film.

Scheduling is the organisational process where goods, crew, equipment and actors are scheduled in the most cost-efficient way. The elephant may be required for a morning on page one of the script and a morning on page thirty of the script. If the script were shot in numerical sequence at a rate of five pages per day, the elephant would need to be available on day one and day six of the shoot, incurring extra transportation and storage charges. If however, pages one and thirty can be shot on the same day, the elephant need only be on the set for one day, thus minimising storage and transportation charges. The schedule is also used to see if a production is being completed in the allocated amount of time or not.

During the shoot, the production company uses the information in the budget and schedule to determine whether or not the production is on budget and/or on time. It is possible for a film to be on time (on schedule) but over budget. It is also possible for a film to be on budget but behind schedule.

Choosing a Budget

The first task in filmmaking is choosing a budget. And choosing a budget suitable to your project will predetermine the route you take with your project, and to a large extent, will predetermine the success of your project. There is no point in trying to shoot a huge epic with thousands of cast and dozens of locations on a minimal budget. The result will most likely leave you dissatisfied. Neither should your very first film be structured to require a cast and crew in the dozens. You would run the risk of swamping yourself with

technology and a series of organisational dilemmas which could threaten to swamp your creativity. A first feature script would probably be a slice-of-life drama set in an area near where you live that would lend itself to being shot with a small cast, minimal crew and readily available resources.

The Four Budgets

The Hollywood blockbuster budget started with movies like *Gone with the Wind* (1939) and the first time an actor was paid \$1 million was Elizabeth Taylor for *Cleopatra* (1963)

Every film ever made falls into one of the following four budgets. A successful producer understands the different types of budget and what can be achieved with each one. With the demands of the script in mind, the astute producer chooses the budget appropriate to the project.

1 Hollywood blockbuster budget

Each summer the American film industry releases the most expensive film ever made. The budget is noted as a hyphenate: \$185–\$215 million. At no time is the precise budget mentioned, nor is the missing \$30 million. It is always promoted as the most expensive film in cinematic history. By marketing this fact, the makers of the film hope that large numbers of people will flock to the cinema to see what a quarter of a billion dollars looks like on the screen.

It is improbable that anyone reading this book will have access to this budget.

2 The typical Hollywood budget

Each of the major Hollywood studios will make twenty to thirty films each year at budgets of \$60 to \$80 million.

This budget includes the cost of the actors and directors (above the line), the actual film production (making) and the marketing of the film in the USA and Canada. This cost has quadrupled over the past 10 years because of increased costs of buying media space for marketing and the huge rise in actors' pay.

I would find it surprising if anyone reading this book had access to this budget.

3 The million-dollar film

Until the mid-1980s, there were only three budgets, with the million-dollar budget being the most typical entry-level budget for filmmakers. Some examples are *Shallow Grave* £1.2 million, *Blood Simple* £1.1 million, *Sex, Lies, and Videotape* £1.1 million and *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* £800,000. The producers of these films raised the budget through a variety of industry and private financing.

It is likely that one in ten people reading this book have access to or can raise \$/£/€1 million.

4 The low budget

Low-budget filmmaking has become a major force in the film industry since the making and international distribution of Robert Rodriguez's *El Mariachi*. While genre and B-movies have historically been produced on very low budgets, *El Mariachi* was at its time the cheapest film to receive international cinematic

Million-dollar films to see and study: *Blood Simple* (1984), *Reservoir Dogs* (1992), *Shallow Grave* (1994), *Broken Vessels* (1998), *The Corndog Man* (1999), *Sex, Lies, and Videotape* (1989).

Lo-to-no budget movies to see and study: *Dark Star* (1974), *The Evil Dead* (1981), *She's Gotta Have It* (1986), *Night of the Living Dead* (1990), *Slacker* (1991), *Laws of Gravity* (1992), *El Mariachi* (1992), *Clerks* (1994), *Go Fish* (1994), *The Brothers McMullen* (1995), *Cube* (1997), *Festen* (1998), *Pi* (1998), *The Blair Witch Project* (1999), *Zero Day* (2002), *Tadpole* (2002), *Paranormal Activity* (2010), *How Do You Write A Joe Schermann Song?* (2012), *City Slacker* (2012), *Heavy Girls* (2012), *Love.Honour.* *Obey.* (2013).

The budget ladder

distribution. By 2000, digital technology was gaining acceptance and the market was flooded with low-budget movies shot literally for next-to-nothing.

Within Hollywood, a low budget is anything under \$10 million. At Rain-dance, a £100,000 would be a huge budget. Accordingly, low budget has been further broken down:

i Low budget—a budget of under \$/£/€1 million

One in ten readers of this book will have access to a budget this size.

ii Microbudget—a budget of under \$/£/€500,000

One in five readers of this book will have access to a budget of this size.

iii No budget—a budget of under \$/£/€100,000

Everyone reading this book will have access to a budget between \$/£/€1 and \$/£/€100,000.

Find the Right Budget for Your Script

Your immediate task, the first principle of filmmaking, is to take a realistic look at your script and decide which budget will do your script justice. You can pick any budget you want as long as it is a realistic budget for the script you want to shoot. The higher the budget, the longer it will take you to raise the money. There is no right or wrong decision at this point, but you must take a decision.

Remember that there has never been a film made in the history of cinema that has had enough money. If you want to finance the film through your own resources or private investors, then pick a budget that you can realistically raise within 3 months.

Hint You must be able to open a dedicated bank account for your project and deposit the money for your film.

Describing Your Budget

If you want to raise a budget of \$/£/€20 million for your film, go out and make a commercially successful film for \$/£/€2 million. If you want to make a film for \$/£/€2 million, go out and make a commercially successful film for \$/£/€200,000. If you want to make a film for \$/£/€200,000, go out and make a commercially successful film for the money you can put into a production account within 60 days of acquiring an excellent script.

Talking the Talk

Every industry has its buzz words and that includes the film industry. Learn the buzz words and the correct way to use them, and you will look like a pro. Use buzz words with finesse and you will look like a producer who can gain the respect and admiration of talent, crew and investors.

The Nine Most Famous Words in Hollywood

Do you remember a moment in the recent past when you announced to your friends and family that you wanted to make a movie? You would have received one of two responses: either 'Yes—you can make a really great movie' or 'Don't even think of giving up the day job'. For me, I remember a groundswell of euphoria that washed over me as friend after friend after relative thought that I could make a really great film. Then I made the mistake of making the same announcement that 'I want to make a movie' to one of those people within a few days. Can you imagine their response? Actions do indeed speak louder than words.

But I was tied up in the feeling of being a filmmaker. All the glamour, the excitement of the opening night galas, the tension of viewing rushes and the hard work seemed to me to be the perfect lifestyle occupation. My oft-repeated line of 'I really want to make a film' became so tedious to my friends after a year or two that I used to dread going to parties where I might be asked the feared question: 'What are you doing?' I never knew how to answer: either with my day job (I was working then as a computer software developer) or with my wannabe career in filmmaking. People who knew me really well would always sidle over to hear what answer I was going to give this time.

After one of these occasions, I arrived home late, totally dejected about a film career that was clearly going nowhere. I flicked on the TV and there, one of my idols, Steven Spielberg was sitting on a talk show and being asked: 'What are you doing now?' This was the same question I had been asked an hour earlier! To my amazement, Spielberg answered with what is now called The Nine Most Famous Words in Hollywood (TNMFWIH): 'I have numerous projects in various stages of development.' I had it! The answer to my prayers! I graduated from filmmaker (implying amateur or student) to 'an independent producer with numerous projects in various stages of development'. This did wonders for my confidence, and made me feel like I knew what I was talking about, even when I usually didn't. When those acquaintances of mine heard TNMFWIH, they gave me several weeks of peace and respect.

My friend Dov S-S Simens recounts a truly hilarious version of TNMFWIH. For more on Dov and his work as a film instructor, visit www.webfilmschool.com.

Being a producer will always attract the attention of fascinated dilettantes and other frustrated artists. They will always want to know exactly what you are doing in order to discover the secret of your success or find your weakest link in order to effectively destroy your ambitions.

The Two Big Questions

You will find that The Nine Most Famous Words in Hollywood are insufficient to divert the attention and satisfy the interest of your friends and relatives. They won't just leave it there and wish you luck, but will probe further, asking the two big questions that new producers dread.

1 What is it about?

Most new producers are instantly reduced to a nervous wreck by this question. They are afraid because they are concerned that someone will ask them details about their script, and they haven't even got an idea for a movie yet. In Hollywood, this question is deflected and diverted with the phrase: 'It's a character-driven drama.'

2 What is the budget?

Astute industry professionals who want to discover whether you are a serious filmmaker or a wannabe with absolutely nothing will ask far more detailed

questions. You will often be asked the budget of your film by investors and by friends as well. Financial sense dictates that you must never mention the budget for your film to anyone except your accountant or the taxman. Here are some ways that you can tactfully answer this question without actually stating a financial total.

i Feature length

Traditional cinema is based on film stock and formed the basis of film budget speak. Ninety feet of film stock passes through the projector or camera every minute, making a 35mm feature film 8,100 feet long (90 feet times 90 minutes).

'I'm shooting an 8,100-foot feature.' What you have stated is the fact that you are shooting a 35mm feature and the length is 90 minutes.

'I'm shooting a 50,000-foot feature.' This does not mean that you are shooting a 9-hour epic. What it says to an industry person is that you have raised enough money to buy a total of 50,000 feet of 35mm film stock on which to shoot all the scenes that will eventually be edited down to an 8,100-foot feature.

Everyone in the industry knows what the cost of film stock and lab processing is, so they can deduce the amount of money you have for your feature.

ii Shooting ratio

Another way of describing your budget to potential investors is to tell them what your shooting ratio is. If you have a ninety-page script it implies that your finished film is going to be about an hour and a half long. If you allow, say, 10 minutes with the camera rolling for each page of the script, then you would express this as saying you have a 10:1 shooting ratio. For example you allow yourself 10 minutes of rushes for each finished minute of screen time. They will do the maths themselves and so will be able to guess at your budget.

Hint Walk like a duck, talk like a duck, get treated like a duck. Walk and talk like a big time producer and you will get treated like a big time producer. Remember that a 10:1 shooting ratio feature film is a larger job to most equipment rental and post-production facilities than any of the big pop promos and commercials they are likely to get. You are a big job. You are important. Never forget or underestimate yourself.

Guerrilla filmmaking: Return the camera on Monday lunchtime. Call the camera rental facility with an excuse of how your van has broken down and lie about your location, and continue shooting. It's likely that the rental facility won't charge you for the additional hire, but you will probably be unable to use them again.

iii Describing the schedule

You can also describe your budget by telling an investor how long the schedule for your shoot is. The longer the shoot, the more the film is going to cost. The advantage is that with more time you can make a better looking film—a film with higher production values.

Three-week shoot

This is a very common length of time for a low-budget shoot. Another way to describe it is as an 18-day shoot: 6 days a week for 3 weeks. An advantage of this schedule is the additional leeway the three Sundays offer should you fall behind.

Two-week shoot

Industry personnel will find this very uncommon. Another way to describe a 2-week shoot is to call it a 16-day shoot. Pick up the camera on a Friday and shoot every day for 2 weeks, ending on the second Sunday night.

Nine-day/one-week Shoot

A 1-week shoot is fun and, if planned and scheduled properly, simple. It can also be described as a 9-day shoot. Pick the camera up Friday afternoon, ready for shooting on the Monday morning, but start shooting Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday. That's nine shooting days:

figure 3.1
A one-week shoot

Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon
Pick up camera			S	H	O	O	T			Return camera

A 1-week shoot has many financial benefits. It is much easier to hire cast and crew for little or no money if you are asking them to commit to just 1 week. People with regular jobs can fit your shoot into a week of holidays. Successful freelancers are very reluctant to give up 3 weeks for little or no money; after all that is approaching a month's fees. But a 1-week shoot is more accessible. And everyone in the industry knows that the 1-week shoot is the fun week. *Love.Honour. Obey.*, the most recent film I produced, was a 2-week shoot (16 days) but we needed the location for 4 days to dress and prepare the set. Thus our schedule shows just twelve shooting days

Advantages of a 1-Week Shoot

It is true that the more time you have, the better looking a film you can make. However, time is money, and you may not be able to afford the time required to achieve everything you want in your film.

In a previous career, I worked as a scenic artist and crew member on sixty-eight feature films and over 700 commercials. I worked on many of the 3-week shoots that came to my hometown, Toronto. They were usually American movies-of-the-week that were shot quickly and cheaply in Toronto so American production companies could profit from the beneficial Canadian dollar exchange rate.

On a 3-week shoot, I found that each week had a specific rhythm. The first week was the fun week, the family week. One was reunited with old acquaintances and everyone swapped tales during the coffee breaks. The pervading atmosphere was: 'Hey! We're making a movie!' The second week was the zombie week. Fatigue definitely kicks in on day two or three of week two following a string of 16-hour days. If you had a Sunday off, you usually had just enough energy to get the stains out of your clothes. Week three is the hostility week. Tempers flare. Arguments break out and you are constantly threatened with:

'You'll never ever work in this town again.'

On a 1-week shoot, guess which two weeks you miss? You miss zombie and hostility, leaving fun. I have only ever worked on two 1-week shoots, both of which I produced, including the one I wrote and directed as well. They were both an incredible amount of fun, although a few zombies do sneak in on about day six.

Elements of a Budget

A budget is divided into two parts: above the line and below the line. The above the line items summarise the cost of the talent: producer, writer, director and actors. The below the line items list everything else. The top sheet summarises the entire budget (see figure 3.3), and the rest of the budget breaks out the detail of the top sheet, as in figure 3.4, which shows the breakdown of budget Line 700, Talent.

Raindance Film			Dr Psychodelia
Producer: Elliot Grove			18 day shoot
			6:1 shoot ratio / 35mm
Account	Description	Page	Total
500	script	1	3,000
600	producer-director	1	14,000
700	talent	1-2	22,460
800	fringes	2	2,246
Total above the line			41,706
900	production staff	2	10,025
1000	camera dept	3	6,200
1100	camera	3	6,000
1200	art department	3-4	9,300
1300	art / props	4	7,640
1400	electrical department	4	3,400
1500	grip department	4	1,950
1600	grip electrical package	4	12,340
1700	production sound	5	1,670
1800	stunts / SFX	5	6,715
1900	police / fire / safety	5	0
2000	craft service / catering	6	7,530
2100	wardrobe / make-up	6	7,350
2200	location manager / scouts	6	2,700
2300	locations	7	10,350
2400	transportation	7	7,950
2500	picture vehicles	7	200
2600	accommodation	7-8	3,000
2700	general office	8	9,735
2800	raw stock / developing	8	24,970
2900	insurance	9	7,500
3000	legal	9	7,100
Total production			156,675
3100	editing	9	20,900
3200	music	9	3,175
3300	post-production sound	9-10	35,210
3400	answer print	10	9,140
3500	titles and opticals	10	10,575
Total post-production / prints			79,000
Misc			0
Total above the line			41,706
Total below the line			235,650
Above and below the line			277,356
Total VAT within budget			15,765
Contingency			27,735
Total (UK sterling)			305,091

figure 3.2
Budget top sheet from
horror picture, *Dr
Psychodelia*

LINE 700: TALENT						
Line	Act	Amt	Unit	Quant	Rate	Total
	Principal Cast					
701	Janey	3	weeks	1	1,200	3,600
702	Dr Psychedelia	3	weeks	1	1,200	3,600
703	Babs Boyer	3	weeks	1	1,200	3,600
704	Guy Hendrix	3	weeks	1	800	2,400
705	Vincent	2	weeks	1	800	1,600
706	Santana	1	week	1	800	800
707	Dr Stalker	2	days	1	250	500
708	Bridget	3	days	1	250	750
709	Iris	2	days	1	250	500
	Day Players					
710	Gordon Grump	1	day	1	250	250
711	Madame Doe	1	day	1	250	250
712	Trixie	1	day	1	250	250
713	Nun	1	day	1	250	250
714	Psychedelia 22	1	day	1	250	250
715	Candy	1	day	1	250	250
716	Psychedelia 35	1	day	1	250	250
717	Doctor 1	1	day	1	250	250
718	Doctor 2	1	day	1	250	250
719	Drunk	1	day	1	250	250
720	John 2	1	day	1	250	250
	Extras					
721	Sailors	1	day	3	30	90
722	Slave girls	1	day	7	30	210
723	Hookers	1	day	2	30	60

figure 3.3
Budget break out for
Line 700: Talent

How to Choose Your Budget

Whatever your position, your first task as a producer, assuming you have a great script, is to choose a budget that will provide enough time and money to bring the story in the screenplay to the screen. Through the rest of this book, we will be analysing the different line items in detail and giving advice on how the budget should be allocated.

How I Chose a £10,000 Budget

Making a feature film on 35mm for under £10,000 is considered ridiculously impossible in the industry. But we are marketing the cash budget. The fact that it was to be shot at such a ridiculously low price was one of the most newsworthy assets we had. If you factor in all the hundreds of hours of labour—over the script, the storyboards, the editing and the acting, essentially you have increased your budget by several hundred thousand pounds, if not

more. But it is not cash spent—it is goods and services in kind. The major film companies know that you are much more cost-effective and efficient than they are. Your overheads are small, and you are able to negotiate payment to staff, crew and talent for a fraction of what they pay.

I developed the £10,000 budget when an acquaintance called me up and asked if I would like to see a new version of the stage play *Othello*. He then told me that his new job was head of tourism for Hackney Council in London's East End. For those unfamiliar with Hackney or East London, suffice to say that a tour of the Third World could start from Hackney Town Hall where I met the tourism officer. He informed me that the Council had hired him in order to attract the arty types to this impoverished London borough. With his modest budget, he had decided to fund the arts—more specifically, theatre and film. The theory was that if the artists came, the yuppies and property developers would not be far behind.

Based on the assumption that £10,000 would be available, I started on a budget using reverse budgeting techniques. I then fell victim to procrastination—one of the three reasons you will not make a film and why I didn't make this film.

Through my contacts in the UK, word of this project found its way to Lloyd Kaufman of New York's Troma Studios. He called me up out of the blue and asked me what I could tell him about this Shakespeare project that I was working on. I asked him to get a pencil and paper and write down the title of the film: *Othello*. I then asked him to underline the word 'hell' in the title: *Othello*.

He instantly got an idea of how the stage play was going to be translated to the screen. I then told him that I had changed the title and asked him to put a period after the O and the T and to turn the T into a J: this made *O. J. Hello*.

I told him that *O. J. Hello* was the story of a black man beating up a white woman and was a tale of domestic violence and sexual jealousy. He was really excited and asked me what the budget was. When he heard that we were planning to shoot the film on a budget of £10,000, he told me he could get a million. I waited and waited and then Lloyd made *Tromeo and Juliet* instead. Had I made the film then (at the time when the O. J. Simpson trial was in full swing) I would have made a film that was both timeless and timely. I missed my window and I have regretted it ever since.

Hint Procrastination is one of the three reasons that you will not make your film.

One of the major excuses for not making a film is lack of money. Choosing to make a film with absolutely no money is a viable option if a carefully considered plan is devised and executed.

How I Chose a Zero Budget

Out of frustration, I then decided to shoot a feature film with a budget of absolutely zero. I developed a script that could be shot in and around the Raindance office and drew up a budget or a list of everything we would need on the shoot and then put a zero beside it. I knew I could write that cheque immediately. I then sat down with my producer, Jamie Greco, and devised a plan to get everything on the list and come in under the budget.

Item	Budgeted	Actual	Details
Producer	0	0	
Script	0	48.72	photocopying
Actors	0	0	
Writer	0	0	
Camera	0	65.00	delivery and collection fees
Film stock	0	0	got free recans and ends
Lab	0	0	contra deal for deliveries / collections
Make-up	0	15.00	cigars x 3
Wardrobe	0	12.00	dry cleaning
Location fees	0	0	
Insurance	0	0	under Raindance insurance
Crew	0	0	
Art department	0	43.52	paint
Transportation	0	0	
Telecine	0	0	
Tape stock	0	94.14	
Edit	0	0	
Titles	0	0	
Answer print	0	0	not done
Legals	0	0	
Misc	0	0	
Contingency	0	0	
Total	0	278.38	

figure 3.4
Budget for zero-budget
feature

Hint A budget should always be done in pencil. The reverse end of a pencil has an eraser.

Refrigerator Theory of Budgeting

If you really want to make a film, consider the refrigerator theory of budgeting. It works as follows.

As soon as possible, go and buy as much film stock as you can afford without compromising your landlord or diet. Store it in your refrigerator.

When you have announced to the world that you are going to make a film, have enjoyed the wash of euphoria, have struggled to get a screenplay and started to raise money, time passes. You also attract unwanted criticism from those you love and from competing individuals. Usually these people will call you late in the evening, either to convince you to get a proper job or to prick your confidence. After a call like this, you will find your resolve has taken a beating, exposing you to the first reason you will not make a film—lack of confidence. In order to bolster your ego, you will then go to the kitchen to get something to eat. You open the door, and there is no food. The entire refrigerator is filled with film stock.

If you follow the refrigerator theory of budgeting, within 6 months you will figure out how to expose actors to film stock. After all, that's what filmmaking really is.

Preparing the Schedule

All scheduling means is taking account of the different variables and figuring out the best combination for the film. One line producer I know likens it in a way to arranging the seating at a dinner party.

The industry method is to take the script and break it down into the parts which are pertinent to budget requirements and to use these parameters to decide which scenes will be shot when. Once you've done this, you'll have a clear plan of what has to be done and how much it will cost and will be able to plan the shoot to be as efficient as possible.

Script Breakdown

In order to get to this point, you have to analyse the elements of the film to work out how much each scene will cost.

The script has to be broken down into its parts. All of the elements of the film (the actors, props, locations, sound effects, music, special effects, wardrobe, vehicles and animals needed during the shoot) need to be identified, organised in a useful manner and costed. The first step is to eighth the script out. See figure 3.6 overleaf. Eighthing a script is subjective. When you look at the script, you need to evaluate the action and dialogue content and the physical elements required in each scene. In this example, it could appear that the first two scenes are roughly the same length. You will notice that the second scene contains action, where the first scene contains a single dialogue. Accordingly, it would be prudent to allow more time to shoot the second scene.

The third scene really is a half page (4/8) but given that each page must add up to 8/8, and this section includes a lot of complicated action, in this example it is given 5/8.

Once you have eighthed the script, you then transfer the information about each scene onto a strip of card in preparation for creating the production scheduling board. Each strip of card needs to contain information about the location of the scene, the actors involved and any special requirements for props, stunts, animals or special effects. Once this material is prepared, the schedule can be started.

There are fourteen parameters which you need to take into account when scheduling. Each eighthed section of script needs to be analysed to see which of these fourteen elements it contains.

1 Locations

Locations present a whole series of special problems in addition to the actual construction of the buildings or geography of the land. Mundane issues like parking, transport facilities, toilets, proximity to police and fire stations as well as hospitals need to be thought out.

<p>7 INT. HOSPITAL OFFICE -DAY</p> <p>A typical hospital office, cold and uninviting. A receptionist is tapping at an official looking form.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NICK</p> <p>You mean, to get her in surgery I need to go private and that costs £10,000? What if I pay cash?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">CUT TO:</p>	7
<p>8 INT. HOSPITAL OUTSIDE ELEVATOR. - DAY</p> <p>Nick is standing with the flowers</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NICK</p> <p>It just wasn't meant to be, darling.</p> <p>He goes to give the flowers to a CHILD going by in a wheelchair. Her MOTHER is pushing. He thinks better and turns and leaves.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">CUT TO:</p>	8
<p>9 EXT. SOHO STREET - NIGHT</p> <p>Nick is working out furiously doing pushups on the back of the car. The flowers lie on the back seat.</p> <p>He is flipping through a stack of file folders and legal papers.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NICK</p> <p>Shit.</p> <p>He winces as he moves his shoulder. He quickly strips off his shirt, and we see the blood soaked bandage over his shoulder. He reaches into the glove compartment and pulls out a couple of squeeze bottles full of fluid. He strips off the bandage and the angry gash is plain to see - held together with crude stitches.</p> <p>Nick runs some water over the wound and pats it dry. He then swallows a couple of capsules and wraps the wound up with a fresh bandage.</p> <p>He puts his shirt on and switches off the dome light of the car.</p> <p>We see Nick sleeping in the car, covered in an old blanket. Frost is caking on the windscreen.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">CUT TO:</p>	9

figure 3.5
Sample script page
'eighthed'

If the location requires prebuild, then adequate preparation time needs to be worked into the pre-production schedule.

Scheduling a shoot on a public holiday requires special attention. Not only are the neighbours at home but public transport may not be available for your cast and crew, leaving the production stranded.

2 Cast members

Actors may not be available when you need them, due to other commitments. If you are trying to schedule several different actors together for a series of a few days, your schedule will fall apart if one of them has a must-do commercial on the second day. Try to negotiate with the actors and get them to commit to a spread of days even if you don't need them for the entire time.

Actors dislike arriving on set only to find that, due to a scheduling error, they are not going to be needed for many hours. Try to make sure they arrive with just enough time for make-up and wardrobe.

3 Day/Night shooting

Your script will contain references to DAY or NIGHT. If you have a series of day shoots, with just a single night shoot, try to schedule the night shoot before a day off, in order to allow the crew time to recover. Scripts sometimes call for dawn or dusk—a very difficult period to shoot as the so-called magic hour often lasts for much less. Usually dawn scenes are shot in the evening, as it is easier to get crew out late than early.

4 Exteriors and interiors

Along with DAY and NIGHT, INT. and EXT. are the second pair of common variables in a script. When you are scheduling an exterior shot, you should always have a backup scene to shoot under cover should the weather turn unfavourable.

5 Shooting in sequence

Sometimes, for creative reasons, a director will want to shoot a series of scenes in their chronological order. This can strain the schedule depending on which actors are needed. It would not be uncommon for an actor to appear in a scene shot on a Monday and not then be needed for another ten days.

6 Child actors

Child actors are subject to a wide range of regulations including number of hours worked per day, special tutors and an accompanying adult. If you fall foul of these regulations you may find yourself facing civil and possible criminal actions.

7 Changes in time periods

Sometimes a set will change from, say, the present day, to Victorian times. The schedule has to allow enough time for the set to be redressed. It is also important in the schedule for the different time zones to be clearly marked.

8 Time of year filming

You must consider how changes in season will affect your film and what impact that will have on special effects for creating weather hazards like snow and ice if you are shooting on location. Be aware that daylight hours are much shorter in winter.

9 Weather conditions

When you are shooting out-of-doors, you must also be aware how adverse weather will affect your shoot and make alternative arrangements where possible. If you want to shoot in torrential rain, then make sure that your

cameraman and spark are informed in plenty of time so that they are prepared with the right kit to keep all your equipment safe.

10 Special effects and stunts

Any special effects or stunts must be scheduled to allow for enough preparation time, and then, most importantly, enough time to film them in the best and safest way possible. Accidents on set usually happen when the director and producer are rushing everyone like mad to get finished on time.

11 Second camera and/or second unit

Second unit work, i.e. work with no actors, can be scheduled and treated almost like a separate shoot.

12 Special equipment

Pages of the script that need special equipment like cranes, dollies or other grip equipment need to be noted. Shoot them in one day where possible to keep expensive rental and operator fees to a minimum.

13 Geography of locations

An astute producer will try and keep all of the locations within a short distance of each other. When locations are changed during the day, remember to allow adequate time to move from location to location. See figure 3.8 and the section on low-budget screenwriting below.

14 Miscellaneous factors

You have scheduled all of your actors for the shoot with much cajoling and pleading. You have that special helicopter rented for the shot of your actors jogging up Piccadilly through near-deserted streets. Your camera crew and actors arrive promptly on location at 7 a.m. and suddenly you realise that the throngs of crowds around you are there for the Gay Pride Parade, and nothing is going to happen.

A good producer thinks quickly and comes up with an alternative plan.

Production Board

When you have analysed all of the variables that appear in each section of the broken-down script, you need to create a production board. The board will enable you to see quickly which is the most efficient order for filming the movie. Do this by going back to the broken-down script, and taking each scene and create a 'strip' for it. Each of the variables listed above will need to be marked on the production board, as below. Production boards can also be created on a computer using specialty software (essential for a large shoot) or on a spreadsheet (suitable for a shoot under £100,000 [£150,000]).

An inexperienced producer who worked with me in London chose two locations in London, one east and one west, and saw they were just four miles apart. Allowing for traffic at 20 miles per hour, she calculated 15 minutes in travel time, based on looking at the map. Unfortunately, she scheduled the move during the midday rush hour and failed to realise that her preferred route was closed for road works, resulting in a nearly 2-hour crawl across London!

SHOOTING DAY	DAY 1				DAY 2			DAY 3		
DAY / NIGHT	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
INT / EXT	INT	INT	EXT	INT	EXT	EXT	INT	EXT	INT	INT
LOCATION/STUDIO	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	S	S	S
PAGE COUNT	3/8	9/8	11/8	1/8	9/8	9/8	6/8	3/8	11/8	11/8
TITLE _____ DIR _____ PROD CO _____	Sally's bedroom	Sally's kitchen	Sally's garden	Sally's bathroom	School grounds	High Street	Tobacconist	Spaceship	Spaceship	Spaceship
SCENE NUMBER	60	83	15	03	32	34	36	41	110	111
CAST:										
ACTOR 1 BOB					1	1	1			
ACTOR 2 SALLY	2	2	2	2	2		2	2	2	2
ACTOR 3 BILL	3	3		3						
ACTOR 4 FRED									4	4
ACTOR 5 JO										5
ACTOR 6 FERGUS					6	6	6			
ACTOR 7 SAM						7	7			
ACTOR 8 EXTRAS					8					
ACTOR 9 FIREFIGHTER		9	9	9						
ACTOR 10 FIRE CHIEF		10	10	10						
PROPS:										
SWORD (SW)					SW	SW	SW			
FIRE TRUCK/HOSE (FT)		FT	FT	FT						
PISTOL (PL)									PL	PL
CAMERA EQUIPMENT:										
DOLLY (DO)								DO	DO	DO
CRANE (CR)								CR	CR	CR
GRIP (GR)	GR									
SPECIAL EFFECTS:										
FAKE BLOOD (FB)						FB	FB		FB	FB
WOUNDS (WD)	WD		WD	WD		WD	WD			WD
WATER (WT)		WT	WT	WT						
FIRE (FR)		FR	FR	FR						
ANIMALS:										
DOG (DG)	DG	DG	DG	DG						
SPIDER (SP)									SP	SP

figure 3.6
Sample production
board

Writing for Lo-to-No Budget Films

Before looking for a screenplay that you can produce, it is an excellent idea to explore the possibilities you have, as a producer, to minimise costs on any items that affect the story. Special consideration should be given to locations,

On the www.loto-nobudgetfilm.com website you will find lo-to-no budget story tools. These are printable templates to help you to write a script for a lo-to-no budget movie.

actors, animals, props and wardrobe. Obviously, items that you can get for free, or very cheaply, must be able to add to the screen production values of your film. Once you have these items in place, then you can see what story can be built up around them.

The traditional approach is back-to-front. For example, if you have a screenplay that absolutely requires you to shoot on an aircraft carrier, then as a producer you must prioritise gaining free or cheap access to a suitable ship. The low-budget approach is to write the script if and when you have free access to the aircraft carrier.

The first task in writing a low-budget script is to list everything that you might have access to for nothing or next to nothing. If you take the traditional budget one sheet, simply list all of the available items that you know you don't need to pay for.

Producer	0
----------	---

This is you. Whatever you do, make sure that your living expenses are covered for at least four months.

Script	0
--------	---

You will be partnering with a writer, will you not? And most probably sharing the financial risk too. Perhaps you will write the script yourself.

Actors	0
--------	---

List all the actors you know who would work for you if there was a suitable part. Pay special attention to any child actors or animals that might be available. Common advice is to limit the cast to four or five parts, although this could hamper your creativity. A larger cast has to be balanced against the extra cost involved: the more actors, the more expensive transportation and catering will be. Try to keep it as simple as you can without limiting your creativity.

Camera	0
--------	---

Whatever originating format you choose, make certain that it will deliver the images you need in order to sell your film.

What sort of camera can you blog? What format is it? What camera is it? DSLR or DV? Is the camera available for a stretch of several weeks, or is the great deal only available on the weekends, which would affect your shooting schedule and the availability of your actors and locations? Do you know anyone who belongs to a college film club or film school where they might have access to equipment for free? These limitations could affect the story that you will be able to tell.

Make-up	0
---------	---

Are there any special make-up effects that will help you to tell your story? Fake blood, prosthetics, wounds and wigs can add to your budget unless you can convince a talented newcomer to work for free.

Wardrobe	0
----------	---

Guerrilla filmmakers would return the already cheap costumes to the clothes store after filming to keep the budget at zero.

Are there any unique wardrobe items that you have access to that would increase your production values without increasing the budget? Used clothing stores can often provide useful costumes and props.

Location fees	0
---------------	---

Which properties can you shoot in for free? What about your own home or someone else's, your college, your kid's school or a local church?

Insurance	0
-----------	---

You'll need insurance to guarantee to the owner of the camera that you can replace it if it is lost, damaged or stolen. Your insurance broker may let you add the kit to your home contents insurance during the shoot.

Crew	0
------	---

You are making a feature film that will further the careers of everyone involved, and they want you to pay them? Learn how to say the word 'next'.

Art department	0
----------------	---

Props, prosthetics, special effects. Whoever the hapless art director is on your shoot will constantly be nagging you for money to buy more paint. If you can't afford to give them any, make sure you hire an art director who has lots of contacts and favours to pull in. Search for unusual and expensive-looking items that could add to the look of the film. I once worked on a shoot near a quarry; we shot the sound, smoke and debris of the blasting and it enhanced our low-budget war feature.

Transport	0
-----------	---

What transport do you have available? Robert Rodriguez had a school bus. Do you know someone with a prison truck, a delivery van, a Second World War vehicle—anything that can either facilitate the making of your movie or be used as a prop in the movie? Or both?

Grand total	0
--------------------	----------

Now, armed with your list of freebies, you are ready to write a script that you have the budget and the resources to actually make.

Moving the Budget Down

Screenwriter William C. Martell is an expert at gaining free access to military bases and ships for his producers. As a writer, he sources naval installations, for example, and then researches the storylines that could be set in a nuclear submarine. He makes sure that the story meets government standards (i.e. no dirty dealings by US Marines) and then approaches a producer knowing that his script has a free, big-budget location like an aircraft carrier or nuclear submarine. His feature film, *Crash Dive* with Gary Busey, was created in this manner.

Suppose you have just £3,000 (\$5,000) to make a feature film; this is not the impossible dream that everyone inside the industry will tell you. In order for a film of this budget to succeed, you must develop a clear strategy.

Budget in reverse: work up the budget sheet, first putting the grand total in—this is the amount that you know you can get your hands on. Then work upwards and figure out how much you can spend on each element, consider what you can get for free and what is on your doorstep and then you can work out what kind of film you can make with what you have, not what you want.

Strategy for Producing a Zero-Budget Film

There are several areas of concern when developing a zero-budget film. Each area must be considered in advance and potential problems solved with fresh ideas.

The more you can bend and twist the traditional film professionals' notions of what can and cannot be done, the more likely you are to earn their respect and the chance of a proper job.

The more you are able to surprise and entertain audiences with the story, the sooner the audience and the film buyers will forget the miniscule budget and offer you a handsome reward for your film. Often filmmakers choose the strategy of notoriety and use shock value to gain their audience's attention. European filmmakers in particular choose this route with films containing shocking sexual violence as in *Irreversible*. The Serbian movie *A Serbian Film* employed this strategy, which backfired when police and censors in nearly every country vetoed the film, forcing the distributors to make major cuts before it could be shown. While this strategy will certainly get you noticed, the downside is that you could be pigeon-holed and labeled a troublemaker and treated like a pariah on your next movie.

Hint The astute producer with a zero-budget film seeks either notoriety or celebrity status.

Script Strategy

A movie with no budget is about how much cable you can afford to rent and how many power points are available for you to tap into. The most successful movies for this budget will typically take place in one or two locations which are geographically close to each other.

The locations are few so that the film can be shot relatively quickly; they are close together and there are minimal transportation and location costs.

Hint The most successful careers in America are launched with the same script: take a gang of kids to a house and chop them up: *Reservoir Dogs*, *The Blair Witch Project*, *Night of the Living Dead*, *Paranormal Activity*. Even *Phone Booth* could have been made with a minimal budget. The fact that a major star was attached meant the budget soared to a reputed \$5,000,000.

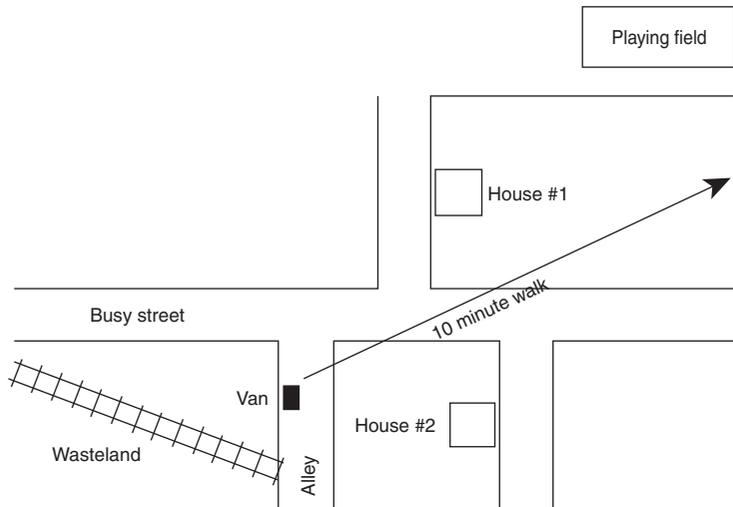


figure 3.7
Location map to show
how a low-budget story
is filmed

Locations Strategy

Locations that add visual appeal could include the bank vault, the tube station, the double-decker bus, the church hall, the bar, the restaurant, the nightclub, the airport hangar, the remote house, the forest, the abattoir. These are all clichés. What breaks the cliché is the action: the bank vault flooding, the restaurant under siege or the woods on fire.

Locations can make or break your film. A great location can add thousands to your art department budget—literally for nothing. The trick is to find the right location for you and your story.

The most important element an astute producer looks for is a location that they can have complete control of during the time the cast and crew are on location. Then, a good location is one that can safely accommodate the needs of the script, the crew and the performers. A good location will also be close to first aid, police and fire stations and public transportation. Of course it will be photogenic. Lastly, a good location must be cheap or free.

Naturally, this is an extremely difficult combination to source. Often, a more lateral approach to locations can be used. If you are to shoot in an area of a town or city try to choose different locations within a 10-minute walk of a central location. This location should be one where you can park a van or two and will be the area where your catering truck will sit. A second van can double as a mobile camera and sound equipment store. From this central location you can then walk with your equipment to each location, minimising costs and maximising time on location.

Raindance is always falling foul of guilds and unions who think we preach that you should never pay cast or crew. Of course that is nonsense. We think that everyone working on a film should be paid, and paid well. But, what if the film won't get made unless a whole lot of talented people donate their time for free? How good is the screenplay? How good is the producer? And what payment deferral programme will you have in place?

An additional complication in Britain are the minimum wage laws whereby everyone on team need to be paid minimum wage. Before you set off, make dead certain that you are not falling foul of local employment laws. The penalties and cost of defending yourself after the event can prove costly.

Stay clear of gunshots and swordplay unless you have a licensed professional on set. If you don't, you could end up in prison.

Writer-director David Baer used a useful technique when working on his first feature, *Broken Vessels*, and then while in pre-production on *Mattress Man*. He found several different alleyways where a catering van could park. He then set off in 10-minute walks in each direction, scouting for possible locations: a park, a school yard, a strip mall, a house and some wasteland beside a disused railroad siding. It took several attempts to find the right location for the catering van. He then researched the locations, and discovered that each location had two very different exteriors: the front and the back. By some clever and cheap art direction, he was able to use each location as if it were two, thereby adding scope to the story and production values to the film. A particular stroke of luck was his discovery that the owner of one of the locations had three geese for watchdogs and was willing to allow his pets to serve as stunt animals in the film, creating an entirely new element to the story.

David already had an idea of the story he wanted to tell and also had some pretty good ideas of how he wanted it to look. With these elements in mind, he wrote an extremely good first draft in 2 weeks, and pre-production commenced while he wrote the second draft. The search for locations can also impact on the story; key elements of the script can be modified to make the most of new opportunities.

Talent Strategy

Attracting big-name actors to a project like this is fraught with difficulty. Usually they will be unconvinced that you can make them 'look good' with no money, and especially with no time.

A strategy here would be to allow the actor to direct. Tell them it is an experiment, and only if it works out will you try to sell it. Or give a bit player a leading role, and dazzle them with some special effect you are able to pull off with no money. Then see if they want to see themselves killed in a new way. You are essentially improving their showreel.

Another increasingly popular strategy is to use non-professional or semi-professional actors. Depending on the skill of your director this can also be a valid way to find cast, but you may need to schedule extra rehearsal time to accommodate the less experienced performers.

Hint Named actors will help you to sell your film. Also, try to get a cast that is as varied and physically striking as possible.

Special Effects Strategy

Try to find a novice special effects supervisor and/or fight/stunt director by trawling through art, drama and film schools. Simple punches, slaps and falls look far better when a fight director is involved. A good fight director can also create a convincing brawl scene.

A well-choreographed fight scene or a convincing special effect will enhance the visual impact of your film dramatically and give you whole new story possibilities.

Shooting Schedule Strategy

Keep the shoot as simple as possible. Perhaps you can shoot the film in chronological order. This allows the performers closer contact with the script, and creates more of a 'stage play' feel to the shoot.

Sample £3,000 (\$4,500) 35mm Shoot

This is a plan to shoot a 35mm feature film in a week for less than £3,000 (\$5,000). A producer discovers that he is able to book his local church hall basement for free most days of the week. He decides to take advantage of this, follows the strategies listed above and gets an excellent script written by a professional writer in exchange for partnership in the profits of the film.

It is a one-location shoot set in a church hall basement. The story is the wedding banquet after the wedding and the relationships between the bride, the groom and the bride's three ex-boyfriends who are all guests at the wedding. The script has been honed through a series of workshops and rehearsals, during which the writer has carefully rewritten the script to create a dozen characters.

Day 1 Monday

Food	25.00
------	-------

The cast meet at a rehearsal room (which could be the location) and rehearse. The working day is light. It could be from 4 p.m. to 10 p.m. to allow for day work, or from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. to allow for evening work. In either event, the day is professional and well run. Tea and coffee are available. Sandwiches are prepared by the producer's assistant.

Day 2 Tuesday

Food	25.00
------	-------

As above. Rehearse.

Day 3 Wednesday

Food	25.00
------	-------

More rehearsal as above. The actors are realising that they are getting professional on-set rehearsal time, which there is rarely time for in a more traditional kind of production. Today you may not be able to use the church basement as you had planned due to a Boy Scout meeting. Move to another location.

Day 4 Thursday

Food	25.00
------	-------

Additional rehearsal, but this time with the director of photography and the sound recordist. They watch the rehearsal and make notes. The costume designer also attends and takes measurements. The men will be wearing tuxedos (provided by the local tailor in exchange for publicity) and the women will be wearing formal gowns (supplied by the actresses). Notes are made regarding hair and make-up.

Day 5 Friday

Food	25.00
Delivery charge for camera	60.00
Transport for assistants	10.00
Insurance	400.00
Sound equipment	200.00

An assistant is sent to the film stock company to pick up nine 1,000-foot rolls of free film stock supplied in exchange for promotion. The camera package is delivered. The camera package is free because the weekend used for shooting is off-peak, and the camera rental facility has several unused cameras. They are assisting in exchange for promotion. The sound man arrives with the recording equipment. It is difficult to arrange for free hire of sound equipment, and this particular sound recordist is just starting out and has not yet got his own equipment. Actors, make-up and wardrobe arrive late morning for one last run through, followed by a technical rehearsal with camera and sound. Make sure that everyone leaves in good time for a sound night's sleep and that the equipment and props are well secured.

Day 6 Saturday

Food	25.00
Wedding cake	60.00
Prop food	100.00
Prop drinks	60.00

The film must be shot today. The church basement is not available on Sunday due to commitments to the local churchgoers.

Crew arrive at 8 a.m. to set up. Actors arrive at 9 a.m. for make-up and wardrobe. Dress rehearsal begins at 10 a.m. At 1 p.m., cast and crew break for at least an hour for lunch and at 2 p.m. the shoot begins.

The story revolves around the head table at the wedding reception. Since the production has just nine rolls of 1,000-foot film, which run at around 11 minutes each, the actors only have one take. The point of the rehearsals was to make them totally comfortable with the script and the dynamics of the shoot. If they stumble during a take there is no possibility of a retake. They must be able to recover, as in a stage play.

The DoP is using a wide-angle lens, which means that the entire room is in focus. By moving in close to an actor, that actor will appear close-up with the rest of the actors in frame and in focus. Handheld or with a dolly, the camera will move in and out of each actor's face, under the table and around the room in a fluid medium master shot.

At the end of each roll, the director will whisper 'cut', and the actors will keep on talking. The sound will keep rolling, and the magazine will be quickly changed (this should take no longer than a minute). On 'action' the camera will roll, and after about 100 minutes, the film will be shot. The sound is left running to allow for the possibilities of overlapping, or to allow for an edit whereby the picture cuts, and the sound is played over leader tape until the camera rolls again.

When the film is finished, the equipment is packed away for collection, and the cast and crew can party on the prop food!

Post-production

Develop negative at 6 p per foot × 9,000	540.00
Telecine at £100 per hour × 4 hours	400.00
Tape stock	200.00

Editing should be elementary on this project, but the key note here is to spend as much time as possible on sound: using ADR and foley as necessary in order to give the film playability.

Marketing Strategy

Play the film at festivals and try and get people talking about the film online in order to attract the attention of the acquisition executives.

One sheet	100.00
DVD preview discs	300.00
Press kits	300.00
Website	100.00

Robert Rodriguez made El Mariachi for \$7,500. We made our film for \$5,000.

Robert Rodriguez shot his on 16mm. We shot ours on 35mm!

Hint In Hollywood, they say if you can make a stage play look like cinema, then you have talent. You essentially have a stage play. If you have Hollywood talent, you will earn a sinful amount of money.

Sample £1,000 (\$1,500) Digital Shoot

The entire premise of this shoot is that it can be done in a day. The producer finds a playwright who has fashioned a series of five short radio

plays—dialogue only—that can be linked together in a series of locations. Perhaps the topic of the plays is ‘Dating Games’ or ‘Breaking Up’.

The actors meet and rehearse for a week in the director’s living room and they assemble in various locations on the shoot day, which can be any day of the week that suits.

The producer finds a cinematographer with their own DSLR camera with a 90-minute card and a camera stabilization device. The cinematographer recommends a sound recordist with their own equipment and the producer pays them £200 (\$300) each for a day.

On the shoot day, the actors assemble and everyone subscribes to a group SMS account and each performer goes to their location and wait for the “Action” SMS from the director.

At the first location, actors 1 and 2 start their scene. They are filmed using a fluid mastershot, with the cameraperson moving around and around them. At the climax of the scene actor 2 jumps up and runs outside followed by camera and sound. He or she hails a taxi—not a film taxi, but the next available taxi, and the actor and sound recordist pile into the back of the cab with the camera still rolling. The actor asks the driver to take them around the corner to the park, where they jump out, pay the fiver fare and walk into the park, where, seated on a park bench is actor 3, possibly actor 2’s ex-lover. Another conversation, another argument and this time actor 3 leaves followed by the crew in a structural device reminiscent of Richard Linklater’s *Dazed and Confused*.

If something goes terribly wrong, then a group SMS goes out. Actor 3 returns to the park bench, actor 2 comes back to the first location and another SMS ‘Take 2—Action’ goes out.

With a budget of £1,000 (\$1,500) there should be enough left over to take the cast and crew out for pizza and champagne afterwards.

Post-production

It is assumed that either the cameraperson or director can edit this project. A good deal of attention should be paid to the quality of the sound. (chapter 6).

Marketing Strategy

By developing social media, this type of film could really take off. Don’t expect instant gratification however. It took Oren Peli two years of hard work on his social media to attract the attention of the marketing executives at Paramount. Once they had seen his film, what they bought was not the movie, per se, but his social media strategy.

One sheet	100.00
DVD preview discs	300.00
Press kits	300.00
Website	100.00

Summary

1. Choose a budget that is realistic for your project.
2. Choose a project that is realistic for your budget.
3. Make the most of what you can get for free.

The first thing you need when you are making a film is *to decide which originating format you are going to use.*

Seven Essential Steps for Becoming Rich and Famous by Making a Low-Budget Film

Step 2 Find Some Money

Making a movie need not be expensive. One of the goals of this book is to demonstrate that you will not need as much money as you think you might. Filmmakers have welcomed the advent of digital filmmaking. While it is true that digital cameras and desktop editing systems have democratised the filmmaking process by making certain elements of the process cheaper, money is still needed.

How much is up to you. Some filmmakers shoot and record their own sound on a digital camera. Others, like Steven Spielberg, require crews of hundreds. Is Spielberg's film more valid because more people worked on it? Hardly so—it just looks (and sounds) different.

The main consideration when deciding how much money you need is to be realistic. It is fine and good to say you have a \$/£/€20 million budget, but the chances of that happening on your first film are very remote. Why not choose a simple project for your first film: one that takes place in a limited number of locations and is easy to shoot.

The bottom line is that many wannabe filmmakers use the fact that their budget is 60 per cent raised as a way to procrastinate, one of the three reasons you will not make your film. These same filmmakers are the ones who believe that filmmaking is hanging around the set with Cameron Diaz. If you are ever in a position where you have 60 per cent of your budget raised, why not reduce your budget by 40 per cent and shoot with the money you already have? You will quickly learn that the 60 per cent has been pledged with so many strings as to not really have existed in the first place.

The important thing to do is to find a project that fits with the amount of money you think you can raise in a specific period of time: for example 'I need £50,000 (\$75,000) in ninety days.' That way you will have a start date built into your schedule from the outset, which will help to build the immediacy of your project into every pitch.

Hint You cannot raise money until you have an excellent script (see step 1). Do not proceed further until you have found or written a superb script.

4 Originating Formats

IN THIS CHAPTER we discuss all the different picture originating formats and learn how to negotiate maximum value for the budget. Traditionally, movies were shot on costly film stock using expensive cameras and developed and processed at a lab, where money evaporated quicker than it could be raised. Sadly, in the low-budget world, film is dead. The end of an era, certainly, but not a passing that should necessarily be mourned. Digital technology has democratized filmmaking, ensuring that your indie movie can sit comfortably beside glossy Hollywood productions.

Before deciding on the format for your shoot, you have to consider the following variables: price, availability, quality, flexibility, artistic qualities and reliability.

No Budget—Toy Cameras and Phones

Modern phones and tiny handheld cameras are capable of recording HD pictures good enough to be shown in cinemas. While you may scoff at the idea of shooting your film on a phone, the fact of the matter is the results are head and shoulders above some pro offerings of just 10 years ago.

Advantages

The main advantage is that you may well already have one and can start shooting today. If you don't then you can pick one up online or in an electronics shop for £100 or less. Perhaps the biggest advantage of all is that you can use them to film just about anywhere. No one is going to hassle you for a permit for sneaking some shots on your phone. These cameras are generally point-and-shoot, so great for technophobes and perfect for making experimental shorts and web videos with your friends. There are also festivals out there dedicated to screening films shot on phones.

Limitations

The lower quality may be apparent on cinema screens and such cameras give you little control over the image either in camera or in post so you may find it difficult to achieve the look that you want. Audio features are also minimal and it is unlikely that there will be any inputs for an external microphone. You may also have trouble getting your cast and crew excited about the idea of shooting on a phone.

Park Chan
Wook, director
of Raindance-
screened *Oldboy*,
shot a 30-minute
film using an
iPhone 4.

Low Budget—DSLRs

The first DSLR to come bundled with a video mode was released in 2009. It wasn't long before they were embraced by the independent film community and they have since revolutionised the indie film world. The ability to achieve a shallow depth of field, and the high quality of their sensors, bring a truly cinematic look to the masses and best of all, they are within the reach of the tiniest budgets. DSLRs are frequently used in TV and have even been used to sneak shots on mega-budget Hollywood films like *The Avengers*.

DSLRs, like higher-end cameras, can be bought body only or with a bundled lens kit. DSLRs are not all made equal. Investigate the pros and cons of different cameras and packages.

Hint If you're buying, invest more money in the lenses. You will find you get better results with a cheaper camera with quality lenses than vice versa. Lenses are also more resistant to the relentless march of technology.

Many cameras have been touted as DSLR killers but none has managed to strike quite as strong a balance between quality and price tag. Most likely, DSLRs are here to stay for the time being.

Advantages

They're cheap! Just how cheap is up to you. Once you start adding lenses, grip accessories and external sound gear, the cost can add up but a basic kit can be hired for next to nothing. DSLRs have a hugely active online community behind them providing a wealth of tips and tutorials that will help you get the best results. There are even third-party software hacks, such as the popular Magic Lantern, that can extend your camera's features even further. However, these are to be used at your own risk as any damage caused to the camera will not be covered by the manufacturer's warranty.

What really sets these apart from the DV cameras of yesteryear is the range of lenses on offer and the ability to override any of the camera's settings. DSLRs offer a level of control that you won't find in camcorders in the same price range. They are small and lightweight, making them easy to lug from location to location, and record on inexpensive SD or CF cards.

Hint The small size of DSLRs means there's a wide range of affordable jibs and dollies. The low budget option? Strap the camera to a skateboard.

Limitations

With all the hyperbole surrounding them, you might get the impression that DSLRs can do no wrong but they do have several limitations. The lack of professional audio support necessitates separate sound recording. Avoid using

the in-built audio for anything other than a guide track to help with syncing up audio later. Fast pans and motion can result in a stuttering effect on earlier cameras. There is a misconception that the DSLR is quicker to shoot with than more expensive packages. It may be true that they are quick to transport and set up but once you start changing settings, swapping lenses and setting up your lights, they take the same level of effort and time that a higher-end camera would require, so for the get-in-get-out guerilla mentality they are not always the ideal solution. It depends on the particular look you are trying to achieve. DSLRs come with a number of restrictions on recording time. Cameras at the cheaper end of the scale record on SD cards which are still subject to 4 gb file size limits. This usually amounts to between 10 and 15 minutes of video depending on resolution. As well as this, to avoid taxation as a camcorder, video recording is artificially limited to just under 30 minutes in European cameras. Some cameras are also prone to overheating on longer shoots.

Prosumer Camcorders

Dedicated camcorders have fallen somewhat out of favour on indie productions with the lower budget being covered by DSLRs and those that can afford more going for digital cinema cameras. However they are still far more ideal for documentary work or features where a from-the-hip style might be more appropriate. There are also cameras like the Black Magic and the Canon C range that bridge the gap between DSLRs and the higher-end cameras. Unlike DSLRs, these have been designed specifically with the indie filmmaker in mind.

Advantages

These cameras come with a straightforward workflow and are a much more reliable workhorse than DSLRs, having been designed for the purpose. There are still some great cameras out there that use tape-based workflows. Tapes, archaic though they may be, free you from concerns about lost data and you can use them to permanently store your rushes. Camcorders are quick to set up and they're fit for purpose on their own. You don't have to worry about hauling around a selection of lenses and audio gear. It's pretty cheap to rent a full shooting kit.

Limitations

The limitations vary widely depending on which particular package you go for. You might find that some cameras are a little limited in terms of what you can do with the picture. You may have to get an adaptor to attach different lenses.

Digital Cinema Cameras

Advances in digital cinema over the past decade have been astonishing. These produce fantastic images equivalent to and even, according to some DoPs, surpassing 35mm film. Unlike film however, these cameras are now within reach of low-budget productions. The big companies are Red, Sony, Arri and Panasonic. Which brand you go for is more likely to be decided

by your DoP's experience or preference. There are several cameras specifically catered to the indie film and TV markets; lightweight cameras that still achieve fantastic results. Technology advances so fast that it's impossible to give specific recommendations here. When you make your film you should look at what current films have a look you want, and find out what camera they have been shot on. Ideally, contact the filmmakers—which is usually easiest at a film festival like Raindance—and ask them how it went.

Advantages

Digital images are stunning and far more practical to work with on set. Gone are the days when a director had to squint at a grainy black-and-white monitor to see their shot. There is a refreshing immediacy to it. Hard drive space is vastly cheaper than film stock and is reusable.

Shooting digital requires a different mindset to shooting on film. Many films are now shot 'flat', that is shot in a neutral way with the final look being created in post. This gives you a tremendous amount of flexibility.

Limitations

Digital cinema cameras produce hefty files and will require a dedicated workflow, and extra crew, to handle all the extra data. If handled haphazardly you could find yourself quite easily losing an entire day's footage! The post-production workflow can vary across cameras so make sure you communicate with your editor and camera department beforehand to ensure they're on the same page. You'll also most likely need to transcode your footage into a different format before editing as even top of the line editing systems still struggle with raw files. Many of the pros of digital have also been touted as cons. Some feel the look of digital is too sharp and lacks the magic of film. Being freed from the budgetary constraints of film stock can also lead to a lack of discipline on set with directors shooting much more footage than necessary. This results in much more material to trawl through in the edit which takes time and therefore money. Colour correction and image processing is no longer an optional stage; it's an essential part of the pipeline. Poorly handled colour correction can harm your film. Where possible employ a dedicated colourist.

Digital Q+A

What Are the Key Things that Affect Image Quality?

The size of the image sensor, more than anything else, determines the quality of the overall image.

What Other Physical Items Affect Image Quality?

Lenses and lighting. Cheap cameras have cheap lenses. Cheap cinematographers give you cheap lighting.

Progressive? Interlaced?

A progressive picture is, much like film, a series of still images. If you are trying to achieve the 'film look', progressive is the way to go. Interlaced means that one frame is interwoven with the next. Interlaced has a smoother motion which many feel is more TV.

2K / 4K?

The number of pixels that make up the image. 2K is 2048 × 1080. Exact resolutions for 4K vary but the most common in cinemas is 4096 × 2160. 4K is the new HD.

What is Raw?

Raw (sometime RAW) refers to footage that is uncompressed, meaning no data is shared between adjacent pixels (see 4:4:4 / 4:2:2 below). The lack of compression results in extra-large file sizes.

4:4:4 / 4:2:2 / 4:1:1?

These numbers detail the level of compression in an image. Without getting overly technical, the first 4 indicates that the image has been broken down into blocks of 4 pixels. The second two numbers show how much chromatic data is shared between pixels. In 4:4:4 each pixel has its own unique colour value. In 4:2:2, two pixels will share the same data.

Originating on Film

Film is still used as an originating format. There are some directors, Tarantino for one, who insist on shooting all their films on 35mm.

Super 8

The Straight 8 Film Festival in London operates a clever entry policy: they only take single rolls of undeveloped film. All entries are accepted. The Festival develops the films, spools them together and screens them, sight unseen, at the festival!

In May 1965 a new film format—Super8 film—was introduced by the Eastman Kodak Company. The original standard 8mm film had been derived by dividing 16mm film in half. Sprocket holes were punched in both sides of the film, so that the gears in the camera move the film along. Then, engineers discovered how the film could be advanced using just a single set of sprocket holes down one side of the film, leaving the extra margin for picture. So Super8 film has a larger picture area than standard 8mm, which is hardly ever used anymore. Today a filmmaker can acquire a sophisticated array of Super8 cameras and lenses for a very modest outlay.

16mm/Super16

16mm and its sister, Super16 were used primarily because of the cheapness of camera equipment hire and film costs, in comparison to 35mm. In addition, the cameras are a great deal lighter than 35mm. As with Super8, Super16 has holes down just one side of the film, allowing for a greater image capture area.

35mm/Super35

35mm film stock was once the industry standard format when shooting on film.

For full details on originating on film, visit www.lotonobudgetfilmmaking.com.

Choosing a Format

Ask yourself the following questions before choosing a format:

1. What sort of production are you undertaking? Is it a mockumentary with a large number of handheld shots that would suit a lightweight camera? Or is it a drama to be shot in a secure location or studio in which a large format camera would work best? Are there a lot of panoramic and pan shots, which would be difficult to capture on lower budget kits?
2. What sort of distribution are you planning (internet/festivals, DVD/Blu-ray, broadcast, theatrical)?
3. Does your finished film need to play in a cinema? This alone might dictate whether you should shoot on a more expensive camera.
4. What physical aesthetics of the camera appeal to you? Does it feel right when you are using it? Do you know your camera and are you familiar with its capabilities and limitations?
5. Can your budget afford the camera you have chosen? If not, are you using lack of money as a way of procrastinating and not making a movie? Get a cheaper format and shoot!
6. Have you considered how the format you have chosen will impact your post-production budget?
7. Consult everybody you can contact, but don't let anyone dictate which format you use. Make sure you understand the reasons why you have chosen the particular format, and be prepared to defend your choice to everyone.
8. Digital video does not mean cheap. Look at your phone as a 'highly concentrated camera'.

Summary

1. Choose the format that suits you, your budget and your project.
2. Make sure you consult with the other members of the team: cinematographer and editor.
3. If you are not sure about something—ask!

If you thought that was complicated, try talking to a lab!

5

The Camera Package

Can you believe that during a 100-minute movie we sit in pitch black for an hour? This is part of the magic of cinema—we accept this distortion, this contrivance. We would never say to a loved one 'Do you want to sit in a black room for an hour?' Instead we say: 'Honey, let's see a movie.'

In recent years the industry has begun to experiment with higher frame rates. Peter Jackson's *The Hobbit* was screened at 48 fps instead of the traditional 24 fps. The effect polarised audiences. Some felt that the higher frame was uncinematic and looked more like television. Others praised the more true-to-life motion.

THE BASIS OF MOTION picture camera technology was invented in 65 BC. The Roman poet Lucretius proposed a theory called persistence of vision that basically states that when the human eye views an object under bright light, the image remains for one tenth of a second after the light source is turned off. Ptolemy of Alexandria proved the theory 200 years later.

A movie is made of a sequence of many individual pictures or frames, each slightly different from the previous one. In each second of a movie, there are 24 frames. Because of persistence of vision, our eye does not interpret each single frame but rather a fluid continuous motion.

How Film Cameras Work

A movie is captured on film using a motion picture camera. The camera is loaded with film made of a material called celluloid coated with light-sensitive material. The celluloid has holes punched into it either down both sides or just one side—depending on the gauge or format. The holes, called sprocket holes, allow a gear mechanism in either a camera or projector to advance it.

Like a stills camera, a movie camera takes separate still images but is constructed to take twenty-four stills every second. In order to separate the images from each other, the film must stop behind the lens each frame. The image is then recorded, and a shutter closes to allow the film to be advanced to the next frame. A device known as the claw inserts itself in the film holes in order to advance it. It stops for each frame to allow the shutter to open. This series of operations happens at the very fast rate of twenty-four times per second. In digital cameras the basic process is very similar. Rather than film stock, the camera's sensor is exposed to light.

Camera Movement

Sitting as director of Raindance Film Festival in London, I have had the privilege of seeing several thousand films a year (lots are shorts!). One of my favourite cinema experiences is watching camera movement.

One of the primary differences between American and European cinema is camera movement. European directors (until very recently) tend to place

Equipment for moving cameras is called grip equipment. Independent cinema has been awash with poor camera movement giving it a tainted nickname of 'shaky camera' movies in some circles, although exaggerated camera movement is now seen in mainstream movies like *Clowerfield* and *Children of Men*.

Professional cinematographers use the zoom very sparingly and generally prefer to move the camera. Amateurs love the zoom and can create some very nauseating motion by combining zooms and rapid pans. A zoom changes the angle of display so spatial relationships also change.

the camera on a tripod and use pans, zooms and tilts (see below) whereas American filmmakers tend to keep the camera moving, even if it is barely perceptible.

Camera movement can be the result of physically moving the camera or an apparent movement when using the zoom control. Camera motion should only be used with a purpose and in a manner that is not visually disturbing. Walking around the room with a camera or frequent panning between speakers can distract the viewer from the action and dialogue. While it is not unusual to see professionals use camera movement, they have access to equipment beyond the consumer grade camcorder and tripod. Camera movement should be a rarely used method when using consumer grade equipment. The three primary camera movements are the zoom, pan/tilt and track.

Hint Camera movement is vital to cinema because in our own life, our eyes (our cameras) are mounted on our necks and are continuously moving.

Zoom

A zoom refers to using your camera controls to change the focal length, resulting in a telescope-like magnification of the view. On film cameras operators can choose between motor-driven or manual-driven zooms. Some filmmakers use camcorders with a smooth-slow zoom, but most produce a more jerky result. The recommendation is to zoom only for a specific purpose such as to emphasise size or to indicate entry. Zooming can be distracting unless it is done for a purpose. Cutting between a series of closer and closer shots will be easier to watch and achieves the same effect.

Hint Zooming makes the image flatten onto the screen and reduces audience involvement. A more effective way to enlarge an object is to track in (see below).

Pan and Tilt

Panning refers to sweeping your camera lens across the scene horizontally, tilting is the same movement vertically. Panning and tilting can be a distracting or even disorienting technique. Pan or tilt only for a specific purpose such as to show size. For example, while a speaker describes a classroom setup, a cut-away to a slow pan across the room might be appropriate. Never pan or tilt just to change the framing unless you will be able to edit out the pan. Attempting to pan or tilt with a handheld camera or low-cost tripod head will lead to a jerky movement which betrays you as a rank amateur. A good tripod head provides an adjustable and constant resistance to movement preventing jerky changes in motion in a horizontal pan or vertical tilt. Even with a good tripod it takes experience to pan and tilt correctly.

Hint A fast, blurred pan from actor to actor is called a whip-pan and is used to emphasise speed or highly charged emotion.

Track

Tracking refers to following moving objects within the scene by actually moving the camera at the same rate. This gives the viewer a feeling of walking or riding along beside the camera's subject. While this is common in professional films, the professional has equipment that you may not. The typical process for tracking involves building something similar to a small railroad track upon which the camera and tripod roll. You can use just about any wheeled object to support your camera for a tracking shot. The best no-budget alternative is to use a porter's dolly with pneumatic wheels that can be softened to absorb bumps. Another alternative if you are shooting outside is to use the back of a car which is then pushed by a few camera assistants.

Dolly

A dolly shot is a shot that either moves the camera closer to your subject (tracking in, or dolly in shot) or moves across the face of your subject (crab shot).

Professional grip equipment contains a wheeled dolly and track upon which the dolly sits and is pushed (see grip equipment below).

The Camera

Certain functions of the camera can also be controlled in order to manipulate the image.

Film Drive and Transport Mechanisms (Film Cameras)

Film drives transport the film to the film gate and operate the shutter and take up the film from the supply reel. Cameras require energy to operate, and these energy sources are called film drives. Film drives are designed to eliminate and drive roller contact with the film emulsion surfaces, thereby reducing the risk of scratching and damaging the films. Precise film tracking is ensured through use of individual 16mm and 35mm exposure rollers, which have the added benefit of ensuring proper resolution by maintaining the film at exactly the correct distance from the lens.

Tachometer (Film Cameras)

A tachometer is a gauge on a camera measuring the film speed when the camera is running.

In the Online Resources you will find a short extract from my feature, *Table 5*, which demonstrates a crab to dolly shot.

During the infamous 'Squidgy' tape affair in the UK (the Princess Diana and James Hewitt telephone conversations), Jon Jost, the American cult filmmaker and I hatched a plan for a short film. The idea was to find a scientific camera capable of shooting 1,000 frames per second (they are used for filming controlled car accidents and bullets leaving guns) with a 10,000-foot magazine (again, created for scientific experiments). We were going to place a Prince Charles look-alike actor in front of Buckingham Palace and have the camera arrive in front of the actor in a van. The back doors would fling open, and I was going to throw a cream pie at the Prince. The entire scene would then be filmed at 1,000 frames per second. Played back at 24 fps, the pie would edge slowly across the screen toward Prince Charles, while the soundtrack would play the voice of his wife and her lover. The film was timed

Shutter Speed

A shutter is a light-blocking device that controls the duration of light exposure to the film negative or camera sensor. A shutter's primary function is to establish a consistent exposure.

The second function performed by the shutter is found only in a variable-type shutter. Just like the shutter speed of a 35SLR stills camera, a variable shutter provides the means to reduce the duration of exposure, independent of the frame rate (frames or exposures per second). Since motion picture film exposes at a rate of 24 frames per second, a motion picture camera's theoretical shutter speed is 1/48 of a second—at best (If you are shooting at 25 fps then you would set the shutter speed to 1/50 of a second). In fact, most shutters run slightly faster. If you've shot stills at a shutter speed under 1/100 of a second, you know that shooting a moving object will blur. You also know that to kill that motion blur, you'll have to speed the exposure up (which also means you'll have to go to a wider f-stop to maintain the same overall exposure). In a motion picture camera, the exposure can be sped up, not by spinning the shutter faster, but by reducing the angle of the shutter. That's why shutter speed on a motion picture camera is graduated in degrees.

The camera's shutter speed can also be varied to be slower (to create a speeded up look) or faster (to create a slow-motion look). Regardless of the speed it was shot at, wherever the film is shown in the world, the projector will run at 24 frames per second.

While in South America filming, cinematographer Christopher Doyle realised that he was running out of film stock. As there was no possibility of getting him fresh supplies of film stock, he simply looked at his shooting schedule and shot the balance of the film, nearly a third of the script, at 10 and 12 frames per second. For that, he has been called a genius of style.

Lenses

Lenses are glass or plastic filters put in front of the shutter to distort the image that enters the camera. A cinematographer will use a series of lenses to 'paint' the scene.

Each lens has a different field of view, most commonly referred to as depth of field. Sometimes in a movie you will see a close-up where the actor's face is in focus, but everything behind their ears is out of focus. Field of view is determined by the type of lens on the camera. A sensible camera package will contain a selection of several lenses. The smaller the number on the lens, the wider the angle. A 10mm lens is fish eye, a 50mm lens approximates human sight and a 200mm lens focused on an actor would clearly define a nostril, with the rest of the face out of focus.

Lens Sharpness and Contrast

Lens sharpness is the lens's ability to render and reproduce very fine details onto the film or sensor. It is desirable that a subject should render on film the equivalent contrast as the scene in reality—this is the quality known as lens

to last six and a half minutes—the length of the tape.

The field of view (FOV) is the angle described by a cone with the vertex at the camera's position. It is determined by the camera's focal length, with the shorter the focal length the wider the FOV. For example, for a 35mm lens the FOV is 63° (wide angle), for a 50mm lens it is 46° (normal), and for a 135mm lens it is 18° (telephoto). A wide-angle lens exaggerates depth while a telephoto lens minimises depth differences.

Current DSLRs will eventually be replaced by 'third generation cameras'. These cameras do away with the mirror and shutter. Point and shoot cameras that are currently used in mobile phones and cheap digital stills cameras are examples of these. What does this mean for filmmakers? Lightweight cameras and lower prices. The lack of physical moving parts also opens the door to higher frame rates and more durable cameras.

contrast. A successful black and white or colour scene should have a pure white highlight area and a pure black shadow area as well as the ability to render and reproduce subtle tones in colour.

Camera Rental

Below are the component parts that you would expect to receive when renting a digital camera kit.

Camera body

This is the basic camera unit to which all of the other accessories and attachments are fitted.

Magazine / storage media

In the case of film, a magazine was a removable, light-proof case into which a camera assistant (called the clapper/loader) loads the film stock. Digital cameras use flash-based memory. Cheaper cameras use cheap SD cards and CF cards. More expensive camera packages, like the Red, use their own brand of storage media.

Lenses

A typical lens kit will consist of a set of 10mm, 25mm, 50mm, 85mm and 125mm lenses.

Sometimes a zoom lens is used, allowing for focal lengths from 10–200mm to be used on a single lens without having to change. The disadvantage of this lens is that extra panes of glass require much more light, and may rule out certain types of lighting scenarios.

Matt box

A device which fixes to the camera body to prevent stray light from entering the camera.

Batteries

A charger and batteries are supplied with the camera body. They must be recharged and kept ready for the camera.

Monitor

The camera will come with a small monitor to be mounted on the camera body. These are typically about 7 inches wide.

Aperture control

Used to control the aperture electronically. Used during complex shots.

Follow focus

Device which allows the focus of a lens to be altered during a shot such as when an actor is moving.

Zoom control

Device which controls the rate of a zoom smoothly.

The main manufacturers of 35mm camera equipment were: Panavision, Arri, Moviecam, Aaton and Mitchel, of whom only Panavision and Arri have made the jump into digital. Other manufacturers of professional level digital cameras are RED, Canon, Panasonic, Nikon, Sony and Black Magic.

Light meter

Device used to measure the amount of light in a scene. A spot meter measures the amount of light reflected from a selected area. An incident light meter is used to measure the light falling around a subject.

Filters

Used to convert between tungsten and daylight.

Head

The device that attaches the camera to the tripod.

Legs

A tripod. Long and short legs refer to the height of the tripod.

Barney

A rubber jacket that is draped over the camera body to help deaden the mechanical noise.

Negotiation Techniques

Most camera rental facilities will rent a camera to you at much less than their normal rate if you negotiate with them professionally and consider the special needs that they have in order to run their business.

How Camera Rentals are Negotiated

Camera rentals are priced by the day. If you need a camera for a week, you in fact pay for 5 days and keep the camera for nine: pick up on Friday and return on the following Monday. You can negotiate a 4-day week, a 3-day week, a 2-day week, or even a 1-day week where you pay for 1 day but keep the camera for 9 days (See figure 3.2 on page 26). Other filmmakers will pay a 1-day weekend rental, rent the camera on a Friday and return it on Monday morning—getting nearly 3 days' use for the price of one.

How successful you are at getting a cheap deal will depend on your ability to negotiate with the rental company, your passion for your project and the availability of equipment.

Requirements of a Cheap Camera Rental Deal

1. Demonstrate that you know how to use and care for the equipment. If you don't know how to use the equipment, send your camera operator to the hire facility for a training session.
2. Present them with a valid insurance certificate. No one will let an expensive piece of kit out of their warehouse without insurance. Your insurance will need to cover not just replacement if the kit is damaged or stolen but also

the rental company's loss of revenue through having no kit to hire out until a replacement can be sourced.

3. You must understand their other clients. It is no good to expect a free camera in the summer months when they are busy. Perhaps you should schedule your shoot over Christmas or Easter when they are nearly closed.
4. Make the camera rental call your last. Facilities managers are very busy. If they agree to rent you a camera cheaply, and then you postpone, it is unlikely you will get them to agree to another cheap deal.
5. Don't expect the best camera in the place. All rental facilities will have brand new kit which they rent out at full list price to large production companies. If you learn to know what their inventory is, you have a far better chance of getting their older cameras (which are just as good technically) at a cheap price.

Summary

1. Choose the package that suits your story and your budget.
2. Understand the possibilities and limitations of the camera that you intend to use.
3. Keep the camera moving.
4. Look after the kit, and it will look after you.

Collecting images is just part of the filmmaking process. Next we discuss sound recording.

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6

Sound

IF THERE IS ANYTHING I have learned about filmmaking, it is that soundtrack can make or break a movie. A soundtrack is often as complicated as the image on the screen. The entire soundtrack is composed of three essential ingredients: the dialogue, the sound effects and the music. These three ingredients must be mixed and balanced together to create the effect of real sound.

Three Sound Ingredients

Dialogue

When the dialogue is recorded so the voice texture suits the character, the audience witnesses a very real person on the screen. If the sound is improperly recorded and the voice texture does not suit the character, the audience sees an actor struggling with their craft. Recorded properly, the audience sees a character struggling with life.

Sound Effects

Sound effects are those sounds matched to what is viewed on the screen. For example, if an actor is walking across a marble floor, his/her footsteps are recorded and matched to the picture in order to enhance the realism of the movie.

In some cases the audience does not need to be aware of the sound and so it is not recorded or added to the soundtrack, for example, the sound of a window sliding open in an office. In other circumstances, for example, during a scene showing a cat burglar entering a bedroom, the sound of the window opening might be exaggerated in order to create suspense.

Asynchronous sound effects are sound effects that are not matched with a visible source of the sound on screen. Such sounds are included so as to provide an appropriate emotional nuance, and they may also add to the realism of the film.

Music

Film music is used to add emotion and rhythm to a film. It often provides a tone or an emotional attitude toward the story and/or the characters depicted. Music often foreshadows a change in mood. Music can also be used to link

Often Hollywood will use loud music to try to disguise a bad scene or sequence. Mike Figgis, the director, writer, composer and editor calls this 'shagging the movie'.

scenes. This is most often used to associate certain characters or locations with themes. Modern film soundtracks are brilliantly conceived pieces in which the composers and sound editors play on the subconscious of the audience.

Recording Location Sound

Good sound recording is the keystone of a good film. Location sound recording is a vital element in the post-production process. Poor location sound recording can be costly and time consuming to correct.

Sound Crew

The adage of hiring the best crew and equipment you can afford is of special importance in sound recording. A small increase in expenditure on sound recording can save thousands in post. A good sound recordist will attack sound on the set and solve problems before they arise.

One-person sound crew

A one-person crew has a very limited capacity. The microphone is physically tied into the recorder or the camera via cables, thereby restricting the movement of the microphones and the sound recordist, as well as the quality of sound that they can record.

Two-person sound crew

A two-person crew is more versatile and, should your investors turn up, more impressive. A truly theatrical quality soundtrack can be achieved. Usually one person operates a mixer from near the camera, and the other operates a boom in a strategic position near the talent.

Sound Consistency

There are three aspects of consistency that the sound recordist must be attentive to:

1. Consistency within the shot.
2. Consistency between shots within the scene.
3. Consistency between scenes.

Sound levels should remain relatively constant between actors and also between background ambiances in each slot. Actors are not expected to match each other in terms of recording level; variations are normal. But their own level should remain consistent throughout. As they banter, the actors' audio should appear somewhat constant. There should be no unwarranted sudden changes in volume except when justified by dramatic intent.

If you were to close your eyes, the changes in audio from shot to shot should not be unnatural or unexpected. This is not to say that if an actor walks

distantly away from camera that his voice level should not diminish. Of course it should, as it would in real life. But a variation in camera angle (as opposed to a change in actor location within the set, visual or implied) does not warrant a major change in audio levels. However, a major change in camera location may justify a change in relative audio, particularly the background sound levels.

For example: if the first scene in a sequence is in an office, the second is in the emergency stairwell and the third is inside an ambulance, or on the street, it is clear that each scene will have to be adjusted to account for the very different levels of ambient noise in the locations.

Changes in audio levels are inevitable. Recording sound is an art form, and the nature of production is such that certain variables like ambient noise and mic placement are often beyond the control of the sound person. The principle of location sound recording is to try to keep the sound level changes to a minimum. Any flaws are then fixed in post-production.

Microphones

Recording sound requires a microphone input of some kind. Getting good sound requires some understanding of how a microphone works.

How a Microphone Works

Popping and smacking refer to the different aspirant noises made by actors when speaking. Each actor will have a different popping and smacking range, depending on their pronunciation and accent.

A microphone is an electromagnetic device that has an element that acts as a reed, which vibrates when hit by sound. The 'reed' causes a flux in the surrounding electromagnetic field that generates a signal. The weak signal flux is relayed down a cable to the input jack on the recorder where it is amplified and recorded. The electromagnetic field surrounding the reed (which is a very sensitive paper and carbon element) can be vibrated by the wind or interfered with by extraneous electromagnetic fields.

A foam or athletic sock over a microphone will eliminate wind racket and moderate 'popping' and 'smacking' from the actors' lips. All wires are protected (over their entire length) from external electromagnetic fields by a sheath of metallic braid.

Types of Microphones

On-camera microphone

As a rule, try to avoid using any on-camera microphones. Not only are they usually poor quality mics, but on-camera is a very poor position from which to record high-quality sound. A sensitive mic will pick up all the humming of the camera, plus ambient noise, and any noise the cameraman makes, rendering dialogue recording nearly worthless.

You can use a high-quality boom mic and plug it into the camera if you have an XLR balance box.

Lavalier microphone

Tie-clip microphones are called Lavalier. Some are wireless and much more susceptible to electromagnetic interference. There are good affordable wireless

models but these may complicate your shots (it's just one more thing that can go wrong). These are great microphones for interviews and can be well hidden while filming an action scene that includes dialogue. Each of the wireless microphones has its own radio frequency, so that the sound is received separately from each actor before being mixed together.

Cardioid microphone

These have patterns that cover a spherical zone like your ears do. These are good for some work but act like on-camera microphones at a distance, picking up everything you don't want to hear.

Shotgun microphone

For wide shots where the microphone must not enter the frame, a shotgun microphone is very useful for isolating the actors' voices because it is unidirectional. It only picks up sound in a very narrow pattern that cancels peripheral or ambient sounds while getting clean reception of the sounds within its narrow reception pattern.

Boom microphone

A microphone attached to the end of a boom or rod enables you to extend a microphone over an actor's head without the need for the operator to enter the frame. This is especially helpful during wide shots. You'll notice that a professional mike boom has a rubber band-like suspension cage at the far end that isolates the mic from the vibrations from the operator's hands. If a mic was taped to the end of a boom without this insulation, every finger movement would send that sound straight through the stick and right into the microphone. That sound would drown out any dialogue.

It's All Just a Chain

The easiest way to discuss location sound is to think of the entire audio path as a chain. In the case of location sound, the 'links' are:

- The sound itself.
- The microphone(s) that capture the sound.
- The cables and connectors that carry the signal from the microphone to the mixing or routing device and from the mixing or routing device to the recording device.
- The mixing or routing device that carries the signal from the microphone to the recording device.
- The recording device itself (camera, hard disc recorder or DAT recorder).
- The monitoring circuit of the recording device.

Just as in an actual chain, the audio path is only as strong as the weakest link. This means that a high-quality, accurate recording device paired with a low-quality microphone will not be able to record anything better than what the microphone is capable of picking up. It means that a great microphone

and audio mixer paired with a substandard recording device will only be able to record to the limitations of the device's recording circuit.

Hint Five sound principles

1. The principles of location sound are the same for almost everyone shooting anything.
 2. No matter who the audience is, at the very least they expect 'transparent' sound.
 3. Sound conveys emotion—picture conveys information.
 4. The better your soundtrack, the less it is consciously noticed.
 5. The closer the microphone is to the sound source, the better you will record what you want your audience to hear.
-

Sound as Picture

The immense popularity of digital filmmaking, combined with sophisticated editing tools, means that the average person now has the means to produce work of quality. The one area that most new filmmakers ignore is sound; many independent, lo-to-no budget projects seem doomed to suffer with sound that ranges from merely average to barely usable. Audiences today expect 'transparent' sound on your soundtrack.

It is a surprising truth that almost all of the emotional impact of a film comes from the soundtrack. Test this out by watching a favourite scene from a movie with the volume turned off. Typically, the moving images on their own have little emotional impact. What may be less obvious to you if you are new to film and video is that audiences of all kinds now expect to be entertained while you are conveying your message. Emotional involvement from your audience is what defines good entertainment. Your sound is largely what will determine whether your project is entertaining to your audience. Unless you want to conceive your project as a 'silent film', you have to be concerned ('obsessed' might be a better term) with your project's sound.

One of the toughest concepts for many filmmakers to grasp is that the better job you do with your project's sound, the less it will be noticed. This concept is one of the reasons why most projects don't end up with very high-quality soundtracks. We are very used to spending time, effort and money on a better camera, lens, bigger and better lighting, crew and visual effects and seeing an immediate payoff when our images are viewed. It's instantly recognisable if a scene is lit effectively or if a visual effect is done well. We feel justified in shooting on a higher quality, more expensive format or with a bigger crew because the end result is usually easily identifiable on screen. Most of us can immediately recognise if a project was shot on 35mm film versus digital or if a project's motion graphics or visual effects were well executed. If we notice a sound mix though, it is usually because the sound was done incompetently. This is the central concept of 'transparent' sound. If your location sound is recorded correctly, the easier it will be to work with the basic audio during the post-production process.

Another surprising fact of sound is that a poor soundtrack will make the picture look dim. If you have ever witnessed a cinema screening when the volume is too low, the act of straining to hear the dialogue makes the picture dim.

As Raintance was about to start the filming of *Love.Honour.Obey*, the sound issue had yet to be decided! As the producer, I was trying to convince the director, the sound recordist and the editor that recording directly into the camera is as good as recording the sound separately. I calculated that recording the audio directly into the camera via a good microphone and connection into the camera could save three man-weeks of synching sound to picture.

Fortunately this story has a happy ending: The sound was recorded separately, but since we had an editor and Digital Imaging Technician on set, the editor was able to sync the sound directly each day. The sound recordist also brought a foley artist, meaning that the ADR and foley were created on the day in the shoot saving significant amounts of time and money in post-production and a week in the editing process.

Hint The better job you do with the sound during video and audio editing, the less the audience will notice it. The only sound that is noticed in a visual medium is poorly executed. Great sound works on a subconscious level with the viewer by drawing them into what they are viewing. Great sound supports and enhances the stories you are trying to tell.

Recording Sound in Camera

There is a lot to be said for recording sound in camera, particularly on a low-budget shoot. Most low-budget digital cameras, DSLRs included, record a stereo audio track along with the footage. The built-in microphone is to be avoided as they pick up the hum of the camera and will be too distant from the action to record effective sound. They will usually have one stereo audio input that will allow the use of an external microphone but in most cases you will have little control of the recording levels in camera. Higher-end cameras, such as prosumer camcorders, will have multiple inputs that will allow you to record different audio tracks to each channel and will often have four channels of audio, allowing for two stereo inputs. Digital cameras record sound using a process called pulse code modulation (PCM). The quality of the recording is determined by two factors: sample rate and bit depth.

The Meaning of 16-bit and 24-bit

When sound is captured by a microphone, it is converted into a digital signal. This process includes both sampling and quantisation. The higher the sampling and quantisation rates, the better the data represents the original sound.

The analogue signal is like a wave, with peaks and valleys. Sampling measures this wave at specified intervals so the wave can be reassembled when it is played back. The more frequently the wave is sampled, the more accurately it can be reconstructed later. Most digital cameras record 16-bit audio where the audio is sampled 48,000 times per second (48kHz).

Quantisation converts the measured value into a digital number. In digital video, the value is stored using 16 bits, or at higher quality using 24 bits (96kHz). The more bits used to store the audio, the more accurately it can be played back, but the larger the size of the file. Sixteen-bit can use 65,536 different numbers to represent any sample while 24-bit can use a whopping 16,777,216 numbers.

In Camera or Sync Sound?

When working on a digital production of some significance (e.g. a feature), the question of how to record sound invariably comes up. Specifically, do you record sound directly into the camera or use a separate audio recorder? A typical sound recordist's response is to use a separate audio recorder because the quality is better. But consider the additional work of recording

sound and picture separately and then combining them in the editing process. By recording directly into the camera, no syncing is required.

Sweetening the Soundtrack

It is a fact that most of the sound we hear from a Hollywood movie is sweetened in post-production using ADR and foley. Although sound is recorded on set and on location, it is considered to be of inferior quality when compared to studio sound and is usually discarded in its entirety. Plenty of studio time is always budgeted and scheduled for the talent to come back in to do ADR.

ADR

ADR is automatic dialogue replacement. An actor's contract will stipulate that some weeks after the shoot they are contractually bound to return to a post-production sound facility to do ADR, which is also sometimes called looping.

They stand in a sound booth with a good microphone and watch the edited scenes play on a screen. They listen to the original sound on headphones (called the guide track) and on cue redo the dialogue.

At this point the director is still able to alter the performance. They can say louder or softer, but not quicker or slower. Often the actor will be asked to say the line many times, in different ways, to give the editor and the director dramatic options in the final mix.

It is also possible to rerecord dialogue in a homemade ADR facility. All you need is a quiet room, a television, the original soundtrack and a good microphone. Try to make the room as acoustically dead as possible. Choose a carpeted room and hang curtains or other materials around the walls to cut down on reverb.

Foley

Foley is the recreation of sound effects. A foley studio consists of a screen and in front of the screen a series of floor coverings or foley pits with several different surfaces: gravel, sand, wood, marble, grass, shag carpet and regular carpet. The foley artist (also sometimes called a 'walker') looks at the screen and sees what sort of surface the character is walking on, and what sort of shoes the actor is wearing: high heels, boots or trainers. He (and they are, for some reason, most often male) selects the appropriate footwear and walks with the same rhythm as the actor. When the feet are not visible, as in a medium shot, the artist will still be able to guess the type of footwear from the way the actor is walking. The sound of his footsteps are then recorded and added to the final soundtrack.

The foley artists also do sound effects for things like handshakes, breathing and rustling clothes (body noise). Foley also refers to other sound effects like running water, door slams and gunshots.

Foley sound is often tweaked in the mix so that it is much louder than the sound that would normally be heard. The three top foley noises are:

- Footsteps.
- Paper.
- Body noise.

Hint If you listen carefully to the soundtrack of any film on television or in the cinema, you will hear loud footsteps and other atmospheric or incidental noises amplified out of proportion to their actual or natural sound. We, the audience, have come to accept this and don't notice how exaggerated it can be.

Sound Design

The importance of soundtracks has led to an entirely new breed of professional called a sound designer. A sound designer recreates the emotional impact of everyday sounds using unrelated noise and music to create the emotion of the sound.

One of the first movies to recognise and do this was the Coen Brothers movie *Barton Fink*. In the boxing scene, what we hear when the middle aged boxer hits the deck is not the sound of flab on canvas, but the sound of wood splintering.

Summary

1. Get the best chain of sound equipment you can.
2. Make recording excellent location sound a priority.
3. Allow for a proper ADR and foley budget to sweeten the soundtrack.
4. Consider the editing process and choose a sound system that your editing system can support.
5. Remember to consider the emotional impact of sound.

Roland Heap is an experienced sound recordist, editor and supervisor whose credits include *Borges and I* (2009), *Baseline* (2010) and *Ill Manors* (2011). He runs the audio post facility Sound Disposition.

You have hired a sound recordist. Now let's consider the pictures you want to capture, and the role of the person in charge of capturing them.

In Conversation with Roland Heap

How did you get started in your career in sound?

I started my career working as an assistant engineer at the prestigious Abbey Road studios. As I could read music I primarily worked on film score recording sessions, often with full orchestras. We would receive a work-copy of the film without the final sound on it; listening to the rough offline sound and then

hearing the difference when the film was fully mixed triggered a fascination with the whole process of sound for picture. I also spent a while working as an assistant to a sound recordist on location on a TV comedy series. The equipment and techniques had similarities with those used in the studios but also many differences—I learnt more in that short period than I could have imagined. I then worked as a boom operator for a while and, before long, was working as a fully fledged sound recordist on an assortment of independent films. Curious in the future of my recordings, I began to learn about the process of sound post-production. I discovered I had a natural flair for sound editing and design. In 2008 I formed Sound Disposition. From the outset I intended it to be a different sort of sound service provider. I now divide my time between running the company and mixing and sound-supervising our feature films.

What services does Sound Disposition offer, and do you often work as a team? (I see you are one of four people listed on the website.)

Sound Disposition is unlike other sound post facilities for a number of reasons—but the primary one is what we call ‘holistic’ sound. By this I mean that we look at the sound for the entire film as one entity, right from the script. This can mean anything from planning workflow and offering creative ideas during pre-production, recording great sound on location, offering workflow assistance and useful materials during the edit, as well as our primary work during post-production right the way through to deliverables. The same team is involved at inception and completion, the team all know each other, production has only one point of contact and that means the process is consistent and organised. We can therefore avoid painful surprises, there is no buck-passing and we can be highly efficient which means we can charge sensible amounts for our work. In this era of belt-tightening that is extremely important.

This also means that ideas and themes developed with the director at the outset are considered properly at each stage, making for a more coherent sound narrative and better serving the director’s vision.

Everyone in the team has a good knowledge of the other disciplines—our location recordists have experience in post-production roles, and most of our post guys have recorded at least one full feature film on location. This is very unusual, but gives us a huge advantage as we truly understand and can anticipate the challenges each of us might face. We maintain a constant and meaningful dialogue and exchange of ideas, inspire each other, share thoughts about new techniques and technologies and no preconception goes unchecked.

At the studios we have a range of suites designed for the different disciplines during post-production—dialogue editing, foley, sound design, premixing and mixing. We try to make it playful and fun, welcoming and enjoyable to visit and work there.

What skills does a sound recordist need on set, and a sound editor in the studio, to stand out in their field?

I’ve had the pleasure of working with some incredible people on both location and post-production, and whilst they all approach their work in different ways there are certainly similar traits which can be defined.

Sound isn't fundamentally difficult or as technical as you might assume, but you need a good technical mind to troubleshoot issues as and when they occur. A solid technical intelligence goes a long way.

Good social skills and a level head are also invaluable. Quite often on location you'll be faced with seemingly impossible challenges, but if you've got the support of the other crew members and a calm disposition it's usually possible to find a solution.

What problems do you encounter in your work?

Shrinking budgets and schedules do make it trickier to get the great results we all strive for—but whilst it's easy to complain about this, it's an industry-wide issue, and is a sign of our changing times. Nobody is immune! The solution is not to whinge, but to change. At Sound Disposition we're constantly seeking new workflows, new technologies, new ways of going about what we do to make it more efficient—resulting in cost savings for productions and more time to spend on the fun and creative side of sound.

On location, the sidelining of sound as a priority seems to be becoming more commonplace. There is a lack of understanding of the value of good location sound amongst some up-and-coming filmmakers which is a disturbing trend. We hear horror stories about recordists unable to get the results they want due to a myriad of factors—poor location choices, making good microphone placement difficult through framing decisions, ignoring requests for wildtracks and room tones, the list goes on and on.

These are the hallmarks of inexperience. That said, it's normally only an issue on a director's first film—once they have been dragged through days and days of reparative ADR and have had to lose some prized on-set performances they usually give their recordist a lot more leeway the next time around!

What's the best way to record ADR and Foley?

Let's deal with these separately. With ADR . . . well, the best thing is to avoid the need for it entirely! This is achieved through thorough planning, cooperation on set and using good recording techniques in the field. But if you have to record it, the best option is to go to a studio. They have the technology to do it properly, and will ensure what you record is a good match for the original. However, if budget doesn't permit, it is possible to do it yourself. The key things to remember when trying this are:

1. Try to match the acoustic of the space in which you originally recorded the rest of the scene. If you can, perhaps consider returning to the location and doing it there.
2. Do everything you can to get the performer in the right state of mind—they need to be able to make the emotion of their delivery match to what was originally recorded.
3. Don't be afraid to do lots of takes—sometimes it will take a while before they get it right!

The recording of foley is based on similar principles. If you can afford to, get a real foley artist—and consider watching them. A skilled foley artist is truly something to behold—it's no coincidence that many foley artists are former dancers.

If you have to do it yourself, it is do-able but will take time! Make sure the place you are recording is really, really quiet. Use the original props and costumes if you can. When walking, you need to try to match not only the movements of your actor, but also their motivation—it will make it more believable. On-set foley is great if you've got the ability to return to the locations—nothing will sound more real.

What does sound add to a picture that makes it so important?

Turning this around, how would your film be without sound? Or with poor sound? A close friend of mine who works as a cinematographer claims that poor sound makes his images look out of focus. Another friend who works selecting films for a major festival says that the first thing that betrays a bad film is the sound of the dialogue. One thing is for certain—if you want to stand any chance of selling your film, the sound needs to be of a good standard. If the sound is done well, the audience won't notice it at all—if it is bad it will make your images look bad. For this reason sound is sometimes neglected in the filmmaking process as new directors may not realise just how much impact it has.

I see the role of sound in a picture as sculpting the audience's emotions. It's like you're subtly taking their hand and leading them through the narrative. Sound speaks directly to the subconscious, which is why it's so powerful when used well.

Any projects that stand out, or that you're particularly proud of?

I'm proud of each and every film we've worked on in one way or another. Even on the smallest project we try to give our all. We won't take on films unless we think we can make them sound really great, and there is always something to love about a film, even if it isn't completely to your taste!

That said, I'm especially proud of certain sequences in a few of the films we've worked on. Notable stand-out sequences include the gun fights and car chases on *The Sweeney*—I think we really nailed them, and we used lots of techniques which we'd never used before to make them work. We spent weeks listening to various different weapon recordings to find sounds that were not only accurate but also worked in the cinematic sense. The end result I still find thrilling to watch even now!

The first 8 minutes of *Shadow Dancer* are another highlight—there is very little music or dialogue, and the sound design really gets space to breathe, setting up the tension for the rest of the film. The train sequence was made up of many real recordings, which were painstakingly gathered over many days of recording, and then combined with less obvious layers to create the end result.

Any words of advice for aspiring sound recordists/editors?

Spend time learning from other sound people—there is a reason they have got to where they are. I've never yet met someone at the top of their game who wasn't willing to share a few choice words of advice; it's one of the things that makes me proudest to be a member of this profession.

Learn how other departments function. If you understand the demands and challenges that are put on them you will become a better team player, and filmmaking is nothing without teamwork.

Look at the whole process—understand the stages which come before and after your work and speak to the people involved. As a recordist it sometimes feels like you're operating in a vacuum, but nothing could be further from the truth! We always try to give feedback (and praise where it's due) to the hardworking recordists who make our job in post a pleasure.

Finally—do it! Choose sound. It's not the most glamorous end of filmmaking, and can be a struggle, but I truly believe it to be the home of some of the most creative and skilled technicians you'll meet.

In Conversation with Stephen Coates

The composer Stephen Coates has been collaborating with filmmakers since 2001, as well as performing for his band 'The Real Tuesday Weld'. His diverse scores have been used in shorts, features, documentaries and animation.

How did you get started as a composer?

I came from an arts background, at the Royal College of Art, so I didn't think I was going to make a career out of composing. I slightly stumbled into the movie industry by accident. People quickly began to get in contact for collaborations, especially for animation films. I always hated music videos, so whenever we had the budget to do something else or persuade the record company to cough up some money, I spent it on a film. Filmmakers started to say . . . can you do this? So it was a gradual process.

So you're quite a visual person? I know that in your live shows with your band you often incorporate visual projection. Have you always thought the connection between auditory and visionary art is an important one? Do film and music serve each other well?

Yes totally! Not being the sort of music that gets played on MTV or VH1, playing the films and music at the show gets these things seen. The film and animation then becomes part of the show! I don't particularly like to go to ordinary gigs; I like a gig to feel like a show. When the audience come into the room or space it's like an event in itself, you create a world . . . a slightly strange world. This was important for showcasing our work early on.

How do you often get involved with a project? Are you approached, or do you approach people yourself if you are interested?

Well to date it's all been people asking me to do scores. I haven't actually been in the position yet of going out into the market place and pitching, I'm dreading it! I think really it's about the relationship with the filmmaker, so it's nice if there is some connection involved. If somebody approaches me and says would you think about doing the music for this film, it usually means they've seen or heard something we've done before. So then there is already a connection going on.

The first indie feature I did was *Bomber*, which premiered at Raindance. I didn't know the director at all and he didn't know me, the reason I got involved was because I was introduced by a music supervisor in America. I'd done some work with her before and she recommended me for his movie. He's actually

English, and now he's a central figure in connecting musicians and composers with filmmakers—creating bridges. Super important!

So if there is a typical process where you work on a film, what would that be? Who do you work with the most, are you close to the director?

In my experience I've had a very close relationship with the director each time. The difference has been when that process starts. I have just completed the soundtrack for a feature called *The Suspect*. I met Stuart the director in New York two years ago, and we've been conversing about the film ever since. So by the time it got to start writing the actual score, there had been quite a lot of work done. In other situations you're coming in at the end when it's basically all been made. I've actually written something for Stuart before just based on the script, without seeing anything at all. He found this approach useful as it added into his process, helping to figure out what the tone of the film is. So for me it's always been working closely with the director.

Have you had a bad experience in your time as a composer where maybe the director or people in the film have approached you in the wrong way?

Yes, I often have bad experiences. They've thankfully worked out in the end but they were difficult experiences. I definitely see my role as serving the film, I'm going to plant my vision in the film, and if anyone could do it then anybody would.

I can't do everything; I can't do big classical score. I did have a difficult experience on the American film *Meeting Spencer*, I was brought in because of my aesthetic, but then the director decided that he wanted to do something different musically. We went through quite a painful month because the clock was ticking. I was trying to give him what he wanted but it was moving further and further away from what I do. Somebody else had to come in from a production company and they told him just to let me do my thing. He had some ideas, and in the end it worked out really well, it stretched me outside my normal range. Fortunately a character in the film had already been filmed performing a song I'd written. There was no way they could get rid of it, I was in there already!

Another difficulty is the schedule. In the last film there was a brick wall deadline for tax reasons. I had to do the entire score in three weeks!

I know that you've worked on documentaries, shorts and animation; in any way does the process of composing for those different forms impact on the way you work? Do you approach each one differently?

It depends on the subject matter. I think documentaries are quite different because generally people don't associate them with having scores. Obviously they do, but it's often placed music. You really don't want to get in the way of the story or force emotion. If something tragic is being shown, you don't need to tell people what to think. The animation stuff tends to be a bit more tightly scored. I like scores where you don't really hear them, they have an effect but you're not sitting there watching it thinking is that a thumb piano on the left hand side—a bit invisible.

You think it works best when it has an unconscious impact on the audience?

Let me ask you a question . . . do you remember the music in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*?

Yes, I remember thinking the soundtrack was good.

Can you hear any of it now?

I'm just trying to think of the tune.

That is the ideal response to me. I love the *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* score, it's John Brian—one of my favourite film music composers. It's completely unique and really serves the film. That's the ideal for me, like *The Godfather*—you can't think about *The Godfather* without thinking about that tune. The amount of dialogue makes a difference; sometimes, there is just less room for music.

What is your opinion of pop music in films?

I am open to that. Tarantino is the classic, he uses all existing music. Big stars were brought in to compose the tracks for *Django* and *Reservoir Dogs* . . . I think it's great! Quite often I've done films where there has been a bit of both, original score alongside existing tracks.

Are you particularly proud of a project in your career so far?

I was very pleased to do *LA Noire* because of the era, and writing original songs. The feedback we've had from that has been strong. I just want to do more! As far as animation is concerned, *Bathtime in Clerkenwell* is an obvious one. The images and music just clicked, and it won all sorts of awards. I'm really pleased with the score of the new film *The Suspect*.

Do you have any advice for aspiring composers?

The thing is, I didn't train to be a film composer, so there is not much I can tell you if you've trained! I can say that the first thing though, is that it should be about the film and the director, not about your music. The other thing is really obvious, but films do not operate to fixed tempos. The director can change the time slot for your piece of music; they won't adapt for your piece.

Why is music important in film?

If I gave you a beautiful image of sand, sun and sea, how does it make you feel? Imagine that to the *Jaws* soundtrack. That's the beauty of music and film together; you can completely transform the image by the music. Music can help the narrative and save a lot of screen time, as the soundtrack can be part of the explanation.

Someone I know did all the music for the last *Wallace and Gromit*, when they screen tested it and got the negative marks. So the first thing they did was change the music, Hollywood is brutal, it's all about money. They brought in a Zimmer and the animation lost something.

Film Sound Glossary

Acoustics

The individual characteristics of reflection and absorption that give a space such as a living room, concert hall or cinema an identifiable sonic 'signature'.

Ambience

Low-level sounds (including sound reflections) that set a mood or suggest the character of a particular place. The 'natural' sound of a space. Often sound designers will add ambient sound, which has not been recorded on location but mixed, to create an emotion.

Analogue vs. digital soundtrack

The width of an analogue soundtrack varies in a way that is directly analogous to the varying soundwaves of the original sound. When played back, the varying width of the track is translated to a varying electrical voltage which causes the theatre's loudspeaker cones to move back and forth to recreate the original sound.

With a digital soundtrack, points along the soundwaves of the original sound are assigned a numeric (or digital) value, consisting of ones and zeros represented as tiny dots on the track. When a digital track is played back, the numeric values are converted to the varying electrical voltage needed to drive the speakers.

Atmospheres

Low-level background sounds, such as wind or traffic noise, on a film's soundtrack which add to the reality of a scene. These sounds are sometimes recorded separately at a shooting location, creating what is called a wild track for mixing into the soundtrack later.

Dolby Digital

The most widely used multichannel digital sound format in the world. This is used for everything from films in the cinema to TV broadcasts, DVD and Blu-ray discs and video games. Dolby Digital provides up to 5.1 channels (left, centre, right, left surround, right surround and low-frequency effects). The original function was to inhibit system 'noise'.

Dubbing theatre

A theatre equipped for and dedicated to mixing film soundtracks.

The sound systems in dubbing theatres where soundtracks are mixed and those in cinemas equipped for playback are calibrated to the same standards. This helps make it possible for audiences to hear the sound the director heard—and intended—when the soundtrack was mixed in post-production.

Dynamic range

The range between the loudest and softest sounds a soundtrack and/or sound system can reproduce properly.

Effects

Sound effects, i.e. the nonmusical elements other than dialogue.

Foley

The art of recreating and rerecording incidental sound effects, such as foot-steps or rustling clothes, in sync with the picture. Named after one of its first practitioners.

LFE

The LFE, or low-frequency effects, channel on soundtracks carries the powerful low bass frequencies (explosions, rumbles, etc.) that are felt more than heard.

Mix

The blend of dialogue, music and effects, recorded both during the shoot and in ADR and foley, which comprise a film's soundtrack.

Also, when used as a verb, the process of assembling and balancing these elements electronically, thereby creating the final soundtrack.

M&E

Music and effects. This is a final mix of your film with music and sound effects only, allowing for dialogue to be dubbed for foreign territories. This is essential if you plan to distribute your film worldwide.

MOS

There is debate as to what exact words make up the acronym MOS, Motor only sync and Mit out sound being the most popular. The term is used to refer to a scene that has been shot without sync sound.

Room tone

Often called Atmos, room tone is a recording of the ambient sound of a room or location which is used to smooth out any gaps in the soundtrack in post.

Stereo

Sound recording and reproduction onto more than one (mono) channel. In the film industry, 'stereo' is understood to include surround and centre channels in addition to left and right. To avoid confusion, multichannel stereo is often referred to as 'surround sound'.

Subwoofer

A loudspeaker dedicated to reproducing very low bass.

Surround sound

The reproduction of ambience, atmospheres and occasional special effects that are recorded on one or more dedicated channels and played through speakers placed along the sides and rear of the auditorium to surround the audience.

7

Cinematography

THE DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY (DoP) is the person responsible for the images the director wishes to capture. The DoP will also have their own creative input based on their interpretation of the scene to be filmed. The partnership between DoP and director is one of the most exciting and dynamic in the making of a movie, as it will directly influence the nature of the final images on the screen.

Part scientist, part mathematician and part artist, the DoP has to have a thorough understanding of emulsions (if shooting on film) or the sensitivities of different digital or tape formats and the camera's sensor. The DoP must also be able to calculate the appropriate amount of light for each shot and make the adjustments to the camera, lens and equipment. The DoP also must have a creative eye for the best angle or movement for each shot, the best lighting, the best lens, as well as the most suitable framing. A good DoP will also understand the drama of a scene and be able to alter or adapt the shot in order to heighten the action or drama suggested by the script.

These elements make the job of DoP so interesting and exciting. Nothing can prepare you for the immediacy and thrill of viewing rushes for the first time and experiencing the visual elements of the movie.

The Production Process

As stated elsewhere, the production process is divided into three parts: pre-production, production and post-production. Although the DoP is mainly involved in the production process, they have responsibilities in the other parts of the process as well.

Pre-production

The DoP must first understand every aspect of the film that s/he is about to shoot before they embark on the shoot.

The first job is to read and reread the script carefully and decide if the film is something that interests them. The DoP should determine whether they can respond to the point of view of the story. Next, the DoP must decide whether or not the script suits their style of lighting and camera work.

Oscar winning DoP and director Anthony Dodd Mantle (*Slumdog Millionaire* and *Trance*) spends every spare minute either at the National Gallery in London, where he researches lighting and composition used by the old masters, or watching and studying classic films.

The first meeting with the director is probably the most important. How one will interact with the director—someone with whom one will be working for several intense months—will determine whether or not one will get the job (or accept it). Having accepted the job, the director and DoP will then decide how to shoot the film to give it the look that the director envisages.

If the film is a period film, the DoP will research the architecture and costumes of the period in order to gain a comprehensive understanding for the detail. Libraries, museums, books and magazines can provide useful information. Sometimes other films, especially documentaries, shot in the period provide useful background information.

The study of the architecture of the period is especially valuable when considering interiors, because the light fittings and windows suggest the amount and type of natural light available for interior scenes.

On low-budget shoots, the DoP will usually complete preparations at home in the evenings and start full-time work a day or two before the shoot. On a higher budget shoot as the start date approaches, the DoP will need to commit to the job completely. This period can be from a few weeks to several months, depending on the complexity of the shoot. The DoP will also liaise with the production designer and art director to discuss how props, wardrobe and sets can be altered to make the shoot easier. Of particular interest will be the colour choices. Certain colours and certain fabrics do not photograph as well as others.

The working relationship between the DoP and the art director is an important one, which will exert a powerful influence over the look of the finished piece.

Location scouting

The producer and director may have chosen a location for a particular scene based on visual appeal and budget. The DoP has to work out how best to light it and shoot there.

The most important aspect of pre-production is going to look at the various locations and sets that will be used in the film. This will probably involve a number of visits to see what the place looks like at different times of day or to talk about any problems that may be encountered when filming.

The final visit is known as the technical recce and will involve the director, first assistant director, sound recordist and the DoP. Other members of the camera and lighting crew will also attend including camera operator, key grip, and the gaffer or spark. As well as photographing the film the DoP is also regarded as head of the camera department and will choose his operator and focus puller etc.

The camera crew

Choosing a good crew is of course essential, but choosing a crew that will get on well together, and with the director, is equally important. A traditional film camera crew consists of four people.

Director of photography

The DoP is the person responsible for making sure the director's vision of the film is captured on the camera. The DoP does not handle the camera. The DoP makes creative suggestions to the director regarding the lighting of

the set and the angles used during the shoot. The DoP has responsibility for the way the light and photography capture the director's vision of the film. A DoP will usually get an opening title credit at the start of the film and brings considerable creative expertise to the production.

Camera operator (cinematographer)

Whilst the camera operator's main task is to operate the camera during the shoot, s/he must also act as a second pair of eyes for the DoP as well as a sounding board for the director when setting up shots. When shooting begins s/he may work more closely with the director when choosing lenses and camera angles.

Focus puller

The main responsibility of the focus puller is to make certain that the image in the frame is fully focused. A focus puller will use measuring tapes to measure the precise distance of the subject to the camera and then calculate the depth of focus by consulting mathematical charts which determine the focal length of each lens and the f-stop the lens requires for the lighting conditions of each shot. The focus puller is not just responsible for keeping the shot sharp but must make sure that the camera equipment is fully operational: keeping the equipment clean and setting up the camera with the correct lens etc.

Hairs are not actual hairs but refer to any piece of dirt inside the camera mechanism or the film gate.

Clapper/loader (film shoot)/Digital Imaging Technician (digital shoot)

The clapper/loader will also act as an extra camera assistant as well as loading the magazines with film. S/he must also put the clapperboard on each take and write up the camera sheets for the lab. The clapper/loader will also unload the magazines and make note of all exposed film stock sent to the lab. Often on larger feature films a camera trainee will work with the crew as an extra assistant under the supervision of the clapper/loader.

On a digital shoot a clapper/loader is referred to as the Digital Imaging Technician (D.I.T.)—the person responsible for making sure the camera is running properly and the files are saved, stored and labeled correctly. They ensure that the footage is transferred to multiple hard drives (a minimum of three is advisable) and that none of those hard drives are transported together at the end of the shooting day.

Digital Imaging Technician is one of the most high pressure positions on the crew. If they make a mistake the results are potentially catastrophic!

Additional crew in the camera department

The DoP operator, focus puller and clapper/loader or D.I.T. look after the actual camera and all that goes with it. Additional crew is required to manipulate the lights and construct camera rigs, dolly, track and specialist equipment like car mounts.

Grip

Grips are responsible for any equipment that the camera is 'gripped' to. The grip is not just responsible for the dolly work. He will supervise the laying of tracks, setting up cranes, building camera platforms, car attachments and all aspects of the camera support equipment.

Gaffer

A DoP will have to choose a good 'gaffer' to handle lighting. He is the head of the electrical department and will supervise every aspect of the technical side of the lighting. He has an assistant known as the 'best boy' who may take over when the gaffer has to leave the set maybe to prelight another set or location. If the camera operator is a second pair of eyes for the DoP then the gaffer is an extra pair of hands and eyes. He will ensure that the lamps are correctly and safely set up, often referring to the notes he made on the technical recces. He is also responsible for the stores that may be needed such as spare bulbs, filter and diffusion gel and the making up of gel frames. A large feature film may involve twenty or thirty electricians as well as trucks and generators; all of this must be organised by the gaffer. Due to the complex nature of some films special riggers may be brought in to build scaffold towers for lamps and camera platforms. Many DoPs will work with the same gaffer and camera crew for many years going from one film to another together. This continuity enables the crew to work smoothly, understanding what is required for a particular shot with a minimum of instructions.

Crane operators and riggers

The use of specialist equipment will necessitate the employment of additional temporary crew members: crane operators and riggers. All of these people come under the responsibility of the DoP, but are managed by the head gaffer.

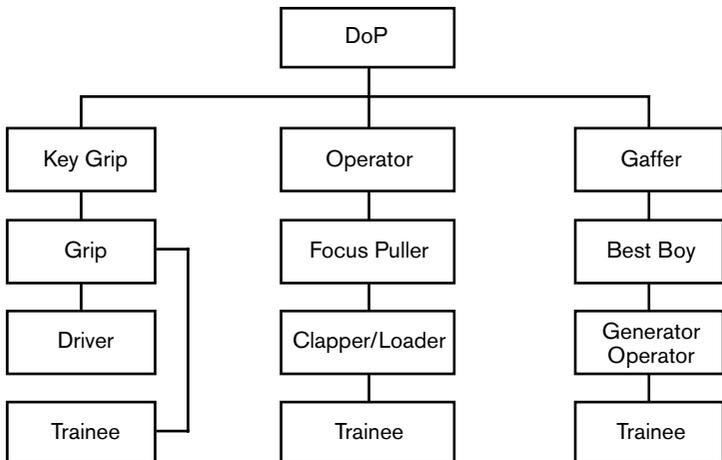


figure 7.1
Camera and lighting
crew

Hint With all the complexities involved in modern filmmaking it is essential to plan every detail in advance. It is often said that filmmaking is 5 per cent inspiration and 95 per cent perspiration. A successful pre-production process ensures that most of the perspiration happens before filmmaking commences.

The Shoot: The Life of a DoP

This is an account of the shoot by veteran cinematographer John Ward, who was also an instructor for Raindance.

John Ward has been a camera operator and DoP for many years, gaining opening title credits on *The Firm* (1988), *To Die For* (1994), *1977* (1996), *Final Cut* (1998) amongst many others.

Finally the first day of production arrives and it is time for the DoP to put all his experience and research to work. Although there are many similarities between different films there are no hard and fast rules as to how a particular shot will be lit. The director, production designer and DoP will all have had their creative input about the scene. Some scenes may require small detailed lighting while others need big broad sweeps of light. This may require different types of lamps or placing them in more unusual positions. Although the key light is often a directional fresnel spot some scenes require a softer look and so a soft light, normally used for the fill, can be used instead. This can give the effect of the daylight coming from a large window and produces softer shadows. The DoP has to be ready to deal with technical problems caused by so-called unconventional lighting.

For example: one of the problems caused by bouncing the light or shining it through large frames covered in a diffusing material is that it requires much more light to achieve the required aperture for exposure. However, this style of large soft lights has become much more popular since the introduction of faster film stocks and more efficient light sources. Another reason is that soft lighting can often give a much more natural look to the scene. Alternatively in a thriller or horror movie the use of a low angle key light and hard deep shadows gives the scene a menacing feel especially if there is little fill light and the contrast ratio is high.

Of course lighting the foreground subject isn't the only problem the DoP encounters. A good DoP pays as much attention to lighting the background. A well-lit background gives the shot a sense of depth and balance. Sometimes this will occupy as much if not more time than lighting the foreground action and this may involve using more than one lamp to do the same job.

For example if the key light's direction is coming from the left of frame, then another lamp will be set up to light the background from the same direction. Another example of the use of multiple lamps is when lighting a large foreground area and where one key light would not cover the whole area. Another problem is light fall-off when an object nearest the lamp will be much brighter than one further away. This effect can also cause problems when actors move around the set and change their relative distance to the key light. And of course unlike a still photograph, the film camera can also move through the set. The DoP must be aware of the different areas that will be seen during a track or pan. All of this can lead to a complicated rig of lights and is a good reason for shooting on studio sets so that lamps can be positioned without the restriction of ceilings and fixed walls. Location shoots are usually restrictive for lamp placement. Each lamp on a set will produce a shadow; much time is spent eliminating these shadows. Reflection or shine is another lighting problem that must be overcome.

Once the lamps are set, the DoP's next job is to get out the meter and establish the exposure for that particular setup. Many DoPs will use an incident meter to measure the amount of light at various points around the set. Incident meters are preferred over reflected light meters as they will give an exact measurement of the amount of light at a particular point without being affected by an overly bright or dark subject. Another advantage

of incident meters is that the DoP can walk around the set and measure the light him/herself, without using an actor. Some DoPs use spot meters to compare the amount of light in different areas of the set by measuring reflected light from a very small spot on a wall or on the actor's skin. Skin tone is usually the most important tone to expose for correctly. Spot meters can also be of use when using telephoto lenses and the subject is some distance away from the camera. However the light is measured, ultimately the decision on the amount of exposure is down to the DoP's interpretation of the information from the meter. How the DoP decides to interpret the information required for the exposure can greatly affect the final image on the film and is down to experience, judgement and sometimes pre-production tests. Here, the DoP's choice of camera, lenses and filters can be crucial and will contribute to the overall look of the film. Finally, at the beginning of each setup, the DoP will shoot a grey scale to enable the laboratory, colourist or editor to grade the shot and match the colour balance in post.

After the final rehearsals, and make-up, hair and costume checks, the time has come to commit the shot to camera. At this point on most feature films the DoP will stand back behind the camera and watch as the shot progresses looking for any problems that may arise. An actor may miss their mark and stand in a shadow or the sun might go behind a cloud, any little thing that may detract from the photographic quality of the shot. Very often the DoP will need to make specific comments on a particular shot and will give the clapper/loader or camera assistant notes to write on the camera report sheets. These notes will detail how the shot has worked and will give any changes that may have happened such as a particular change in a lighting effect. This might mean that the shot starts in darkness and the light is switched on part way through. The editor and colourist will need to know the intention behind the shots to get the best effect and so the instructions from the DoP are essential. Some DoPs may operate the camera as well as lighting the film but most feel it is better to have an operator who can concentrate on the framing while they are free to observe the lighting.

During the shooting of the film much of the DoP's time is concentrated on the lighting, but there are still a great deal of other duties to be performed. Keeping a check on the number of memory cards or hard drives as well as the camera equipment, scaffolding, tracks and lights that may be required for any given scene. A DoP will make sure that all additional items of equipment are ordered in time for the shots that will require them, such as high-speed cameras or specialist cranes. The DoP will be constantly checking to make sure that the shots are recorded correctly and that the rushes show the film as it was intended to look. A DoP will often do camera tests ahead of time to make sure tricky shots are rehearsed and agreed beforehand.

Visiting the sets and locations that are yet to be shot or are still under construction is time consuming but very necessary if the DoP and gaffer are to be ready in time for the actual day of shooting. It may be that another lighting crew can be brought in to prelight that set or lay out long cable runs and for the riggers to set up lighting towers, etc. Throughout all this mass of paperwork and practical on-set activity, the DoP will have to deal with

the constant pressure of a schedule that is usually too tight or director who makes numerous changes to the script, plus a producer who will always want it done quicker and cheaper. There are two well-known sayings in the film industry which always get quoted when producers try to cut financial corners:

'The cheapest deal is never the best deal, it is only the cheapest.'

'If you pay peanuts you get monkeys.'

Post-production

This is an account of the post-production process by veteran cinematographer John Ward, who was also an instructor for Raindance.

Throughout the pre-production and shooting of the film the DoP will be in frequent contact with the editor and D.I.T. The editor will prepare the rushes for screening by the director and DoP. The editor will give the DoP a report each morning after viewing the rushes and point out any problems with exposure, focus or light flares. All this information will help the DoP keep track of the exposure and ensure a consistent look throughout the film. It will also be of use at the post-production grading stage.

And finally, after all the trials and tribulations, months of painstaking work and much sweat (but hopefully not too much blood or too many tears) the DoP will have achieved a minor miracle. A fabulous looking film that will excite, enthrall and dazzle the audience, and yet 99.9 per cent of them will not even notice the lighting. But with any luck a few other DoPs might just think the film good enough and the long awaited nomination for an Oscar or BAFTA may eventually arrive. Not that any DoP can rest on their laurels; another film is waiting and the whole process is about to start all over again.

Film Lighting Crash Course

Our eyes are set a few inches apart and bring in information to the brain which we blend in order to create the impression of three dimensions. A camera only has one lens, and in order to recreate the illusion of three dimensions, we use lights. The three basic lights are: key, back and fill. If you look at anyone standing in a room, you will notice large pockets of shadow under their eyes. This is unflattering and unattractive. In order to get rid of these shadows, a key light is shone into the actor's face. The shadows disappear. But now the face has absolutely no modelling.

All good cinematographers go to art galleries to study the old masters, looking in particular at how they interpreted light and shadow on their subjects. In order to bring back some modelling to the face and give the portrait shape the DoP will use a side light, called a fill light. This lamp will put gentle shadows back into the face.

Key and fill lights make the face look 3D. But because the light on the face is now so intense, the actor's face looks as if it has been pushed back into the background of the set. To compensate for this, the DoP places a light behind the actor and points it to the back of the actor's head. This is the back light, which creates a halo around the actor's head, pushing it away from the background and creating depth.

Jon Jost, the American experimental filmmaker, shot many features with a single sound assistant. He created a career by shooting 35mm features and shorts on shooting ratios of less than 3:1. His filmography is vastly overlooked, and is well worth a look. *Muri romani* (2000), *London Brief* (1997), *Albrechts Flügel* (1994), *The Bed You Sleep In* (1993), *Uno a*

The Low-Budget Shoot

In the low-budget world, it is impossible to use the same number of people as on a full-blown production as described above. Accordingly, the roles of the camera personnel tend to blur and overlap. For example, the DoP may also operate and focus pull (although it is almost impossible for a DoP/operator to also focus pull on complicated tracking and dolly shots). There is no reason why one person cannot operate, focus pull and load a camera, although the constant pauses for loading/unloading would certainly justify the expense of another camera assistant. At the very least, on a digital shoot, it is advisable to have another person to D.I.T.

From an economic point of view, the greatest saving in the camera department on a shoot is to avoid or exclude lights, thereby saving not only the expense of hiring the lights but the salary of the lighting truck driver and the expense of the gaffers and the sparks. Add to this the saving you make on catering, and it is easy to save £15,000 (\$22,500) per week on a shoot by working without lights.

Shooting without Lights

When shooting without lights, it is still possible to recreate the elements of key, back and fill lights by using available light. Sometimes the available light

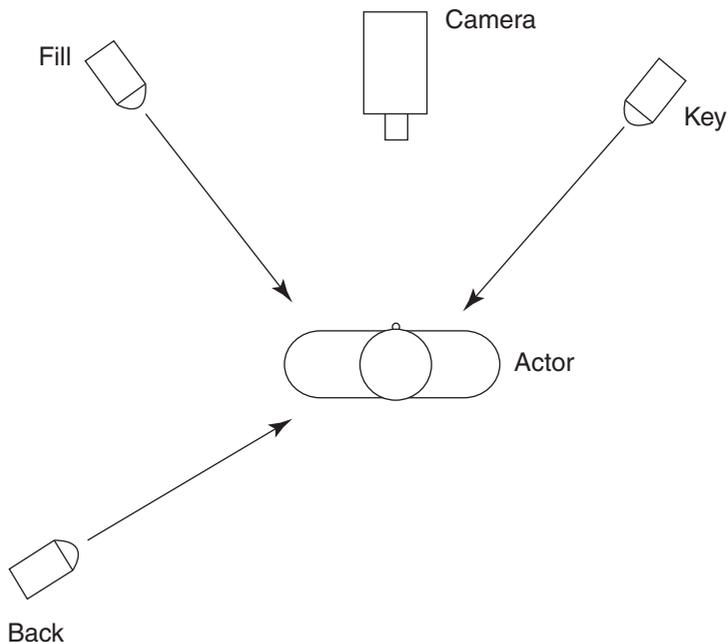


figure 7.2
Lighting a person in
a room

me, uno a te e uno a Raffaele (1994), *Frame Up* (1993), *All the Vermeers in New York* (1990), *Sure Fire* (1990), *Rembrandt Laughing* (1988), *Bell Diamond* (1985), *Slow Moves* (1983), *Plain Talk & Common Sense* (1987), *Psalm* (1982), *Stagefright* (1981), *Godard* (1980), *Chameleon* (1978), *Last Chants for a Slow Dance* (1977), *Angel City* (1976), *Speaking Directly* (1973).

Mike Figgis developed a unique steering wheel device to mount a DV camera and a high performance mic too. By placing zoom and focus controls on the wheel, he is able to shoot and sound record his own movies with a crew of one.

can be enhanced by using reflectors. Reflectors can be fashioned from a sheet of white (or coloured, if desired) cardboard.

Some DoPs will carefully consider the placement of their subjects before shooting, thus creating natural key, back and fill lighting. Others will place their subject immediately in front of a bright light to create a burn and silhouette effect, which, although technically considered wrong or incorrect, has a certain beauty and power within the parameters of shooting with available light. The financial and logistical advantages of this method are:

1. Fewer crew, vehicles and rentals make the shoot more cost effective.
2. Smaller crew makes for a more intimate set.
3. Lighter equipment and fewer crew mean quicker setups.

Hiring a DoP

When hiring a DoP one needs to consider their artistic ability, their technical ability and their ability to work with the director. When choosing a DoP you will solicit showreels from prospective DoPs by contacting camera rental facilities, agents, placing ads online, using directories or on recommendation from other filmmakers.

Once you have reviewed and shortlisted the showreels, you send the prospective DoPs a script and then set up a meeting.

You are looking for someone who understands the look of the film you want to shoot. You also need to make certain that the person you hire is a true collaborator and not someone who will take over the job of directing as well.

Career Route of a DoP

DoPs go to film school where they learn the basics of celluloid and digital response to imaging, as well as the mechanics of operating cameras. They also try to shoot as much as possible—working as loaders, operators and DoPs on student shorts. When they graduate, they usually have two business cards printed, one of which says Clapper/Loader or Camera Assistant and the other says Director of Photography. If they meet you in a bar, which card do you think you are going to get? The DoP card, of course. If they meet an established focus puller, operator or DoP they will hand them the Clapper/Loader or Camera Assistant card in the hope of paid work.

When you discuss payment, you will probably start with their weekly rate. By mentioning a number, they just lost the negotiation arguments. You now know where they sit on the pay scale.

If you want them to work at a reduced rate, or even for free, ask them whether or not they have an opening title credit as DoP on a feature film. At this point you will get an amazing amount of humming and hawing and answers that refer to some second assistant to the assistant to the clapper/loader on a Stanley Kubrick film some decades ago!

At this point you have got them. Now the decision is all theirs, and they will decide whether or not to take this job based on the elements that will promote their careers as well.

Hint The elusive opening title credit is your first step up the career ladder. With it, you can get listed on imdb.com and use it on your CV. As a producer, you are handing out opening title credits. Never undersell or underestimate the value of your credits.

Summary

1. A feature film is a huge opportunity for a cinematographer to become a director of photography.
2. Make certain the DoP you hire is compatible with the director.
3. Look for a DoP that can solve problems, not create them.

We have everything ready to go: lights, camera, sound. But before we roll, what about the set?

Lighting Terms Glossary

Accent light

A light which brings the eye to an area or object.

Ambient light

Natural light available in a shot.

ASA (ISO)

Sensitivity rating of film emulsions. The same terms are used for digital cameras. Rather than the sensitivity of film stock, the numbers will refer to the sensitivity of the camera's sensor.

Attributes of light

The factors affecting the quality of light are: hard or soft (or in between), intensity or brightness, direction, colour and beam pattern. All but colour are affected by the light's size and distance from the object it is lighting.

Available light

Existing light on an interior or exterior set.

Backlight

A light or lights angled onto the background to reveal the character of the background, which helps to separate the main subject from the background. Often used with smoke, gels, steam and filters.

Barndoor

A device of several panels or doors which can be attached to the front of a stage light in order to shape and shade the scene or protect the camera lens from a beam of light.

Base light

Bland, diffuse set illumination.

Bounce light

Soft light effect created by bouncing light off a colour-neutral surface.

Butterfly

Large frame with fabric diffuser or net to soften or reduce harsh light.

Camera-top light

The flat-light look of on-board lights for news-type shoots.

Cinema lighting

The process where artificial lighting is used to create mood and drama, dividing the space of the shot into planes and artificially suggesting depth and enhancing character.

Colouring light

Gels correct the colour of light sources relative to each other or the film. Coloured gels distort light for dramatic or artistic purposes.

Colour temperature (kelvin or K)

Briefly: how red or blue the 'white' light is. Films are 'white-balanced' by choosing the correct colour temperature source (daylight, about 5600K, tungsten usually about 3200K) or by filtering.

Continuity of light (matching)

The process whereby the director of photography records the lighting levels of scenes shot out of sequence in order to be able to match them in post-production. Beware of camerapersons who dodge this one by saying that you can fix it in post. You can but it is expensive.

Contrast ratio (brightness ratio)

Compare two reflected-light readings: compare the lightest significant area of the subject or scene with the darkest. Also see Lighting ratio.

Cookaloris (cucoloris, cookie, kook)

A device with patterns placed in front of a hard light which throws shadows or dappled light on bland areas. Also known as gobo or flag. A good cookie can change the look of a scene.

Cool light

Gels or subjects in the blue-green region of the colour spectrum.

Cut

To remove light from the scene.

Cyc (cyclorama, cove)

A background where floor and walls are joined in a gradual curve.

Dichroic

Vapour-deposited coating that reflects unwanted portions of the light spectrum or a coated filter. For daylight correction of tungsten light.

Diffusion

Translucent materials that soften highlights and shadows, reduce contrast and increase beam-angle.

Distance (throw)

The light to subject distance not only controls fall-off but also sharpness and (effective) size of the light, relative to subject size.

Dominance

If several sources are needed, one of them (or one direction of light) should dominate.

Fall-off

Light, from a point source, falls-off inversely to the square of the distance. Move the light from 10 feet away to 20 feet away and you have a quarter of the intensity; 40 feet, 1/16th. Diffused lights appear to fall-off even faster.

Fill light

Fill lightens shadows and controls contrast and lighting ratios.

Finesse (light control)

The art of refining white light by using focusing knobs, barndoors, fancy-scrims, gels and anything handy that won't melt instantly.

Flag (cutter, gobo)

An opaque panel, used to block light and shadow the subject, background or camera lens. It can also hide lights in the dark recesses of a scene. Which term you use depends on the device's size.

Flare

Lens flare occurs in the optical system of cameras. Keep bright lights and strong reflections out of the lens to avoid it.

Flat light

All light is characterless, textureless and shallow-shadowed when the source is close to the camera.

Flood

To increase the angle of beam-size of a focusing light, which decreases its intensity.

Focus

To vary a spotlight's beam-size and intensity.

Footcandle (fc)

A unit of incident illumination, largely unaffected by the subject's luminosity (brightness).

Foregrounds

Dark foregrounds help hold the eye within the frame and increase the illusion of depth. Bright foreground objects, especially out-of-focus or moving ones, can be distracting.

Fresnel

A thinner, lighter, 'stepped' version of a plano-convex lens. Also, a spotlight with such a lens.

Gel (gelatin, media)

As used with photographic lights, a strong flexible, fire-proof and fade-resistant material used to change the colour, amount or quality of light.

Glare

Light reflected off of shiny surfaces. In moderation, it is one of the most useful ways to add life to drab subjects.

Glare angle (angle of reflection)

The law-of-the-light states: the angle of incidence equals the angle of reflection. Simply: light is reflected at the same angle it came from but in the opposite direction. See Plane lighting.

Good eye

To help develop sensitivity to light and composition: study good films, photographs and paintings; keep an image file; observe the subtleties of light and shadow all around you, even when not shooting. Good DoPs often carry sketchbooks with them.

Hard light

A relatively small, direct, usually focusable source, with or without lens, that produces strong highlights and dark shadows. The quality is more dramatic and controllable but generally less flattering than soft light; often improved with diffusion.

High-key

Lighting which results in predominantly middle-grey to white tones.

Incident light meter

Tool which measures the strength of the light that reaches the scene.

Intensity (light output)

The 'strength' of the incident light source.

Key light

The key, or main light, tends to set the character of the lighting. It may suggest a source, like the sun, or a window.

Kicker

A low-angle side-backlight that adds glare to the side of faces.

Kicks (hotspots)

Bright light reflections that add sparkle.

Kill

To turn off one or more of your lights.

Lamp

Trade name for light bulbs.

Lamp life

The number of hours at which half the test lamps fail.

Light (fixture, head, luminaire, instrument)

The contraption, regardless of name and shape, that surrounds the lamp.

Lighting director

The person responsible for lighting.

Lighting grid

An overhead pipe-like structure in a studio to support lights and electrical connectors.

Lighting ratio

The ratio of key light plus fill, vs. fill light only, using an incident light meter. (If the first is 200 footcandles and the second 50fc, the ratio is 4:1.) Optimum and maximum lighting ratios depend upon subject matter, mood, media, and type of reproduction as well as personal tastes. In television, a timid ratio is 2:1, a dramatic one, 8:1; a maximum one, about 16:1. Film and slides can handle higher ratios than video and printed photos. See also Contrast ratio.

Limbo

A photographic background that appears to disappear.

Location

An area used for shooting, or considered for use, other than a studio.

Low-angle light

The ideal key for villains and monsters and nymphs. See Motivated lighting.

Low-key

Lighting which results in predominantly grey to middle-black tones.

Lux

A unit of measure of incident light (not reflected from the scene). The US equivalent is footcandles. To convert: $fc \times 10.8 = lux$.

Magic hour

The time of day (dusk) when everyone would shoot almost everything, if only it lasted longer, because the sun is low and strong and golden.

Matte

A nonreflective dull subject or surface. Also, a technique originally used to create special effects within the camera.

Motivated lighting

Where photographic lights appear to come from actual sources.

Moving sources

Effective when justified by the action, baffling at most other times. There are a few exceptions: diffused sources moving with the cast and camera, outdoors or where background shadows are not a problem. Or when used symbolically.

Moving subjects

It is challenging to light moving talent correctly. Rehearse the action, do it before you light and note where people pause. Don't attempt to light large areas evenly; movement is enhanced by intensity changes. If movement is not predictable, set the lights far away and high.

Multiple shadows

Few things expose the novice and the artifice of cinematography faster than multiple shadows, unless they are motivated or done with real style.

Night vs. 'night'

Film is illusion: it doesn't have to be night, it only has to look like it. Try shooting late in the day, with the low sun as back light and with a little fill. If you want to see street lights or the sky, shoot during late dusk or real night. This has gotten even easier to pull off with digital technology but can look horribly cheap and unconvincing if not done correctly.

Opaque

An object or material that does not transmit light.

Plane lighting

Visualise your subject, or the entire scene, as a series of planes at various angles to the lens. Position lights to reveal those planes effectively. Light planes

to different levels of brightness; usually the closer or larger ones should be darker. See Glare angle.

Polarising filters

Polarising camera filters can be set to reduce most glare as well as darken blue skies. They work by admitting light only from a selected direction.

Practical light

A prop light seen in shot that can be operated by the cast, sometimes doctored to control brightness, colour or coverage; usually positioned to motivate or justify the key or other source.

Reflected light

The light reflected from a surface, after losses due to absorption and scattering. See Bounce light, Glare and Spill for further reflections.

Reflected light meter

Meters that read the intensity of light reflected off the subject or scene.

Reflections

The rules that affect reflections are the same as those for glare.

Reflectors

Curved contraptions that concentrate the lamp's beam, and flat devices that recycle light from lights, sun and, at close range, even overcast sky.

Rigs

Assemblies designed, or adapted, to support lights, backgrounds etc.

Scrims

Metal screen put in front of lights to reduce intensity without diffusion.

Set light

The video equivalent of background light.

Shade

Consider all the subtle shades of shade: wide-open, dappled, flat, side, kicker and back-lit varieties. Keep your eyes and your options open, and your reflector handy.

Shadows

Backlights and low-angle lights can exaggerate shadows for impact.

Sharp

As applied to shadows, a hard, clean edge. The farther away subjects are from a light, and the closer they are to backgrounds, the sharper their shadows will be. The edge of a spot beam produces sharper shadows than the centre.

Side light

This half-key-half-kicker hits subjects at an angle of 90°. It is doubly misused, at times, in matched-pairs, from opposite sides. See Dominance.

Silhouettes

Dark shapes and figures against light backgrounds can have impact, even on small screens.

Size and distance

The larger the light, the softer its quality, but the effective size of a source also depends upon subject size and distance. A large, distant source is, in effect, small and hard (e.g. the sun). A 4-square-foot soft-light backed off to cover a car is small, but lighting a watch, enormous.

Snoot

Snoots are front-of-the-light 'tubes' that project a circle of light on a subject or background and refine the area that light falls onto. See Sharp.

Soft light

Soft shadows and subtle highlights are produced by large, indirect, heavily diffused or bounced light. The largest, cheapest soft source is an over-cast sky.

Spill

Light that falls outside of the intended area but which can be useful in reducing contrast.

Spot

To adjust a focusing light toward maximum intensity and minimum beam angle. Also, a hard light.

Spot meter

Light meter which reads a narrow angle of light reflected from the subject.

Strobe light (flash)

Electronic source producing a burst of light capable of freezing motion.

Top-light angle

Directly over the subject. If you want to light eyes, not nose-tops, save this for nonhuman subjects. Soft, top-front light is ideal for some faces.

Translucent

An object, material or vapour that transmits and diffuses both light and images, such as frost gel and dense smoke.

Transparent

An object or material that transmits both light and undiffused images.

Two-dimensional preview

One way to anticipate what will happen to our three-dimensional world when it becomes a two-dimensional image, is to view the shot with one eye, or light and compose through the lens.

Volts

A measure of electrical 'pressure'. Formula: volts = watts divided by amps (better to say $A \times V = W$). To save bucks and save face, check lamp voltages before plugging in, and overseas voltages before grabbing your passport. Common voltages: 12, 30, 120, 220, 240 and in Japan, 100.

Warm light

Gels or subjects in the red-orange-yellow range of the colour spectrum.

Watts

An expression of electrical power.

Wild wall

An easily removable section of a set, to facilitate camera positioning and lighting.

8 Production Values

THE COMBINED EFFECT of the look of the film, and the quality of the 'look' is the production values. If you shoot a scene that looks like it cost \$1 million to film, when you actually did it for \$10,000—well, that is giving your film high production values at a bargain price.

The look of the set, make-up and wardrobe translates directly to the screen, creating production values that will enhance your film. Knowing where to spend additional funds at this stage will predetermine the final look of your film. Understanding how production design and art departments work will enable you to maximise the art department budget which will translate directly to screen production values.

Role of the Production Designer

Where the director is responsible for the look on the screen, and the DoP responsible for what is recorded by the camera, the production designer is responsible for how the set and wardrobe look. S/he reports directly to the director, and consults with the cinematographer. The production designer will also talk to the performers to make sure that special effects, costumes and make-up are properly designed to allow for performances.

The production designer will meet initially with the director, having read the script, and will offer suggestions for the designs. Once commissioned, the production designer will have a list of sets, props and wardrobe requirements for each actor in each scene, along with a budget for the creation of the sets and wardrobe (art department budget). Once the drawings and location scouting is complete, the production designer heads up a small army of assistants and brings the sets, make-up and wardrobe in on time and on budget.

Art Department

In a commercial feature film production, the production designer gives the drawings and specifications to the art director, who executes the drawings and delivers props, wardrobe and sets under the direct supervision of the production designer. Wardrobe assistants, prop builders, scenic painters and set carpenters all work in the art department.

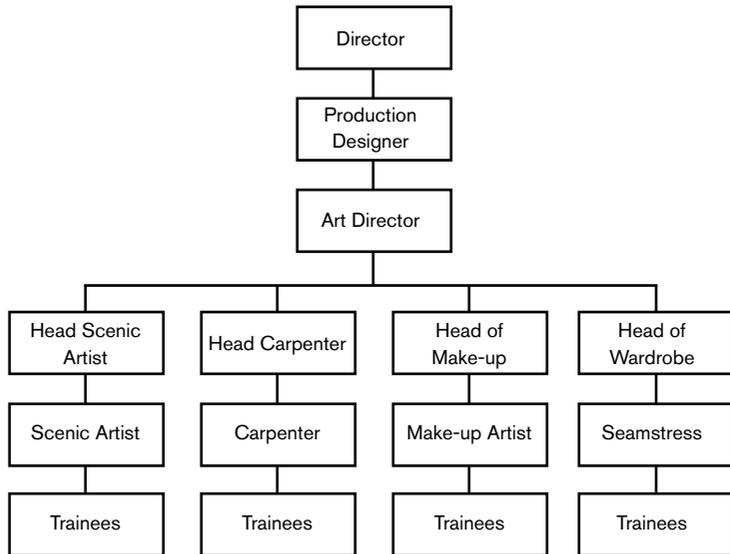


figure 8.1
Structure of production
design crew roles

Low-Budget Art Department

The first sacrifice you make when working on a low-budget film is people. Thus, the production designer doubles as the art director, and very often the set carpenter, scenic artist and wardrobe mistress as well. While this is an excellent way to learn valuable techniques it can also be frustrating because you rarely meet people with more experience than yourself, which hinders your development.

However, the low-budget art department has certain advantages over a fully fledged industry standard art department—and that is creativity. Often the effects achieved with little or no money have greater impact than the really big budget productions.

One just has to look for the dirt in a Hollywood movie to realise that somewhere a production designer yelled ‘dirt’ and then an art director yelled ‘dirt’ and then a scenic assistant scurried back to the goods desk and yelled ‘dirt’ until a sleepy clerk shuffled over and put a couple of dirt cans on the counter.

Hint Isn’t your first film going to be a gritty slice of life drama shot in and around where you live work or go to school? Get a talented production designer to make the dirt look better! Simply arranging the dirt can sometimes make it look more photogenic.

Low-Budget Special Effects

The quickest way to get production values into your script is to create action. Here are a few basic tips, but remember, they are just tips. I am sure you can come up with better, more creative ways.

When Roger Corman spent 10 days at Raindance. I asked him what the secret to a successful low-budget movie was. He replied, in his lovely gravelly voice, that a successful movie had to have sex and violence in it. Then he said: 'Let's just call it action!'

Alfred Hitchcock famously used Bosco chocolate syrup in his film *Psycho*.

Fake blood

Independent films often have to rely on a certain amount of violence or nudity to sell—just ask Roger Corman—he's made an entire career and no small empire based on violence.

Filmmakers are always finding new ways of creating realistic looking blood on screen. In order to give you the latest in screen blood, I talked to Jake West, whose cult hit *Razor Blade Smile* created a furore usually reserved for big budgeted Hollywood films. Here are two of Jake's simple formulas for making movie blood.

i Syrup-based blood

Get a bottle of light corn syrup, add in red food colouring, a little blue and just a touch of green. Obviously, most of the food colouring you use should be red. By experimenting with the amount of blue and green, you should be able to come up with some very realistic looking blood. This will not run freely from a wound, but it will do well for bloodstains, zombies, gunshot victims, etc.

Remember to adjust for the lights and for the kind of camera or film stock that you are using. It could well be that the actual blood is nearly blue or purple to the human eye but will give you a sickeningly realistic and bloody look on screen.

ii MB2-based blood

This blood formula is more realistic. As there's no sugar and very little food in the formula, it's less attractive to insects (an important consideration if you're shooting outside).

Flour base—to make about 250ml (250cc):

Mix 2 teaspoons of plain all-purpose flour per 250ml (250cc) of water. Mix the flour into the water completely (no lumps) before heating. Bring it to the boil then simmer for half an hour. Stir frequently. Let cool before adding food colouring. This makes a good base for stage blood.

Colouring:

30ml (30cc) red food colouring

1/8 teaspoon (0.5cc) green food colouring

Add to flour base described above.

Again, quantities of green and blue colouring used can be adjusted to account for the type of film/tape stock used. The shelf life of the MB2 formula blood is just a few days at room temperature. The blood does not go but ferments a bit and loses viscosity with time. This formula will temporarily stain skin but will wash out of cotton clothes.

All you need now is to make certain you have a superb stills photographer around when you shoot the blood. You'd be amazed how useful a bloody still is when you go to sell the movie.

Wounds

The key to convincing low-budget effects are simple festering sores, the all-important classic wound, which can be easy and cheap. After all, the indie filmmaker needs realism, diversity of options and recognition of the proverbial

empty wallet. Also handy is a blood bag which will burst on contact with a fake knife.

i Stab wound

Use extreme caution when dealing with knives, retractable or otherwise.

You will need:

- A retractable knife
- A solid piece of plastic or metal
- A latex glove or a condom

1. Strap the piece of plastic or metal onto the victim, placing it where he/she will be stabbed.
2. Attach a baggie of fake blood (in the finger of a glove or the condom) over the top of the plastic or metal.
3. Cover it with their shirt (duh). They when they are attacked on camera, the baggie should burst. If you have a retractable knife, this will be easy—just stab the knife onto the blood bag.

ii Cuts

Special effects make-up artists are more than dedicated—they are creative, they are thorough and they post their instructions on the web.

1. Roll two long, thin pieces of tissue and connect them at the ends, leaving the middle part separated.
2. Using liquid latex, apply the tissue to the skin.
3. Make the outer edge rise from the skin, and the inner edge (the 'cut') rise sharply.
4. Apply more than one layer of liquid latex and cover with make-up (and blend).
5. Squeeze fake blood into the centre of the cut and let it run down.

Stunts

Health and safety is a serious issue. If cast and crew are hurt, it will affect your schedule and the producer could end up in prison. Use an expert—a stunt coordinator or a fight director.

Any physical action that may endanger the cast or crew, or any physical action that an actor is not willing to do, should be considered a stunt. This can include nude or sex scenes.

No matter how simple a stunt may look in the script, for the stunt to work safely it will require much more time to shoot than a regular scene. If the stunt is something like a fight scene, the production will also—for that scene—require more editing and shooting time, which will impact on the production and post-production schedule. A typical page of dialogue may take only 1 day to rough-cut and a few hours to film, but a good fight scene could take a week to edit and 2 or 3 days to film. This will impact on your budget, as will the health and safety considerations; whenever there is a stunt, you may be required to also hire a stunt coordinator in addition to the stunt person.

Sex Scenes

In one of my first directing roles, I hired an actress who would not appear nude. However, wearing a g-string and skimpy bra was not considered by her to be nude. The lesson learned was to make sure your talent understands what is expected of them before they are signed to your shoot.

Sex scenes should be regarded in the same way: you can't assume that any actor you might have in mind for a certain role will get involved with sex scenes or nudity. As a producer you will have to negotiate with the agent for permission, and it will usually cost more. Scenes involving nudity also take longer to shoot, especially if you've written in lots of close-ups of fingers clutching bed sheets. During production it will be a closed set, and only a fraction of the crew will be working on the scenes, so things may take longer to shoot. In some cases, body doubles may have to be used, which is another body on set that the producer has to feed, transport, pay and apply make-up to (and lots of it).

Firearms

For scenes involving guns or rifles, you have to make sure that a licensed gun handler is on set at all times. This could be a special effects coordinator or it could be one of the art department crew. A special effects artist will have to be hired for any 'hits' you want your firearms to make. If the gun or rifle is fired, a pay-duty policeman called an armourer or gun wrangler will have to be hired. If an Emergency Task Force officer has to be hired, his/her fees will be higher than regular pay-duty police.

If you've written scenes with explosions, the complications can be daunting. A special effects coordinator will have to be hired; the local fire department will have to be notified, and in some cases may have to be hired as well, along with a truck. As with stunts and other special effects, it will be cost-effective to cover the scene with multiple cameras, thus using more film stock, the hiring of extra operators and assistants, etc. The area the explosion takes place in will need to be secured by additional pay-duty police. There are only slim distinctions which govern who is responsible for certain effects. Sometimes the props person can handle it, sometimes you'll need a professional special effects artist. It is best to seek advice from a certified stunt coordinator, who will be able to help you with risk assessment.

A stunt coordinator is very similar in job description to a fight director. However, the role covers a broader spectrum of action scenes such as wire work, fire, cars—things that often don't take place on the stage (the role of fight director evolved from the same job in the theatre).

Screen Combat and Fight Directing

Violence on a stage or set is managed and choreographed by a fight director. On film and television, the fight director will work under the direct supervision of the stunt coordinator or action designer.

While there is no legal obligation to hire a fight director, it is advisable to use a fight director on a production for two very good reasons:

1 To make the fight safe

Safety is the primary reason for using a fight director. The fight director's main role is making the fight safer for all those involved.

2 To make the fight good

Making a fight that serves the production. The FD will instill a sense of security in the actors that will allow them to perform without fear of accident. S/he will tailor the fight not just to the production, but a good FD will also tailor the fight to the needs and abilities of the actors.

Working with a Fight Director

A fight director needs to be informed about several technical aspects in order to assist the actors in creating the right fight for the scene. They need to make sure that the fight is safe and that it looks as good as it can on screen.

Designer or design department

The FD needs to know what surfaces the fight will be on and what other elements, such as props, need to be brought into the scene.

The props department

The FD needs to see what weapons have been designed for the scene. If there are firearms, then an armourer will have to be hired.

Wardrobe

Wardrobe should be informed of the necessary safety requirements. They may be required to hide back padding or knee braces etc. under the costume. They may have to provide specific safety gear such as gloves and they may also be required to have stand-in costumes for fights which involve potentially getting dirty or bloody. The FD will have to discuss footwear with them also.

Lighting

The FD will want to make sure that cross lighting will not blind the performers. Also, the director of photography and the FD may wish to discuss the elements of the fight in order that it can be shot in the best and most effective way possible.

Director

The FD needs to make sure that the director's vision is being followed. A good FD helps bring the director's vision to life.

The producers, first AD or other production personnel

It is a good idea to introduce the FD to the rest of the production team.

Summary

1. Always seek the elements that will enhance the look of your film.
2. Make absolutely certain that you adhere to health and safety issues.
3. Be inventive. Learn to use the budget limitations of your project to your advantage.

On the website www.lotonobudgetfilmmaking.com there is a review with fight director Tim Klotz along with a glossary of fight direction terms.

If you are shooting on public or private property, you will need to make legal arrangements. The next chapter tells you how.

Low-Budget CGI

Keys to the Special Effects Kingdom on a Lo-to-No Budget by Floyd Webb

Floyd Webb is one of the pioneers of CGI graphics and an expert in low-budget CGI. Floyd is currently in Los Angeles, although he travels frequently to London and Paris where he designs motion for websites (to make a buck) and works on feature films with a host of the most respected indie filmmakers in America.

CGI effects for independent films can be achieved these days for very little money. That is, little money relative to what you hear about being paid for big budget feature effects. Right now it is about access to hardware, software and the people who know how to use it.

Whether you shot on film or digital, you are always going to be posting non-linear in Final Cut Pro, Avid, Premiere, etc. That is unless you are some cinema Luddite still obsessed with the smell of film cement and the clickety-click of a Steenbeck and navigating jungles of film strips hanging from a clothesline (ahh, those were the days). With Adobe After Effects, Electric Image, Maya, 3D Studio Max and a number of other software packages you can accomplish some amazing things.

As filmmakers we should remain aware that this is a collaborative art. One of the first things I try to do is find out who my possible collaborative partners might be. As a director, writer or producer we should concentrate on those skills we have chosen to pursue. While we may want to and even be able to do it all, we should not. Sure, you can try to learn every job, but take it from one who knows, it is better to have a pool of people to coalesce with and be able to delegate duties, especially with CGI. Have you got 400 hours to learn to use the software? If you do—great—if not, then you need another solution.

Do some research on what it is you require for your script. Try to gain some familiarity with how 3D animation works and the various software packages. This will keep you ahead of the game and allow you to identify people who are more than posers. Time is of the essence and no one has any to waste.

'Social engineering' is a hacker term that describes how to get something you need out of a person. While somewhat manipulative and devious as a practice, the core technique is sound. As filmmakers we are in a social business and we lead with charisma, passion and dedication to our ideas. There are people who can help you with whatever you need. All you need do is look for them, sell them on your idea, ask nicely, pay them a token fee and always feed them well. Take your people to lunch. Listen to their ideas about what you are doing and always be ready to compromise. Those forty-seven lightsabre fights in the first ten pages may actually not be a good idea after all. Listen and learn.

If you get someone who is really skilled at CGI, has the hardware and software, believes in what you are doing and needs the working credit, then you are in. Show them some respect, compensate them based on your ability to pay or not (never promise what you don't have) and take them to meals, invite them to screenings, parties, introduce them around (after you get done with your project).

You can try to search for people who work at post-production houses to get a deal—see if there are any talented people who are looking to make a name for themselves working for the next George Lucas. They may not be able to do the work at the post house. It is most likely that someone who has their own software and equipment at home will be most helpful to you. But these guys are working nine to five for big money. They will give you top flight work, and they may give you the hard sell, but if you have a small budget to pay them for their out-of-hours time (they work really fast) this could work for you.

If you have absolutely no money, the first place to locate people is art schools. Find out what colleges and training facilities have advanced students on the verge of entering the workforce (but are not stuck in exams 2 weeks after you get started). Put up a flyer promising fame and a credit on a new hip indie film in production. Look at a few portfolios and take note of each person's strengths and weaknesses. Talk to department heads and teachers to find out who they think the most gifted students are. And by the way, you have a legitimate film project. What you lack is money. Say so at the beginning. You're a producer—you should have the patter down before you start talking to people.

Some students might be good at character animation, others at 3D environments and still others at visual effects. You need all three and it rarely comes in one person. If you find that special one—great—if not, build a small team. One of these people should become your point person, someone who might have management ability and can liaise with you smoothly. You now have your very own visual effects supervisor and this could save you a lot of headaches down the line if you locate a bright kid with a good work ethic. The best advice I ever got from someone was in LA, of all places. He told me that 'the key to being a successful independent filmmaker is surrounding yourself with people of like mind and superior work ethic.' Works for me.

Try to attend conferences of 3D animators or professional associations like SIGGRAPH. Again check the Internet to see where they are or ask around. Go with that charm and sophistication you exude so well and sell your idea to whoever you find that is skilled at 3D animation. Go to booths touting the newest 3D animation software and talk to the sales guys. They always know people.

Another good place to find people is online. Communities and discussion boards exist for all of the major animation and 3D software. On these sites work is placed for review, problems are solved, issues clarified and yes, you can recruit someone to help work on your film. People post samples of their work online on these forums. It does not matter if they are in Slovakia or Katmandu: if they have a connection and can receive storyboards and images, you can work with them online. Contact user groups: search online or ask around. There is a local user group for software in most urban areas.

Set up a PayPal account online. It is free. Go to www.paypal.com. You can use this site to set up an online account to pay for any possible shipping or supplies expenses or surprise someone who has done a great job for you on \$0 with a few bob/dollars/euros.

Never require someone doing free work for you to leave themselves out of pocket for your project unless you discuss that first. Even if they offer, try to cover any expenses required for the job. Before you talk to them try to

have as much information as you can on what you need, and always have a strict schedule. Storyboards are always appropriate. CGI effects must be previsualised and hopefully you will have talked to your CGI people before you have shot any scenes. Nothing beats good planning. Make it easy as possible for the CGI artist. Get them extra RAM or an additional 120GB hard drive if needed. Little things mean a lot when you are dominating someone else's time.

Build effects around content. Don't make the mistake that so many films do and forget the story in exchange for scintillating effects. Be judicious and respectful of the effects artist's or animator's time. Be critical of work produced in an affirming way. You are not paying anyone to take abuse. Be ready to accept criticism as well and understand that visualisation is what the effects person does. All relationships are balancing acts, especially in film production.

In Conversation with Joe Pavlo

Joe Pavlo is a Visual Effects Supervisor and Digital Artist working in visual effects since 1995. Over fifty film and television credits include *Band of Brothers*, *The Da Vinci Code* and *Star Wars Episode II*. He won his first Emmy in 2005 for his work on the *Life and Death of Peter Sellers* and his second in 2006 for the HBO/ BBC drama series *Rome*. He has also received nominations and awards for his work from BAFTA, RTS, VES and D&AD.

How did you break into the business?

I got very lucky. A friend of mine just told me about a job going in what was called The Computer Film Company at the time, it's now called Framestore. The job title was babysitter. It started at 9 p.m. and I worked until 9 a.m. This is back in '95, and my job was to make sure things kept running overnight and to fix them if they stopped rendering, also to do Roto-work and various other helpful things. It was quite a good experience because just by staying up all night I had lots of time on my hands, learned every single thing I could and volunteered myself for every crappy job that people didn't want to do and made myself useful.

How long did rendering take back then compared to now?

There was a lot of rendering overnight. Nowadays you tend to submit your job to a massive render farm somewhere off in Pinewood or Slough or something like that and you get it back in seconds or minutes! Rarely does it even take an hour. But obviously everybody kept working on their jobs all day long and then hit 'render' at the end of the night.

The software they'd be used to seeing was all homemade, it was all done on a command line; you would type a script, a loop script that would say: blur 10 pixels, get the next frame, blur that 10 pixels, get the next frame, blur that 10 pixels . . . There was no mouse, GUI (graphical user interface) driven environment to do all these things in. So it was primarily my job to make sure that when these loop scripts got hung up and stopped rendering, to open them up and see what was causing the problem. It was usually just a simple math thing.

So you got to learn how to do everything during those long nights!

It was pretty hardcore because you couldn't buy any software at the time to do this stuff. It seems funny, but less than 20 years ago—there was no off-the-shelf stuff. It was all homemade, invented at the computer film company the stuff that they used. Even their computers they built themselves, and the

disc filing system they wrote themselves, and all the software for the visual effects was written themselves and so I learned my craft by getting really deep into the math and understanding the basic fundamentals of it, which is different nowadays because you're just pointing and clicking and saying 'oh there's a plug in for that' or 'there's a gizmo for that' . . .

Does having that base knowledge help even now, when technology is changing so quickly?

It's math. A lot of a people in my industry that have come to it late in the day probably really don't even know . . . they know it instinctively but probably haven't thought about that, but it's all just math! A lot of it is all interface driven and mouse driven, but everything underlying it is math.

Going back to college in the 80s, I wrote a 3D program. Super-rudimentary—it was a wire-frame cube, or a wire-frame pyramid, and they would rotate. I did that on an Apple 2, which predates the Mac. It was before the Mac and before the GUI. Apple's first computers were all command line—they looked like DOS—it was very different to now. But that all applies today, even though it was super primitive by today's standards computer-wise and the programming was very rudimentary and I was just drawing shapes, lines that formed a cube, it all applies today 100 per cent, and so I would say the most important things that a budding visual effects artist could do is learn about the mathematical side of it, but also to really apply yourself to art. By that I mean drawing and painting with real pencils—not Photoshop or something like that, but learning to see and learning to record what you see is probably the most important thing.

Visual effects is all about light and how it looks, in the same way that filmmaking, cinematography, is all about light. The difference is that quite often in visual effects you're creating it from scratch whereas a cinematographer will light the real world or find the right light in the real world.

Is there a certain project that you're very proud of or that you found particularly rewarding?

Yeah, definitely! I've worked on probably more than 60 feature films and some television projects. I think perhaps *Band of Brothers* stands out amongst them. I'm very proud of the work we all did on it, but I'm usually proud of the work I do on everything! It was just a rare convergence of elements and story and direction and production that made something that I think was really quite worthy. And it so easily could have been terribly crap! Looking at a lot of American efforts on WWII, certainly at the time, like *Pearl Harbor* came out. It was this patriotic, chest-thumping kind of American(ism) and love triangles and all these sorts of things that made *Pearl Harbor* an awful movie—great visual effects but awful movie.

But *Band of Brothers* really stayed true I think to the story, and the peoples' story it was telling. For me, I keep in touch with a lot of the people from *Band of Brothers*. They are my colleagues, and when I'm pleasantly surprised to be working with someone from *Band of Brothers* that I haven't seen for a few years, we greet each other like family. More so than any other production I've worked on I think that everybody felt like they really did something good for that one.

So you stayed on it throughout the series?

I started about a month after the initial shoot, but I went through all the way to the end so I was on it almost 2 years. It was a good long time and it was my first real job on set. I had been on lots of movie sets and everything but I was more of a tourist in the past almost, or just taking notes or pictures or whatever. It was a different experience.

What does the process involve for a Visual Effects Supervisor being on set?

As a supervisor you have to work very closely with the director, the production designer, the cinematographer, but primarily the director. You need to come up with a lot of quick answers on the spot for solutions and you need to be prepared to do lots of visualisation and getting things in front of them, and then you need to be prepared to throw it all away when you get on set because they've changed their plans at the last minute! But you can do that; with experience you should always have several backups and be able to think on your feet because everything on set changes frequently.

Do you have your own ways of doing certain effects?

I have my bag of tricks over the years. Everybody had their own way of doing things and there are cleverer ways being developed all the time. One of the things about visual effects is that it's a very young industry, and it's changing dramatically every year. You can just look at the quality of the films over the last decade and the visual effects that they've been able to do. Things that were a complete deal breaker even 5 or 6 years ago are now thrown in at the last minute: 'this isn't working, maybe we should do this.' Whereas in the past, that would have been: 'we haven't got the budget for that!' Technology advances, computers get faster.

Is there a pressure to always keep up to date with the latest software and techniques?

You have to keep up. The good thing is, going back to what I said; it is all built upon the same fundamentals. I get stuff thrown at me; new techniques, new technology comes up. Some years ago, when everybody went to 32-bit floating point, that was like 'this is going to change everything' and you go 'whoa, what's involved?' and you look at it 'oh, ok. It's just math, again.' It's different, and it's incredibly useful, and it's totally new compared to what we were doing before, but you get your head round it. It's all just the same stuff, only better and coming at it from a different angle.

What are the restrictions of working on a low-budget film?

Well, there's always a way to do something. When I'm designing visual effects or consulting with the director and the filmmakers, I'm usually the first one to throw out a non-visual effects solution. If I can think of a way to get it where it's as good or better in camera, and it doesn't break the budget, then I'll be the first to throw that out there. I'm a little different in that way I think.

Visual effects need to serve the story, not themselves. If there's a better solution that can be cheaper and quicker for the production then that's always got to take precedence. But, like I said, there's a lot changing rapidly. You can now

do visual effects on a par with any high-end \$100 million-dollar budget visual effects film on a laptop, with software you can buy off the shelf.

So is it just a case of having the time to put in the work?

Yeah. Obviously, if a company is doing something like *Life of Pi* or *The Hobbit*, they're not rendering it with one guy on a laptop; they'll have literally a warehouse full of servers all rendering away on the show. But if you have the time, I mean look at Gareth Edwards and his film *Monsters*. Shot on a shoestring budget, just him and two actors and whoever else he could find, went around and shot this thing. He's a visual effects artist, and did all the visual effects himself. When the credits roll, it says 'visual effects—Gareth Edwards' even though there's CG monsters, set extensions and various other invisible effects throughout the whole thing. He just did it himself! That's not going to win the Oscar for visual effects because of the scale of it is not as grand as say *The Hobbit* or *Life of Pi*, but the visual effects are of a very, very high calibre. There's no difference in the quality, it's just that he hasn't got an army of 10,000 soldiers or space ships or dinosaurs. He does have a couple of monsters though. He's doing *Godzilla* now!

Any words of wisdom for aspiring visual effects artists?

It's a great job, I'm very lucky I have a job that I really love, and I never wake up on a Monday morning thinking 'oh god I have to go to work.' I do really enjoy my work. I think it is unfortunate the trajectory that the visual effects industry is taking at the moment. Budgets are tighter, production schedules are shorter and the money is tighter and all that. So if you want to get into this industry you're going to work hard, you're going to work long hours, weekends and evenings. And there's no union! That's the bad thing.

The good advice would be that I remember the first time I was hired at the Computer Film Company back in 1994, I was trying to impress them by saying I had used Photoshop, but I really hadn't. It was on version one I think at that point, or two. I'd used it, but I wouldn't have called myself knowledgeable at all. I remember the boss at CFC telling me, 'don't worry about the software. I see that you've got a fine art degree. We can teach you the software. That's what I'm interested in—the fine art degree.' And that's always stuck with me, that you're not called a visual effects artist for nothing.

I think that a lot of people coming into the industry now are just learning software. I don't think that's really that hard, to learn software. What's hard is to learn art, and that's where people should focus.

In Conversation with Simon Hughes

How did you break into the business?

I am an artist by training and still am a painter, film and video maker. When I was finishing my degree in visual arts I couldn't imagine that you could make a living from being an artist (although in fact you can)—and that's why I embarked on

Simon Hughes is based in Winnipeg and is one of Canada's brightest young designers. The feature he designed, *Hey!, Happy!*, did for Winnipeg what John Waters did for Baltimore.

this strategy of trying to get into film. In the end it has worked out that I alternate my years working on films with doing my own work as well.

I was lucky in that this move coincided with the rise in offshore American film production in Canada; American companies shoot in Canada to save money. So I started volunteering on little no budget shorts as part of a co-op called the Winnipeg Film Group. Gradually I worked to get union membership and was doing scenic painting and set dressing and miscellaneous props calls. Then I started to be more visually oriented; I got into helping out with design and art direction on low-budget movies. So I had this dual career where on bigger money things I could go work as a painter and make a proper wage and then be the boss of the entire department on a low-budget feature and make less money than I was making painting sets for American TV movies of the week. It was a trade off because although you get to build your reputation and CV as designer or art director, you don't make that much money. It was nice to have a foot in the legitimate movie world too because you learn so much even if you are low down on the ladder. It's better to see how it happens at the lowest end of the art department; you actually see everything being built and you learn how the designs can end up being completely changed in practice. You learn about the nature of shooting and how flexible you have to be. You learn that it's not like building a house where you just design and then build it according to the plans. Everything can change from day to day; the DoP will decide that he wants a different look and the entire set has to change; the actors' blocking can totally dictate how the sets are built; the colours have to go with the costumes and whatever else. It was nice to have been on both ends.

To date my credits would be designer on *Hey!, Happy!*, which was an ultra-low-budget Canadian feature which played at Raindance and Sundance and a bunch of other grungy festivals in the New York underground. I was art director on *Inertia* which won best Canadian feature at Toronto last year and is not doing too badly. I have been a general producer/director/art director on a couple of music videos for Canadian bands. Art direction on a historical documentary and scenic artist—well, I'm a jack-of-all-trades!

Is there a certain project that you're very proud of or that you found particularly rewarding?

Well in *Hey! Happy!*, the art direction is largely invisible. I was just proud that I survived making it because that budget was so low and that we could even pull it off was an achievement. Otherwise the first music video that I did and designed and produced with a friend was a proud moment. The first time I saw it on Much Music (the MTV of Canada) it was a really weird sensation. To have watched that channel your whole life and then to see your video on it—it's like you entered the matrix! Any low budget thing I've done I am proud of.

How closely do you work with directors and cinematographers?

Very, very closely. The designer has equal credits with the DoP and all the key people, but on the shoot it's the director and the DoP who run it. You really have to pay attention to what they want. At this point in my career most of the things that I have learned are from mistakes.

At the earliest stage try and get hold of the director's storyboards even if they are crude little sketches, because when you read the script you have an idea of what it's supposed to look like but the director will have his own vision and will know how he's placing everybody and it's super important to know. I learned that on the last feature that I worked on (*Inertia*). It matters so much: you could spend 2 weeks preparing a set and then look at the storyboard and find that all it is a close-up of a hand picking up a teapot off a counter and you were building a whole apartment. You've got to work really closely with them when you are on a budget. In a budgeted film, you just build everything. Then you have complete safety; you can turn the camera 360 degrees and there's always a set there, but when you're on a budget you can save money by keeping things to a minimum.

Working with the DoP is really important too because lighting is part of the set and if you can combine the two you can get really interesting effects. Also on a practical level you have to know where they're looking so you know where to put walls. They might need a wall to go away suddenly and you need to know that so the construction of the set allows it to move around. The first sessions of working with the director are conceptual, like 'This is what we are trying to do and this is what it all means and these are the colours and this colour means that the character is sad.' When it comes down to it, though, it's all the practical stuff that you have to know about.

You have worked on a few low-budget films. How do you cope with the restraints?

It's frustrating when you have done proper industry work—it would almost be better if you came from nowhere and had nothing to compare it to. On the other hand it can be good as well because you have a structure in your mind and you work towards that even though you know you can't quite pull it off. The biggest lesson I learned about coping with a low budget is to try to make your life as comfortable as possible. The first thing you should do with your budget, no matter how small it is, is to figure out how many people you can get—volunteers or kids out of film school who want something for their CV. Even if you can't imagine what you could possibly use fifteen people for, you will need them for something and in low budgets there are always people who are happy to come out and help because they want experience. Gather as many bodies as you can even if some of them end up being bodies and are kind of useless—there's always a few people who will rise to the challenge and do better than any union Joe on \$500 a day.

The other super important thing is transportation, something that I didn't think about on the first couple of projects that I did—it's crucial. It might seem to you or the production manager that it's a big expense to get a proper truck or van for the art department. The truth is that the art department is the ghetto of the production. The camera department gets all the gravy and we get the rotten chicken bone leftovers. It's very important in the early stages to fight it out with the production manager for vehicles because you can always find stuff cheap or almost free to make sets out of but what if a guy says to you 'I have got a load of lumber you can have for free—just come get it' and all you've got is an old Ford Pinto and a rusty bicycle because there's no budget. What seems like spending money will end up

saving money. Transport is the most important thing to the art department along with bodies and people, because there's always tons of stuff to carry and move.

It's so unfair. The camera guys just get to show up and point their camera at the set. Obviously they have to carry a lot of heavy stuff too but they just don't realise that for them to change something it's just a move of the camera or a change of lens and for us it's taking down a wall or redressing an entire sofa—not that I'm complaining. Vehicles and people are the two most important things when you are dealing with a low budget.

At what point do you like to get involved in a project?

You get told about it in the very early stages but generally the designer starts working at the same time as the production manager. The general protocol is that the designer starts several weeks ahead of the rest of his department because that's the time of research and drawing out plans. Then ideally an art director comes on a little later and then the key props master, set decoration, construction coordinator—but if you are dealing with a tiny budget obviously all those people might be you. The earlier you can start thinking about it the better.

When I say low budget this is an extreme example. A feature that I did had a total budget of \$90,000 Canadian which is about \$60,000 US and the art department budget was under \$9,000 Canadian so that's quite drastic. The beauty of it was that the director was so helpful; he just made the call that all the sets he'd planned as interiors were now all going to be outside. For the DoP and me it completely saved our bacon. It was a good example of how an aesthetic decision can come about from money because it just saved so much. I didn't have to build any walls. The DoP didn't have to bring in tons of lights. You should read John Waters's book, *Shock Value*, about his early productions which is all about making low-budget movies.

Any words of wisdom for up-and-coming production designers?

I probably did it the wrong way because I didn't get a design or architecture degree which apparently is important. There's a great production design book in the *Screen Craft* series. There is one on cinematography, production design, editing, costume design. It's a big nice coffee table book on design and they interview all these big designers. The great thing about it is that you see how not all of them come from the same background, there's a few classically trained architects who switched over into film but there's some people who, like me, just started out painting or doing little jobs in the art department, just observing, keeping quiet and watching how it's done and then eventually making your mark. There are some really good points in there. One of the designers says that the main thing is curiosity. You see something and you're just curious about how it stands up or how it works.

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9

Locations and Permits

The London Film Commission, now a part of Film London, has worked miracles at reducing the amount of red tape a filmmaker needs to complete to shoot in London. info@filmlondon.org.uk www.filmlondon.org.uk

OFTEN A PRODUCER will decide that it is cheaper to shoot on private or public property than to hire a studio or sound stage and build expensive sets. In order to find appropriate locations, a film company usually employs a location scout who will recce possible locations and present them to the director and production designer. The location scout may consult databases of properties compiled by a private location hire firm or from the files of a local film commission. A film commission is a publicly funded organisation designed to smooth the red tape of shooting in a city, area, state or country. A good film commission will also assist filmmakers in finding crew and locations. Some cities, like Toronto and New York, are known for their hospitality to filmmakers. Others, like London, have a reputation of being bureaucratically complex.

Either way, the production designer and the director will decide on a suitable location which will allow the scenes to be filmed in a manner where the production can control the sound, light and passing traffic to a degree sufficient to allow the filming to be completed. An agreement with the owner is entered into and a rental price agreed. The rental price is usually based on the number of days of the shoot, insurance of the property, on the cost of restoring the property after the shoot and the cost (if public) of providing additional security and policing, along with lost revenue from parking meters.

Location Scout

During the pre-production period, the director and producer may engage a location scout to hunt for suitable properties, to photograph them and then negotiate for their use with the owner or managing agent. A good location scout needs a flair for property and must have a good sense of direction while travelling country lanes.

Location Manager

A location manager takes charge and control of a location from the moment the first members of the crew arrive. S/he is responsible for making

sure that the interests of the film company and property owner are both met and that everything stipulated in the contract between the parties is adhered to.

If an electrician needs to screw an 8-inch hook into a period ceiling in order to suspend a crucial light, the location manager is the person who liaises with the owners and seeks permission. The location manager is also the person who is responsible for health and safety on a location, although it is the producer who takes the ultimate risk on health and safety.

The location manager will recce the location prior to the shoot and make notes on mundane items like parking, the location of portable toilets, electricity supply and security. The location manager will also need to know where the nearest police and fire stations are, the quickest route to a hospital and the shortest route to a working photocopier. If the shoot is to last more than a few days, then s/he will arrange for a portable or temporary office, most often shared with the assistant directors.

Shooting on Private Property

When shooting on private property, the producer looks for a secure location in which the filming can be contained and where there is adequate electricity, water and local amenities like shops, police station, fire station, photocopy shop, hospitals and ample parking. It is also a bonus if the location is near good public transportation, which means the production does not need to rely on expensive private transport.

Additional Budget When Shooting on Location

Even if you are shooting in your best friend's house in the leafy suburbs and not paying a location fee, you will still need some money.

It works like this

On the first morning when you arrive, the husband of the house is making you tea, and the lady of the house is running around with muffins. Everyone is oh-so-happy that you are using their place for a movie. On the second day you are greeted with a stony silence. You, the producer, are scratching your head trying to figure out what went wrong. Then you realise that someone in your crew dropped not one but two cigarette butts on the rare hand-me-down carpet in the hallway, and the entire crew trampled through the prize orchids in the front garden. Somehow you make it up to them and you move on.

And on the third day it is outright hostility. They may even ask you to leave. 'What now?' you sob. It is of course not your location hosts but their neighbours. What no one realised was that thirty vehicles are turning up every morning and staying there on the street until late at night—which means that the neighbours have nowhere to park when they get back from work. You will probably figure this out yourself on the third morning, when the director yells 'Action!' and at that precise moment,

'We are N.G. sound!' is what the recordist will shout to let everyone know that the take has been interrupted and the sound he has recorded is no good.

I produced a 35mm short in which the director insisted on a shot of a lingerie section inside a department store. Even if we had the budget to build a set, we didn't have the time, and no amount of persuasion would make him change his mind. We agreed to attempt a shot at a major department store a few minutes' walk from the Raindance office on a Sunday morning. The store opened at noon and at 12:05 the DoP, the director, the actor and myself did a *recce* of the store. We noticed that there was an elevator that took you to the lingerie department. We regrouped in the office, and the DoP decided on a lens and the assistant loaded up a 400ft roll. As we approached the store, the camera started running, and we all calmly walked to the elevator. Meanwhile the actor was in place 'browsing' upstairs. We got out of the lift, and the shot was done in about a minute. The DoP even had time for some close-ups. We got back in the lift and we

the neighbour three doors down decides to chainsaw their oak tree, and you are N.G. sound. What works really well in situations like this is taking £50/\$100 notes door to door. 'Hello Mrs X. Here's a small token of our appreciation for your continued cooperation'. If you don't have cash, then bottles of champagne, steaks or frozen turkeys work wonders in community relations.

Of course, if you are shooting with a minimal crew, problems like this shouldn't arise. It is quite likely that a considerate and minimal crew can get better results than a so-called proper crew with dozens of techies loitering around waiting for their call to action.

Shooting on Public Property

Whenever you shoot on public property, you are required to have a permit. The permit will state the length of time you have to shoot, as well as limit the number of vehicles you are allowed to park.

Guerrilla Filmmaking

One of the many filmmaking practices referred to as guerilla filmmaking has to do with shooting on the street without a permit. The authorities in most urban areas have decreed that it is against local laws to use a tripod which rests on public property without first obtaining a permit. If you are ever in front of Big Ben in London when the tourist buses pull up, I wager that you will see dozens of guerrilla filmmaker tourists.

The authorities are worried about two things: health and safety. They do not want you to impede or redirect the flow of traffic, and they do not want you to put anyone at the risk of injury. Accordingly, you must not ever ask a car or pedestrian to stop or wait until you get a shot—as that is disrupting the flow of traffic.

But what if you could not or did not get a permit?

I was once working as a producer's assistant on a shoot in Trafalgar Square on Easter Monday morning at 8 a.m. The shot involved a set of three stunt cars coming around the bend together and disappearing off camera. Unfortunately on this occasion, the location manager had failed to procure the necessary permit. Sure enough, about halfway through the early morning work, a policeman, probably 2 weeks away from retirement, decided that he had nothing better to do than bust some filmmakers. He asked for the permit. I was fainting. The producer asked him politely to wait and proceeded to go through his pockets. After several minutes, the producer told the policeman that the permit was in the office. By now I was really getting worried, as I knew there was no permit and that our office was just around the corner. Imagine my amazement when the producer then said that our office was in Brighton—some ninety minutes away. Off the producer went, and the policeman settled down to wait. About an hour later I got a call from the producer who was shocked to hear that our legal friend was still in attendance.

were done! In the end, the director had the nerve to cut the scene!

After about 3 hours, as we were starting to pack up, the producer returns and brandishes a permit, duly completed. He thrust it under the policeman's nose, only to be told that the permit was invalid because there was no official receipt on it. Cursing, the producer slapped his forehead and disappeared again, only this time it was for a well-deserved lunch around the corner to which we all joined him some half hour later.

Shooting on the Street

Even if you have a signed letter from the Chief of Police giving you permission to shoot on the street, on the day, the lowliest bobby on the beat has the final say—only he can tell if your presence is disrupting public order. Policemen are able to confiscate your equipment if they want, and it takes 5 or 6 weeks to get it back, during which time you are on the hook to the rental facility for the rental payments.

Shooting on the street does require a permit. The value of the permit varies from locality to locality, but it is generally calculated on the amount of money lost to parking meters and for the wages of any policeman that might be needed to redirect traffic.

Many policemen and permit-approving officials do not understand that the low-budget filmmaker might be able to snatch a shot of a couple of actors wired with radio mics wandering through a busy city square in a few minutes and that they will be able to do it without a dozen vans and catering trucks taking up the side of a city block.

At Raindance we shoot with large professional cameras on the street all the time but without permits. We do however, follow a few simple rules.

We always telephone the local police station and tell them that we are about to do a student test demonstration between these hours and make certain the police station supervisor has our cell phone number to call in case of any complaints. We find that the police are more accommodating for a 'student' film than a professional film.

If a policeman, with nothing better to do (like stop bank robbers or solve murders), confronts us, we immediately pack up and leave, no matter what. The confrontation is never ever worth it.

We try not to use a boom mic with a sock. Even when we have been carrying a huge 35mm kit with barn doors through a busy city street, we find that the most attention is created by the sound man and the sock. People think that a boom mic equals a movie.

If anyone asks what you are making, always tell them you are making a student video with no one in it—even if it's untrue.

Keep the amount of film equipment to a minimum. If you, the camera person and the sound person cannot carry everything you need between you, then you are probably attempting too much.

Permissions

Opposite is a simple location release form that you can use to confirm your arrangements to shoot on someone else's property. Even when you are using a friend's or relative's space, it can be a good idea to make the agreement formal and so protect the production in case anything should go wrong.

LOCATION RELEASE FORM

Mr Bigshot
Film Producer
Address

To: [Name of owner of premises and their address]

Dated: [dd/mm/yyyy]

Dear [Name of owner of premises]

Name of film _____ (the 'Film')

This letter is to confirm that you have agreed that we may film at your property known as _____ (the 'Property') from _____ (starting time) to _____ (finishing time) on _____ (date) together with a setting up period of _____ hours and a striking period of _____ hours.

It is therefore agreed as follows:

1. That you will allow the equipment, props, artist, personnel and vehicles employed on our production onto the Property for the purpose of setting up, filming and striking on the dates and for the periods agreed.
2. You agree that you have read the script of the scenes to be filmed at the Property and you confirm and agree that these scenes can be filmed at the Property.
3. You hereby agree that we may use all films, photographs and recordings made in or around the Property in the Film as we decide and without any need for further consent from you.
4. Structural or decorative changes to the Property cannot be made without your prior consent, and in any event, we agree to reinstate the Property to the state it was in before our alterations, or to a better state.
5. Should we be unable to complete filming on the dates agreed, you agree to a further day(s) at a mutually agreeable time for a fee of _____ per day.
6. In consideration of the rights granted in this letter we will pay you the sum of £_____ (amount) on _____ (date).
7. You agree to indemnity us and to keep us fully indemnified from and against all actions, proceedings, costs, claims, demands however arising in respect of any actual or alleged breach or non-performance by you of any or all of your undertakings, warranties and obligations under this agreement.
8. This agreement shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the law of England and Wales and subject to the jurisdiction of the English Courts.

Please signify your acceptance of the above terms by signing and returning to us the enclosed copy.

Yours sincerely,

_____ (signed)

Indicate here if the number of vehicles is to be limited if the property owner requests it.

You may wish to take a simple video 'hosepipe' record of the condition of the premises when you first do a recce. This will prevent property owners making false claims of damage caused to the property during filming.

figure 9.1
Location release

Risk Assessment Forms

To complete the table opposite, you must rate the severity of each risk that is present in your location. First assess each risk's severity on this scale and enter it into the table under 'Severity'. If it is a negligible risk, mark 'N', for slight risk mark 'SL', for moderate risk mark 'M', severe risks are listed as 'S' and a very severe risk is denoted 'V'.

Then assess the likelihood of each risk on this scale and enter it into the table under 'Likelihood'. If it is very unlikely that the risk will actually cause a problem, mark 'VU', if it is unlikely mark 'U', if it is possible write 'P', if it is likely mark 'L' and if it is very likely mark 'VL'.

Then determine the risk factor using the matrix below and enter this final factor into the assessment table opposite.

	Very unlikely	Unlikely	Possible	Likely	Very likely
Very severe	3	4	4	5	5
Severe	2	3	3	3	5
Moderate	2	2	3	3	3
Slight	1	2	2	3	3
Negligible	1	1	2	2	3

figure 9.2
Calculate the risk factor

You then need to decide what actions to take. The table below should help you to assess and prioritise the risks.

Risk factor 5	Very severe	Take immediate action
Risk factor 4	Severe	High priority
Risk factor 3	Moderate risk	Programme for action
Risk factor 2	Low risk	Action may be required
Risk factor 1	Negligible risk	Probably acceptable

figure 9.3
Decide the action to take

The form on the facing page is part-completed as an example.

There is a template for this document on the website www.lotonobudgetfilmmaking.com.

Next you need to complete a hazard form for each risk identified. Copy and paste the table below beneath the hazard list (as opposite). Then sign the completed risk assessment.

Hazard Number		Risk Factor (1-5)	
Description			
Person(s) exposed [Detail if cast/crew (C), outside company (O) or public (P)]			
Action to take [include date to be completed]			
Person/company responsible for action			
To be completed on date set above:			
Exposed person(s) informed?		Agreed action taken?	
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Risk removed?		Risk removed?	
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

figure 9.4
List each risk identified

figure 9.5
Risk assessment form

This low-budget, limited crew shoot will take place in an atmospheric, disused warehouse. Its shell is secure but the entire interior is not. The scenes to be shot involve a fist fight, including falls, and require the actors to smoke on set.

Complete a hazard form for every risk that you have identified as present in your location.

If the producer has not completed the risk assessment themselves, then they should countersign it.

Risk Assessment: Kill Phil		Emma Luckie (Prod. Manager): 0755599966			
020 55 7287 (Production Office)		Oscar Sharp (1st AD): 0755500099			
Shooting 25 to 30 June		Elliot Grove (Producer): 0755599900			
Disused warehouse		Disused warehouse			
	Hazard	Present?	Severity	Likelihood	Risk factor
1	Alcohol/drugs	No			
2	Animals/insects	No			
3	Audiences	No			
4	Camera cable/grip equipment	Yes	SL	L	3
5	Confined spaces	No			
6	Derelict buildings/dangerous structures	Yes	S	P	3
7	Electricity/gas (other than normal supplies)	No			
8	Fatigue/long hours	No			
9	Fire/flammable materials	No			
10	Hazardous substances	No			
11	Heat/cold/extreme weather	Yes	SL	L	3
12	Laser/strobe effects	No			
13	Machinery: industrial crane/hoist	No			
14	Materials: glass, non-fire retardant	Yes	M	P	3
15	Night operation	No			
16	Noise: high sound levels	No			
17	Non-standard manual handling	No			
18	Public/crowds	No			
19	Radiation	No			
20	Scaffold/rostra	No			
21	Smoking on set	Yes	M	VL	3
22	Special effects/explosives	No			
23	Special needs: elderly, disabled etc	No			
24	Specialised rescue/first aid	No			
25	Stunts, dangerous activities	No			
26	Tall scenery/suspended ceilings	Yes	S	VL	5
27	Vehicles/speed/traffic	No			
28	Water/proximity to water	No			
29	Weapons	No			
30	Working at heights	Yes	S	VL	5
31	Working overseas	No			
32	Food and drink: on set/prop food and drink	No			
33	Other risks	No			
Hazard Number		4	Risk Factor (1-5)		3
Description		Trip hazards – lights/camera cabling			
Person(s) exposed		C – all those involved in scene			
Action to take		Secure and mark all cabling by 25/06/04			
Person/company responsible for action		Gaffer			
To be completed on date set above:					
Exposed person(s) informed?		Agreed action taken?		Risk removed?	
Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		No	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Completed by:			Position:		
Signature:			Date:		

Health and Safety

Failure to ensure the safety of your cast and crew could leave you exposed to a charge of criminal negligence which could lead to a fine, imprisonment or both. Often, a new producer will ignore the necessary steps to prevent an accident on the basis of cost. However, the extra costs incurred by spending more time rigging, issuing hard hats and ensuring that a set or location is safe for use by all cast and crew will be far less than the possible medical bills and legal fees you might get landed with if you don't do these things. Your insurance policy will also stipulate certain provisions that you must take in order for the policy to take force. As the producer, you must accept ultimate responsibility for health and safety on set. A good producer will delegate this responsibility in part to a crew member trained in health and safety, usually the first assistant director, the line producer or the location manager.

As soon as possible, in pre-production, a good producer will examine the production for possible risk in order to take responsible action to downsize or minimise the risks. Factors a producer considers are:

- What is the likelihood of an accident occurring?
- What are the possible consequences?
- How can the danger be eliminated, reduced or controlled?
- What protection is available against the danger?
- Which experts, procedures or guidelines are available to assist in the process?
- Who specifically is at risk?

Skillset has devised industry guidelines on the standard levels of health and safety that should be expected from different crew members: www.skillset.org.

As a producer, it is your call as to which risks you will bear and which you won't. Certain precautions seem like common sense and are very cheap: tapping down cables, wearing hard hats, surge protectors. Other risks may prove too expensive to make safe or too dangerous. Only by doing a proper risks assessment can a producer judge each situation.

Hint Make sure that adequate time and money is budgeted to allow for safe working practices. Make sure that there is money to pay for proper safety specialists and equipment and that the production is crewed in relation to the type of activity taking place.

Health and safety training is broken into three units:

Unit X2—Ensuring your own actions reduce risks to health and safety for everyone at work regardless of position or number of hours worked. This unit is about making sure that risks to health and safety are not created or ignored.

Unit X3—Conduct and assessment of risks in the workplace. This unit is for those undertaking risk assessments.

Unit X4—Developing procedures to control risks to health and safety. This unit is for people who write health and safety procedures and review their implementation.

Skillset has set out that everyone involved in production—from carpenters to accountants—should have Unit X2 level qualification. Most heads of department should be at least at Unit X3, and the producer and construction manager, and sometimes line producer and first AD, should be at Unit X4. For further information see www.skillset.org.

Basic Principles of Health and Safety

1 Be safer than you need to be—You have far less to lose

Remember to consider both your cast and crew, and members of the public, at all times. If you're filming on a street remember that your crew may be aware of a cable, track or tripod but a passer-by may not. If you cannot ensure obstructions are securely out of the way, employ a runner to direct the public around it.

2 Develop preset arrangements for emergencies

During shooting, the producer would usually assign safety responsibility to the production manager and first AD. Details of their responsibilities are contained in the PACT Health and Safety Policy Document. There should always be someone on set with authority to take charge in emergency situations. Key crew should know details of the nearest hospital, as well as the mobile number of production manager and first AD. Even if you don't have a first AD or production manager, make sure someone takes responsibility for this role on set—otherwise it is the job of the producer.

3 Ask the cast and crew if they have any medical conditions they should tell you about

Always do this in confidence and privately. Find out from anyone with a condition what you should do in an emergency—such as a nut allergy sufferer accidentally swallowing a peanut—and ensure that your on-set health and safety designates are aware of this.

4 Complete a risk assessment of your shoot

Work from a checklist of potential risks. Of those that exist, estimate both the severity of the hazard (from negligible to very severe), and the likelihood of it occurring (from very unlikely to very likely). Then decide the action to take. Keep a written record of this process.

5 Make sure equipment on set is safe

Kit such as hoists, cherry pickers and vehicles must be supplied with the relevant test certificates. Manufacturers' instructions should be supplied and followed with appropriate training and instruction where necessary. When equipment is supplied with an operator (e.g. a Steadicam), checks should be made into the competence and track record of the operator. If you are in any

doubt over the safety of a piece of equipment it must not be used until it has been checked by a relevant expert.

6 Have first aid

A recognised studio will have a first aid department, and make sure your key crew know where it is upon arrival at the studio. If you work late, the studio first aid centre is likely to be closed, so you will have to make alternative arrangements.

On location, you must take a first aid kit and nominate a first aider or, budget willing, a unit nurse. Advise all crew members who the first aider is, so if there is an accident, they will know who to go to for help.

7 Develop a fire policy

Well, firstly you should have taken every reasonable measure to prevent one from happening in the first place. You should also ensure that there is adequate firefighting equipment at each location and studio and that all cast and crew are aware of a pre-nominated safe area where they will assemble in the event of a fire. If a fire occurs you should follow a predetermined process similar to the one outlined below. You should use this process in conjunction with any local fire regulations of studios or locations that you are using.

When a fire is found, the first AD must be informed immediately (either in person or via radio/talkback). S/he will be responsible for informing the director/producer and production manager/supervisor and instructing a member of the crew to alert security (if available) and activate the nearest fire alarm or dial 999. Crew members should be instructed to immediately switch off all equipment and move equipment away from sets and fire exits.

The first AD will order the floor/location to be cleared and escort the artists and crew to a pre-nominated safe area. If, in their opinion, the fire is dangerous s/he may order the immediate evacuation of the studio/location and inform the producer of the decision. Once all crew and cast members are assembled in the pre-nominated assembly points it should be checked that they are all present and the absence of a unit member must be reported immediately to the producer or appropriate nominee or fire chief if in attendance.

If you are filming in a studio with an audience, then there are further regulations you need to observe—see the PACT guidelines for more information: www.pact.co.uk.

8 Personal protective equipment

Personal protective equipment (PPE) covers all equipment that is worn or held to protect against risks to health and safety—this may include flame-resistant clothing, goggles and respirators, gloves and hard hats. The PPE Regulations lay down the type and standard of PPE to be used when risks cannot be avoided, and the regulations state the PPE should only be used after all other attempts to reduce the risk have been removed. The following should apply:

- PPE should be provided to employees at no charge where a risk requires its use and the risk cannot be controlled by other means.

Question:
anyone figured
out how the
sound recordist
can wear both
headphones and
a hard hat?

- PPE must be kept in good condition and working order.
- You should carry out a risk assessment regarding the suitable use of PPE.
- Make sure when using more than one type of PPE that it is compatible with other PPE in use.
- Arrangements must be made to ensure that any necessary safety equipment is available to those who require it.

9 Shooting at night

When your cast and crew are tired, night shoots can demand extra safety precautions. Ensure that adequate work lights are installed. Budget for more of everything: more time, more food, more heating, more clothes and fluorescent jackets.

10 Handling dangerous substances or equipment

Before you bring something hazardous into a studio or location, specialist advice should be sought at the earliest possible opportunity. Items that you should use with expert advice include (not exhaustive):

- Any substance hazardous to health.
- Any substance or equipment that may cause a fire or an explosion.
- Any radioactive substance.
- Any bacteria, viruses or other infectious material.
- Any drugs normally requiring a prescription.
- Any high-risk equipment, e.g. lasers, thermal lances or any similar scientific devices.
- Any compressed gas.
- Equipment with exposed, dangerous moving parts.
- Equipment capable of producing very high or low frequency sound levels.
- Equipment with exposed dangerous voltages.
- Prop food, which may be on set under hot lights for several days.

11 Dealing with noise

Hearing can be permanently damaged by loud noise, the risk being a function of both volume and exposure. High sound levels produced by loudspeakers and headphones without distortion can be particularly hazardous because the effect is not always unpleasant or even thought of as noise. Noise At Work regulations were introduced to protect the hearing of industrial workers. Special care should be taken on locations such as airports, motor racing events and pop concerts. A safety-conscious producer will post warning notices and give ear defenders to those working in areas of high noise.

12 Animal safety

All animals—regardless how small or tame—should be considered potentially dangerous and therefore handled in the correct manner.

There are a number of regulations which control the keeping and movement of certain animals. If the script calls for an animal to be used in a way which creates an illusion of cruelty, a vet should be informed in advance. It is an offence under the Protection of Animals Act to cause, procure or assist

in the fighting of any animal. The suppliers of all performing animals should comply with the Performing Animals (Regulation) Act in regard to the training of animals. For lions, tigers, etc., in order to comply with the provisions of the Dangerous Wild Animals Act it is necessary for the keeper to hold the appropriate license. This should be checked before any animal covered by the act is allowed in a studio, set or location.

PACT and Bectu have an approved list of special effects technicians.

13 Explosions and pyrotechnics

To create an explosive or pyrotechnic effect legally you need to use an expert. Make sure that the provisions of the Bectu Code of Practice are referred to. Your crew and cast must be fully briefed before participating in any rehearsal, including a practical demonstration of the effect whenever possible. If you can't rehearse, then increase the safety precautions accordingly. Make sure that the fire brigade and police are informed before any outdoor or location explosive or pyrotechnic effects are carried out. If there are a lot of people involved, it may be necessary to have a nurse present at the time of the effect.

14 Using and handling firearms

Using a firearm on set, even a gun firing blanks, without an official handler (or armourer) is a criminal offence, and the producer responsible can be charged with attempted murder. Every firearm must be considered a lethal weapon—loaded, unloaded or lying on a table.

Weapons, including replicas or dummy firearms, should only be used with the authority of the producer, and then only with an armourer. It is common sense to alert local police that you are using replica weapons in public so they know you aren't engaged in a criminal activity.

15 Working with heights

Make sure that any risk of people or objects falling is controlled—be it through harnesses, safety barriers or toe boards (rims at the base of platforms). Remember that no one should be asked to work heights against their will and to get specialist advice where needed.

If you're building scaffolding, make sure it's erected by a professional—the Screen Industry Training Advisory Committee (SITAC) issues a PACT- and Bectu-approved list of recognised riggers and scaffolders and this is available through the Producers Industrial Relations Services (PIRS) offices—020 7380 6680.

16 Working with water

Water requires preparation. Find out which of your cast and crew can and cannot swim. Ensure that buoyancy aids and lifelines are available. If you need divers and power boats, always ask for professional help.

When shooting on a coastline or at sea make sure you plan fully around tidal times. Monitor the weather right up to the shoot, and have contingency plans for adverse conditions. If you're shooting at sea always consult lifeboat coxswains, coastguards, harbour masters or other recognised local authorities for advice. When shooting on rivers, canals or lakes, you must consult

local authorities in order to assess the degree of pollution and the accompanying risk of infection. Many rivers carry nasty industrial and agricultural pollutants: immersion may require a hospital check-up. When using a boat, then ensure that it is manned by a competent skipper. When in doubt, always seek professional advice.

You must inform the police if you plan any of the following:

- The firing of maroons, firearms or other explosive substances.
- The simulations of accidents, disasters, invasions, sinkings, drownings or other events which might in any way be mistaken for genuine events either by the authorities or members of the public.

17 Filming on a roadside

Crews should wear reflective high visibility waistcoats when filming on or near public roads. Make it very clear policy that your crew knows not to stand on the road. If you have to shoot in the road itself, you need to notify the police and place appropriate cone and diversion signs around your shoot. If you need to control traffic, you will need to get the police to assist you. This must be arranged ahead of time; it is usually organised when you are getting the location permits.

18 Using stunt artists

No member of the public may participate in a stunt or be put at serious risk of injury by the performance of one. When artists, contributors and crew are involved in stunts you should make an assessment of their fitness to do so. Stunt artists are responsible for taking measures to ensure their own and the safety of others who may be affected by their activities while they are performing the stunt specified in their contract. This responsibility extends to the selection of equipment or materials used. You must inform the actors' and producers' guild of any stunts to be performed.

19 Filming underwater

No artist or crew member may use underwater equipment on a production unless previously examined and authorised by an approved medical authority in addition to being qualified under the terms of the Diving Regulations.

The producer should advise the unions and PACT on the production notification sheets whenever underwater filming is to take place.

20 Filming underground

Underground, the slightest spark can ignite flammable gases and cause explosions. Special 'sparkless' equipment may need to be used.

21 Filming with children

There are very strict laws to protect children at work. A specific license must be obtained from the local authority based on your detailed schedule and shooting proposals. Work hours and welfare arrangements will be specifically and rigorously enforced.

22 Drivers

Goods-carrying vehicles with a maximum permitted weight (vehicle and load) exceeding 3.5 tonnes need to be fitted with a tachograph and the

For more
information use
the website
www.cddiver.net.

driver has to comply with EU Drivers' Hours Regulations (1968 Transport Act) and subsequent amendments. These state:

- Drivers cannot work more than 4.5 hours without taking a break.
- Breaks must be at least 15 minutes, and a minimum of 45 minutes, during or immediately after a period of 4.5 hours driving.
- A working day is 9 hours maximum.
- A rest period must be taken after six consecutive driving days.
- Drivers cannot work more than 90 hours in a 2-week period. The weekly maximum is 56 hours.
- If the driver is also doing other work, they must have at least 11 hours' daily rest period (which can be reduced to 9 hours on up to three occasions in any 1 week). Any reductions in the daily rest period must be compensated for before the end of the following week.
- The minimum weekly rest period is 45 hours. This can be reduced to 36 hours (24 hours if the vehicle and driver are away from base) provided always that the reduced rest periods are fully compensated within the succeeding 3 weeks.
- Driving off road or away from public roads does not count as driving but is regarded as other work.

Skillset provide a list of all UK health and safety training providers as well as offering funding for freelancers looking to extend their health and safety knowledge—www.skillset.org.

23 Local rules

Many locations – factories, industrial sites, large buildings and so on – will have in place 'local rules'. These rules are specific to the site and cover health and safety as well as issues like evacuation procedures, working practice and handling. Adherence to local rules will be a condition of entering the site – you must follow these rules.

Summary

1. Simplicity is a real virtue on a location.
2. Keep equipment to a minimum.
3. Make certain you have proper permits, and follow health and safety regulations to a 't'.

You're going to need somewhere to do all this stuff.

The Office

Finding a location that will enable you to conduct your business in an efficient and safe manner is one of the challenges facing a filmmaker whether you live in a major city, town or village. Getting this element of your career or project right is a major step towards success. It is not a good idea to try and use your second bedroom at home. First, it is unprofessional. Second, the volume of traffic to and from your front door will most likely irritate anyone you share the space or common entrance with. Third, there is something uplifting and motivating about saying to yourself every morning 'Time to go to the office', even if it means walking through your garden to a converted garage.

Location and Equipment

A good office is between 500 and 1,000 square feet, is centrally located and convenient for public transport and has access for deliveries.

Hint The three essentials of property are location, location, location.

A well-equipped office should have comfortable workstations for each person with appropriate computer terminals. If your budget won't allow this, maybe do what I did for the first 3 years: I shared with a graphic designer who not only had the equipment but did design work for me much cheaper than I could have found commercially. A great temptation is to 'borrow' software from friends. This is theft and creates bad karma in your workspace. It also exposes you to criminal action if you are caught.

The minimum software requirements are: a word processing package, an accounting spreadsheet package, a graphic design package and an email and Internet browser programme. This basic combination allows you to send emails and faxes from your computer, keep company records, write business plans, build and maintain websites, manage social media and design professional quality print materials like posters, catalogues and leaflets. Depending

on your budget, editing software would allow you to cut your own trailers. Programmes like Photoshop and Illustrator allow you to manipulate and create images. You may also want to design your own website using a theme either free or purchased from WordPress.

Your telephone must contain an excellent answering machine. Do not use a single telephone line for telephone and fax messages: it looks amateur to have a tel/fax line. You also need broadband with the highest speed possible.

As you are a film company, it is a good idea to have a television with a DVD/Blu-ray player so you can screen trailers and films. Try and get a multistandard DVD so you can watch discs from every country in the world, regardless of whether they are NTSC, PAL or SECAM. A supply of cool drinking water and a clean corner to make tea or coffee are worthwhile additions.

Make sure that you have adequate storage, both shelving and filing cabinets. Remember you will need to house dozens of DVDs, hundreds of photographs (of actors and locations) plus all the miscellaneous paperwork. You will also need adequate hard drive storage space to back up all your pictures, movies and files.

Finally, remember your fire, safety and security responsibilities. A well-protected office has a strong lock and is a safe place to work. It has safe wiring, adequate ventilation, good lighting, a first aid kit and fire and smoke detectors and extinguishers.

How Your Office Works

Your office houses your business records and is the place from which you conduct your business. You make telephone calls from your office, prepare business documents and receive mail and visitors.

A well-designed letterhead with a good logo will immediately make your company look professional. The registered name of the company (if there is one) along with the VAT number (if registered) must appear on the letterhead. The logo should appear fresh and exciting, while looking clean and simple. Sometimes, you will have a partner of significant standing in the industry or several people who are well known who will allow you to use their names as patrons. These names should be incorporated into your letterhead as well.

Remember that the design of your logo must work well in black and white, in sizes ranging from a storefront to a tiny, matchbook size on your website and business card.

You can also design business cards and compliments slips. A simple business card is a mini advert for your company, and everyone who works with you should be encouraged to give out as many as they can. Another useful tool is a rubber stamp with your address on it. This can be used to stamp envelopes and for temporary letterhead and receipts.

Answering the Telephone

The first impression that anyone will get from your company is on the telephone. How your telephone is answered is going to create a lasting impression on your potential clients, investors and talent. Try to promote a clear-cut

impression of who your company is. Sometimes I call a production company and I get a mumbled 'Hrumphted film company, eeer, limited'. Get used to answering the telephone in a positive, clear way, giving the entire name of your company. It might sound a little strange at first, but you will get used to it, and hopefully, proud of it. After all, if you are not proud of your company, its name and what it is trying to do, how are you going to get anyone else interested enough to invest their time or money into your business? A further benefit is that a clear, strong, positive telephone answering voice will cheer you up on those days when everything is looking bleak.

Staff

Before you take on anyone, make certain that you are fully conversant with the financial risks attached to employing staff. Make sure you can afford to pay not only the wages but the fringe benefits of holiday pay, national insurance contributions, pension plan contribution and maternity/paternity leave and pay that are required by law.

The secret to keeping good people working for you is to maintain an open, friendly work environment. Part of this environment should be a clear set of expectations for each employee and a manageable procedure for voicing complaints and grievances.

Hint Make sure that anyone you work with is in tune with and excited by your vision.

Sweat equity

Sometimes, in order to preserve cash flow, you will offer an equity position to an employee in exchange, or in part exchange, for work. If you are interested in operating this sort of arrangement, make certain that you take the time to draft the necessary paperwork so both sides know exactly what the parameters of the deal are.

Employment contracts

Each time you enter into an employment arrangement with a new person, you should prepare a contract outlining your company's policies on items as diverse as dress code, place and hours of employment.

If you are developing a sensitive database, or working on a screenplay, it is highly advisable to get each new employee to sign a nondisclosure contract.

Self-employed

It is possible that you will be able to survive as a self-employed person—at least until your company grows. Self-employment has certain advantages. It can be a more tax-efficient way to expand your business as genuine business expenses are tax deductible.

Hint Take the advice of an accountant. The money spent at this stage will be well worth the investment.

Interns

Should you manage to create a stable working environment in a decent location, you might be able to attract interns or young people seeking work experience.

Interns are highly intelligent, if inexperienced people, interested in the same sorts of things that you are. They differ from you in that they are presently in higher education and may know more about the film industry than you do!

If you do agree to an internship, remember to keep it challenging and allow enough time to direct and guide your charges.

Other Uses for Your Office

A well located and functional office will also become the ideal location for casting calls, saving you the expense of hiring an audition space. Try to ensure that the furniture can be rolled to the sides in order to make a working area for actors.

A secure office can also become a great place to store camera equipment and, space permitting, props. You might even want to use your office as a location—this is one of the things I did to keep the budget down on my ultra low-budget feature, *Table 5*.

After the shoot, the office can double as a post-production editing facility. All you need to do is carry in the computer, make sure that there's a couple of comfortable chairs, drag in a radio for some mood music and voilà—an editing suite.

How to Look Established for Next to Nothing

The minute you tell your friends and family you've decided to become a filmmaker, eyes will roll and whispers will fly around behind your back. I found when I started Raindance a lot of people spoke openly about how I would surely fail.

And fail I nearly did! What I learned, however, were a few simple things to make yourself look better and bigger and stronger. Nothing feeds success like success. Sometimes you need to feed the illusion at the beginning to keep the illusion that you are talented and deserving alive.

Follow this checklist and you should be looking like the success you know you are in less than a week with a total outlay, of maybe £100.00 (\$150.00).

First: Get A URL

Use a website like godaddy.com to register an URL. You want and need emails and a website with your name. I have Raindance.org, and everyone's emails are name@raindance.org. Makes Raindance sound kind of big, right?

Assuming you have a relatively uncommon name, i.e. you are Bob Gaga and NOT Lady Gaga, you should be able to get yourname.com for \$10–\$20 (£6–£15).

Once you have the name, wander over to Memset or another hosting service and grab yourself a hosting package that gives you 5–10 email addresses.

Make the following email addresses:

yourname@yourname.com

info@yourname.com

assistant@yourname.com

Then add in emails for each of your collaborators.

Before you know it, those whispering and doubting Thomases will think you have a mini studio on the go with all the emails of employees set up!

Then go to WordPress, choose a theme and start your website.

Second: Get a Landline

Nothing promotes the loser image more than your mum answering the telephone or just having a cell contact number.

In America, we love Grasshopper. It makes any roaming cell phone look like it's connected to a big fancy phone system. A few bucks a month and it looks like you have a reception area full of assistants making and processing the many calls your now successful career needs.

Third: Get a Business Address

You can make it from the second bedroom at home, but the minute a competitor or potential collaborator Googles you, you will have that 'amateur' halo hanging around your head like a noose. Besides, it just makes you think better about yourself and your career if you need to get out of bed, scratch your body and go to work—even if it's traveling to the garden shed at the foot of the garden.

How do you get a commercial address when you are broke?

I blagged a free desk space with a mate in exchange for answering his telephone when I started out. Or, get a few mates together, rent a warehouse space, each of you pay a slice of the rent and telephone. That's what we are doing with our new offices in Paris and Berlin. Be creative.

Fourth: Get a Business Card

Dress up your networking with a stack of 250 professional looking cards for less than £30 from flyeralarm.com, like we use, or from the new print and ship service from FedEx. Your new cards will have your email, your landline, your business address as well as your brand new website. Now you are ready to travel!

Fifth: The Tyranny of the Hotel Lobby

First impressions are worth millions.

No longer will you be meeting important career prospects at Starbucks. Someone of your calibre will only meet in hotel lobbies. Chances are the coffee is not only better, but for literally pennies more, it will be served in real china cups as well.

Sixth: Get a Car Service

Excuse me—a car service when you can hardly afford public transit?

Once your “assistant” has set up your meeting, here’s a nifty little tip: use Greentomato.com. They have an app so you can order a car, and they send a SMS when the car arrives. Plan this carefully so a car can arrive and whisk you away to your next meeting at a moment’s notice. And it’s a lot cheaper than a regular cab.

In the US use uber.com. You may be the next cult director, but you are too busy or important to take public transport.

Obviously, those who know me, know I have my tongue in my cheek.

Seventh: Become an Expert

The big trick to success is to become an expert. That’s why I wrote three books—books that proved I knew what I was talking about.

It’s even easier in today’s world. Free PR sites like HARO and Muckrack allow journalists to post questions about stories they are writing. Get on these journalists’ radars and they will soon be asking you for your advice and quoting you in their articles all over the world.

Get the link for the article and get your “assistant” to email you the story the next time you are in a lobby meeting at that swanky hotel; flash it to your coffee mate, drop a business card on the ledge and leap to the car that’s waiting to take you to the next meeting.

It doesn’t take much for people to think you are successful! And none of these tips are taught at film school!

Essential Paperwork

Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Incorporating a Company but Were Afraid to Ask

There are various ways in which to run a business. However the most common way is to incorporate a private company. The main reason for incorporation is limited liability. A private company is a legal ‘person’ which must not be confused with the people who formed the company and are its members.

Limited liability means that the members are not personally liable for the debts of the company and that if the company goes bankrupt, the most the members risk losing is the amount they invested in the shares of the company.

There are also disadvantages to incorporation. There are a lot of administrative requirements, form filling, certain information must be disclosed to Companies House for the public record, i.e. the changes in the company's circumstances and particulars, and the company name and certain information must be displayed on the company stationery.

Before incorporating

In order to be able to incorporate a company there are a number of issues to consider and documents to prepare:

- The type of company.
- The memorandum of association.
- The articles of association.
- The company agents.

1 Type of company

There are four main types of company:

- Private company limited by shares—the members' liability is limited to the amount they have invested in the company's shares.
- Private company limited by guarantee—there are no shares in such companies and the members' liability is limited to the amount they have contributed to the company's assets.
- Private unlimited company—the members' liability is not limited and they can be held personally liable for the company's debts.
- Public limited company (PLC)—the company's shares may be offered for sale to the general public via the stock exchange. Liability is limited to the amount invested in shares.

2 Memorandum of association

This contains the following information relating to the company:

i The company name

The choice of name is limited. It must not be already used by another company, it must not be offensive and its use must not be a criminal offence. Some words and expressions should also be avoided:

- If they imply national or international pre-eminence, i.e. British, English, Scottish, Welsh etc.
- If they imply pre-eminence or representative status, i.e. association, authority, institution etc.
- If they imply specific objects or functions, i.e. assurance, fund, chartered, charity etc.

ii The company's registered office

This can be anywhere in England or Wales. It is the address of the company and appears as such on the register.

iii The company's authorised share capital

The memorandum must state the authorised share capital, the number of shares and their nominal value and whether there are different classes of shares.

iv The company's objective

This is just to give an idea of what the company does.

3 The articles of association

The articles of association rule how the company is run internally and how the powers are divided between the members and the directors. The Company's Act 1985 provides precedent articles of association called 'Table A'. When writing the articles of association of a company there are three options.

- The articles can be especially drafted for a company.
- Table can be adopted as the company's articles without any changes.
- The articles can be partly drafted and comprise part of Table A.

4 The company's agents

The company must have at least one director and one company secretary. Anyone can be a director or company secretary—there are no qualifications needed. However, you cannot be a director if you are an undischarged bankrupt or have been disqualified by a court.

Incorporating the company

Once all of the above information has been gathered, incorporation can take place. The following documents need to be sent to the Registrar of companies:

- Memorandum of association signed by at least one subscriber.
- Articles of association signed by the subscribers to the memorandum.
- Form 10. This document details the registered office and the company agents. It must be signed by the subscribers to the memorandum.
- Form 12. This document is a declaration that all the requirements of the Companies Act relating to the incorporation of companies have been complied with. This document can be signed by anyone named on Form 10 (or by their solicitors) and must be sworn before a solicitor or commissioner for oaths.
- Registration fee of £20 or £80 for same-day registration.

Once the company is incorporated, the Registrar of companies sends out a certificate of incorporation.

Shelf companies

Another way to set up a company, which saves having to go through incorporation, is to 'buy' a shelf company.

Shelf companies are ready-made companies, which are available from company formation agents, accountants and solicitors. They are already incorporated and all that is needed is to adapt it to specific requirements. The following would need to be changed:

- The name of the company—there is a fee of £10 for this or £80 for a same-day change of name.
- Its agents: directors and company secretary. Form 288a for appointing new agents and form 288b for removing current agents.
- Its registered office. Form 287.
- Its authorised share capital (not always necessary). Form 123.
- Its object (not always necessary).

These changes can be effected by holding a board meeting and a members meeting.

After incorporation

After incorporation of a company, Companies House must be kept informed of:

- The appointment or retirement of company agents or their change of personal details. Forms 288a, 288b or 288c.
- The details of new shares being allotted. Form 88(2).
- Certain resolution of members meetings.
- Details of any charges created by the company. Form 395.
- The change of the registered office. Form 287.

In addition every company must deliver an annual return (Form 363) to Companies House at least once every 12 months. There are automatic penalties for the late filing of returns.

The above information is a short synopsis of what is needed to form a company. Companies House staff can advise you on matters generally, but when you start a company it is important to get things right. Everyone has different circumstances and therefore it may be sensible to consult a solicitor, company formation agent or an accountant when appropriate.

See www.companies-house.gov.uk.

In Consultation with Sean Faughnan

Structuring Success

By Sean Faughnan, who worked for 11 years as an investment banker, and then began developing finance for various film projects.

As a relative newcomer to the film industry, I was immediately struck by two things. First, by the enormous energy and enthusiasm of almost all of the people I have met. Second, and more negatively, I was also struck by the look of blind panic that comes over so many people's faces when you ask them how they plan to transform all of this energy and enthusiasm into real projects with real money. The film industry may be different from other industries in many ways, but in one vital respect it is exactly the same: it is a business.

Here's the good news: it's easy to become a producer. All you have to do is go down to your local print shop and get yourself 100 business cards that have your name, a logo and the word 'producer' on it. Hey presto, you are a producer!

Here's the bad news: You have probably just wasted your money.

I have a very simple, even simplistic, view of life. In my world a producer produces. And in order to do that he's going to need a great many things, the least of which is a business card. He's going to need money, great scripts,

creative people around him, access to distribution, etc. In other words, he's going to need to set up a company. And that is what I would like to focus upon: structuring your production company correctly.

At this point, I can almost hear the groans and see the yawns. Structure—yuk. But before you turn the page to something more interesting, read the next sentence. I guarantee that without the right company structure you will either fail or be much less successful than you should be. Put it another way: if you decide to ignore the question of company structure, the chances are that success will decide to ignore you.

So what do I mean by structure? The question can be answered in one word: control! When I ask how is a company structured, what I am really asking is how is it controlled? How are the decisions made? Get this aspect of the business wrong, and it will be hard for anything else to work right. For the most part (though not always), the shareholding structure of a company dictates who has control and how decisions are made. The more shares you have the bigger your potential say.

In the text below I have looked at four different shareholding structures for a new production company and their relative advantages and disadvantages. The list is certainly not exhaustive, and even within the four cases I examine, there are numerous possible permutations. The scenarios I have established are a bit simplistic. But I hope the examples will identify some of the issues that need to be addressed when starting a new venture. I would highlight two right now. First, the more money someone puts in, the bigger the stake of the company and its profits they will require.

Second, shareholding structures evolve over time as new investors come in and older investors cash out. The structure should, right from the start, take this into account.

If a third investor is brought in and given even one per cent of the company, both of the original partners lose their negative control, since they are now below fifty per cent (forty nine point five per cent). The third investor is now pivotal: He can break any deadlock between the two original partners because his one per cent is enough to give either side a victory (forty nine point five per cent + one per cent = fifty point five per cent = victory). In a very real sense you could say that control of the company has just been handed over to him.

Shareholding structure 1—Going it alone

Aspiring Producer wants to set up his own production company, to be called Beginners Film Production, Ltd (BFP). From the start, he takes one hundred per cent of BFP's equity.

The advantages of this are that Aspiring Producer has complete control of BFP and that Aspiring Producer gets to keep one hundred per cent of BFP's profits. But there are disadvantages. Aspiring Producer has complete responsibility. If something goes wrong, it's all down to him, also Aspiring Producer has to put in one hundred per cent of BFP's costs. He'd better have deep pockets and/or a friendly bank manager. On top of this, Aspiring Producer must bear one hundred per cent of any losses incurred by BFP.

Shareholding structure 2—Half and half

Aspiring Producer decides to bring in a partner, who has great industry contacts and will put some money into the company. He gives her fifty per cent of the company's stock.

The advantage is that BFP is now a genuine partnership, with a sharing of the costs and other burdens. The company has additional money and the second partner may be able to strengthen the company through her industry contracts.

The disadvantage is that Aspiring Producer will now only ever have fifty per cent of the profits. Also, the 50/50 structure is a recipe for deadlock. Each

of the partners has what is called 'negative control': they can stop something happening by voting against it, but they do not have enough shares to make something happen without the agreement of the other.

Shareholding structure 3—Major and minor

Aspiring Producer decides to bring in a partner, but only gives her thirty per cent of the company's stock in exchange for some money. The advantages of this structure are that the Aspiring Producer has found someone to share the load. There is also additional money in the company, although less than there would have been had Aspiring Producer given away more of the company. With this structure, there is no confusion over control: Aspiring Producer has seventy per cent of the company. On the other hand, Aspiring Producer has to share the profits. The partner may, over time, become dissatisfied with her minority position, particularly if she thinks Aspiring Producer is not running things properly.

Shareholding structure 4—The three musketeers

Aspiring Producer decides to bring in two partners and give each of them one third of the company in return for them working for the company for little or nothing.

BFP is now a genuine partnership, with each having an equal stake. Running costs have been brought down since the new partners are working for very little money (also called 'sweat equity'). If a decision has to be made, there will always be an automatic majority unlike in the 50/50 example, i.e. they will either all agree to something or there will be a two to one majority. Deadlock is not possible.

However Aspiring Producer has to share the profits three ways and, since the other two partners have more than fifty per cent of the company between them, they could in theory collude together and completely ignore Aspiring Producer.

No one, including myself, likes to spend a great deal of time thinking about structure. However, if you don't get structure right from the start, it will at some time make your life very 'interesting' indeed. As in horribly interesting as your company becomes a battleground between discontented owners and your dreams are ripped apart.

Insurance

My background taught me to distrust the concept of insurance and insurance agents and brokers. The theory was that buying insurance against a disaster tempted fate and would wreak havoc on your life. My Amish relatives scorned insurance. In that community there was a natural order of insurance. Should someone's barn burn down, the neighbours would show up for a barn raising. The farmer would have a new barn and the community saves more money than the cost of insurance premiums.

A combination of common sense and good security systems will ultimately be cheaper than paying for certain insurances. In the filmmaking world it is unlikely that fellow filmmakers would be willing to fork out the cash for lost or stolen computer and film equipment.

There are two types of insurance that you must have to operate legally in the United Kingdom.

1 Public liability insurance

This protects the public should they suffer an accident caused by you, your employees or your company's activities (on a shoot, for example).

2 Employer's liability insurance

This protects you and your staff.

There are other types of insurance that you may require. Make certain that the cover you obtain is sufficient to cover the risks that you and your investors are taking on during production and post-production.

1 Equipment insurance

Covers the costs of damage or theft of the camera and sound equipment. This must not only cover repair or replacement, but also the loss of revenue that the hire company might suffer while the equipment is being repaired (usually 12 weeks).

2 Negative insurance

This covers the cost of reshooting a scene should the film be damaged within the camera or at the lab. Labs do not provide insurance, and since this cover is very expensive to procure, it is used mainly on higher budget films. On a low or no budget shoot with a small crew and cast, it is usually cheaper to reshoot the scene.

3 Cast insurance

This covers the risk to your production should an actor be unable to complete your film due to death or illness to themselves or to a member of their immediate family. The director can also be covered by this insurance.

4 Props, set and wardrobe

Covers against loss, damage or theft. Usually this insurance has a cap on the amount to be paid out for the loss or damage to specific items like jewellery, furs or other specialist props.

5 Automobiles, airplanes, boats

This covers the property damage risk for any moving vehicle used in the production of the film. Should you have a van, for example, that is used as a prop in the film, then it is almost always cheaper to use private motor insurance.

Summary

1. Make a functioning office a priority.
2. Design the image for your company.
3. Take care of the nitty gritty legal and financial details. Now we are ready for the shoot.

Office Checklist	Production
The set-up	All actors and day player deals <input type="checkbox"/>
Establish office space <input type="checkbox"/>	Crew deals:
Establish production company and complete all legal paperwork <input type="checkbox"/>	director of photography <input type="checkbox"/>
Register for local/national tax and employer compensation schemes <input type="checkbox"/>	editor <input type="checkbox"/>
Acquire public liability insurance <input type="checkbox"/>	assistant directors <input type="checkbox"/>
Hire accountant <input type="checkbox"/>	miscellaneous crew <input type="checkbox"/>
Hire legal counsel <input type="checkbox"/>	Location agreements <input type="checkbox"/>
	Releases <input type="checkbox"/>
	Equipment agreements <input type="checkbox"/>
	Facilities agreements <input type="checkbox"/>
Screenplay rights	Post-production
Review chain of title with lawyer <input type="checkbox"/>	Title clearance <input type="checkbox"/>
Assign rights to production company <input type="checkbox"/>	Lab agreements <input type="checkbox"/>
Register assignments at UK/US copyright office <input type="checkbox"/>	Music package <input type="checkbox"/>
Get copyright to any underlying work <input type="checkbox"/>	Other music clearance <input type="checkbox"/>
Get clearance report and revise if necessary <input type="checkbox"/>	
Register copyright of screenplay with UK/US copyright office <input type="checkbox"/>	Delivery
	Register copyright with UK/US copyright office <input type="checkbox"/>
Financing	Errors and omissions certificates <input type="checkbox"/>
Negotiate finance agreements <input type="checkbox"/>	Laboratory access letters <input type="checkbox"/>
Negotiate sales agent and distribution agreements <input type="checkbox"/>	Credit requirements lists for adverts <input type="checkbox"/>
Negotiate completion bond <input type="checkbox"/>	Delivery of video and sound masters <input type="checkbox"/>
	Key production and music contracts <input type="checkbox"/>
Pre-production	Chain of title documents <input type="checkbox"/>
Obtain production insurance <input type="checkbox"/>	Key production and music contracts <input type="checkbox"/>
Obtain errors and omission insurance <input type="checkbox"/>	Copyright/title reports and opinions <input type="checkbox"/>
Hire casting director <input type="checkbox"/>	Stills <input type="checkbox"/>
Negotiate key deals for:	Trailer <input type="checkbox"/>
principal cast <input type="checkbox"/>	Key art <input type="checkbox"/>
director <input type="checkbox"/>	Music cue sheets <input type="checkbox"/>
heads of department <input type="checkbox"/>	Certificate of origin <input type="checkbox"/>
producer <input type="checkbox"/>	Rights transfer instrument <input type="checkbox"/>

figure 10.1
Office checklist

Seven Essential Steps for Becoming Rich and Famous by Making a Low-Budget Film

Step 3 Telephone

When I travel around Europe talking to new filmmakers, I always ask 'What is the most important piece of filmmaking equipment you will ever need?'. The script goes like this:

Elliot: What is the most important piece of filmmaking equipment?

Filmmaker: Camera.

Elliot: What do you need to get the camera?

Filmmaker: Actors.

Elliot: What do you need to get the actors?

Filmmaker: Crew.

Elliot: What do you use to get the crew and actors together?

Filmmaker: Money! (See Step 2)

Elliot: But what do you need to get the money?

Filmmaker: The telephone.

A telephone is the most important piece of film equipment you will ever need. And by telephone I mean that in order to get a film made you need to acquire excellent interpersonal communication skills.

To illustrate, let me tell you a story. Whenever I used to go to parties, people would ask: 'What are you doing?' And I never knew whether to answer my day job, or 'filmmaker'. Every time someone asked me that question, my answer was different. I was losing confidence.

One night I was channel surfing when I stumbled across an interview with Steven Spielberg. The interviewer was asking questions like: 'What are you doing next?' or 'What are you doing now?'. This caught my attention because it was all too familiar. Steven said: 'I have numerous projects in various stages of development'. A few weeks later I caught George Lucas saying the same thing. In fact, it seemed like everyone in the entire industry was saying it.

Suddenly it hit me: If you talk like you know what you are doing, others believe that you know what you are doing and start to believe in you. Better yet, you start to believe in yourself. So, when you are using the telephone, or networking, introduce yourself as an independent filmmaker with numerous projects in various stages of development. I used that phrase for a good many weeks, and was basking in the glow of success, when at a party one night someone responded with 'What is your project about?' Back to channel hopping, until I heard a celebrity filmmaker say: 'It's a character driven drama.' I was back in business, even if it was a fantasy business.

11 The Shoot

THE SHOOT IS THE period of time when a skilled crew and actors set out to record the audio and visual information demanded by the script. The days and weeks leading up to the shoot are stressful. The shoot itself is not only stressful but is physically demanding as well. The actual shoot, if organised properly, can be an enjoyable experience. If the shoot descends into chaos, it is a nightmare.

The Seven Steps to a Successful Shoot

Step 1 Get Organised

Having dozens of cast and crew arriving at different times and locations and working with different combinations of people is an organisational nightmare. The key to getting a shoot together is by creating a clear and concise schedule. A good schedule should let you know at a glance what part of the script is being filmed, who is needed (both cast and crew) and what props, wardrobe and other special equipment are required. A good schedule will also help determine the order of the filming so that people and resources can be combined in the most cost-effective manner. Chapter 3 deals fully with planning the schedule.

Shoot planning paperwork

These pieces of paper will help you to run an efficient, on-budget shoot. Prepare these well in advance in consultation with the relevant members of the production crew.

Script breakdown sheet

Analyse what you need for the shoot by breaking down the script. Analyse each scene individually and list the actors, props and special effects involved.

The information you produce will become an essential resource when you prepare the production board. This is a straightforward process which is explained in detail in Chapter 3. The production board will, in turn, form the basis of your call sheets.

Production board

Next you need to create a production board. This is the foundation of the production. Again Chapter 3 contains full details of how to do this.

Call sheets

Call sheets for the next day are usually completed by the third assistant director and given to the location or studio manager for distribution to the cast and crew before they leave at the end of the day's filming. Cast or crew not on the set will be contacted by telephone or email.

The call sheet is a summary of the work to be completed the following day, along with specific directions to the location, or, if transport is being arranged by the producer, detailed instructions. Often the call sheet will include emergency telephone numbers of the cast and crew so that last minute changes or travel emergencies can be coordinated. See figure 11.1 opposite for a breakdown of a call sheet.

Movement order

A movement order is a sheet of paper that clearly lists all the practical considerations that cast, crew or anyone else travelling to a location will need to know in order to arrive on time. Include a map of the location and alternative travel plans as well as the locations of the nearest emergency services and hospitals. It is vital that a cell phone number is included for the line producer and location manager in case of travel problems. See figure 11.2 opposite for a sample movement order.

Step 2 Hire a Line Producer

In television a line producer is called the production manager.

A line producer is the person who makes sure that you finish the film on time and on budget. They are the most anal people you will ever meet—the person going absolutely berserk if you are 3 minutes late from lunch. I have never understood why anyone would like a job like line producing because you seem to be permanently on the telephone nagging or pleading. The right line producer will assist you in completing your production board and will also be able to help you with crew contacts. A good line producer can also help to negotiate any rental or lab deals you may be trying to do.

Step 3 Hire the Right Crew

If you are trying to break in as crew, make sure you keep in touch with the producer of anything you have worked on—as they will be the ones to refer you on to other shoots.

Choosing the right people for the right job is the real skill of a producer, and to a certain degree, the director. In many cases, the below-the-line staff will be chosen, or recommended by the line producer, whom you will have hired, in part, for access to their little black book of contacts.

In the film industry, the production crews are organised military style around heads of department, with the assistants lined up in descending order of importance (and usually, the further they are removed from the head of department, the more work they have to do).

Listing the story day/time helps the actor to keep their character consistent; they need to know if the scene comes before or after their character discovers her partner's adultery.

Production title / Director's name						Date	
Producer / Telephone						_____	
Line producer / Telephone						Start time	
1st assistant director / Telephone						_____	
2nd assistant director / Telephone						Wrap time	
3rd assistant director / Telephone						_____	
Location information							
[include the address, directions by car and by public transport and any information that will help cast and crew get to the set on time, e.g. train timetables, road maps]							
Scene number	Script page	Int/Ext	Description	Day/Night	Story day	Eighths [pages]	Cast
Actor number	Artist name		Character name	Pick up time [when a car will arrive to collect actor from home]	On set to rehearse	Make-up/ Costume	Turnover [time when camera will start rolling]
Additional information							
[Include details of any special effects or stunts to be done today]							
Advance call for next day:							
Scene number	Script page	Int/Ext	Description	Day/Night	Story day	Eighths [pages]	Cast

figure 11.1
Sample call sheet

Going to Address	Going on Date
	Map to the location
Contact Details Include name / mobile telephone for: Production company Producer Line producer Director Location manager	
Additional Information Directions by car Parking instructions Facilities Emergency facilities – police, hospital, fire	

figure 11.2
Sample movement order

The Crew

Director

The supreme commander, and in charge of everything that affects what you see or hear on the screen. The director is also the only one allowed to talk directly to the actors while they are on the set.

Assistant directors

The first assistant director is in charge of making sure that the director is aware of scheduling problems on the set, the first AD also sets up the shot by calling: 'Quiet please. Roll sound. Roll camera'. It is the director who calls Action. And Cut. The second assistant director makes sure that all the accessories (props) for the shoot are in place and that the actors arrive at the set when they are needed. The third assistant director works on organising the shoot and preparing call sheets. They make sure that the film is collected for the lab and are the main point of contact to the director while the director is on the set. Also part of this team is the script supervisor, who records the lines of dialogue as shot, along with action sequences. These notes are recorded as an assist to the editing process.

Camera department

The director of photography is the head of the camera department. They are responsible for making sure that everything the director wants is set up, plus they add their own creative input as to how the scenes are lit, how they are shot and so how the film will look.

The camera operator makes sure that everything the DoP and the director wants is in the frame. The focus puller makes sure that everything in the frame is in focus. The clapper/loader keeps the camera clean, reloads the camera, does the camera reports and marks the slate with the scene and take numbers. On a digital shoot, the clapper/loader is called a Digital Imaging Technician (D.I.T.) who makes sure the drives are recording properly and the rushes are backed up.

A gaffer is an electrician. The term refers to anyone who has anything to do with lights and electricity. The gaffer works under the DoP. The gaffer's assistant is called the best boy.

A grip is anyone who works with anything that 'grips' or attaches to the camera. Tripods, dollies, wedges and track are all operated by a grip. The head grip is called the key grip. A dolly/crane grip works the dolly. Grips also work under the DoP.

Art department

The production designer is the head of the art department and is the person who creates all the drawings for the sets and locations. S/he is directly responsible to the director. The designs are given to the art director, who oversees their execution.

Sets are built by the scenic carpenter and painted by the scenic artist. Any assistant to the art department is considered part of the swing gang.

The heads of make-up and wardrobe and their assistants deal, unsurprisingly, with make-up, hair and wardrobe. Sometimes they also create the

CORE TEAM

Writer / Producer / Director

HEADS OF DEPARTMENT

Art / Sound / Camera / Script / Craft

CREW FOR A FILM WITH A BUDGET OF UNDER £50,000

Make-up Artist / Scenic Artist & Props & Runner / Sound Recordist / Director of Photography / Camera Assistant / Catering & Runner / Stills Photographer

CREW FOR A FILM WITH A BUDGET OF UNDER £100,000

All of the above plus:

Costume / Art Director / Sound Assistant / Production Assistant / Focus Puller / Key Grip / Gaffer / 1st Assistant Director / Continuity & Script Supervisor

CREW FOR A FILM WITH A BUDGET OF £100,000 TO £300,000

All of the above plus:

Scenic Artist(s) / Scenic Carpenter(s) / Stunt Coordinator / Stunt Performer / Sound Editor / Musician & Composer / 3–5 Production Assistants / Line Producer / Executive Producer / Production Accountant / Camera Operator / 1–5 Gaffers / 2nd Assistant Director / Storyboard Artist / Special Effects Coordinator / Casting Director / Unit Driver

figure 11.3
Outline of a crew

costumes. Make-up and wardrobe work under the production designer and art director. See Chapter 8 on production values for more detail.

Sound crew

The sound recordist manages the sound department. The head sound recordist takes the responsibility for recording the sound and is assisted by a boom operator.

Craftsperson

Food and catering services are supplied by the craftsperson. On set or location they usually report to the third AD who will tell them when to expect meal breaks.

Gofers

General production assistants are called gofers and can work for any department.

Hiring and firing

When you hire someone, make certain they are completely aware of what is expected of them and what they are to be paid and which responsibilities you expect from them are a priority.

If you face the unpleasant task of firing someone, it is my advice to be very direct, explain to them precisely what the circumstances are for their dismissal and pay them any money outstanding. Unless there has been a criminal offence, such as theft, then wish the person well, and apologise for the fact that it hasn't worked out. If you are firing the person because of

a personal flaw, such as tardiness, make sure the person knows what the production tolerances are: i.e. three times and you are out.

Should you fire a person caught stealing, you will have to decide what other action you will take. You may decide to allow the person to come clean and return the goods, or you may decide to take the step of involving the police. Either way, I believe that a clear decision is better than no decision at all, and the rest of the crew will probably support a strong decision maker—even if the decision you made was wrong.

Integrity and trust are vital qualities of an effective production crew.

Interview process

Interviews should be short and direct. People who have travelled to meet you are not impressed by half an hour of idle chit chat. Be polite, and make sure to ask them questions about what they expect out of the job. This is most important when you hire people for little or no pay.

Advertising

Local film schools and theatre groups are excellent places to look for crew. The most difficult people to find are gaffers—electricians. Gaffers will most usually be union men or women and will be the most expensive crew members. Word-of-mouth is the next most effective way to find people—either from your new line producer or from other producers who have just finished a shoot.

Deferrals

Producers like to hear the sound of large numbers whooshing past their lips. When the DoP names their price (several thousand a week), an inexperienced producer will say something like: 'What if I give you a third in cash, and the rest (of your overly inflated fee) as a deferral?'

Deferrals hardly ever get paid. It is just one of the facts of life that there are so many hands in the gravy of the profit of a film at the distribution end, that hardly anything trickles down to the producer. This can destroy personal relationships: if your friendly DoP reads the newspaper to see that your film took a million, he'll wonder why you've beaten him out of his two grand deferral if he doesn't realise that you, the hardworking producer, have yet to see a dime yourself.

Avoid deferrals if at all possible. If you defer, try a universal deferral scheme where everyone is paid on deferral in accordance to the length of time they have spent on the set. This democratises your payroll, putting a lowly gofer on the same level as the crusty DoP.

Payment

Whatever arrangement you make with your crew, make certain that you follow local laws regarding tax deductions, National Health or Workmen's Compensation deductions and any union or association payments that you must make. As far as possible, pay people on time; this is not just good practice, but it shows respect for the job your crew have done and may also mean that your crew will want to work with you again or will recommend you to their colleagues.

Union crews

For the latest information on union crew wages contact Bectu,
E: info@bectu.org.uk, W: www.bectu.org.uk

Step 4 Make Sure Everyone Knows Who's Boss

As a producer or director, keeping control of a set is vital. As the numbers of people on the set increase, so do the chances that your authority might be undermined. Here is my tip list for keeping in control.

1. Don't be the nice guy. Nice guys get walked all over. Remember that Margaret Thatcher was hated by everyone. I don't mean that you can't have a laugh, but you just can't be nice all the time.
2. If you hear mutiny, stamp it out. Unfortunately there are certain types of people who mutter and complain behind your back and who will criticise everything you do—from the location to the menu for lunch. You cannot and must not work with people like this. Get rid of them.
3. Have rules given to each crew member on their first day, which clearly states company policy on things like tardiness, dishonesty and drugs. People will get the idea that you don't fool around and are more likely to take you seriously.
4. Never rebuke someone in front of the rest of the crew. It will only make you feel and look like an idiot and you will have broken your relationship with that person past mending point.
5. A little praise goes a long way. A few words of thanks will help the crew learn what turns you on, as well as what turns you off.

Step 5 Be Professional

Make sure all of your company paperwork is in order and that you have carefully considered health and safety issues and taken all appropriate measures to minimise the risks. See Chapters 10 and 11.

Step 6 Food

The prevailing theory of film production management states that whatever else you do you need to feed your crew well. The history of this theory goes back to the Hollywood of the 1920s when the studios were a good three-quarters of an hour drive outside of the city. It then became cost effective for the studio to bring food into the set in order to keep cast and crew together. Since then a whole tradition of film food has sprung up, where filmmakers demand and expect food on the set. Several of my friends have in fact given up other jobs to work in movies simply because they get a free lunch. Are there any other industries where lunch is provided?

Some simple rules for food: make it fuel. Don't serve food. I once had the unenviable task of organising catering for the crew of a Dennis Potter-directed movie starring Alan Bates. Since I had worked on many sets as a scenic artist, I thought that rather than give the crew bangers and mash, I would cook up some French food, maybe a few Thai dishes—in short make picturesque meals that you might have mistaken as coming from a well-reviewed restaurant in the centre of London.

On the second day of the shoot, a giant, burly gaffer grabbed me by the scruff of the neck and lifted me up off the ground, and said 'Fuel, not food'. I had to admit then and there that if you are working long hours, then carbohydrates are what does it for you. Out went the canapés and in came the mashed potatoes. Everyone was happy.

What if you have no money for catering? What do you serve then? Maybe you can get a relative to cook up some curry. Or go to the local supermarket and get some day-old sandwiches and fruit. I've done that. I once worked on a shoot where the only food was white rice. After a few days on that, you certainly see your energy drop to near zero.

The people I hire in the better positions: the camera department, the actors, either all have some money of their own, or if they are working for me they are so convinced that the project will elevate their careers (which it has in many cases) that they are quite happy to work for free and buy their own lunch. The people on the set that I really worry about, food-wise, are the crew. These are students who genuinely are broke. To each of them I pay a fee of between £100–£150 out of which I expect them to pay for public transport to get themselves to and from the set, and to buy a substantial lunch.

In 2013 I produced *Love.Honour.Obey.* in a location about 2 miles from the nearest store. On this occasion I had to provide food. Luckily our line producer found a local caterer who could whip up some tasty pastas and chilis cheaply.

At Raindance, when I am producing, I serve reality burgers. When it's lunch time, I say that the reality is that they are serving burgers in any one of the myriad cafes and burger shops within a walk from the set.

Step 7 Learn to Say No

See below, the fourth essential step for becoming rich and famous by making a lo-to-no budget film.

Being a Runner in Soho by Oscar Sharp

If you think of the film and television industry as having 'career ladders', the runner is not so much on the bottom rung, as in the small, greasy puddle in which the ladder is standing. Still, running is often trumpeted as 'the way in'. It can certainly allow you to meet a lot of interesting people and see exactly how the business works.

Beyond this, I'm afraid, I can't tell you much about what a Soho runner actually does. This is because 'runner' is a borrowed term, which used to refer only to an on-set job—the assistant director's assistant's assistant's assistant (seriously). This kind of runner works long and hard for very little pay but is rewarded instead with on-the-job training from the entire crew. This sort of apprenticeship is so desirable that the rest of the industry soon realised that just by labelling their lowliest position 'runner' they could offer the worst of

Oscar Sharp, like everyone, started out as a lowly runner in Soho and is now producing his own award-winning short films.

conditions and still get hundreds of willing applicants. Because of this, there are as many different kinds of runner as there are film and TV companies.

One thing I can say: runners don't actually run. At least, not unless they're asked to. If they are asked to run, they hurtle about as if in mortal danger, scattering tourists and old ladies without a second glance. The word 'no' simply is not in the runner's vocabulary. When runners do experiment with 'no', they rarely make it to the '-o' part before being fired, replaced and completely forgotten. If, despite all this, you still want to join Soho's legions of runners here's how.

First of all, try to fix on some semblance of a plan, justifying to yourself why you want to be a runner at all. You'll need to hang on to this when times get hard, so make it good. 'To learn about producing' or 'to become an editor' is good, because it gives you a clear direction. Something like 'to get an insight into . . . ' is fine, but remember, once you have gained that insight, to move on. 'I just want to break into the industry' is risky; if you want to find out what interests you, then fine. If you just have a notion that 'The Industry' is somehow 'cool' or 'glam', then you will either end up sorely disappointed or a soulless git.

Secondly, shed your pride. Try visualising yourself in a prison, emptying out somebody else's filthy slop bucket for the eighth time that day, whilst they sip on champagne and giggle to their friends about how crap you are. Now imagine smiling benignly back and offering to top up their champagne. Now imagine doing this every day for weeks on end, during nonsensical hours, being begrudged a minimum wage for your trouble. Imagine not minding much. You have now shed your pride.

Without pride, you are ready for the third stage—a job in post-production running. The notion that running work is hard to get is a myth. The big post-production houses employ lots of runners on a very high turnover. Log on to www.theknowledgeonline.com, gather some numbers and phone around. You'll have a job in a week or two. The going rate is minimum wage. You will probably be employed on a freelance basis, with no rights and a notice period of 30 seconds.

Stage four: you are now a Soho runner, but of the lowest kind (yes, there are even tiers within runnership). Your days are spent serving refreshment to whichever twenty or so clients are currently utilising your employer's facilities. If you're lucky, they will occasionally acknowledge your existence. Occasionally, you will get to take packages to other companies in and around Soho. This is a key qualification—you will learn the layout of 'industry Soho', and therefore become considerably more employable as a fully fledged runner by a production company, agency, distributor or suchlike.

Stage five: keep in mind your plan from stage one. If post-production is your thing, stick at it. If not, fire off CVs and phone calls constantly. You will often be told 'We're not looking for anyone just now, but please send us a CV and we'll keep it on file.' Unfortunately, 'on file' is usually either a dustbin or, if your covering letter is really pitiful, the bottom of a box marked 'light relief'. To stand a chance, your CV needs to land on the right person's desk just as, or slightly before, they are recruiting runners. Keep an ear to the ground—if you aren't worried too much about keeping your post-production job, gently pester appropriate clients (those you have managed to impress) about running work. From here, you're on your own. Before long, you'll be running the world.

Summary

1. Plan, plan and plan some more.
2. Let everyone know who is the boss.
3. Learn to say no.

You've shot your movie. Let's get it edited and ready for the cinema.

In Conversation with Ate de Jong

Ate de Jong is the cult film director of *Drop Dead Fred* (1991), *Fogbound* (2002) and an episode of *Miami Vice* starring James Brown and Chris Rock. His most recent work, *Love.Honour.Obey.* (2013) is a Raindance Raw Talent production.

So, Ate, when did you first realise you wanted to make films?

I started very young in the film industry; I was 17 when I went to the Film Academy in Amsterdam. To be honest I had only seen one film in the theatre before I went to the Academy, so it was a little bit of a stroke of luck. Then when I came into the Academy and started seeing films, I got hooked! So there's not a specific moment that I thought 'Oh I have to make films!' There was not an epiphany, but it was during the course of the Film Academy. I suppose when I was around 18 I couldn't imagine doing anything else anymore.

So it was a gradual process?

It is a gradual process in my case. I mean there are people who somehow see a film and absolutely want to be a filmmaker: I never had that, you know. I never went to see films: I wasn't allowed to, from my religious background I wasn't allowed to see films. But I hid under the table and watched films on TV, that sort of stuff. I saw the nouvelle vague films when I was very young and never understood them, but I always thought 'oh I can do that better!' So that's how I started to want to make films.

How did you actually first start out? What was your first job?

I was 21 when I left the Film Academy, and I was very lucky; immediately a producer offered me a film. It was a short, but four shorts together went into the theatre. I did it because I thought, you know, maybe I'll never be asked again so there's my chance. I made the film and I didn't think it was particularly good. Then I thought, you know what, I'm just going to make a film myself with my own money. It's going to be a feature film. Everybody told me 'Don't do it! You're going to lose your money, you'll never make a film again . . . ' and I thought you know what I'm just going to do it, why not? With a crew of six people, it was almost like *Love.Honour.Obey.* where we're returning to that state again: make a film with little means but have enormous pleasure in doing it.

So part of the process of starting out is just taking that risk and going for it?

Yeah. There's nothing better than just making a film. If you're extremely conscious of how good the film is, and career oriented and all that, it might be

smart to wait a little bit and do some apprenticeships. But I've always believed the best way to make a film is make a film!

You started out in Holland, but how did you make the transition to Hollywood?

When I was 23 I made my first feature. When I was 27 I made a feature that was a huge success; one of the most successful films ever [in Holland]. When I was 29 I made another big one. By the time I was 32 I had made 6 features in Holland, some of them extremely successful. I realised I could stay there until I was 65 and make subsidised films, and the challenge was gone. So I literally took my two suitcases: one with videos of my films; the other with clothes, and I went to Hollywood where I didn't know anyone, and I wanted to start all over again. So it was jumping into the deep end.

Another big risk

Just taking the risk, yes!

You've directed for television as well as film—How do those experiences differ?

I did very little TV. I did *Miami Vice* when I was in America; I did some TV in the 90s in Germany, but they were movies of the week. My feeling has always been: people often talk about TV and feature films as a difference in the way they are shot. There is a difference: it's a little bit more static in TV, it's a little bit more closed up . . . but those differences are very arbitrary. Particularly, it's a way of thinking. In cinema, and I mean big cinema, you think far more philosophically, and in TV you think far more social: the subjects are like small social subjects, with problems between the people that play on an emotional level. While in cinema, though we have a lot of emotions, there is usually a bigger layer beyond it. That is the big difference; that's why I'm never a big fan of people doing both, because you think differently. And I feel that if you want to make films for the theatre, for cinema, you should be very careful and not do too much television.

You've directed your own scripts and those written by others. Do you have a preference?

Yeah it's going to sound strange but I think it's better if you direct films that somebody else writes, because if you write yourself and you direct it, you respect your own writing too much. While if you direct somebody else's script you interpret it, so you go into another level, whereas you have written it you already know what you had intended and you're going to recreate as a director what you intended as a writer. So you have more freedom, strangely enough, if you direct a script that is not your own.

Also you have the whole input of somebody else, a different writer. You can make it your own, you can work with it, but all in all I would say it is almost better to direct something that you didn't write. I've done both—of course I'm not going to say one way is wrong. But I have found over the course of the years that you can make more of your own film if you have a little bit of distance from a script.

Can you tell us a bit about the range of budgets you have worked with?

I think the biggest budget I had was something like \$20 million (about €15 million or something), and the smallest films I've made have been like, let's say, \$100,000. The difference is: you buy possibilities to correct your mistakes. If you have a lot of money, you sometimes can make a mistake and you have the possibility of correcting it. But money is not always a blessing, because if you know you have a way out you are less determined to do the right thing immediately. But of course you have production values, you have other things; people get paid well (you can't always make films for free). But ultimately money is not the decisive factor; it is an additional factor. The only thing money does, in general, if you have a high budget, the distributors and the people who basically bring the film to the audience, they take it more seriously because they have more of a vested interest. But as a filmmaker telling a story, budget is not your primary concern.

In your career so far, do any films stand out?

That's a very difficult questions and it's an obvious answer that I'm going to give! Every time you make a film, that film is the most important one. Every time you think about all your films they are our more or less all your children, so they are the same. But the reality is—and I have four children—sometimes you like a child more at one moment, sometimes you like a child more at another moment. For instance, I made a film called *All Men Are Mortal* based on the book by Simone de Beauvoir. It had Stephen Rea in it and Irène Jacob, who at the time we made the film were both big international stars, certainly European stars. I absolutely despise that film, because those two people were obnoxious people. They were not nice to me; I was not nice to them. But I saw the film again 2 years ago and I thought, 'Actually it's not such a bad film.' But in my memory it's been an awful film because my memory of the shooting period was so awful. It's also the other way around—I have some films that I have great memories of for whatever reason—you had a relationship with somebody, whatever—and then you see the film again and you think, 'hmm maybe not as good as I thought!' [laughs] So the director is not the best person to ask what his best film is. I have my favourites and it usually has to do with the circumstances.

So it can mar the experience?

Completely! Generally the films that have a rough time are the best films to tell stories about, so if you have no stories to tell about a film it must have been a good film but also a boring film!

Any sage advice for aspiring filmmakers?

The most important thing is: see everything you can see. See every film you can see. It doesn't matter what genre it is; it doesn't matter whether you like it or not, it's almost better to see bad films. At some point you will see every change of angle, you will see every cut in the film, you will learn why people are looking away, why they do this, why they do that etc. And have a life, you know! Don't have a life only in the cinema, but in the real world. So see a lot of films and be a part of society. That is the most important thing you can do. The rest you will learn on the way.

Seven Essential Steps for Becoming Rich and Famous by Making a Low-Budget Film

Step 4 Saying No

One of the most difficult things to do in the film business is learning how to say no. No one in the industry ever says it; instead they say 'Yes!' or a 'That's a really great idea.' The theory for this is if an executive turns you down and then you go on to be discovered by a rival, they do not want to be known as the one that turned you down in the first place. These loose and vague comments are designed to leave you hanging in limbo without a real decision. If in doubt, remember that the only true yes in the film industry is a contract and cheque made out to you.

Film schools teach the theory that in order to succeed you must build strong personal relationships with the cast and crew. This theory will lead to your downfall as a producer, especially if you suffer from any personal insecurities or are trying too hard to be nice. The film school theory will teach you to be transparent and show everyone in your cast and crew the budget of the film. The first person who will run out of money will be the art director/production designer. They run out of money first because they start first. If you use the film school approach, the conversation between the art director and the skinflint producer plays out like this:

AD: I need more money.

SP: What for this time?

AD: I need to turn that big long wall green.

SP: How much is that going to cost?

AD: A hundred.

SP: Shall I show you the budget so you can see that there's no money?

AD: I don't care where you get the money, as long as I get a hundred.

SP: (Shows AD the budget) Would you like me to buy less film stock?

AD: Yes.

SP: Or maybe shoot mute? Think what we'd save on sound equipment!

And if you decide to continue this polite approach, then you will probably get a lecture similar to the one that I got from the art director on my first shoot:

AD: If you don't get me a hundred now, no matter what, if I don't get a hundred, then (stabbing at Elliot's nose with a finger) no matter if the actors give the performance of their lifetime and the cinematographer takes pictures that are the best ever in the history of cinematography, when the scene is cut you will have well acted, well lit, well photographed shit. So give me a hundred now or I'll know that you know nothing about filmmaking.

The best way to say no is to use the Hollywood no: 'Thank you for sharing that with me.' As soon as you use the Hollywood no, you have to leave the set.

Learn when to listen, learn when and how to say no and your career will start to zoom.

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12 Ten Steps of Post-production

THERE ARE THREE stages to filmmaking: pre-production, production and post-production. Pre-production is most likely the stage you are at while you are reading this book. The stage where you are researching various filmmaking techniques, toying with different ideas for a film, getting a script together and starting to raise finance.

Professional pre-production is the stage where you are actually spending money—on script development, casting, location scouting and securing crew. The second stage, production, is right after you get financing. You get everyone together and spend 9 to 10 days of 14 to 18 hours each shooting. Pre-production is physically easy but mentally draining. Production is both physically and mentally draining. During production everything happens at once. The actors, the crew, the technical problems and the creative concerns all descend at the same time. Production, although typically presented as being fun and joyous, will probably be the most tiring and draining 2 or 3 weeks of your life. Finally your film is in the can. You bring out the flat beer and celebrate. Everyone hugs everyone (except you, the skinflint producer) and goes home. You pass out and wake up approximately 2 days later. On waking you find 50,000 feet of film or 20 hours of digitally recorded footage at the foot of your bed. You're all alone. What do you do now? The answer, of course, is simple. You begin post-production.

Post-production, somehow, is the process that intimidates people most. Remember, it is not difficult. Production is massively difficult. Post-production is not, as long as you take it step by step. Your first phone call will probably be to your DoP who, although s/he probably hates you by now, will be able to introduce you to several good editors.

The Ten Steps

As a producer, all you need to know about post-production and finishing your film is a matter of following the ten steps listed below. Just take them one step at a time in the order they appear. Unlike production, there will be no 18-hour days. Your function will be to hire people and oversee them by dropping in for half an hour here and there.

Step 1 Pick an Editing Format

There are two ways of doing post-production. One is the old way, the film way. Shoot film and edit or splice film on film editing equipment. Although I personally admire classic film editing on film, we will not be discussing it in this book.

This chapter is not about the pros and cons of film vs. nonlinear editing, so just pick a format. The steps are pretty much the same in either format.

Many excellent directors have started out as film editors—David Lean for example. When Roger Corman attended Raindance in 1996 he told me that new employees were given the following jobs to do if they wanted to direct. Only by satisfactorily completing these tasks were they allowed to progress to the next level.

1. Clean the garage (to demonstrate good manual and organisational skills).
2. Work as an assistant editor logging rushes on three to five features (learn discipline).
3. Work as an assistant editor on three to five features (learn how to do a rough cut).
4. Work as an assistant director on three to five features (learn how to look for unusual shots).
5. Direct (prove your talent and ability).

Step 2 Hire a Picture Editor

After you have selected a format for post, your cinematographer will probably be able to introduce you to a few editors with demo reels. Select one, and allow him/her to pick an assistant and tell them to give you a rough cut with numerous versions of key scenes within 8 to 10 weeks. When they have finished, your 50,000 feet or 20 hours of digital video will be cut down to 8,100 feet or 90 minutes of storytelling.

What makes a good editor?

A good film editor must be a natural storyteller and possess the ability to negotiate the various business and political minefields when dealing with a director and producer.

The entire outcome of the film, and the investment by financiers, largely rests in the hands of the editor. A skillful editor can mask poor performances and technical blemishes and assemble a final cut where these imperfections are concealed from the audience. Scenes may have been photographed poorly and performances might have been less than inspired, but a skilled and creative editor can assemble the film so that the audience will never see these imperfections.

Hint Involve your editor at the earliest possible stage of the production—preferably at script development level.

What is editing?

Suppose you are at a cinema, the lights dim. Titles appear, and we see the skyline of a major city. We zoom in a little closer and see that it is London. Buckingham Palace. A figure shrouded in a cloak leaves a brown package next to the Palace gates. The guards chase him, and he flees. The sounds of his shoes on the cobblestones fade into horse's hooves cantering down Pall Mall past a hobo with a banjo. He sings a rustic song.

The screenwriter, director, cinematographer, actors, lighting designer, sound designer and, finally, the film editor all created this scene. The film editor works with the director and shapes its final form. S/he views countless hours of rushes, considers the use of stock footage for the skyline and from this material edits a 60-second scene.

The scene appears to take place in Central London, near and around Buckingham Palace on a summer morning. In fact, little of what the audience sees was filmed in Central London at all.

The opening shot of London has come from a stock library picture shot which the producer felt was cheaper and better looking than anything they would be able to film. The shot of the man placing the package under the Buckingham Palace Gate had to be done in a studio, with either a photographic backdrop of the palace, or by cutting between close-ups of the package, the man's hands and an establishing shot of the Palace. It certainly wasn't all filmed in the same morning. The sounds of the man's feet, the horse's hooves and the hobo's song were all recorded separately in a studio and then mixed together. The finished piece flows as if taken at one place at one time and this is down to the editor, who ensures that the pictures, sound and music all work together despite the fact that the multitude of sound and pictures were recorded at different times and places.

The six stages of film editing

The methodology of classical film editing is very similar in every country around the world.

Editors need discipline so they are not overwhelmed by the multitude of variables. Classical film editing has developed a methodology which structures the work process into precise stages. Each stage has its own procedure and order.

Hint Editors need to 'get the material in their head'. An editor needs time to take a break from reviewing the material, even though it can be reviewed at the speed of light at the press of a button.

i Logging

The dailies or rushes are sorted and labelled in 'bins'. Each take may be accompanied by extra notes from the director or the cinematographer. This is the first time the editor sees the film and, since it is shot out of sequence, it is out of context of the story. A good editor views the rushes and looks for fluidity of movement and nuances that will later be incorporated into the film.

ii First assembly

The editor considers all the visual and audio material collected on the shoot and then re-orders it in the way to tell the story best. In the scene described above, the editor may decide to open with an aerial shot of Central London and then track in to Buckingham Palace. The next shot might be a close-up of the hands of the bomber followed by a dissolve to the hands of the hobo playing the banjo. There are dozens of possible combinations the editor can use for this simple sequence, each of which creates a different mood and tells the story differently.

Editing on a large budget feature usually commences as soon as the film starts shooting. An editor will work on the rushes and assemble scenes for the director and producer to view whilst shooting is still going on. Often at this point the editor and director will decide that additional footage of key moments is necessary in order to make more editing choices available during the edit.

Hint First assembly is like a sketch of the finished scene. It is a good idea to save these sketches for reference, should the editor get stuck.

iii Rough cut and variations

The rough cut can take up to 3 months to complete. Each editor works differently. Sometimes the editor works alone and shows the day's or week's work to the director and producer. Sometimes the editor and director work together, discussing every nuance.

In the rough cut, the scenes are placed in order and checked for continuity. This all-important step in the editing process allows for revisions and new ideas to be tried and tested.

Hint Make the edit points between the scenes very obvious in order to emphasise the 'roughness'. Failure to do so may result in the editor committing to an edit before it is ready.

iv First cut

The first cut is the rough cut that is accepted by the editor, the director and the producer. This is sometimes known as a rough fine cut. Selection and sequence are basically fixed, although changes can still be made. The later film is visible. Detailed fine cut starts out from its proportions, structures, rhythms and emphasises them.

Hint Never be afraid to let the first cut 'rest' for a few days so everyone involved can see it with fresh eyes.

v Fine cut

The fine cut no longer focuses on the entire film but on the details of each and every edit point in the movie. The fine cut emphasises and strengthens the rhythms and structures identified in the first cut.

vi Final cut

When a fine cut has been agreed with the editor, director and producer, the sound designer, music composer and title designer join the editor.

Sound effects and music are created and added to the final cut. For more detail on the process from this point onwards, see steps 3 to 9.

When everyone has agreed with the final cut the picture is locked. In the case of film an edit decision list (EDL) is sent to the lab where a negative cutter 'conforms' the negative to the EDL in order to create an exact copy of the final cut. In digital editing the process is much the same. Instead of a film print, the edit is conformed to the original high resolution footage.

Editing functions

The huge range of professional computerised editing machines has created a bewildering array of functions that can overwhelm editors, especially beginners. There are literally hundreds of options. The first thing you will have to decide is which software package you will edit with. Avid,

Final Cut and Adobe are the big three but there are also many popular alternatives.

A drawback to this huge technological advance is that an editor's attention can be drawn from the pictures and sounds to the demands of the machine. The technical skills needed to operate editing software are fairly easy to acquire. An editor could do their work with just two buttons: one for separating and one for combining. What about the hundreds of other functions? Defining the basics of editing brings us to seven elementary functions which combine to produce all the others:

- Separating (segmenting, make subclip).
- Linking (sequencing, adding).
- Selecting (select, activate, mark in/mark out).
- Inserting (substitute, splice in).
- Removing (eliminate, extract).
- Replacing (permutations, replace, overwrite).
- Making longer or shorter (expand and compress, trim, slip, slide).

Step 3 Hire a Sound Editor

About 2 months after the picture editor has started, the film is tight but you need to enhance the look with sound. Hire a sound editor and assistant for 5 to 6 weeks to cut dialogue tracks, to recreate and place sound effects and to get cue sheets ready for steps 7 and 13.

Step 4 Do ADR

This is automatic dialogue replacement, which takes place in a large hollow room with a projector that plays the work print (from step 2). The actors come back and lip sync, rerecord and loop any dialogue that wasn't sharp and clear in the original. Chapter 6 has full details.

Step 5 Do Foley

Go to a room that looks like (or could very well be) the ADR room and this time, without actors, have sound people called foley artists—or 'walkers'—rerecord the noise of footsteps and certain other sound effects into your film. This is covered in greater detail in Chapter 6.

Step 6 Secure Music

It is a common misconception that you can have an actor walking past a radio on a set with a Beatles song playing out of it and not have to pay. This is simply not true. A sound clip of any Beatles song of less than 8 seconds can cost as much as \$150,000. Here is the story of Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs*. Tarantino had the script and had sent it to all the major studios who had used

the typical Hollywood 'no' and told him that they loved it, but thought it was too violent. He then raised about \$30,000 and was preparing for a 16mm shoot when his friend, Lawrence Bender pleaded for the option, knowing that the script deserved a better budget than the one Quentin had planned. Tarantino agreed, and for \$10 Lawrence had an option for a month. He sent it everywhere, and had no luck. Then he discovered that his ex-girlfriend had moved to New York and was taking acting classes at the Actors Studio where she had met and was now sleeping with Harvey Keitel. At that time, Keitel's career was nearing rock bottom. Through the personal connection of Keitel's lover, Tarantino and Lawrence Bender were able to get the script to Keitel.

In his naïveté, Bender assumed that this meant he could get money based on Keitel's commitment. But Keitel did not express commitment, only interest. The only real commitment is when an actor agrees to appear at your set or location for a specific period of time (the window). That is meaningful.

When the Russo Brothers first attended Raindance with their first feature film, *Pieces*, they included the song 'The Girl From Ipanema'. The song was not an essential element to the film, unlike 'Stuck in the Middle With You' in *Reservoir Dogs*. Because they had failed to clear the music rights before they attempted to sell it, they had to pass on several lucrative offers, and this excellent film became

Keitel instantly agreed to play in the film. If you think about it, Tarantino is an expert in assessing and accessing talent. Think of Travolta in *Pulp Fiction* and Pam Grier in *Jackie Brown*. But time was running out, and Lawrence needed to get some money to the table. With about a week left in his option (Tarantino had already told him that he was a loser and shouldn't have wasted his time), Lawrence went back to Keitel and asked him if he would be interested in producing.

Hint If you ask someone to produce, are you not really asking them to write cheques?

Keitel agreed, got some money from a home video distribution company, Live Entertainment, got a bit of private investment from the amazing filmmaker, Monte Hellman, and together with Tarantino agreeing to waive his fees, got a total of \$800,000 together. The film was shot with a below-the-line production budget of around \$250,000.

They cut and edited the film and used the Stealers Wheel song 'Stuck in the Middle With You'. In their naïveté, they forgot to clear the music rights. When the film was delivered, the distributor was horrified, because they had financed a movie that could play absolutely nowhere except film festivals. Sensing that they could have financed a turkey, they decided to test the film at some film festivals, starting with Sundance. The response was overwhelming.

Now the discussion with Stealers Wheel needs to start. Had they approached this band of aging (well, very aged) rock stars before the movie was shot, they could have expected to pay in the region of a few thousand dollars. But because the newspapers and film magazines were now full of Tarantino's triumph, the band was able to negotiate a mid-six figure deal, rumoured to be \$600,000—almost the entire budget of the film! And, in addition, when released, the film promoted their back catalogue and they benefited from a huge increase in their sales.

Tarantino, I am sure, has never made this mistake again. And if you look at his filmography, it always contains a vast amount of music from the forgotten artistes of the 70s and 80s whom he resurrects by putting them in his movies. Look at the sound track to *Pulp Fiction* on iTunes: every single track is by kind permission of A Band Apart Productions Ltd—the company he formed with Robert Rodriguez to exploit music rights.

Don't use any popular old song that you haven't purchased the rights to. Although you can use public domain music, remember that you still have to

unreleaseable. Even so, their film was good enough to get George Clooney and Steven Soderbergh interested in producing their next feature. *Welcome to Collinwood* cleared all its music rights before release and did exceptionally well in sales, despite lukewarm reviews.

To find out who owns the copyright to a song or performance that you would like to use, contact the Performing Rights Society (PRS), www.prsformusic.com.

If you want to watch and listen to my personal favourite soundtrack of the last 20 years, get your hands on a copy of *Six String Samurai*. I simply cannot believe that this film didn't do more business. The soundtrack by the Pink Elvises—an émigré Russian street band from Santa Monica—is nothing short of brilliant.

purchase performance rights if the recording is less than 70 years old. But a recording done more than 70 years ago is unlikely to be of good enough quality for your soundtrack.

If you want to use Beethoven's Fifth, remember that the score is public domain, but the recording of the London Symphony Orchestra playing in 1985 is not, and to use that you will have to buy it out. Another alternative would be to hire session musicians and a studio—which adds up.

I was re-editing my first feature in a valiant and brave attempt to turn a shambolic screenplay into a movie I could sell when my new editor suggested that I use a Kris Kristofferson song recorded in 1974 as he was crossing over from gospel to country. I called the MCPS (as PRS was called then) and filled in a form with my budget and sent it off for a quote for a universal all media buyout. I was astonished when the price of \$2,000 came back. I thought it was a bargain.

Film music from pop stars need not be expensive. We had a panel at the Raindance Film Festival which included Damon Albarn, one of the Cocteau Twins and Stephen Tin Tin Duffy—all big stars in the 1990s. In the open Q&A at the end of the session, I was astonished to hear them all say that several of their songs, released to top forty acclaim 7 to 10 years ago, had had their copyright revert back to them from the record company. As they had already realised profit and critical acclaim from these songs, they were all willing to consider a no-money fee for these songs in a movie if they liked the script. The reason they were willing to do this was because they wanted their older music, music that they now had control over, music that they were proud of, to reach a new audience (by plugging the back catalogue). And they confided that if this music was placed properly in a film, then they all hoped that they might be able to use it as a calling card to get real paid work as a film score composer and thereby add a possible revenue stream to their 'business'.

My good friend and confidante Phil Alberstat was the executive producer on a movie which featured the music of Dave Stewart of the Eurythmics, including eight original songs. I was astonished to find out that Stewart's fee was just £34,000 for the entire soundtrack—although the album rights went to his record company. This enabled the producer to use the phrase 'Original Soundtrack by Dave Stewart' to market the movie.

It can pay to find out from a major record company which bands they handle and who they are about to spend money on promoting. If the timing coincides, you might be able to get not only the music for free, but some cash for the production budget as well.

Hint As a producer it is your job to discover talent. How many demo tapes have you listened to? How many clubs have you gone to looking for new sounds, new ideas and new bands? Don't be lazy. Find and hire a musician with his or her own studio to compose brand new original songs and tunes that you have the rights to. The UK is the home of new music, and the USA is the largest market. Hundreds of new musicians hit the marketplace every week. And what about Europe? Have you heard the new music coming out of France, Germany, Italy and Serbia? It is absolutely terrific.

The Blair Witch Project also has an exceptional soundtrack. Exceptional, because the noises and 'music' in the soundtrack are bordering on subliminal and use human noises like heartbeats and respiratory noises to great effect.

Hint Uncleared music is a major reason why a sales agent or film buyer will pass on your film. They will always ask about music rights.

Step 7 Rerecording or the Mix

At this stage you will have twenty to forty tracks of sound (dialogue, ADR, foley, music). You must layer them on top of each other to artificially create a feeling of sound with depth. This is called rerecording or the mix. In the mix session, a sound engineer will mix the sound in time to a projection of the picture. Depending on the nuances of the scene, a good sound mixer will mix the sounds, dialogue and music to maximise the dramatic effect of the scene.

Step 8 Get an M&E Track

Movie sound mixes are reduced to three tracks: music, effects and dialogue. Somewhere in the not-too-distant future you will be selling the rights to your film to foreign nations. The distributor/buyer in that nation wants a soundtrack without English dialogue in it to facilitate dubbing the film with the voices of actors in their own language. M&E stands for only music and effects tracks, and excludes the dialogue tracks.

Hint You will debase the value of your film in certain foreign territories by up to ninety per cent if you do not have an M&E track.

Step 9 Get Titles

Your editing is now done. What is now left is to get the final six to eight opening title cards and then the rear title crawl. These can be created on any graphic format, but need to be transferred in the proper resolution onto the final master of the film.

Keep the opening titles swift and sweet. There is nothing wrong with opening with the title of the movie, and then putting all the 'opening title credits' at the end of the film as was done in *Terminator 2*. Remember, no one watching your first film will have heard of anyone in it!

Hint Keep your opening titles brief. The most common opening title credits for a film submitted to the Raindance Film Festival that we do not accept has a sequence such as: title of film, written by, directed by etc., and then special thanks to Uncle Norman and Aunt Emma (without whom this film would not have been made) and go on and on and on, until we are left screaming 'Who are these people?' and getting bored before the film even starts.

Two Types of Title

In camera titles

The titles are filmed as part of the narration (as in Bob Dylan's *Don't Look Now*) or handwritten signs are filmed and become part of the actual show.

Optical titles

Where a graphic designer with a good software programme like Illustrator or Photoshop creates a title and exports it for printing on the final film, be it actual film stock or digital.

Step 10 Colour Grading

Your picture is locked. The mix is wrapping up. All that remains is the colour grade.

Colour grading is not just about making the pictures look pretty. Colour grading enables you to direct the eye of the viewer and strengthen the impact of a scene. The possibilities are almost endless. It is possible to track individual elements in a scene and effectively do a virtual relight. Many films are now shot flat with the intention of deciding the final look of the film in the colour grading stage. It's important to have an overall idea of where you are going and the look you are ultimately trying to create. Many filmmakers create a colour palette early on that they apply to all stages of production and post-production. A professional colourist will enhance the look of your film immensely.

Summary

1. The editor is a key creative. Meet him/her as early as possible.
2. Make certain you and your editor agree to the editing formats and the post-production workflow.
3. Lack of cleared music rights will prevent you from selling your film. The rest of this book relates to dealing with the creative people in your project, and the marketing and distribution of your film.

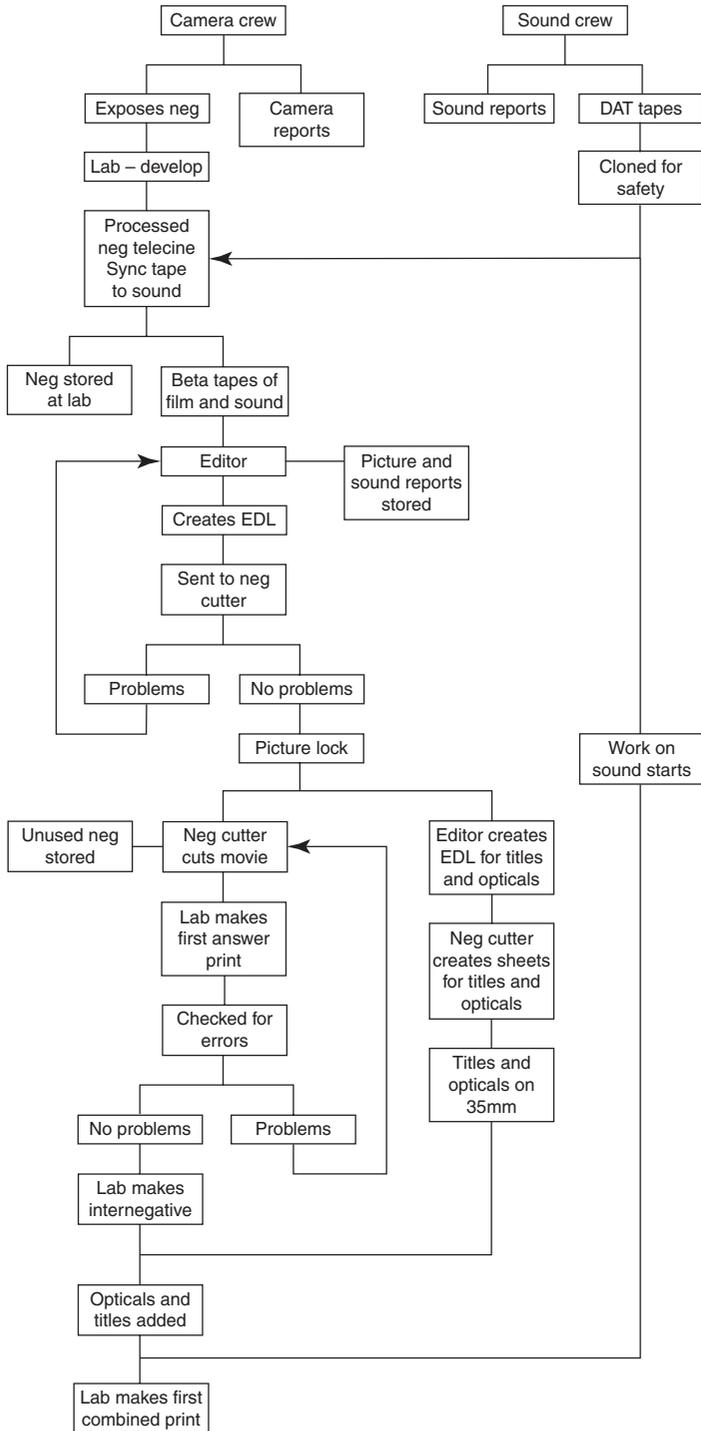


figure 12.1
The post-production process

Film Editing Glossary

Cut

A visual transition created in editing in which one shot is instantaneously replaced on screen by another.

Continuity editing

Editing that creates action that flows smoothly across shots and scenes without jarring visual inconsistencies. Establishes a sense of story for the viewer.

Cross cutting

Cutting back and forth quickly between two or more lines of action, indicating they are happening simultaneously.

Crossing the line

Where the camera is moved across the imaginary line drawn between the noses of two characters, disrupting continuity and making an eyeline match impossible. See figure 12.2 below.

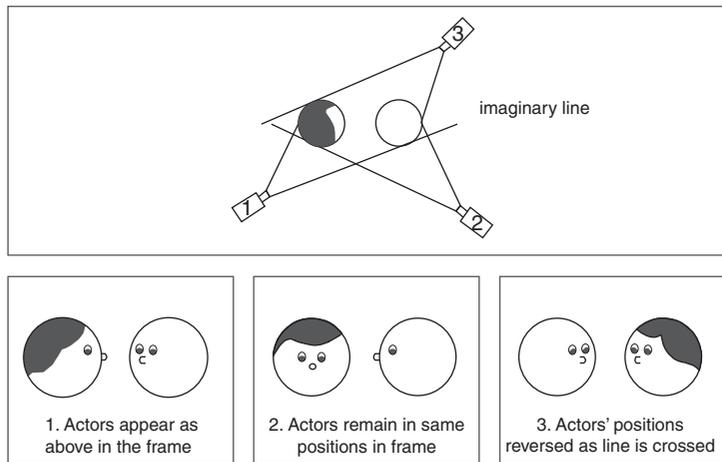


figure 12.2
Crossing the line

Dissolve

A gradual scene transition. The editor overlaps the end of one shot with the beginning of the next one and as the first slowly disappears, it is replaced with the second.

Editing

Selecting and joining together shots to create a finished film.

Errors of continuity

Disruptions in the flow of a scene, such as a failure to match action or the inconsistent placement of cast or props.

Establishing shot

A shot, normally taken from a great distance or from a 'bird's-eye view', that establishes the location where the action in the following sequence will occur.

Eyeline match

The matching of eyelines between two or more characters. This establishes a spatial relationship of proximity and continuity.

Fade

A visual transition between shots or scenes that appears on screen as a brief interval with no picture. The editor fades one shot to black and then fades in the next. This transition is often used to indicate a change in time or place.

Final cut

The finished edit of a film, approved by the director and the producer. This is what the audience sees.

Iris

Visible on screen as a circle closing down over or opening up on a shot. This technique is seldom used in contemporary film but common during the silent era of Hollywood films. This transition functions to transpose from one scene to the next.

Jump cut

A cut that creates a lack of continuity by leaving out parts of the action.

Matched cut

A cut joining two shots whose compositional elements match, helping to establish strong continuity of action.

Montage

Scenes whose emotional impact and visual design are achieved through the editing together of many brief shots. The shower scene from *Psycho* is probably the most famous (and arguably the most effective) example of montage editing.

On-line editing

On-line editing is when you are editing using full resolution footage, rather than a lower quality version. This requires a more powerful computer and can be a slow process. Usually this will be the case in colour grading or with anything involving visual effects or titles. With lower quality filming formats however, there is no reason why you can't edit on-line from the start.

Off-line editing

Off-line editing is when you are editing with low quality proxy files that will later be replaced by conforming to an EDL.

Rough cut

The editor's first pass at assembling the shots into a film, before tightening and polishing occurs.

Sequence shot

A long take that extends for an entire scene or sequence. The scene will therefore be composed of only one shot with no editing.

Shot reverse shot cutting

Usually used for conversation scenes, this technique alternates between over-the-shoulder shots showing each character speaking.

Wipe

Visible on screen as a bar travelling across the frame pushing one shot off and pulling the next shot into place. Rarely used in contemporary film, but common in films from the 1930s and 1940s.

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13 Above the Line

ABOVE THE LINE refers to the elements of the budget which summarise the cost of the creative people involved in the project. Even though many people add their creative input to a movie, above the line refers to the producer, writer, actors and director. Regardless of your career ambition, it is essential that all of these above the line jobs or careers are understood.

Producer Credits

Directing is the most glamorous role in the industry, writing is the most creative but producing is the most important. The irony is that a great producer operates behind the scenes and behind the camera, making sure that everything runs smoothly, and, if they do their job well, they are unlikely to be in the spotlight.

When the film comes out, a director will take all the credit if the film is a success. If the film is a failure, the director can usually blame the fickle taste of the general public, and the producer is left to explain the resulting financial disaster to the investors. The director's career can still advance after a failure, especially if the film has a unique 'look' to it. But a commercial failure of a movie can end a producer's career.

The lure of producing is hard to explain. For some, seeing their ideas on the screen fulfils a driving ambition. For others, it is the powerful communication tool of film and television that enables them to reach a great number of people which is the lure. And of course there are the financial rewards; a producer with a single hit film can buy a large house (or two) with the profits. If fame and glory are anywhere in your dreams, then producing will never do it for you. The most you can expect, fame wise, is a grudging respect from other above the line people in the industry.

If you have ever sat through an entire movie, it is hard not to notice the title sequences at the beginning and end of the film. The first credits are called the opening title credits. Here the above the line individuals associated with the making of the film are mentioned, either with other names (a shared title credit) or on their own (a single title credit). The credits at the end of the film are called the rear title crawl.

Naturally, everyone involved in the film wants to be in the opening title sequence because it is more impressive. You will often notice certain people,

A common complaint of producers and their lawyers is the amount of time it takes to agree on the credits in the film. Who comes first, how long one's credits are on the screen, the size of the typeface and whether or not the credit will appear in newspaper advertising, on cinema trailers, on DVD and video jackets and on telecasts are all negotiating points.

like the editor, cinematographer and production designer sneaking into the opening title credits—they are people whose career is at the level where they can command and receive an opening title credit in addition to their salary.

A closer examination of the opening title credits will reveal several different categories of producer.

Producer

The producer of the film is the individual who has conceived the idea for the film, found an excellent writer to write a suitable script, hired an appropriate director, supervised the casting process, the shoot and the post-production. The producer will also have a certain say in the marketing of the film. Parallel to all of this worry, the producer is also charged with the responsibility of raising the money for the film and dealing with the investors.

A good producer, like Stephen Woolley, Norma Heyman, Lawrence Bender, Saul Zaentz or Nik Powell, has a valuable creative role to play in the filmmaking process.

Each producer spends an amount of time bordering on the obsessive trying to identify new talent. They read galley proofs of unpublished novels, read countless screenplays by up and coming screenwriters, see dozens of theatre productions seeking new actors and writers and watch countless movies at festivals and at home on preview cassettes. A producer must also be a master of negotiation and be able to sell the concept of the movie to talent and investors.

Hint A producer's job is to discover and nurture talent. A good producer looks everywhere for it: at the theatre, at concerts, in art galleries—anywhere something new is tried that might work in the cinema with a little guidance.

Associate Producer

Suppose you, as a producer, find you have an actor of a certain stature attached to your film, but cannot attract an investor. You may meet an individual who says: 'Based on the fact that your project has these merits, including this actor, I have a client who will invest in your film.' This person makes a formal introduction to a financier who then finances the movie. The person who introduces you to the money is called the associate producer. An associate producer has no other role in the film, and for their services you pay either a flat fee, a commission based on the amount they raise and/or a small percentage of the profit you make from the film, if any. The associate producer rarely has any creative input into the film. Associate producers have been compared to real estate agents and accordingly often insist on having a title other than associate producer. In a situation like this, you will usually accede to their demands to be a 'producer' because it will facilitate the financing needed to make the film happen.

Co-producer

Suppose you have an investor who will only fund your project if certain actors are involved. If you do not have a good contact to these particular actors, or are being shut out by their agents or personal managers, you may need someone who can introduce you to these people.

A co-producer is someone who can gain direct personal access to the person or actors you are pursuing on your behalf. A co-producer leads you to talent. Like an associate producer, they have no other involvement in the film and are paid either a flat fee or commission if the person/actors they introduce you to sign a contract with you. Co-producers have been likened to dating agencies.

Executive Producer

An executive producer is the person who writes the cheques. Sometimes several individuals share this credit. The credit can also be taken by the solicitor who does the paperwork for the company or individual financing the film. An executive producer does not have creative control, technically, for the film. But in reality, the executive producer can dictate whatever they want using the adage of all business: he or she who has the gold makes the rules.

Line Producer

A line producer is like the construction foreman who makes sure that all the stuff you need and all the people you need are at the right place and at the right time. A good line producer will bring to your set their own little black book stuffed with people they have worked with before and who they know are quality crew. Line producers also have good relationships with actors and their agents—it is they who are often the point of contact between a production and an actor once cast.

How Much You Get Paid

The rule of thumb fee for producers is ten per cent of the total budget of the film. In reality, this is rarely achieved and British television producers have seen their fees cut to less than half that.

As an independent producer, you need to be aware of the demands a project will place on your time. Until *Trainspotting* was in official pre-production, the producer Andrew Macdonald spent a year and a half working with the screenwriter, John Hodge, perfecting the script. During that time he was working in Scotland as a runner. Once you have the script and the money raised, the pre-production phase commences. Until the film is totally complete, the producer will be unable to do any other job. They say in the film business that there is no life after movies. And this is especially true for the producer.

A typical first independent film with a budget of under a million will totally consume the life of a producer for between 6 months and 1 year. During this

time the producer will not be able to contemplate working for anyone else or earning revenue from anywhere else.

In order to calculate your fee, simply take your monthly living expenses for 6 to 12 months. That is the minimum amount of money that you need as your fee. To take any less money means that your work as a producer will suffer while you try to supplement your income from other endeavours. The irony is that producer's fees are usually the most difficult to raise. Investors usually resist the idea of paying a producer's fee to someone who also has a profit share.

Hint Everyone has different lifestyles and different expenses and financial responsibilities. Make certain you have an accurate estimate of what your time will cost you before you submit your producer's fee.

How to Break In

Tim Bevan is the cofounder of Working Title and has an impressive list of producer's credits including *Notting Hill*, *Fargo*, *Bridget Jones' Diary* and *Les Misérables*. He insists that his smartest move was to befriend the juniors at the main Hollywood agencies (Endeavor, ICM, William Morris and CCA) when he started out in the mid-1980s. Now each of these juniors has risen in rank and they deal with the majority of the big stars in the industry. They all return Tim's calls and make his job of producing that much easier.

There doesn't seem to be any one way that producers break in. Roger Corman was a chemist until the age of forty-seven when he sold a script. With that money he bought a camera and started producing.

Many lawyers end up producing and are remarkably well suited for the job. They already know how deal structures work and understand the complex money flows involved in the life of a film.

Other producers have broken in by working as an assistant for another producer. Producer Chris Auty started on the bottom rung at The Recorded Picture Company—Jeremy Thomas's company. As a producer's assistant you will work on someone else's feature as an assistant to the producer, usually for nothing, in order to gain experience.

Or maybe you should produce a short—either for yourself, or someone else, to see whether or not you enjoy the experience.

Hint As Robert Rodriguez says in his excellent book *Rebel Without A Crew*, get experience on your own movies, not movie experience (i.e. pulling cables) on someone else's film.

Seven Essential Qualities of a Producer

1 Know your screenplay

A great script is gold dust in the film industry. Finding it can be like finding a needle in a haystack.

Hint Take the time to fully understand screenplays. It will pay dividends in the long run.

Jeremy Thomas, one of the greatest living British producers, tells me every time I meet him that he is out 'truffling' for money.

2 Understand money

Especially how to raise it. This is what a producer must do in order to call themselves a producer.

Hint The more you learn about money, the better able you will be to understand it and use it.

3 Develop excellent interpersonal communication skills

A producer is only as good as their power of persuasion.

Hint Hone your pitching skills. You will have to pitch the film not just to investors, but to cast, crew and finally distributors.

4 Have business savvy

No one can teach this, and it isn't something you can buy. It just sort of develops as you gain experience.

Hint Read the trade papers.

5 Be organised and able to multitask

The phone is ringing, the doorbell is chiming, the sirens are wailing and your lead actor is having a nervous breakdown. All in front of your principal investor. Deal with it.

Hint Prioritise and deal with situations in order of importance. If that fails, remember that the sun always rises tomorrow morning.

6 Have boundless energy

Every day during the principal photography of your film you will say to yourself that you have never ever felt so tired in your entire life.

Hint Find that extra energy you never knew you had and power through.

7 Have talent

Talent is a very subjective subject. Number seven should really read: must have producing talent; talent for finding writers; talent for developing stories; talent for working with casting directors; talent in finding financial partners; talent for selling movies.

Hint It's not what you know, it's who you know.

The Producer's Contract

On the website you will find a generic producer's contract.

The contract between the producer and the production will also need to be agreed by the principal investors. The main points are: time and duration of hire, responsibilities of the producer, clear understanding of how any additional profit (or points) are paid, how the flow of money will pass from the investors to the production company to the producer and a clear statement of how the contract can be terminated should any party fail in their agreement.

In Conversation with Mark Shivas

How would you describe your role as a producer?

The late Mark Shivas was a producer at Perpetual Motion Pictures. Both as Head of Drama and later as Head of Films at the BBC, Mark has produced and executive produced scores of television plays, series and feature films including: *Truly Madly Deeply*, *Jude*, *Hideous Kinky*, *The Snapper*, *The Witches*, *A Private Function* and many more.

I would describe it as a mixture of a cajoler, a wet nurse, someone who raises the money, someone who keeps the movie on track, someone who looks after the crew.

It requires a mixture of skills as well: you're an accountant, you're someone who knows something about scripts but probably can't write them, you're somebody who knows a little about everything and not much about anything. No one producer is good at everything a producer does—some are very good at raising money, some are very good on scripts, some are very good on the set, some are very good at promoting the movies. I don't know anyone who is good at all those things.

My forte is with the script, and on the set, with the cast and getting the right crew and the right director for the project—keeping everybody reasonably sweet. My forte is not raising money particularly.

What does being a producer involve?

Well I find the project, which often means that somebody comes to me (at least they do now because I've been at it for a very long time), with a book, an idea or a script, and says 'Will you produce this?' To which the answer is usually no. But sometimes it's yes, and then it's a matter of helping the writer to get the script written, and finding the money for that. Then I find the right director and then make that relationship work between the writer and the director and the script and the director. Then I find the right crew, and so on and so on. That's the bit I know how to do best I think. I'm reasonably good in post-production, not so great on the marketing, not so good at the money raising.

I think a producer ought not to be there the whole time. I think another thing the producer should be, is a kind of 'long stop' for the director. The director is very much focused on what's going on from day to day, and I think the producer ought to be able to be a 'back stop'—stand back, see the wood for the trees and generally support the director.

On average, how much time does a project tend to take from conception to final product?

I don't think there is such a thing as an average. I was an executive producer on *Capture the Castle* which I commissioned when I was head of films at the BBC, 6 years before it actually hit the screen—6 years! That's the time it took to buy the rights of the book, to get one writer writing it. Then we had to throw out that script and get another one written, and then the first director who was involved in the project left, so we had to get another director. I didn't actually produce that movie, but I was attached and aware of what was going on all the way through.

I was involved as producer on a television series that came out at the same time, called *Cambridge Spies*—that took four years, from the time the writer came to me with an outline.

Twenty years ago, I made a movie called *Moonlighting* with Jeremy Irons, where I was approached by somebody in January and we had the film made and shot and on the screen in Cannes with subtitles in May! That's the extremes. But very few producers work on only one project at a time, most producers have to work on several—so they are in various stages of development.

How many projects normally do you work on at one time?

I have three movies that I'm involved with at the moment, and that's a good number. You could have too many and spread yourself too thinly. These three are at various stages of development—they all have scripts, so I'm now casting for one, looking for a director for the other, looking for money and cast for the third.

How do you go about choosing directors?

You look to see whether they have any kind of rapport with the script and the subject matter. In the case of these three movies, two already have directors attached and the third one's looking for a director right now. And because it's a movie that has a part for a star actor, we probably need a director who is reasonably well known to encourage the actor to take part, so we will need a very sensitive and visual director, with a lot of imagination, who's also had a success or two, who can attract these sorts of people. It's all a matter of whether they are available. The good people are working, so you have to leap in and hope.

Do you have some favourite directors that you tend to go with?

No, I don't. I've worked with several directors twice or more, but I don't have a director, as it were, with whom I always produce—not like say, Andrew Eaton and Michael Winterbottom or Jeremy Thomas and Bernardo Bertolucci. But I am working on something with Nicolas Roeg at the moment with whom I did a film in 1988, so yes I have worked with directors more than once. Some I would never wish to work with ever again of course, but they are few and far between and they shall remain nameless.

How do you find new projects?

In various ways: I have an agent, who sometimes sends me books and scripts, I read the *Times Literary Supplement* to see what books are coming, then there are friends of mine who come to me with things they suggest—there's no one way. Just occasionally, someone will ring up and say 'Look, I've got this script, will you produce it?' And that's like having a birthday—if it's any

good that is. I've had plenty of people ask if they can send me a script, and I almost always say yes, and it often turns out to be something I wouldn't want to do. You have to think that it's going to take years of your time and you have to want to get out of bed in the mornings to work on it, so you have got to be incredibly enthusiastic about the project.

What do you look for in a project?

I don't think there's any one kind of movie that I like to make more than another except maybe black comedies—comedies with an edge, which are incredibly difficult to find, but I've made two or three—*A Private Function* by Alan Bennett with Michael Palin, Maggie Smith and a pig and Roald Dahl's *The Witches* with Angelica Huston. If I could find more of those, I would be very happy—on the other hand, they don't always make money. I suppose you try to find something that is unusual, whatever that may mean, and I couldn't possibly define that. There are certain genres that I don't care for; I don't really like science fiction,

I may watch it sometimes, but films where the characters are called X and Y are not my cup of tea. And I haven't made 'big' movies, most of the movies I have made have been of a modest budget. I can't imagine making a movie that cost \$100 million.

What is the single most important element in a project?

The script. First the script and then the director. You cannot make a good film without a good script, in my opinion, but you can sometimes make a decent film without a very good director. You can start thinking 'It's not a terrifically good script, but we have got a fantastic cameraman, we've got fantastic actors,' and thinking that will raise it up, but what usually happens when the film is all put together, is it comes back and you'll think: 'If only the script had been better'—it usually shows.

Scripts usually take a long time to get right, which is why developing films can take years. A script does seem to take longer to develop now than it did in the past. I think a lot of films used to go into production that were not properly cooked, and I think there are more fingers in the pie now. So many development executives having opinions, so many financiers having opinions. It's as true of television as it is of movies.

Many people look at directors and producers in the film industry and call these 'lifestyle occupations'. How do you react to that?

I can only think of about ten film producers in this country, or fewer, who are making a decent living. I wouldn't describe it as a lifestyle occupation, because there isn't much of a lifestyle—most producers are not making enough money to have a decent lifestyle.

There is much more money in television, I've found. There are an awful lot of people around who call themselves film producers who have made one film every 5 years. So if you call that a lifestyle, then I suppose that's true.

Am I painting a black picture? There are a lot of young filmmakers and people who want to get into films, who don't seem to know anything about television or television writers, which seems very strange to me. They might have just about heard of Paul Abbot or one or two others, but they don't

seem to watch television to look for directors and writers, and that's a strange blankness, especially as some of the money for making films now comes from television and has done for a long time.

How do you deal with agents?

Well if they are British agents, most of them are quite helpful—not all, but most of them. And if they have some respect for you, then they will usually help you, and indeed find things for you and point you in the right direction. American agents I have had less to do with. It seems to be very hard to get past them to their clients and they seem obstructive to people they don't want to deal with. I think some British agents are becoming more like American agents and managers, which is not particularly good. But of course, a lot of people have an agent here and in America—the bigger clients.

How do you see their role?

I have an agent and his role is to find me things and give me advice and to do some of the deals. I would have thought there is a difference between an agent and a manager—and in days gone by, there was more of a managerial role for some of the agents who guided their clients' careers, but these two functions have been split between the agent and the manager—that's more American, but it's coming here too. Producers don't always have agents—they usually have lawyers instead!

Has digital filmmaking changed filmmaking for the better or worse, or not at all?

I don't think it has changed it for the worse, no. I don't think it has changed things greatly. There have been some very interesting movies shot on DV, which, like Michael Winterbottom's film *In This World*, couldn't have been shot any other way. It can be a good thing, but again, it depends on the project and the script.

What are the largest problems you face today?

The scarcity of sources of money to tap into in this country in terms of production companies. There's the Film Council, BBC Films, Working Title and one or two other places, but other than that there aren't that many places to go. Of course there are the leaseback organisations, tax breaks and so on. There aren't very many places to go for development finance for scripts either, which is a problem.

In the art film market—by which I don't mean 'art' films, I mean smaller films—it is so difficult to get people to notice them. So much money is spent on big movies and marketing them, that it's hard to get in there and to make people take notice—that's changed I think.

I think the change has happened because the corporations have taken over from the film companies, because of this business that if a film doesn't do well on its first weekend, it gets pulled—I think that's very bad, things can't just take root. It's too expensive to advertise—the amount of money it takes to advertise has become colossal—almost as much as the production of the movie. So we are up against these huge machines really, and I find that hard.

Is finance the only problem?

The more fingers there are in the pie, the more opinions come, and it's possible that the vision of a few people can get diluted by having to dance to the tunes of a larger number of people, and that's the danger in international coproductions; the more producers and the more financial sources you have, the worse it is for the producer, director and writer.

Why do you do what you do? What satisfies you about it?

I like most of the people I work with, it's never the same from one day to the next and it's always interesting and dangerous and funny.

Why did you choose to become a producer in the first place?

I think because I like to be in on a project right from the beginning, and I didn't feel that I particularly wanted to direct actors. The business of working with the script and the writer from the early stages seemed to be something I was quite good at. I liked the movies, I liked television. Once upon a time I thought my life's ambition was to be a film critic for *The Observer* newspaper—but that never happened.

Do you have to make many sacrifices?

Well you are away from home quite a lot. If you're shooting, you're away for 8 to 10 weeks. That's tough. But every job requires some sacrifices, I don't think producing requires an inordinate amount of sacrifice.

Is there one deal, one project that got away?

Yes but I'm not going to tell you what it was. It's a television series.

Could you have prevented it from happening?

No. I made the wrong decision—I turned it down, which in retrospect, was a mistake. We all make mistakes don't we?

Writers and Buying Screenplays

There are two types of screenwriters: those with a previous screen credit, and those without. As a producer, you could exploit an unproduced writer desperate for an opening title credit quite easily. However, morals and common sense dictate that this would be a strategically unsound approach. In essence, whichever type of writer you deal with, as a producer, you are hiring a creative ally and, depending on the financial arrangements, are initiating a financial partnership.

Successful producers I know in London, such as Andrew Macdonald, Jeremy Thomas, Richard Holmes and Tim Bevan, have a pack of writers—usually around eight to twelve—who supply them with scripts. Writers all have different work rates, and it is not uncommon for a producer to have several scripts delivered in the same fortnight—and then to have to choose between them. Had the scripts been delivered on time, this situation would never arise.

Development Team

The classic development team consists of a producer, a development executive and an admin support person. The development executive reads and assesses the scripts submitted to the producer for consideration. A good development executive will also take meetings with the writer and make creative suggestions for the rewrite.

The admin assistant maintains the database, and prepares packages for delivery. S/he may also help read scripts.

In London, a three-person team like this one, including office rent, telephone and payroll deductions, will cost a minimum of £200,000 per annum and will be able to assess ten scripts a week and see about three stage shows and five preview screenings each.

Three Types of Script Deal

Scripts are bought and sold in three different ways.

1 Outright purchase

If, as a producer, you find a script, and make an offer of purchase, and if it is accepted and you pay your money, then the script becomes yours. You can do anything you want with the script during production, and the writer has no recourse to dispute your decision. Some producers will buy a script, polish it and then attempt to sell it on for a profit.

2 Option

Suppose you find a script, and agree a purchase price, but want to protect your own cash flow while you are attempting to raise the rest of the finance. The answer to this dilemma is to get the writer to agree to an option period where you pay a deposit against the purchase price. The balance of the purchase price is payable on the first day of principal photography—the day when actors are speaking on set for the first time. The amount you paid as a deposit may or may not be credited against the total amount if you do choose to buy the script.

Should the project not meet its target financially within the agreed option period, then the producer returns the copyright to the writer, and the writer keeps the down payment. Or the parties may have agreed beforehand to allow for an extension of the option period for a limited and defined period of time for a further deposit.

Hint The option deal: Often a producer will wish to minimise his/her outgoings and offer a writer a part payment to be treated as a holding deposit on the script for a period of time while they secure the balance of the finance. The balance of the purchase price is due on the first day of principal photography or on the anniversary of the option, whichever is first. Should the option period expire, it is customary for the producer to arrange for a further payment to the writer for an additional option, with this extra money credited to the original purchase price, or

Suggested purchase price for a screenplay in the UK for a film with a total budget under £750,000 is £14,000 (PACT). In the US for a movie with a budget under \$1.2 million it is a minimum of \$43,681 (Writers Guild of America).

not, depending on the agreement. Most option agreements call for a ten per cent payment for a 1- or 2-year option.

3 Step deal

When a producer finds a good writer, they may ask the writer to develop an idea into a treatment, and then, after discussion, develop it further into a first draft, second draft, polish and so on.

A step deal operates on the premise that the writer will be engaged for each step of the process, and also allows for a divorce mechanism should the producer and writer have creative differences. Should they separate (i.e. the writer is fired), the writer keeps the step payments made to date and the producer owns the copyright to the work created thus far.

Hint A good writer's agreement forms the cornerstone of the legal paperwork of your production. Make one hundred per cent certain that the script you are buying or developing has the proper paper trail to satisfy the 'chain of title'.

Shopping

This is the fourth way that scripts can be sold, and unfortunately it can ruin a writer's script.

Shopping refers to a practice deplored by screenwriters. It occurs when a producer promises something unrealistic, like a personal contact to Harrison Ford, and manages to get the writer to sign a short option of a few days or weeks while they try to get the star's interest.

They then call every single production company they can think of and pitch the script. Later, when the option has expired, the writer will then find their script on the 'rejected' list of every suitable production company. Sometimes, naïve or poor pitching in a single afternoon can fatally damage a script.

There is a long form writer's agreement on the website. In order to mitigate your costs, it is advisable to look at this contract and make notes in the margins of any additional comments or clauses you cannot agree to before you go to your legal counsel. Philip has also provided an outline contract for an option deal.

The Writer's Contract

A producer or production company needs a contract with a writer that conveys the full copyright of the script to the production company in exchange for a sum of money. Before negotiating with a writer, the producer needs to establish whether or not the contract will be offered under the writers' guilds: either the Writers' Guild of Great Britain or the Writers Guild of America. The guilds have an enormous amount of influence with the studios and the large production companies, and have very strict and established guidelines that cover the whole range of writer/producer relationships including the provision for residuals, travel and accommodation expenses and payments for rewrites.

As the writer's contract forms the cornerstone of the eventual copyright of the film, it is essential that you consult and hire an entertainment attorney familiar with writer's rights and the bargaining chips that you, as producer, have to offer.

In Conversation with Steve Kenis

Steve Kenis is an independent agent and has his own company, Steve Kenis & Co. His clients include Peter O'Toole, Rutger Hauer, Julie Andrews and Asia Argento, and he was Richard Harris's agent too. Steve is also a member of both the American and British Motion Picture Academies and PMA (Personal Managers Association) Council and is a founding member of the British Independent Film Awards.

What is it that you do?

How long have you got? I'm an agent. I represent actors, writers, directors, sometimes producers, in furthering their careers. I would say we are in 'the ham and egg' business—except we have to get both the ham and the eggs! We try to find situations or employment or whatever you want to call it, for our clients. That's kind of basic. In the context of a filmmaker with their own project, my job is to try to help get that financed, move it along, get the picture made. If you are talking about a director who, in addition to having his own projects, is also a gun for hire, it would be to find him a place to shoot his gun.

What do you look for when choosing clients to represent?

Talent. Just talent. At this stage in my own career, I'm looking for more established people. I do have a couple of young, starting out writers, directors—but very few. I'm beyond the stage of taking talented young but unheard of actors and breaking them. I don't do that anymore. I will do it rarely with a director and even more rarely with a writer. I would have to be completely knocked out by what s/he's done—and I mean knocked out. I have to be convinced that I can move them. I have to see some of their work and make a judgement. There's not a checklist of specifics that I'm looking for—it's an overall evaluation.

Do you gravitate towards certain kinds of directors?

No. If somebody is good and talented, that's it. Some people are more comfortable working in one genre, be it comedy, melodrama, action. Some people work across two genres, rarely more than two. I don't gravitate towards any particular one. The only area that doesn't interest me that much is horror movies because it's probably the only genre of film that doesn't appeal to me.

Do directors come to you or do you headhunt them?

I used to headhunt them, or they came to me. Now I rely more on recommendation, referral. Someone will tell me 'Hey I've heard about X, you ought to check them out'—in which case I'll go after the person, find out about them.

Who are your main collaborators?

There are several people I work with regularly; a manager in New York and a management company in LA. In terms of producers, once a producer gets involved in a filmmaker's project, then I will work with that producer to get it financed—there can be that kind of collaboration, where the two of us are going towards the same goal together.

At what point in a project do you get involved? Can you explain the process of your involvement?

Usually I'm involved at a project's infancy, but each one is individual, it depends on what's involved, who's involved. For example, I saw a TV serial

here in Britain and it occurred to me that there was an American movie in that story, so I contacted the producer. It turned out she had the rights for a theatrical feature picture in the material. I got her together with an American producer who appreciated the same thing that I did in it, and we made a deal for her, with him and he moved forward with it then—because he could do things with it that she couldn't do, because she lives here in London, he lives in LA—he brought in a lead actress and set it up at Warner Bros.

I have had other situations where I have worked with a producer here, and if we get something set up over here, we are both moving it forward. We'll be talking to each other all the time, strategising, figuring out who's going to do what. In terms of getting a movie set up, each project is its own role of the dice.

Are you involved in the legal side of things also?

Well, I try not to be. I encourage whoever I'm involved with to have their own lawyer. The TV producer I mentioned earlier has a lawyer here in London, and that lawyer is one of the few people who is also an American lawyer and has worked at one of the major American studios, so he's one of the few people in this town that can look at an American studio agreement and understand it and know all the details and nuances of it. There are few like him; I think people are best off hiring someone in LA, and I encourage them to do that.

I have helped out though. I helped out a young writer-director who had a piece of material and we had an arrangement with some people that fell apart. He couldn't afford a lawyer, but I was able to make sure that the other people who were involved with the project couldn't reach in and grab it. But I don't like to be involved with the legality of things.

Is it very different representing writers than it is directors?

It is different. With writers, if you are talking about an original screenplay and what you are normally doing is trying to find a viable producer who will pay some money for it and has the ability to get it set up. For example, I represented the writers of *Sexy Beast* and I sold that property to Jeremy Thomas. Jeremy got it made. On the other hand, you might take a piece of material and try to get a director attached and then get that set up, either with a producer or a financier, or distributor. If you are talking about just a director, presumably who has a piece of material—because a director without a piece of material is just a director for hire—then if the director is hot and he has got a piece of material then you can go in and get that set up. You are bringing a producer a gift.

What would you say makes a good agent?

Tenacity, taste, knowledge of making a deal but the most important thing is relationships. Relationships are indispensable in this business—if you can't do relationships, it doesn't matter whether you've got taste and tenacity. If you don't know anybody or people don't respect you, there's nothing you can do. Relationships make an agent. And patience.

What's the difference between a huge company like ICM and a smaller one like your own?

I don't have to answer to a whole level of management: I'm only responsible to my clients, that's the primary advantage. The disadvantage is that you've got to get all the information yourself, which is a pain in the neck and very time consuming. I've done both, and there are advantages and disadvantages to each. Right now, I like doing it this way.

What are the differences between agents here and in the US?

Agents here tend to get more involved with their clients. In America, the expression is an agent 'handles' or 'represents' somebody. Here an agent looks after a client. It's more than semantics: agents here deliver a more personal level of involvement.

In the US they also have personal managers. They are not licensed and they do a lot of the same thing as agents (if they're any good), but they aren't supposed to make deals. Some actors (and some directors and writers as well) have both personal managers and agents. The area of personal management does not exist here except in the music industry. The British don't like paying two commissions, whereas Americans would rather pay the extra money in the hope that they are getting a better shot at success. Also there is a closer level of personal involvement with an agent here in Britain than there is in America—it's not the same, it's not as in-depth, but it is an important difference.

Do you think it is easier for a director to approach an agent in the US than it is here?

No. You have got to direct a film that's going to get interest.

The best thing is if you can direct a movie or a short (a feature is obviously best, but that's the toughest) and somebody from one of the distribution companies—whether it's an art house distribution company, one of the classics divisions or one of the studios or whatever—sees it and gets excited. They will pass the word to a couple of agents—and agents will always get excited if they are hearing that a buyer likes somebody. This is called 'demand pull' (as opposed to having to push yourself). That's the best way of getting an agent. It's the Good Housekeeping seal of approval!

What are the difficulties you face today in the current economic climate?

I don't relate it to the overall economic climate, I relate it to the state of the motion picture and television business, and if they're making movies, it doesn't matter if they are tearing down all the buildings outside, if they are making movies we'll do OK. The economy can be thriving, but if the number of movies and TV shows being made is cut back, we won't do very well. It depends on the market that we have to sell into—if that is strong and vibrant, that's what determines how well we do. Whether that is related to the overall economic climate is something else—that's something you should ask the financiers and distributors.

Is the current climate good then?

Yes, it's pretty good—it's been better, but boy oh boy has it been worse—in the late '70s, early 80s and early 90s. *The Crying Game* was a watershed movie—everyone thinks that the watershed was *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, but in my opinion, it wasn't. *Four Weddings* did much better worldwide box office than *Crying Game*, but the watershed was *Crying Game* and then *Four Weddings* consolidated what had already been started. There have been situations like that before, *Chariots of Fire*, for example, also started something of a wave of interest in British pictures. Following *Four Weddings*, the international motion picture and TV community started looking to Britain again for its movies and more importantly started looking at the talent here. Other subsequent movies built on that success, but then there was, as often happens, a swing the other way, and in the 5 or 7 years following, a lot of movies got made that maybe shouldn't have been made. I think that about 2 years ago or so, people started waking up and realising that there were British movies that had been made that were sitting on the shelf, without theatrical distribution deals, in the States or even here in the UK, and so things started falling away again.

The various government initiatives and tax incentives have helped to keep the fall from being as precipitous as it has been in the past, when we had oversupply, overproduction etc., but still there has been a recession of sorts since that peak. That's probably where we are right now. So it ain't so bad, but it's been better.

The production numbers for this year have been pretty good, so whether it's going to go south or not, I don't know—that's going to depend on the movies that are being made now and how well they do. When a movie comes out and people go see it, that's great, but that's not going to happen to every movie, we all know that—but if it happens to enough movies to keep the pot bubbling, then we'll be fine.

Every once in a while having a 'big British picture' sure helps. I'm all in favour of a *Chariots of Fire*, *Notting Hill*, *Bridget Jones's Diary* or a *Billy Elliot*. That's terrific. I mean, thank god Working Title's around. The people over at Working Title have a lot of ability and having a working relationship with Richard Curtis sure helps too. But the other non-Working Title films that have come out and done business in the States, in the UK and other countries of the world are also very important. The more *Sexy Beasts*, *Full Montys* and *Billy Elliots* there are, the better off we all are. Those are the kind of films that keep the British film industry in business.

Why have you chosen to be an agent?

I like it, I like doing what I do, I enjoy it! Why do I enjoy it? I don't know! I just found something that I like doing, so I do it. Being an agent as opposed to selling shoes you mean?

Surely it must be something to do with a love for film?

Well I've always loved movies, I've loved movies since I was a kid and the process of doing what I do is enjoyable to me. Why? I don't know that's just the way I've popped out of my mother's womb I guess! I don't know.

Directing is the most glamorous job in the industry. The most prized is that of writer-director. Writer-directors are considered the most creative people in the film industry, and deservedly so. When contemplating a career as a writer-director, remember that the industry considers writing an excellent screenplay to be extremely difficult and rare. The industry also considers the job of directing a film well to be very difficult. As a writer-director, you are effectively saying to the industry that you are taking on not one of the most difficult jobs in the film industry, but two. There is nothing wrong, or overly ambitious, about striving to break in as a 'hyphenate'. If you feel that you have the energy and talent for both, then go for it. The work habits are career paths of writer-directors are very different, however. A writer-director will be able to complete a single project

Do you like helping a person to achieve their creative potential?

I find show business and the people who populate that business to be a very satisfying arena for me. The people in the business are generally bright, they are generally talented—maybe with some it's artistic talent, maybe with others it's commercial talent. I like it, and I've gotten a great deal of enjoyment out of it, and I see other people who do other things and I wonder if they are happy and satisfied doing it—some are, most aren't, but the people who are in this business all seem to enjoy it.

What's the hardest thing you have to deal with?

Clients who try to rewrite history! People who say that something happened in a different way than it happened.

The hardest thing is always dealing with other people's disappointments—nobody likes that, whether it's a director or whatever.

What advice would you give to a filmmaker who is starting out?

Make sure that's what you want to do. Then do everything you can to be able to direct something, because that's what you are going to be judged on. Whether you do it by going to film school, or conjuring up a short film, whatever, people don't hire people to direct movies that have never done anything before. You have got to be as industrious as possible and persevere and be as tenacious as possible.

The Director

Everyone wants to direct. It is easily the most interesting job in the film industry, and the most sought after. Create a unique look in your short or feature and the industry will sit up and take notice.

The film industry is noted for glamour. Directing is the most glamorous job in the industry and easily the job for which there is the most competition. Most people cannot name the writer or producer of a commercially successful film. But most can name the director of *Slumdog Millionaire*, *The King's Speech* or *Memento*.

When a director is hired, s/he is charged with the overall responsibility of the picture. The director has to take full responsibility and make the final decision on the visual and audible details of the film. The director also has to coordinate all of the elements of the script, the sets, the lighting, the make-up, the wardrobe and the actors and meld them into a whole. Taking charge of a hundred-strong army of technicians and creatives with their accompanying technologies is a daunting challenge. To succeed at a job that is full of so many variables is amazing.

Hint The director's job is to keep everyone working together and on target, hurtling towards the final destination determined by their vision.

It is no surprise that some directors embrace the French 'auteur' theory that claims the film is the creative brainchild of the director, regardless of the creative input of the actors or the rest of the creative team (including the writer!).

every 30 to 40 months. A director can easily direct a film per year, and a writer can complete a script in 3 to 4 months.

Other directors such as Stephen Frears (*My Beautiful Laundrette*, *Dirty Pretty Things*) refuse to label themselves as artists or auteurs because of the contribution of the writer. These directors consider themselves mere craftsmen.

Hiring a Director

While some movies are produced and directed by the same person, it is most common for a producer to hire a director. A good producer is one who understands the creative vision of the director.

For a producer, choosing the right director is probably the single most important creative and business decision that they will make during the production of their film. The right director will be the creative partner for the producer and also be able to understand the main elements of the financial Everest that the producer will have to climb. The relationship between the director and producer is also an important ingredient that can determine the outcome of the project. The wrong producer/director relationship will create a feeling of distrust which will permeate the entire set.

The Director's Contract

There is a full long form director's agreement on the website. In order to mitigate your costs, it is advisable to look at this contract and make notes in the margins of any additional comments or clauses you cannot agree to before you go to your legal counsel.

A director's contract needs to clearly define the following points: that the copyright of the film remains with the production company, the terms of hire (dates of employment and reimbursement) and a means for terminating the contract should either of the parties fail to deliver their services as stated. It is essential that this contract is written and signed by all parties before commencement of the production.

Four Responsibilities of the Director

1 Directing the screenplay

A director's first task is to read and reread the screenplay and look for the visual details that will help to tell the story. Then a director must decide what visual details need to be added in order to enhance the story. The director often rewrites the script to incorporate these ideas into a new draft, which the producer can use for funding. Producer Jeremy Thomas will say to potential investors that David Cronenberg has looked at the original script and has now added his comments. This is another way that producers add pedigree to the script. If you are a director but are not at that level yet, be prepared to fight hard for any changes you want to make to the script.

2 Directing the actors

Directing for the screen is different from directing for the stage. In stage directing, you work with actors to get them to peak on the first day of the run.

In screen acting, you want a performer to stay the same as they were during the audition process.

One of the screen director's many tasks is to find out what the cast can and cannot do and what they will or will not do. This is done during the audition process.

Running an audition

Actors will be nervous at an audition, and the director must make them feel comfortable. Perhaps an assistant will welcome the actors in an anteroom and take their head shots and costume measurements.

Most auditions consist of a cold reading of two or three pages. The director might read one part, the actor the other. Sometimes you will hire an actor to read a part with the one you are auditioning—especially if you have already chosen an actor for a role and want to see how they compare to another face.

To see what an actor can or cannot do is fairly straightforward: either she can drag the 200-pound gorilla through the burning embers or she can't. Similarly accents, if required for the part, are either believable or not. If the actor cannot do what is required for the part, then they are not right. If they are right for the part, then a good director will find out what they will or won't do, and find out before any contracts are offered. This is all done during the audition process.

However well or poorly an actor reads the part, compliment them on their reading, remembering that they are nervous, and ask them to do it again, but give them a direction. Have them read standing up, shouting, whispering, walking around—whatever, as long as it is different.

Actors go to acting classes and acting school. They read deep books on the art and craft of acting and, through their training, form opinions on how a certain emotion should be acted. If you are not in agreement with this, then you cannot work with that particular individual. And if they argue or challenge your direction in the audition process, you will not be able to direct them during the rigours of the shoot.

It is useful to videotape the auditions as a point of reference. Most actors are happy for you to do this, but it is polite to ask them first.

The evening of the audition is the polite time to call and tell actors whether they have been successful or not. Actors are all too accustomed to rejection and understand, rationally at least, that they do not fit the part. They will usually tell you that they enjoyed the audition and look forward to working with you on a future project. A personal call from the director demonstrates your compassion for them. If you are unwilling to call, then get an assistant to call.

Not calling an actor about a failed audition is rude; however, most film companies don't extend this simple courtesy to the actors who have given up their time for them.

On the shoot

Actors get overused and worn out. There is a knack to knowing which actor is good on the first take, which on the third. Use the slower actor for camera tests and preliminary technical rehearsals.

Many British acting performances, either on stage or on screen, have been ruined by pale imitations of American accents. Why the fad of American accents? Are there no American actors living in Europe? I am certain no British cinemagoer would accept an American actor poorly imitating Hugh Grant's or Kate Winslet's accent.

Don't move on until the master shot is perfect. In a worst-case scenario, you may have to rely on the master shot if all else fails. After the shot, the director will ask the camera and sound persons whether or not they are happy. The sound person will always say that they picked up the noise of a helicopter or something, and you will have to decide whether or not to do another take.

Notice that a 6:1 ratio does not mean that the actors get to say their lines six times each; it means that you have just 6 minutes in order to get the shots you need to get the editor enough material to work with in post-production.

3 Directing the camera

Deciding where the camera is placed before each shot is the prerogative of the director. Sometimes a director will consult with the director of photography, sometimes not. Once the position has been chosen and agreed, the director places the actors and blocks the scene while the camera and lights are being rigged.

The DoP watches this process and decides which lens to use. By showing the director a lens, the DoP can then demonstrate the viability of the shot. Often the DoP will suggest an alternative camera position, which gives the director extra time to rehearse the actors while the camera is being moved. Actors will attend the shoot knowing their lines.

Basic shots

The film industry has terms for the different ways that a person is framed. This makes it easy for film professionals to communicate the type of shot that is expected.

i Master shot

This shot takes in all of the dialogue and any new visual conceived by the director. If the camera is moving at the same time, this is called a fluid master shot.

ii Medium shot (MS)

A shot that is framed from the waist up.

iii Close-up (CU)

A shot of just the face or head.

iv Extreme close-up (ECU)

A shot of just the mouth, or the eyes.

v Cat in the window

The cat in the window shot was named after the shots of the family pet turning its head during 1950s American sitcoms. This shot gave the editor something to cut to when there was insufficient coverage to cut a scene. Hence, cut to the cat in the window.

vi Reaction shots

Shots of other actors reacting to the dialogue or action off camera.

Hint Allow max headroom. Don't cut through the top of the head or through major joints like elbows or knees. Leave space at the top of the head except where you are in an ECU. This allows the image to breathe.

4 Directing the budget

To demonstrate the challenge of directing a low-budget feature film, let's look how we did it in the days of film: let us assume that you have a ninety-page script and a 6:1 shooting ratio, and a 1-week or 9-day shoot. That means that

we need to shoot ten pages per day. Ten pages per day is about 10 minutes of screen time. If you allow just 6 minutes per page, then your shooting ratio would be 6:1. It also means that we can ship no more than 1/9th of the film stock to the lab each day, or 5,400 feet of film stock per day.

At the end of the each day, you want to hear the script supervisor say that you shot ten pages and the camera assistant say you have shipped 5,400 feet to the lab. That means you are on time and on budget.

If the script supervisor says you have shot nine pages and the camera assistant says you have shipped 5,400 feet, you are still on budget, but behind schedule.

If the script supervisor says you have shot ten pages and you find out you have shipped 6,000 feet to the lab, then you are on schedule and over budget.

If you shoot just nine pages, and ship 6,000 feet, it would seem that you are close to schedule and budget, as you are only over by ten per cent. However, this is a fiasco, and if at the end of each day this happens, it will most likely mean that you will run out of film stock near the end of day seven. In a digital shoot, film stock is not nearly so expensive, but time is. You have to keep on top of the shooting schedule as a producer, or the budget will run away from you and you won't finish your film.

When I worked as a scenic artist, we dreaded day three of the shoot, as it was usually the day that the director was fired. Actually, directors are never fired, they leave due to creative differences. And that usually means that they did not understand how to direct the budget.

On the third day of the shoot, a suit would come to the set. People in the industry dress according to their jobs. Everyone on set dresses creative-sporting-casual as if to suggest when they woke up in the morning they dressed not knowing if they were going to play polo or go to the set. Anyone in the film industry who deals with money dresses in a suit. And when the suits came to the set, we feared negative suit burn, referring to the damage the suits would do to the negative.

As soon as the suit would find out how many pages they were behind, they would rip out the next two, three or four pages from the shooting schedule, and presto! We would be back on schedule.

If you find out you are behind budget on a short, low-budget shoot, you must make some decisions immediately. It doesn't really matter which decision you make, just make one of them.

The options open to you are:

1. Abandon the shoot, return all the equipment and film stock, suffer the loss of a few thousand and regroup and come back in a few months' time when you are better prepared.
2. Offer the director and cameraperson a 2:1 shooting ratio until they have caught up.
3. Find some more money and realize you are going to need to pay for more time and more equipment hire.
4. Fire the director and direct the picture yourself. At least you will understand the importance of shooting ratio.

Remember that we are using the assumption that 1 page = 1 minute = 90 feet of 35mm film.

It is no good talking to the director and cameraperson about shooting ratios and schedules, because whatever you say they will just agree with you, and continue on their way. In the low-budget world, your budget is your film stock. In the world of digital filmmaking it is your time, your schedule, the pages per day that defines your budget.

Shooting a Page

Let us suppose that we are shooting a page of a script.

On this page of script, a wannabe filmmaker sneaks into a bookshop and finds a how-to book on the shelf. A clerk catches him and says that he is allowed a single minute to look at the book. The filmmaker is desperately flipping through it because he is about to meet a film investor, and they have been warned that the first question this particular investor always asks is: 'What is your shooting ratio?' And this filmmaker has never bothered to find out. A bookstore clerk rounds the corner, sees our hero frantically flipping through the book and warns the potential customer that they must pay for the book if they want to look at it. Our hero replies that he has no money and pleads with the clerk to let him continue. The clerk agrees, but the fire alarm goes off.

At a 6:1 shooting ratio on 35mm we would have 540 feet of film to shoot this page. On digital we have 6 minutes of camera time. Remember we have to shoot ten pages every day.

Directing the script

Which visual element, not in the script, if added, will enhance the script? What if we add a ticking clock? After all, the script says: 'You have one minute to look at the book.' Perhaps as a director, you would like to cut to the reader, cut to the clerk, cut to the reader's eyes, cut to the ticking clock, cut to the clerk's eyes and so on in order to add drama and tension to the scene. For that you need a big ticking clock with a large second hand. At this point you summon the art director and hope there are still a few pennies in the production budget that will allow for a large clock with the right 'look'.

Directing the camera

Again you have to select the shots: master, medium and close-up. You might want to storyboard the scene or simply list a series of shots and angles, called a shot list.

Directing the budget

We have 540 feet or 6 minutes of camera time to shoot this scene. Shooting ten pages per day might mean that we have just 1 hour to shoot this page. All the professionals say: capture the master shot, and then move in for coverage. The master shot is when you place the camera in a position that is visually interesting and which captures all the dialogue, and the extra visual element—in this case—the ticking clock. Call action, and after 1 minute the scene is filmed. We have now used 90 feet of film stock, leaving 450 feet.

Hint If you have to redo the master shot, do it from another angle, which means you might be able to use some of the usable segments from the first take, intercut with the second take.

Then we need to do the medium shot. We need some of the clerk saying his lines, some of the filmmaker saying his lines and some of each actor reacting to the other's lines. I could easily argue that 2 minutes would be enough to get these shots. This leaves a balance of 270 feet, or 3 minutes.

Close-ups

Before we start doing close-ups, what about the clock? Shouldn't we take some shots of that, because we will need it to cross-cut with the actors during the edit? And how much should we take? The first and the last ten seconds? What about cueing and starting and stopping the camera? It might just be easier to film the entire clock for 60 seconds and reduce the risk.

Which leaves 180 feet. So let's get back to the close-ups. You will probably be moving the camera really tight on the actors' heads. It is considered OK to gently touch the actors' shoulders and head to show them where the frame is. Remember that the depth of field is now getting very shallow, and if their heads move towards the camera, or away, they will fall out of focus. You will also find that when the face is close, and with focus so critical, it is very easy to ruin take after take due to the technical issues of focus and framing.

Before you know it, the director is asking for some more film stock, is pleading with you to let them have another couple of takes—pushing you to 7:1 or 8:1.

How do you answer a director in this situation? Remember that in the film business they never actually use the word 'no'.

You answer by saying: 'Thank you for sharing that with me. We will come back to this shot at the end of the day if we have the time.' And maybe you will. Most likely you won't.

Qualities of Successful Directors

1 Great visualisation

Successful directors absorb the script with such intensity that they are able to visualise the entire film in great detail—down to the texture of the fabric on the supporting actors' costume and the nuances of an actor's speech.

2 Great eye for detail

A great director is notoriously difficult to please. They will not approve any prop, set, costume or camera movement unless it is absolutely perfect—or as perfect as it can be in the time permitted for the shot.

3 Great organisational skills

Orson Welles said: 'A poet needs a pen, a painter needs a brush, but a filmmaker needs an army.' The director is the general and has to keep everyone in the army focused all the time.

4 Great communicator

Great directors are able to communicate their vision to each of the cast and crew on the set and to the entire post-production and marketing team. A director may not win each creative battle but is wise enough to know which battles are worth pursuing.

5 Very pragmatic

There are two schools of thought as to how a director should act. One is that of total dictator, where no argument or contradiction is possible or allowed. Any dissent means an instant pink slip from the first assistant director. The other is that each decision should be reached with the consensus of the other creative people on the team: DoP, production designer, editor and actors.

Either extreme has its merits and pitfalls. The truth is that a great director, whether s/he is leaning towards ruthlessness or towards compromise, knows what has to be done in order to get the film completed.

6 Talent

In the low-budget realm, as a director you are essentially turning a stage play into cinema. Remember that what you are most definitely not doing is filming a stage play. Films of stage plays are boring. A director transforms a stage play into cinema.

Consider one of the most dramatic debut features, *Reservoir Dogs*. Would that not make an excellent stage play?

If a director has talent, if a director has the eye and ability to turn a stage play into cinema, Hollywood spots this and calls it talent. They then offer sinful amounts of money, and I think directors deserve this monstrous payout.

Nine Routes to Becoming a Director

There are nine routes to consider when launching your career as a director. Before you decide which route to take, research the careers of those directors whose work you admire and see if you can see which route they followed.

Remember, that there is no such thing as the route—only a route that is good for you, one that allows you to maximise your abilities and talent.

1 Studio or guild route

After securing the necessary minimum days of on-the-job training, join the Director's Guild with a signatory production company and work your way up the ladder. Some companies allow you to shadow a director, which gives you valuable training.

2 The independent route

Learn how to identify or create a low-budget, ninety-page script which you feel has something controversial to say. Scrape together some money and execute a 4:1 or 6:1 ratio shoot with high production values. Hire a sales agent and sell the film at AFM, Cannes, EFM or Raindance, and make a profit for your investors. Repeat this process until you are discovered or are considered a worthy risk for investors.

See Woody Allen, Steven Soderbergh or Quentin Tarantino.

3 Screenplay option route

Write or purchase a script/story and sell it, releasing the screen rights only when you are hired as director. This technique is called holding your script hostage. This happened with *Return from Alcatraz*.

4 Student or festival route

Make a short film or ultra low-budget feature and enter festivals, demonstrating your talent, gaining exposure to future clients and agents on the lookout for emerging talent.

Hire a publicist to promote yourself, even if it is at the expense of your film. You are aiming to achieve notoriety or celebrity status.

See *Buffalo 66*, *Trees Lounge*, *The Blair Witch Project*.

5 Agency packaging route

After associating with celebrity actors or writers from a common agency, convince the agency to represent you as part of a package that they sell directly to production companies with you attached as director. The agency will usually attach name stars to your project as well.

See *Cop Land*.

6 Establish yourself in commercials

By offering to direct test commercials or pop promos for unknown bands, demonstrate your talent and original ideas, and convince a producer to hire you to direct. This is what Ridley Scott and Tony Kaye did.

7 Become a master of the short form

Write and/or direct short films which demonstrate your talent. Enter festivals and competitions. When you have gained confidence, select several of your short films and approach either a production company (route 1 above) or talent (route 5 above) and convince them to let you direct a feature. This was the tactic used by Shane Meadows.

8 Start as an assistant editor

This has been the classic route to directing used by many directors from the 40s through to the 70s. Offer your services for free as an assistant editor: log shots and sync sound until you are promoted to editor. When you have cut several films and impressed with your knowledge of shots, get hired to direct a feature. David Lean, Francis Ford Coppola, Martin Scorsese all went by this route.

9 Become a successful stage director

Most stage directors do not realise how well equipped they are to direct film. Blocking, timing, storytelling and working with actors are all essential directing skills that many film directors lack. Why not start a theatre group with a few close friends (like Steppenwolf in Chicago or Second City in Toronto) and build a reputation for exciting stage shows? Invite reviewers and agents, and wait to be discovered by a producer, or turn a stage show into a movie yourself. This is what Sam Mendes, Stephen Daldry and Andrew Shea all did.

In Conversation with Michael Radford

What do you look for in an actor that you're trying to cast?

First they have to be able to act. It's very difficult to tell from an audition because some actors do good auditions and some do not. So you either have

Filmmaker Michael Radford is best known for directing the internationally praised and Oscar-nominated *Il Postino* (1994). After a 4-year break he bounced back with *B. Monkey* (1998), a romantic crime drama starring Asia Argento, Jared Harris and Rupert Everett, which he followed up in 2000 with *Dancing at the Blue Iguana*, starring Daryl Hannah.

to take it on trust that they can act or you have to agree that if they can't you're going to have to teach them and therefore you'll have to have the time to do it. Some actors you take on knowing that they can't act and then you have to accept that those people have something that you need but don't have a great range. Look, for instance, the girl that played in *Il Postino*, Maria Grazia Cucinotta, she was really not an actress, as such. She called herself an actress but she hadn't done any notable acting. You check her out and her smile lights up the screen and you use that very sparingly through the film at the right moment. When you're directing films you have so many other tools at your disposal that you don't actually have to get the perfect performance out of them—you can fiddle with it later on.

It really depends what kind of role it is as well. Every actor is different. There are actors who have incredible technique like Joss Ackland or Tom Wilkinson. You recognise them when you see them. You know that they have such skill at their disposal that there is very little you have to teach them or ask them to do. They understand the process of acting.

Then there are people who are movie actors who have a wonderful look about them and have loads of experience and they're the kind of people you get to play to their strengths, which is often the fact that they can, by some kind of wonderful mystery, give insight into an alternative life, and that, in essence, is the most important part of cinema. When you look into an actor's eyes and you actually see something more going on even when they're not acting. That's what you look for.

I try to cast actors who 'look the part', because you have to start somewhere but if I find someone I like I tend to read just the role to fit them.

Do you prefer working with actors that have experience or not?

I like working with all actors. I was asked to do a course on acting for thirteen directors. I decided to teach the directors how to act in 5 days so that they understood what it's like to be an actor and it's amazing what we achieved. It depends how much time you have. If you have no time for rehearsal then you need professional actors because newcomers don't know how to approach the whole process. If you've got the time, you can work through the process of acting with newcomers. Take *City of God* as an example, which is done with kids, adults and people from the favelas and shantytowns of Rio de Janeiro. The director went there for 6 months, set up an acting school and taught everybody how to act. Once he had taught them the process, it's a fantastic opportunity. People who are real civilians and not actors bring a kind of freshness to it that is very difficult to achieve when you have professional actors and they don't have the range you need.

On my last picture, *Dancing at the Blue Iguana*, I had about 5 months of rehearsal, and when you have professional actors and so much time for improvisational rehearsal you get to a far more profound level than you will ever get when you just go in and do the text. It depends on what kind of film is being made.

Time specific—recut I'm about to make a film of *The Merchant of Venice*. I was thinking of going to a small Iranian village and doing it there. That would entail a considerable amount of very rewarding work. That's one kind of movie. Actually I'm doing it with Al Pacino as Shylock, which is another

kind of movie. I'll get the chance to work with a great actor and to explore something in a very classical but profound way. Some people don't like to work with big movie stars—it can be a pain in the ass if there is a lot of ego flying around. As the director you want to feel as if you're in charge and if you feel there is some actor in charge then it's tough.

So does it bother you if an actor comes up to you and tells you how they think a scene should be done?

It bothers me if they tell me how they think a scene should be shot. I think actors should know their craft and if they feel a scene should be done in a particular way they should articulate that. However, one reason that you have a director is because an actor is not always the best judge of the whole. He's following his path and his particular character and, just like we all in our lives try to make ourselves the most important person in the universe, similarly the actor takes his character and makes him the most important person in his universe—in the movie. But that may not be what the movie requires and you have to be able to say no.

I remember when I was making a film called *White Mischief*, I made the mistake of saying to the actors 'Look the dialogue is not necessarily Shakespeare so if any of you feel that it needs altering then go ahead.' The next day, every single one of them had written a new scene for themselves. One of the girls brought me her work and I asked 'Why have you written this extra scene?' I knew she wanted an extra scene but what she said to me was 'Well my character feels this and feels that. This is a scene in which she expresses it, and I don't think that there's one in the screenplay.' I said 'How do you know she feels those things?' She said 'Well, from reading the screenplay.' I said 'Exactly'.

What do you do if an actor is having a difficult time getting through a scene?

You have to look very carefully at what you've done. The first thing that crosses through your mind is whether you've hired the right person. Then you'd have to start all over again. That's happened to me on numerous occasions. When it's a small role I tend to take the quickest route and bring in a new actor. With the bigger roles obviously that's difficult but it has happened to me when I seriously consider, after a week of shooting, restarting the film with a new actor.

If it's a particular scene you have to look at why. You have to ask 'Is it because the circumstances are not right?' 'Is it because we are approaching this scene wrongly?' 'Is it because the actor doesn't understand the scene?' If all those things were true then it's down to me. If an actor is having trouble with the scene not because he can't act but because he's incapable of doing what you asked him to do, then you're in deep shit. But if the actor is sincerely trying to get somewhere then you have to figure out what you have to do to make it work.

I once had a conversation with Denzel Washington about this and we called it the tingle. You get a tingle when you feel the scene come alive. What I try to do is look at all the things in the scene that can make the scene come alive for the actors. Just the choreography of the scene if necessary. But you have to remember not to obsess about things; usually scenes go a bit awry at

the beginning of the shoot, before the actors get totally into their characters. You also have to make sure you're not obsessing too much. You don't want to become too much of a perfectionist. Remember that you can cut around the problems in the scene. A director has to be aware of losing perspective himself—you could be looking at this thing and thinking the actor isn't getting it but actually they got it ten takes before and you just didn't recognise it. That's what usually happens. Things are never quite as bad as you thought and if they are you can always loop it in the studio.

I was told that one of essentials for being a good director is being able to act yourself. Do you think that's true?

I think you have to know what to feels like to be an actor. One of the ways to do that is to attend a workshop where you actually have to be one. When you play a character and have it judged, you instantly understand what it feels like. You understand how exposed an actor is. I think the secret to all directing is to strip away all the layers of self-consciousness. Everybody walks onto a film set aware that there are one hundred and fifty people standing about ready to judge you right at that moment—never mind the public. No one is impervious to that. So, what you have to do is just get them feeling really confident about who and what they are. I think you can only do that if you recognise that actors are not like cameras and all the other technical stuff you have in the movies—they're actually living and breathing beings. Often the battles that take place between actors and directors are about the actor fighting to be allowed to act in the face of a director who is not interested in what a performance can bring to their vision. The director needs to prevent the actor from imagining that everything relies on him and helping them to trust all the things that don't rely on him.

I read about a director who said that actors are the most important part of the movie because an audience can forgive any technical mistakes but if the actor isn't on point with his performance then . . .

I would go further than that and say the audience will forgive even bad acting if they're in love with the story. I mean, look at the *Harry Potter* movies—nobody gives a shit what the acting is like—it is terrible, universally terrible—but nobody gives a damn because everybody knows the story and everybody wants to go and see it.

I think great acting is one of those things that you don't miss if it's good enough, if it's serviceable, but when it's great, you really do notice it. One thing I don't like is when you get the sense that the actor has one eye on an Oscar™ nomination and they're giving an Oscar™-style performance. Which is why I think a lot of people like to watch non-Hollywood movies—they can be very self-regarding. You don't get that kind of acting where the performers have one eye on themselves all the time anywhere other than Hollywood.

What are some of the techniques you use to put actors at ease?

My methods have changed over the years. You have to be confident with yourself. You have to look like you know what you're doing first of all—that's the most important thing. The way you talk to actors is important—you need a confident tone of voice. You must look like you know what you're doing even though you don't sometimes. If actors can trust you, can trust that you actually understand what they are trying to get at and where they're coming from and

all the rest of it, then that's immensely useful. You have to be endlessly patient. There is no point in exploding and making the set a miserable place.

There really is no point in yelling at actors. I think there are some people who think that gets the best results. I know there are some people who think that the more miserable a film set is the more likely you are to get good results, but I don't believe that. I believe that if people are happy and content they work well. We all get well paid in this business. You want people to put in the maximum. I won't tolerate anybody who doesn't hit that level. The other way you put people at their ease is by giving the actor a feeling of real importance on the set. Often the technicians will take over. They will barge in and do the lighting as though the actors can just come on and get on with it. What I make sure is that the actors are not interfered with. During rehearsal I send everybody out.

I don't have everybody standing around watching because it doesn't allow you to work and actually direct the actors. I demand that they have all their stuff ready and they don't come in with all their stuff breaking the actors' concentration. Often the technicians won't be aware of that, but on my sets, they bloody well will be, because I think it's really important that the actors are given the space in which to work. It's not all about the lighting and camera work. The other thing is that if you do have a bit of rehearsal time it makes everybody feel a little bit better about things.

What was the most important thing you think you had to learn to become a director?

Choreography. You have to learn to choreograph scenes. The more films you do the better you get at it.

In Conversation with Bernard Rose

What do you look for in an actor?

I think the first mistake people make—and perhaps this happens in England more than anywhere else—is the idea that the actor has received some special information or some kind of training that is somehow going to make a difference when you're actually doing a movie and, although obviously actors need to be trained to do theatre, they are just people. There isn't some kind of great and mystical difference between someone who is an actor and someone who is just an interesting person. So really what I'm looking for is someone who is an interesting person and who can hold your attention and if they don't hold your attention in real life then they're never going to do it on the screen. And that can be for a whole number of reasons and depends on what you want to use them for. The whole thing isn't mystical or mysterious really it's just you want to get X so you need Y.

So does it matter to you if the actor is experienced or not?

It depends on what you're doing with them. If you need somebody to do like a Shakespeare or some great monologue, you're better off not just picking someone off the street, but if you want someone to look like someone off the street then they are probably better at it than an actor who has been around.

English director Bernard Rose started out as a music video director, completing his first feature film *Paperhouse* in 1988. He directed the cult classic *Ivan's XTC* in 2000.

So it just depends on what you want to do. I think each situation is different. There are times when an experienced actor will give you ten times more than a nonactor, but conversely there are times when an experienced actor will not be the right choice.

So how important is rehearsal?

I think, again, it depends on what you're doing. If it's something that needs rehearsal—like a bomb sequence—then you'd better rehearse it. If it's a stunt or something dangerous or something that requires physical precision then I think that rehearsal is absolutely essential but for everything else it's better not to rehearse at all. I don't even like to block action. I just like to say, 'I'll follow you, you do what you want.'

Does it bother you if an actor comes to you and tells you how they think a scene should be done?

Immensely it bothers me. I would say to them 'I'm not interested in what you've got to say. Just show me and I'll shoot it. If it's any good we'll use it, if not we'll do it again. But let's see it in action and let's see if it works.' From that point of view I always encourage actors to come to work in full make-up and costume because one of the things that I think is really bizarre about filmmaking is that unlike theatre, ballet, opera, clowning or all the traditional forms of dramatic art where putting on the face and putting on the make-up is an essential part of an actor's preparation, film actors don't do their own make-up. If they can't control how they look what are they really doing? I think that they have to make themselves up like they would in the theatre. The process of making themselves up and choosing their clothes and deciding how they're going to look—that becomes their real rehearsal, that's their real preparation. They're really making all the key decisions about how they're going to play the part and without it being a rather boring and meaningless and dry discussion. That's physical and real.

What do you do when you have an actor who is having a difficult time getting through a scene?

Either you stop and try something different or a different approach to the scene or a different version of the scene or you fire the actor. One of a few things has gone wrong if an actor is not giving a very good performance; reshoot the scene with somebody else if the actor is bad, redo the scene if the scene is bad or sometimes it could be the location that's bad or sometimes it can be something really stupid like the chairs are in the wrong place. I don't block people, but the way you arrange the furniture in the room is essentially telling the actors where to sit. But if someone is having a difficult time the worst thing you can do is ask them to repeat it in the same setup because all you'll do is make them more aware of their own failure. You have to change something so that it's different; it could be something very simple, but if you don't change something physical about either the set, the lines or the lighting or do it on a different day or change the actor, then doing it over and over will grind everyone down and they will get very unhappy and not work to their maximum ability.

A lot of times in movies you get scenes of the director jumping up and down, screaming at the actors. That's not true is it?

No, not unless they want to get fired. People do get frayed when they're working on a film but if that was your MO for doing a whole picture, then unless you were paying for it, people wouldn't put up with it. It doesn't mean that you don't sometimes have to be very definite and keep things moving on to get what you want.

One of the things that I like about shooting with DV is the speed that you can work at. I think one of the greatest enemies or problems of any set is when the cameraman takes too long to turn the camera around and to change the lighting and everybody's energy goes.

What was the most important thing you had to learn?

How to use a camera. I don't want to insult the whole profession of directors of photography, but the DoP is basically a filmmaker who decided to stand up and commit to content, but they're just going to be hired for their filmmaking ability. Essentially a director who doesn't know anything about a camera is somebody who is placing their entire film in the hands of the DoP so your film's success depends entirely on the guy you just hired. That is an incredibly dangerous situation to put yourself in because you're not in control of your set. He might say he needs another half an hour to shoot the scene and you don't know if he's lying or if he just wants to get overtime for his buddies. You're really up shit creek without a paddle. The most important thing, now that the market has changed, is to be able to use the camera and do it yourself so that you're not relying on anyone else. I don't think in the future that the jobs will be separated in that way anymore. I think that the person directing the picture will be the person who shoots it and that will be how it works. There won't be that kind of separation of specialisms any more.

I think that is really a thing of the old technology.

Do you think that a lot of young directors seek the glamour?

I think there are a lot of people who get into the movie business because they want money or glamour but it is a terrible business to earn money in. That's not a good idea and it's not really all that glamorous. That's why I'd say, that if you want to be a director, you should grab a camera and shoot as much as you can and realise that that is the same as making a film. That is making a film. The idea that someone is a better director because they sit in a chair watching a monitor while everybody else runs around and does the work for them—that's not directing. That's being strapped in a front of a train which might be okay but you don't know who is driving the train or whether they're going to slam you into a brick wall. There are some people whose talent as director is just being the head of the crew and doing a job and that's legitimate. There's lots of filmmaking that is essentially just that but if you want to actually make films that are different or that have something to say, that have more substance, then you're going to have to do it yourself and that might very often mean doing things that are completely not glamorous and poorly paid too.

Actors

In the realm of low-budget film production, actors are the most exploited group. This is almost certainly because there is an oversupply of actors trying to break into the industry. Often, in micro and no-budget film productions, the actors are referred to as the moveable props. This is partly because they have little or no rehearsal time. They are moved around the set like pieces of furniture.

How Actors Break in

Stage

Some actors train for theatre and perform a succession of roles in increasingly high-profile productions until critics, audiences and film producers notice them. If a producer or casting agent spots them in a stage production and thinks they might suit a part, they will contact the actor through their agent and arrange for a screen test. Often an actor trained for the stage will not know the different techniques required for a camera. Sometimes an actor will look good on stage, but will not be photogenic and therefore be unsuitable for the screen. Other actors work equally well on stage and screen. Once the actor is discovered in theatre, they then become a movie actor. Rachel Weisz is an example of a stage actor who has become a screen actor.

Many British screen actors started out in theatre.

Television

Actors dreaming of becoming movie stars will typically move to LA and get a job as a waiter, and then try to hunt down work in television. Television work may not be as glamorous as movie work, but it is much more abundant and, by restaurant standards, extremely well paid.

Fortunate actors will get the odd commercial to supplement their income until they get the golden call from their agent that they have an audition for a pilot for a television show. If they succeed in getting the part, they will get Screen Actors Guild minimum payments for the show. The pilot producer has probably received funding from a TV network to produce the show, and everyone concerned with the pilot wants the show to be recommissioned thereby guaranteeing more work. The assumption is that if a pilot works, the networks will want to use the actors from the pilot in the real show.

A very small percentage of pilots actually get aired, and an even smaller percentage of the ones that are aired get commissioned. The producer will probably get a commission for a half season (thirteen shows). If that tops the ratings chart, then they might get a commission for a full season (twenty-six shows). Up until this point the actors are probably still receiving SAG minimums. But at the twenty- to thirty-episode level, actors' salaries start to balloon. At this point they might go to \$10,000 or \$20,000 per episode. As the total episode count nears a hundred, the show is considered a huge American success, and the producer can now start to sell the show to other countries. As their original commission and budget was for the USA only, any foreign sale goes directly to the producer's bottom line. Actors then have the leverage to increase their payments to huge

amounts, such as the reported \$600,000 per episode the Seinfeld stars were getting.

But the actor is still a TV star, and although they are now well established on television they are still unable to get work as a movie actor. And regardless of the amounts of money they are making in television, many TV actors have career ambitions of working in movies because of the glamour.

TV stars vs. movie stars

No matter how well known and successful a TV star is, they cannot get starring roles in movies because audiences are used to seeing them at home on television where they can watch them for free. A movie star is an actor you can only see in the cinema, and whom you are willing to leave your home, go to the movie theatre and pay money to see.

Certain actors cross from television to film. Although it took George Clooney several years, he did eventually make the switch to being a big movie star. Helen Hunt, Will Smith, Bruce Willis, Demi Moore and Johnny Depp are other examples.

Certain actors attempt to cross from television to movies and fail. David Duchovny is one example of a TV star who has had tens of millions of dollars spent on advertising him as a movie star and who failed to win audience recognition. Michael J. Fox is an example of an actor who made the transition from TV to movies but then returned to a successful career on television.

How to Treat Actors

Actors and producers are all aware that every low-budget feature has the potential to explode and propel the participants into glory. It is precisely this expectation that producers exploit.

Producers must be aware that creative people involved in the production, including directors, writers, composers, camera people and actors automatically own the copyright to their performances or creations. But the producer must own the copyright one hundred per cent if the film is to be sold. Accordingly, actors must enter into a legally binding agreement with the producer that gives the producer one hundred per cent of the copyright to their performance, even if they are not being paid.

The Actor's Contract

Contracts exist to protect both parties—the actors and the producers—in an agreement. A good contract lays out the ground rules so each party knows what is expected of them and is protected in case the other party fails to deliver.

Hint Always use a written contract with actors, no matter how informal the shoot is. This will save misunderstandings and disagreements later.

A full long form actor's agreement is on the website. In order to mitigate your costs, it is advisable to look at this contract and make notes in the margins of any additional comments or clauses you cannot agree to before you go to your legal counsel.

Basic conditions

Overleaf is an example of a basic actor's contract. Terms included are:

1. Pay for the travel and food expenses of an actor.
2. Provide public liability insurance to cover cast and crew for any accidents during the shoot.
3. Provide the actor with a copy of the finished film after post-production is complete.

Rights and payment

You must obtain the rights to distribute and exhibit the film, even if you want to put it on your website for free. As a producer, you try and get actors to agree to assign all rights in a short or no-budget feature film to you for nothing, or next to nothing when you sign the contract. Actors usually are aware that there can be little or no revenue from films like this, and are generally willing to sign agreements like this if they feel that their performance will get exposure.

Whenever you are forced to be specific about distribution rights, you may want to include the specific rights you want the actor to assign to you as 'cinema, television, home video, DVD, Internet and film festival'.

Hint It is a reasonable request that the producer is making here. Without this film, and unless you are allowed to get it as much exposure as possible, an actor may not get the chance to progress their career.

Deferred payment contracts

Sometimes you will need the services of an actor who will only agree to assign their rights in the film if you agree to a deferred payment. In this scenario, you negotiate additional payments which become payable if and when the film achieves a certain level of sales.

Equity

Equity is the British actors' union, which lobbies for actors' rights and has made agreements on minimum actors' payments with other organisations. Thatcher's reign in the UK reduced the power of the trade unions, including that of Equity. Presently, not every actor is a member of Equity, nor do actors need Equity cards to work on film and television. Equity does not blacklist members or companies who pay below Equity rates. Equity has negotiated agreements with the organisations behind the film and TV industry to ensure a minimum wage for their members.

These rates are obligatory in some circumstances and discretionary in others. There is a certain unwritten standard that you should pay Equity minimum rates, and if you intend to pay less, you may have to vigorously defend your position. If you are partly funded by public money, you will have to pay Equity minimum rates.

Clause 3 will allow you to distribute the film in any and every way you can.

For the latest details on Equity day rates visit their website: www.equity.org.uk.

BASIC ACTOR'S CONTRACT

Actor's Name

Producer / Production Company

Actor's or Agent's Address

Production Company Address

Date [dd/mm/yyyy]

Dear [Actor],

This letter confirms our agreement that you will take the part of [character name] in the film [title of the film] (henceforth referred to as the 'Film'). I am letting you know in advance that the title of the film may change, but if it does, I will let you know by sending a letter to this address, making clear that the name change will not affect our agreement.

I am writing to everyone taking part in this production to make clear to everyone, including you, the basis upon which the Film is being made. If anything is unclear, or if you would like further discussion, please contact me.

Once you have read the entire letter, and agree to it, please sign both copies, retain a copy for your records and return a copy to me.

1. I, [name of actor] will make myself available for the shoot dates of [start date] to [wrap date].
2. I, [name of actor] will attend the following locations for the shoot: [list them].
3. I, [name of actor] agree to give over any rights I may have in the finished Film to [name of production company or producer].
4. I, [name of actor] will be paid a fee of [amount] per day for my performance in this Film. The fee is payable within [number] days after the performance was given.
5. [The production company or producer] will ensure that [name of actor]'s working days are not longer than ten hours.
6. [The production company or producer] will use our best efforts to ensure [name of actor]'s health, safety and welfare during the shoot.
7. [The production company or producer] will have public liability insurance to cover [name of actor] during the shoot.
8. [The production company or producer] will provide [name of actor] with food and refreshments throughout the shoot.
9. [The production company or producer] will either provide transport or pay travel expenses to and from the location of the shoot. These expenses will be agreed between us in advance.
10. [The production company or producer] will provide [name of actor] with a VHS of the finished Film within three months of the completion of all post-production. Upon receipt [name of actor] agrees in advance to sign a piracy waiver.
11. Should [name of actor] require access to the rushes for the purposes of [name of actor]'s showreel, we will make them available at cost price.

Signed by [name of actor]

Signed by [the producer or on behalf of the production company]

figure 13.1
Basic actor's agreement

To register your production with PACT, you need to be a limited company (see Chapter 11) and to agree to pay the PACT levy. For more information see the PACT website: www.pact.co.uk

'Use fees' are the rights to sell or exhibit the finished film in a certain media/territory. To exploit the film in any market and by any media the producer must make the appropriate use fee payments. The payment is calculated as an extra percentage of the total basic salary: if it's fifty per cent extra on a salary of £100, the actor will be paid £150.

figure 13.2
Option A: Net profit share

PACT

PACT is the producers' association that represents most TV and film producers in the UK. Most TV stations in the UK have signed the PACT agreement that includes minimum payments to actors. If your production is registered with PACT, then you must use their simpler minimum payment system. If not, then Equity's standard should be adhered to. PACT minimum payments are £100 per day or £400 per week.

Film Rates

Equity had a bitter dispute with PACT which was resolved in 2002 after nearly 2 years of wrangling. The basic minimum rate was set as above, and the agreement reached allows for two methods of payment of actors for use, net profit share and royalty payments. You, as producer, must decide which of the options to use at the time of engaging the actors and must apply the same option to all performers in the film, and you can't change your mind afterwards. Producers can no longer buy out all rights in all media in perpetuity; artists will now share the success of a film either through royalties or net participation.

Option B relates more to the large studio pictures that come to be filmed in the UK. This is mandatory for productions with budgets of over £20 million. This option relates to royalty payments.

Option A is the most relevant for independent producers. In addition to day rates that start as low as £37.50 for school productions, performers are entitled to two per cent of the net profit of the film. There is also a sliding scale for prepurchase of other territories. There are also rules about the minimum 'use fees' that you must pay. You must prepurchase a theatric use at thirty seven and a half per cent of the total fee. If your budget is under £1 million, then you must prepurchase other uses up to a minimum total of fifty per cent. If your budget is over £1 million, then you must prepurchase uses to a minimum of seventy five per cent. Other uses are in the chart below.

Market / Medium and Territory	Use Fee %
Theatric North America and non-theatric worldwide	37.5%
Theatric world excluding North America and non-theatric worldwide	37.5%
Videogram	90%
UK premium pay, pay per view and on demand TV	25%
UK network terrestrial TV	20%
UK secondary TV	5%
USA major network TV	25%
USA non-major network TV	10%
USA pay TV	20%
World TV excluding UK and USA	10%

Finding Actors

Equity

If you believe that an Equity card makes a better actor and just want to reach Equity members then visit their website, www.equity.org.uk.

Fringe and local theatre performances

Tuned in producers and directors comb the fringe theatre productions looking for new talent. The actors in these productions are very approachable and open to deals. Many have yet to find an agent, removing another layer in the negotiation process.

Drama schools

The National Council for Drama Training has a good website which lists all the drama schools in the UK. A canny producer will watch drama school productions, with an eye to spotting the next big performing talent.

Spotlight Casting

Spotlight Casting Live offers a premium service which costs £30 plus VAT for a 3-month subscription to their database. Once you have access to the database, you will be able to browse over 25,000 actors. The entries are divided into handy groups like age, hair colour etc. to help keep auditions as efficient as possible for you and the actors. Go to www.spotlight.com.

Hint When you approach an actor or their agent, you need to have a sheet of paper with the following:

The name and full contact details of the production company
Summary information about the film—length, shooting format, shooting dates, funded or unfunded
Appropriate information about the roles available giving age range and meaningful physical and character detail
The location of the shoot
Details of the payment on offer

Working with children

If you are filming for 3 days or fewer, no licence is needed.

In the UK, it is a criminal offence for a parent or guardian to allow a child to take part in a publicly shown film or TV programme without a licence, or for any person (i.e. you) to encourage or employ a child to do so. All children under the age of sixteen need a licence to perform if you ever intend to show your film to a paying audience, on TV or sell videos/DVDs. This also pertains to family members, preventing you from using your own baby in a film unless you obtain a licence.

A licence is obtained from the local authority where the child lives. The application is made by the producer and countersigned by the parents and/or guardian.

It states the length of the engagement and includes two photos of the child and a copy of their performance contract. If the child is under fourteen a licence will only be granted if the role can only be performed by a young person of that age.

The authority will only grant a licence if they believe the child to be healthy and fit, that the filming is not dangerous, that their education will not suffer and that they will be treated with care.

In addition to the licence, there are strict regulations relating to working hours and rest periods. A young person over thirteen cannot work more than 79 days per year; under fourteen they cannot work more than 39.

It is also an offence to allow or cause a child to go abroad for the purpose of 'singing, playing, performing, or being exhibited, for profit' without a police magistrate's licence.

Hiring a Casting Director

Landing the right actor for your film is usually the key to securing finance. In order to get the right actors for your financiers, hiring the right casting director becomes another of the essential ingredients to the film package.

Once the right actor has agreed to be in the film, there begins a delicate balancing act between the actor's demands, the needs of the producer to satisfy the financiers and the director's creative demands.

A good casting director juggles these variables and delivers the actor to the set on time, drug free and ready for work. This will cost you a weekly fee of £1,000 to £3,000 per week. Most film projects will require their services for at least 6 weeks.

Summary

1. Choose the best above the line people you can.
2. Offering an opening title credit is a huge inducement for new talent.
3. Deferrals can be helpful but can also cause problems. Enough talk. Let's get into action and sell the movie.

In Conversation with Ewan McGregor

What makes you choose to take on lots of independent films when you could be making commercially big films?

Well, I've only ever really seen them as, certainly the ones I've chosen to do, I've only ever seen them as stories, and I'm in the business of telling stories, so whether it's a huge-budget Hollywood picture or whether it's a low-budget British picture makes no difference to me. What's important is, is it a good story and do I want to be part of telling that story? Really that's it. I've always seen it that way. I would never want to narrow my horizons because the great thing about being an actor is you can get an opportunity to play all kinds of people in all different kinds of movies. And to kind of narrow that down would be foolish as far as I'm concerned. Initially, I suppose I was almost the other way around. I didn't want to be involved in Hollywood pictures. But I've learned that that's stupid too, because, you know they make a lot of pictures in Hollywood, why

Since he burst onto the film scene in *Lipstick on Your Collar* and *Trainspotting*, Ewan has starred in Baz Luhrmann's Oscar and BAFTA winning *Moulin Rouge!*, *Big Fish* and *The Impossible* to name but a few of the broad range of roles Ewan takes on. He is recognised as one of the finest British actors in the world and has been described both by *Vanity Fair* and *Time Out* as 'the saviour of the British film industry'.

would you not want to be involved in them, if they do have stories to tell? Yeah, the more the merrier, really. It shouldn't be, or I don't think it should be a reason for doing a picture anyway, what size the budget is. It's irrelevant to me.

Does what you're looking for in a script differ now from when you were starting out?

No, no, no. It really doesn't. And in fact I'm in the best place that you can be as an actor. I've got choice, and that's all you can ever hope for as an actor, is to have choice in your work. So I'm really fortunate. So now more than ever I'm in a position where I can do whatever I want really, independent or studio or whatever.

And I still don't get offered all the studio stuff, you know, I'm not saying that I do, but some of it I do.

What's the process that a script would go through to get to you? Does somebody else read it first? Does it hit a lot of hands before it gets to you?

In my case, yeah, I have an agent in Los Angeles and I have an agent here in London and they get sent all the scripts. Some people hand them to me at festivals and things like that and I'm terrible at reading them. I mean, I'm just lazy. Also I get kind of busy—all next year is booked up. I'm making three films almost back to back next year, so the scripts that are on for next year, I can't do them anyway. So there's really no point in me reading stuff for the moment, and I'm not. I suppose the normal process would be, my agent would be sent the script with a breakdown of who's steering it and who's involved in it and whatever. My agent here in London knows me inside out. She's known me since I was nineteen, and she's been my agent since then and she knows exactly what I'm about. You work closely with your agent, so she knows what I would be interested in and what I would not, and sends me the cream of the scripts that she gets given, because there are a lot of them, because there are a lot of people trying to make films, which is great. But I just can't read all the scripts I'm sent because I just haven't got enough time. She also doesn't make any decisions based on budget, because she knows I'm not interested in that.

The film I made in Scotland, *Young Adam*, was very low budget, and also we lost a lot of the budget so it didn't have the money, and I was already attached to it. And I went out to look for the money myself, in America and here and went talking to people to try to regain the budget that we lost. *Young Adam* came in with a bunch of other scripts, and she sent it because it was a Scottish piece and also it was a terribly well-written script. It was the first I read of that bunch and that was it. Just because it was a great story.

Once the script gets to you, what do you look for?

First and foremost is the story. I don't have any system of choosing scripts. I don't have a check list—does it have this, this and this? And I'm not particularly knowledgeable about them. I'm very easily pleased. I'm very easily pleased when I watch movies and also when I read them. And I can read a script and other people go, 'Well you know it needs a lot of work,' and I would be quite happy to go shoot it right there and then. I'm glad those people are around. They've obviously got a higher standard of script reading ability, or whatever,

than myself. But it's really just like if you're reading a novel and you don't want it to end. I just look for that. If I feel that way reading scripts and I'm really enjoying it; if I'm looking forward to seeing what's happening to the character next—I'll know within about ten or fifteen pages. Sometimes a character doesn't appear then, but you're kind of engaged after that short amount of time in the script. If it's well written you can tell right from the beginning.

I think what turns me off from a script these days is that, and especially American scripts, there's a tendency at the moment for very clever writing, for the writer to make a lot of comment to the reader. I hate that because I'm sensible enough to be able to read it on my own. I don't like stage directions that are directed towards the reader. And I don't like reading stage directions for actors, because you're going to hire actors to be in your film and it's really up to them to decide whether to close their eyes at a moment or not. It's not really up to the writer. 'He closes his eyes, turns to the left and says . . . '—you think, 'How do you know?' And so I find that rather frustrating and it will put me off a script, if there's too much in writing. I was sent the script for *xXx*, and it was just fucking abysmal. I mean, I don't think I read fifteen pages of that before I gave up. But there was stuff like 'No James Bond, this movie,' and I was thinking, 'Yes it is—it's just James Bond on fucking roller skates.' And there were lots of in-business jokes which just are a waste of time. Tell the story, and tell us what happens to the characters in your film and don't be too clever about it. It's different with the best writers—a Tom Stoppard script won't have any directions in it for anybody. It'll say 'Park—Night'. And there's the dialogue, and that's kind of what it should be. It should be just that because the writer isn't the director, the writer isn't the designer, the writer certainly isn't the actor, usually, and so they should leave that to the people who know best. It's kind of juvenile. It's like control freakish, to be writing everything for everybody. You don't need that. There should be room for imagination.

When a script comes to your agent, does she take into consideration who's sending the script?

Yeah, it's like, say Mark Herman had written and was directing another film and he sends it to me, then she'd send it to me because we've done two films already. And yeah, that'll happen; if there's any history there or if one of my friends was in it. There's a constant dialogue between an actor and an agent, and she'll very often be sent a script, and say 'I don't think it's very good, do you want to read it?' and I'll ask about it and then say no, just because of time. I can't be only making films and reading them because I've got other stuff to do, you know what I mean? But I don't think there's a risk of things slipping through the net. Very often people come up to me and say, 'We were going to send you this, but we thought your agent would never give it to you,' and that's just not the case. My agent will give it to me if it's very good, you know, if it's a very good piece of work. If it's being made for £5.50, but it's a great story. I'll get sent short films if they're good. I had a meeting with a director who was making his first film. I got sent this short script. It was ten pages long, but it was good so I met him, and then it didn't end up working out for one reason or another. I think there's a common misconception that you can't get scripts to people. Well, that may be the case with other agents, but certainly not with mine.

So as long as it's a good story, it doesn't matter to you if it's being directed by an established filmmaker or a newcomer?

Yeah, yeah if it's good. Oh yeah, absolutely, I like that. The exciting thing about being an actor is you get a chance to meet a whole bunch of other great people. A lot of my films have been with first time directors, I mean a lot of them. And continuously. With David Mackenzie [director of *Young Adam*], it was his first—he's made a digital feature and a bunch of shorts, but this was his first feature film on film. And that's exciting. It's really exciting to be working with someone who's directing for the first time—watching them suffer [laughs].

As an actor, what is the most important thing you feel the director has to do?

The most important thing for us is that they know what an actor does. That they understand—well, you can't really understand the acting process because every actor has a different process, I believe that; I don't think there's anybody that goes about it the same way—but some of the directors I've worked with whom I'd say are poor directors, it's usually down to the fact that they have no idea what you do as an actor, and they've no understanding of acting.

It's a very interesting relationship between an actor and a director. It seems to me that the best directors are the ones who have the best character. It's funny, it's just so much to do with their character. It doesn't matter if you know all the names of all the filters and all the lenses—it's irrelevant to me. And really if you've got a great DoP, he's going to be in charge of all of that anyway. I really think the biggest mistake a director can make, a new director can make, is to feel he's got to be in charge, that everything's got to be his idea. It's a huge mistake, and I've seen lots of directors do that, because it's terrifying, there's no question about it. It's terrifying to be standing on a movie set and it being your movie. It's scary. You've got time against you—everything's against you. You've got thousands of questions being fired at you, right, left and centre. But the biggest mistake is not to use the talent of the people around you. And the easiest thing, and the thing that makes the best director, is somebody who stands in the middle of this creative process and uses the talent of the people he's employed. You know, he won't know as much about how a camera works or what stock to use as the DoP, because it's the DoP's job. So he should rely on the DoP to help him out.

He should rely on the sound man to help him out and all of the actors to help him out. And to stand in the middle and kind of orchestrate it, you know, like a great conductor won't necessarily be a great clarinet player, but he'll be able to guide the clarinets. It should be like that. I have directed myself, and I think it's a terrible thing that there's a sense of failure if you ask someone else's advice, and it's not the case. It is a collaborative process, and it should be, it should be one. They should at least have an understanding of what acting's about. I get more and more frustrated. And it's funny, it's getting worse and worse on all levels, in big films and small films, the crew's frustration with actors. If you want to discuss something with the director you can see people in the crew rolling their eyes. You think, this is what it's about, this is what people come to see. They're not coming to look at your set.

I mean, I hope not, anyway. They're coming to see people, and they're coming to relate to the people on the screen. And that sometimes can take as much time to get right as the DoP took to light the set. It's very often the case that the DoP will light for 45 minutes and we'll come on and be expected to shoot a five-page scene in 5 minutes. I really believe it's all about mutual respect on a film set between actors and the crew, and the crew to the actors. I would never dream of going up to the DoP while he's lighting to have a chat. I would never do that. But in the same respect, I wouldn't want someone in the crew to come up and start rapping with me when I'm trying to get my head around a death scene or something, you know what I mean? I deserve my space around me at that moment, the same as the crew does when they're setting lamps, or whatever they're doing.

Do you ever see yourself directing yourself in a film?

I think it would be very interesting. I actually think it's quite a good place to do it from. I'd have to speak to somebody who's done it. I think Johnny Depp did it. Kevin Costner does it a lot [laughs]. I think it'd be fascinating. Certainly it comes in the editing, because you've been in the scene. I learned this when I co-produced a film called *Nora*. I was involved in the post-production of it. And I would be sent, you know because I was in Australia at this point, I was sent tapes weekly of the latest cut. And I'd know where the errors were in the timing in the edit because I'd been in the scene and I remembered the beats. I remembered exactly how long pauses should be, you know. And I was able to say, 'Hey look, there's a really nice pause there and you're nipping the end off, and that's why the scene's not working.' And they'd put it back in there and suddenly it would work. That's only because I was in the scene and I would remember how it should feel. I don't know about the logistics of being on set and shooting and directing and being in the scene yourself. I don't think it would be a problem. It might be difficult to direct the other actors because you're in the scene with them, and the take would finish and then you'd go up as an actor giving other actors notes. I don't know how that would work. I have to find out.

What is the most important thing, in your opinion, that a producer has to do?

Keep out of my fuckin' way [laughs]. Yeah. Fuck off, mainly. I don't know, I don't know very much about producing. I've worked with some great producers. I think it depends on the project really. Because sometimes the producer is there and shelters the actors from any of the concerns going around about the production. Sometimes that's a very good thing. And other times it's nice to feel that you're really involved in it and that you're an active participant in making this movie. It just depends. And I've worked with producers who are on set all the time. I've worked with those producers who you never see. There's no right or wrong, really, I don't think. I've worked with Jeremy Thomas, he produced *Young Adam* and he's got to be the best producer in the world, I think. He's got a CV of some incredible movies that he's produced. And he's still an independent film producer and Britain's finest, I'd say. He would pop in and out of set because he was working on other things at the same time as *Young Adam*. Again it's something to do with the character of the man or the

woman, you know. He's a great bloke, and it's always lovely to see him. Then there's other producers that you only ever see 10 minutes before you're due to wrap. They come on to put pressure on the director and the crew to get it done quicker. But at the same time they're putting pressure on the actor in front of the camera and it's best not to do that, really. It's terrible when you suddenly catch the producer out of the corner of your eye, and you know it's because he wants you to get on with it. I don't know, it's a difficult job. Thank god they do it because otherwise we wouldn't be making movies at all. I have very little to do with the producers of films, really. You know, they take you to dinner, but that's it.

When you were starting out, what were some of the things you had to learn about the craft of acting, and then the business side as well?

Well see, I'm still learning every time I do a film, I think. The very first time I sat in front of a camera was in *Lipstick on Your Collar*, which was the first job I did, a Dennis Potter series on the television, which was shot on single camera as a movie. I think I felt absolutely that I was ready for it, and I didn't doubt I was going to be—I was very arrogant I suppose, but I never doubted I would be good in it. Or at least I was driven to be good in it. At the same time I had absolutely no technical knowledge at all, and I'd spent 4 years training in theatre. And even through 3 years of drama school in London we did nothing—we didn't touch movie work at all, which is insane and stupid, really. British actors have the luxury of being able to do television, theatre and film all at the same time, so we should be trained as such. I had no technical background. And just even down to things like the names of who people are: what's a best boy, who's the gaffer, you know. Hitting marks, shooting tables up and down, cheating eyelines. The technicalities of filmmaking I was completely clueless about. Had it not been for my uncle, who's an actor, who kind of took me to his flat a couple nights before I started that project—I remember he put a pair of socks down on the floor and he said, 'OK, deliver this bit of dialogue and walk towards me while you're doing it but stop when you hit the socks'—he taught me how to hit marks and it gave me a head start. One of the things I love about my job, is that it's absolutely fifty-fifty split. It's absolutely a two-sided thing in that, on the one hand it's emotional, you are emotionally exploring a character moment to moment. And at the same time, you're technically making sure that that emotional performance is ending up on film. You rely on those two things to different degrees. I mean you can't hope to emotionally hit the mark every take of every day of every shoot. It's not going to happen. So sometimes you rely more on your technique than your emotions and sometimes it's the other way around. But I enjoy that. I really do enjoy working with focus pullers and operators and making sure that everything works the best it can and making sure I give them an option that's easy to get focus marks, and working with them. I really enjoy that side of it. And tricky tracking shots—making sure you're always seen by the lens, while you're playing a part. Maybe you're upset or something in the scene while you're upset there's always part of your brain that's making sure you're still on camera. What's the point otherwise? There's no point in being really upset and crying beautifully if the camera can't see you, you know. I like that, but at the same time I've seen actors who think it's

completely the technician's side to make sure you're on film and it's got nothing to do with them. And I just don't agree. I think we're all working together to make a movie. Things like standing up slowly, or something, you know. If you're in a scene in a tight shot, sitting at a table, and you suddenly stand up really quickly, the operator hasn't got a chance of keeping you in frame. And I've often heard operators saying, 'Look, can you just stand up a bit slower?' And I've heard actors saying, 'No, I can't. I'm feeling this at this moment so I can't.' And I think, 'Well good. You stand up as quickly as you like and you won't be on film at that moment.' Because, you know, they won't be able to get you. I think it's always better to find a way to stand up slowly, you know. Find a way to work together to make it all happen.

Are there any mistakes you've made that you wish you hadn't, or you would recommend to somebody not to do?

Not really. No, because I think everything's part of you. Although I would have gotten more sleep at times. I really mean that. There's films that I did where I think I should have spent more time asleep in my bed before going to work. But I've learned that lesson. It's important—there's a magic that happens in front of the lens and it's a shame if you waste it. It's a shame if you're not present for it or if you're exhausted. You're tired making a film anyway, but you have to look after what happens in front of the camera. But there's nothing I regret, there's no mistakes. There's not a moment in any of the films where I go 'Aargh', because it's all kind of fine. I'm not too critical about myself when I watch things, not really. The best thing about it for me is that I still can't believe I'm up there. When I sit down in a preview cinema or in a cinema and the lights go down and the film starts and I'm up there, I still can't believe it's me.

I get such a kick out of it. And I've never not enjoyed watching something that I've been involved in for the first time. Not really.

Are there any favourite directors you've worked with?

Yes, and they've all been very different. I've never worked with a director and thought 'Oh he directs like so and so.' That never happens. Everyone's always completely unique. I love working with Danny Boyle, because there's a connection there that was built over three movies, and I don't know what it is about him other than I would do absolutely anything. I'd want to be my best for him. And he works you—he pushes you; every single take of every setup, he would be working you. So as an actor you're very satisfied. You'd never hear him say, 'OK, that was great. Let's just do another one.' He'd always have something for you to try. It's another note for directors, I think, base your direction on what the actors have just done. There's nothing more frustrating for an actor than doing a take and then getting a note that's got fucking nothing to do with what you've just done. That means you're left wondering if the director's watching, you know. Which is terrible if you think, 'God, is he watching what I'm doing?' If you get a note out of left field it's very frustrating. It's much better to build a performance through the takes based on what the actor's giving you. I think that's an important note for directors. Danny certainly did that. I loved working with Peter Greenaway, and he's a completely different animal all together. He'd give you very little direction, if at all. And at the same time I had such trust in him because I knew his work, and he's such

an amazing, intelligent man. That film, *The Pillow Book*, is one of my favourite pieces that I've done. Mark Herman I've worked with. I've enjoyed working with all of them in different ways. I think Danny and I had a real special thing going on and I was very happy that he was there. I will always remember the feeling of, if I turned around and saw him on the set, I'd feel happy that he was around. And that's a really nice thing.

In Conversation with John Hubbard

How important is casting in a film?

John Hubbard and his wife Ros run Britain's premier casting agency, Hubbard and Associates.

The thing is about getting the talent to get the money. Nobody gives you money now without knowing who the cast is, even if you have a really good director. They say in Hollywood these days that the only reason you hire an A-list director is to get A-list talent. They would rather not hire an A-list director, they would rather work with a first timer, somebody that is a little more cost effective, because it is all about money. Hollywood is, without a doubt, all about the dollar.

At what stage do you like to get involved in a project?

We like to get involved in the very early stages of a project's development. Sometimes people come up to us and tell us they are thinking of buying the option to a book, and ask us if it is castable. Sometimes we are second in. The producer will have a script or an option to a book, we will have a synopsis or just an idea of the story and they will come in to talk about it. They will say 'Do you think an A-list cast would like to do this?', 'Do you think people that would get the film funded would want to do this sort of subject?'

Sometimes a director or a producer will get very fixated on one person, and that is very terribly dangerous because you are most likely not to get that person. Then they start saying 'If I don't get so and so then I can't make my film' and it just doesn't work that way. It can be the same with every project no matter the size. We are just about to start *Tomb Raider 2*, it's a big budget very attractive film, it's Jan de Bont directing, who is a very big A-list action director. It's a big studio, lots of money and exposure. But I know that we're going to have to work down a list of actors because our first choices are going to be unavailable or too expensive or they'll pass on the script or won't want to do an action film. The earlier we are in the better, because then we can control the casting and make a big contribution right from the start of the process.

Is there any one of the many films you've worked on that you have found particularly rewarding?

The favourite has got to be *The Commitments*, because Ros [Hubbard, John's partner] and I had so much fun working on it. Our day started at around seven or eight o'clock in the morning we would start workshoping at nine with the actors and the musicians that we met two or three nights previously. We would do that until five o'clock. Then we would have a break before we went out. Every night we went to all the clubs in Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Belfast listening to the great music, the awful music; we would have a video

camera and film each member of the band in close-up as they were performing to play them back later and decide whom we wanted to bring into workshop. Because Ros and I just love music, it didn't feel like work, it wasn't like a holiday because the hours were very, very long, but we got a total buzz out of going to see bands and working with music.

Lord of the Rings was an incredibly satisfying film to do because it is a very spiritual film. In fact Ros did an interview a couple of weeks ago with a magazine that I had never heard of called *Bible Today* and they wanted to talk to her about her beliefs and her life and *Lord of the Rings* because Tolkein was a Catholic. I think the strength of the movie comes down to its spiritual aspects not being obvious, but it is about human beings and is about their place in the world, it is about fellowship and about humans coming together to beat off a mass evil. And I think one of the reasons why the film has been so successful is that it's a true story about people's beliefs and feelings and relationships towards each other. Also it was great working with a genius director like Peter Jackson, who is one of the very few truly visionary directors. I read the script and was not able to see a cinematic possibility, I could not see the massive success that it could have but Peter sees something. He saw the power it would have on the screen, how he would multiply the power of the words in the script to make it visually and emotionally moving. *Evita* was fantastic because we were all over the place like America, Argentina, Budapest and Spain.

The less satisfying ones generally had a script that was not that good, but unfortunately you have to do a few of those when you have a business to run and are training people and when you have to keep an eye on the turnover.

Out of the 100–150 films that we have done, somewhere between fifty to sixty of those have been the most amazing experiences. I am about fifty-eight now and I am still learning all the time. Everything that happens, every job I do, I learn a little bit more. That is very satisfying—when you still get excited by something.

Can a person with no experience in casting be able to just have the eye for the business, or do you need the experience and training to be successful?

It is primarily about instinct, either you have an instinct or you don't. I think you can have no experience but still have a good instinct about good actors. We work with film students all the time who have never made a film and a lot of them have never worked with actors, but some of them come in and you see that they have a natural instinct. I was talking to a young film student the other day, and he just seemed to go to movies 24 hours a day which is a very good learning tool. If you have an instinct that is how you develop and strengthen it. I think if you were going up a mountain and you had the choice of somebody who has been up fifty times or someone who has just started I think you would go with the older and wiser person. However, the media loves youth. Dan, my son, is twenty-seven. Clients call and say that they are going to use Dan to cast a film because it is for young people. And I say 'But Ros and I just cast *The Commitments*—I don't understand. Just because you are over thirty doesn't mean that you can't cast a nine-year-old.' First of all it's instinct then it is experience; meeting thousands of actors, seeing thousands of movies. I believe that my instincts are more highly trained than most people

who have only done a couple of films—that's not to say that they don't have the instinct or the talent.

If a producer came to you with a limited budget would you get involved? Would you accept deferred fees?

It would entirely have to rely on the script and director and the producer and the team. If my instincts say that the script is really interesting and I am dealing with realistic and intelligent people, then yes we will get committed and we will say OK we will do guaranteed deferments, or share success in the film, or help you out for nothing. I have to do it less and less, because we are so busy with what we call the day job that it is very difficult to set aside that kind of time, and people can be very demanding when you are working for them for nothing. I sometimes do it, but it absolutely depends on the conditions, my judgement about the script and the people that are associated with it.

Do you join projects based on working with directors and other crew from previous films or are you individually hired?

The answer is yes to both, so for example you will work with Ron Howard and then he will never use you again, I'm not sure why—he just doesn't. Whereas people like Alan Parker and Bruce Beresford will fight to have casting directors. There are just a lot of directors that want us for the team, without a doubt we will do Alan Parker's next film and Paul Greengrass's next film and that's very satisfying. It also has to do with how much power that the directors have because a director can go into a meeting and say that they want to use the Hubbards and the studio may say they want to use someone else. Alan Parker will fight for us but some directors may not be able to or don't want to make waves.

How long do you stay involved on a project?

Until you finish casting the last person that has to be cast. Some casting directors will only cast leads, some may do the children and day players as well. When I go to the preview, I want to know that I cast everything that moved. Even if it is two people who have a couple lines each, I want to cast them, because I want the best people there.

How to you attract big names to low budgets?

It is really difficult to get big names in low-budget films. A lot of it is about the right approach—not being stubborn with agents, having respect for them and what they can do for you. Always be pleasant and always be realistic. The agents have to read the scripts as well, so they have hundreds of scripts in their office and what I resent is the arrogance of producers who think that theirs is the only script, or the only important script. If your approach is like that you will just get rejected, because the attitude is all wrong. Being stubborn and unrealistic is also a problem. Saying 'I have a really good script, I have a really good part for Art Malik' is OK and you have to aim for those big names, but you have to be prepared to cast someone else. Your script should be just as good without the big name. Use people like us, also respect our presence and position and also the power we have to help you have the right attitude and approach us in the right way.

Have you ever worked on a low-budget film, if so have you ever cast any big names?

One or two, not very many. Gossip about established stars 'looking for a different kind of part' is generally nonsense. Take Daniel Day-Lewis—that kind of rumour circulated about him, but he is retired and is not working unless the director is Martin Scorsese or Jim Sheridan. It took Michael Mann about a year to persuade him to do *The Last of the Mohicans*, ending in a 4-hour lunch. And this is Michael Mann, this is a man who makes fantastic movies, and he found it difficult to get this guy. So coming in with that sort of line is complete rubbish. It is hearsay, somebody making it up, somebody being dramatic, being misinformed. Usually projects need a hook, like a director or writer that actors respect. That is what moves a project up; because agents are engaged by the clout a respected (not necessarily big) name can have. At the level of low-budget scripts it is extremely difficult to get big names. It's a matter of having a fantastic story and characters. For the big name factor, you just have to bash away at agents and use every means you can to try to get it to the actors. There are a lot of actors that don't open the script and send it to their agents. I would never do that myself—eventually you are going to end up talking to the agent, so why make them angry. If you talk to Richard E. Grant at a party and he says he loves the sound of your script, he will give you his agent's number. But then you'll call the agent and he'll say they're not interested. Actors do want to help out; they are very generous and they don't want to say no to your face! But it's hard and getting harder at the film markets to sell anything. In the old days if you had just one name that would be just fine, but now the market wants two names or five names because they need to get more attention and publicity than other films. The more names you have, the more publicity you get and the more people take notice. It has become frustrating and painfully hard to make any movie.

14 Moving the Budget Up

I am always asked how much a low-budget film costs. The question should be: How much do you have?

AS THE CASH BUDGET for your film creeps upwards, certain elements of your budget may remain the same even though the budget increases in value. You might be faced with the prospect of having a hot project where you suddenly raise more money than you anticipated. Or you may decide to ramp your budget higher in order to attract different types of crew or talent. The exercise below is an interesting and useful way to see what happens as your movie budget inflates.

Hint Making low budgets work depends on two elements: the cash you have (budget) and the amount of time you have allocated for the shoot (schedule). You must negotiate with your cast and crew and convince them that you can complete the entire film with the amount of time and money you have in your budget.

Basic Considerations—Film Prints and DCPs

When your film is finished you will need to deliver an exhibition format to the distributor. No matter how low or high your budget, when you are finished for certain markets you will have to make a 35mm internegative and for others a digital cinema package (DCP). The following budgets do not include this final step in the filmmaking process, which costs roughly the same whichever budget you use to shoot your film.

Similarly, if you shoot on an electronic format, the cost of transferring to film is not included. Again, this is more or less a standard fee regardless of the type of electronic camera you use.

It is a common myth that a distributor will pay for your transfer DCPs if they like your film. In truth, they simply lend you the exact amount of money you need to finish your film, and then add on interest and charges that somehow seem to leave no money for the filmmaker.

Hint If a distributor pays for print or DCP, you may not make any money, but you will get your film into cinemas.

Hint Choose the format that suits your story.

Moving a £100,000 (\$150,000) Budget Up

Producer

As a producer, you will have a nominal fee. The more money you demand as a producer the less likely you are to maintain a profit share of the film once it is made.

Script

The script requires self-contained, minimal locations and a handful of actors. You will also limit in the amount of special effects and stunts required to tell the story.

Writer

At this budget level, most writers will also want to direct. If you are buying a script from a writer, it is unlikely that you are going to be able to pay more than £1,000 (\$1,500).

Remember that you also have to allow for the costs of registering your script at the US Copyright Office (about £25) and of photocopying the script. You will need about 100 copies to give to potential investors, sales agents, cast and crew.

Actors

Most likely you will be using semiprofessional actors.

Originating Format

There are three choices at any level. It is important to choose the format that suits your story and budget. While you may be attracted to shooting a high-quality film on a 35mm format, it could be that you will have to sacrifice mobility and speed to the detriment of your story.

1 35mm

- One-week (9-day) shoot at a challenging 3:1 shooting ratio, and finish the entire film.
- Two-week shoot, 6:1 shooting ratio and enough money to complete the edit up to the point of the final mixing and neg cut.
- Three-week shoot at 6:1 and enough money to cut a trailer with which you attempt to raise the money to finish the film.

2 16mm

- Two-week shoot, 6:1 shooting ratio, start to finish.
- Three-week shoot at 8:1, raising more money later for post-production.

3 Digital

- Two- or three-week shoot start to finish, but using the savings on film stock and labs to finish the film digitally.

Hint The longer you have to shoot, the better looking the film will be.

Crew

In Chapter 11, 'The Shoot', there is an illustration of how a crew can grow in size as the budget increases.

You will be working with a small crew of four or five people: producer, director, first assistant director, DoP, sound recordist and one or two production assistants who will double as boom operators or camera assistants when necessary.

Post-production

You will try to get the film edited with pictures and sound to a ninety five per cent completed state. You can then present your film to sales agents and potential buyers on a high-quality digital format, avoiding the expensive final 35mm process.

Moving a £250,000 (\$375,000) Budget Up

Producer

One could reasonably expect a fee of £10,000 at this budget, partially to acknowledge the increased responsibility and the larger cast and crew.

Story

The script you choose can handle locations within a major city, with the possibility of two or three days in another town or village.

Writer

This budget could carry a fee of up to £15,000 for the script.

Actors

Genre definitely dictates the type of actors you will use. No-names will work in sci-fi and horror, where the type of story will make the film sell. Other genres will sell much more easily if you spend a large portion of your budget on named actors.

You may choose several known (but not really well known) actors and go for an ensemble piece. Often you will see a film with several actors that you remember vaguely from other movies, but the title and logline of the film are what sells it. Audiences might choose to see the film based solely on the fact that the actors, although not widely known, are likely to turn in solid performances.

Perhaps you are in contact with an actor with a bigger name, and choose to surround them with experienced but unknown actors. In this case, the film might be billed as 'Starring X'. Or you might be able to get an actor with a very large name to do a cameo role.

Whatever level of actors you use, it would be wise to spend at least £50,000 on actors at this budget level.

Originating Format

1 35mm

- Two-week shoot, 6:1 shooting ratio and enough money to complete the edit up to the point of final mixing and neg cut.
- Three- or four-week shoot with a 9:1 ratio and enough money to cut a trailer, with which you attempt to raise the money to finish the film.

2 16mm

- Although cheaper than 35mm, shooting on this format at this budget is not really an option unless demanded by the story.

Hint You may not require big names if you are making a genre piece, but selling your film will be easier with star names.

3 Digital

A two-camera HD shoot is often used at this level.

Crew

The crew will rise to nine or ten.

Post-production

It is possible to completely finish the film with this budget, although finishing the film to a fine cut, showing it on tape and hoping to raise additional completion funding is also an option.

Moving a £500,000 (\$750,000) Budget Up

Producer

One could reasonably expect a fee of £20,000 at this budget. Again, this is partially to acknowledge the increased responsibility and the larger cast and crew.

Story

The additional script payment of up to £25,000 allows you to consider more experienced (and expensive) writers or acquire the screenplay rights to a novel or short stories. The story possibilities are still limited, however, in terms of locations.

Writer

This budget could carry a fee of up to £25,000 for the script.

Actors

Depending on the genre and script, it would be possible to spend up to £250,000 on actors (see above) or with a horror or sci-fi script, spend as little as £25,000 with the balance of the budget below the line, in either art department or special effects.

Originating Format

1 35mm

- Three- or four-week shoot at 12:1 through to completion of the film.

2 16mm

- Three- or four-week shoot at a ratio of 12:1 through to completion of the film, with enough money for a blow-up.

3 Digital

- Shooting on HD, for 3 or 5 weeks at a ratio of 12:1 through to completion of the film.

Crew

Up to thirty people including a driver, art department assistants, runners and other support personnel.

Post-production

Edit the film to completion, including clearing all music rights.

Summary

1. If budget permits, spend on talent. It makes the film easier to sell.
2. Try to add money to the art department and special effects budget. A better looking film is easier to sell.
3. You will never, at any level, have as much money as you need to do 1 and 2 above.

When you're finished you need to decide how you will sell the film.

Raindance Film
 Producer: Elliot Grove

The Living in the Home of the Dead
 HD
 30 day shoot
 12:1 shoot ratio
 Director: Simon Rumley

Account	Description	Page	Total
500	script	1	25,000
600	producer/director	1	40,000
700	talent	1–2	65,000
800	fringes	2	6,500
Total above the line			136,500
900	production staff	2	11,500
1000	camera dept	3	7,000
1100	camera	3	6,000
1200	art department	3–4	14,000
1300	art/props	4	12,000
1400	electrical department	4	5,400
1500	grip department	4	2,000
1600	grip electrical package	4	8,500
1700	production sound	5	5,750
1800	stunts/SFX	5	14,500
1900	police/fire/safety	5	1,000
2000	craft service/catering	6	17,650
2100	wardrobe/make-up	6	8,675
2200	location manager/scouts	6	2,700
2300	locations	7	21,000
2400	transportation	7	12,500
2500	picture vehicles	7	200
2600	accommodation	7–8	8,500
2700	general office	8	12,750
2800	transfer to 35mm	8	75,000
2900	insurance	9	15,000
3000	legal	9	10,000
Total production			271,625
3100	editing	9	25,000
3200	music	9	5,000
3300	post production sound	9–10	45,000
3400	answer print	10	10,000
3500	titles and opticals	10	10,000
Misc			0
Total above the line			136,500
Total below the line			366,625
Above and below the line			503,125
Total VAT within budget			56,400
Contingency			20,000
Total (UK sterling)			523,125

figure 14.1
 Budget top sheet for
*The Living in the Home
 of the Dead*

In Conversation with Nick O'Hagan

Nick O'Hagan produced *Pandaemonium* (2001) and *Age of Heroes* starring Sean Bean (2011). He was the co-producer of *Festival Express* (2003) and *Young Adam* starring Ewan McGregor (2003) and line producer on Dustin Hoffman's *Quartet* (2012).

How would you say different budget levels affect the story?

You tend to look for stories that are contained, have fewer characters, don't have big set pieces, that will only take place in a couple of locations—low budgets tend to be more character-driven or have something very unique about them. What I would encourage though, is even when you're just using a couple of locations, to be a bit creative—you should push the boundaries a bit. People tend to think they are only going to be able to shoot in one room, but you could be on the moon in the story, and then in some field out in the middle of nowhere; or you could go back in time. Don't limit yourself when you are thinking about budget. Sure you are limited about the set pieces, but there are ways of not allowing yourself to be limited by a smaller budget of £200,000.

How would a budget increase from £100,000 to £500,000 affect the film you made?

It would probably not make a huge difference to the script, but to the elements, yes. I would always say cast as best you can, and as high and as sexy as you can in terms of profile. Always go for the best actors. Crew I'm less concerned with.

So you would pay extra to get 'named' actors?

Well, good actors—not necessarily 'names'. Because low-budget films are limited with cast as they are with crew, they tend to just go for people who are willing to do it. And the actors who are willing to do it, although they may have lots of potential, they haven't had the experience and they don't have the presence yet. It's just fact. I find that with a lot of British low budgets the acting is just not accomplished enough. So you could have a great little script, but you do tend to get let down by some actors. Because they are the ones who are telling your story, they are the ones who have got to be up there. On a low budget, you haven't got much time—you are having to shoot a lot, and quickly. If you put in someone who is experienced, they will quickly get to the level of acting that you require and you'll get a better, more powerful performance on film. If you don't have someone who is a bit more experienced, you may not be able to give them enough time to get into their part.

I make sure that I can pay actors a reasonable amount, so that I'm not getting someone who just wants a part in a film because they are not getting any other work and so are prepared to do it for nothing. That said, some great actors are still prepared to do things for almost nothing. Other than cast, things don't change much at this level of budget.

Do things change when the budget goes from £500,000 up to £1 million?

I think it only really starts changing when having the extra money allows you to shoot for longer. But sometimes, allowing you to shoot longer isn't necessarily going to make it a better film.

So given the option, would you prefer to shoot for longer, or spend the extra money on getting a good actor?

I would prefer to spend it on a good actor. But shooting longer can obviously help. It allows the director and everyone to get it right, and not be so rushed and compromised. So yes, going up to £1 million is going to improve the production values.

I wouldn't be changing the script dramatically. I would focus on more time.

And of course, people can get paid better. This means that you can probably get more out of your crew because you are at least paying them a little bit. And when the going gets tough—which it invariably does—people don't feel so bad about doing the hours. But, that said, once they are in on a film, they are in—they believe in it, and are doing it for various other reasons, so that extra £100 a week isn't going to make a big difference.

How does an increased budget affect your choice of originating format?

I really have no preference. Format does not change according to budget—it changes according to what the film requires. I will say that if you are shooting on Super16 and you are blagging a Super16 camera and film stock, you might as well blag a 35mm camera and stock, once you are in for blagging stuff for the film, I think that if you want to shoot 35mm, then shoot 35mm. If you are shooting digitally you still have to blag a high end camera, the lights and equipment. It is not the budget that is going to tell me what format to shoot on.

What I will say is that sometimes budgets are just unreasonably high. I think what a lot of people do is say 'I'm going to make this film for this price,' and just jot a figure down, but they don't know why they are doing it for that price. I do think that if you are a first time filmmaker, you have to try and make it for as little as possible, and don't kid yourself that you are going to make a £300,000 film. Too many people think 'We are going to need £3 million to make this film.' I hear it all the time: 'Look, I've done a really nice budget.' But that's a waste of time! It's got nothing to do with anything—we don't make budgets, we make films! No one is going to give you £3 million. So I suggest that people do it for as little as possible. And then there is a point where they might say 'I can't make the film then'—then you can't make that film now. Put that one aside I'm afraid—write another script, do something else first.

You have got to think how you are going to get the investment to cover that budget, and it's just not possible if it is too high. The only way it is possible, is if you have an A-list cast—and even then it is sometimes not possible, because you have a first time director.

If you are a first time filmmaker, you should be making something for £100,000 because then you might just get the investors' money back. You have to think about what the bottom line is. You could create the most brilliant piece of filmmaking but ultimately not make the money back for the investors. If you don't make the money back, you are not a good bet and are not going to get another chance either from the same investors or from others. First time filmmakers really need to look at making films for as little as they can.

First timers should not write things that are mainstream. One reason is the cost, but the other thing is that anything that is mainstream is never going to

get you noticed, unless you are exceptional—but even then you can't compete with the mainstream in terms of an A-list cast.

Take the filmmakers of *Lighthouse*. They had very little money when they started out, but they eventually got a bit of money to help finish it—and that is often what happens. But they've done really well because they did it for almost nothing. With that film, if they had gone out and tried to raise money the traditional route, it could have cost twenty times more than it did—because that's how much you would have thought it would have cost. Then they wouldn't have been able to make it. But what's happened now is that they got to make it, and climb up another rung, and then they get asked to make a bigger film.

A first time filmmaker shouldn't do something that is financially risky—that's the bottom line: the script shouldn't be financially risky, it shouldn't be too big a budget. You want something that is quirky, and edgy that will get you noticed. Keep the budget down, and someone might be prepared to take a risk on it, as it just might pay off.

What are the differences between films you have produced for £100,000 and those made for £1 million or more?

More money does and doesn't change things, because I think you never have enough money. No matter what your budget is, you never have enough money to do everything you want to do anyway, so in a sense, you are always limited. In fact, having less money can make you do something more original, because you are pushed and you can't go the easy route. You need ambition. And never having enough money does challenge you. With less money, never is your ambition more apparent. You are immediately feeling the constraints and fighting against them—so you are having to work harder and be more ambitious in order to achieve your goal. You should never lose that ambition. That's what good filmmaking is: pushing the boundaries.

In Conversation with Simon Rumley

How important are 'named' actors in your films?

Simon Rumley is the director, producer and screenwriter of *Strong Language* (2000), *The Truth Game* (2001) and *Red White and Blue* (2010). I produced his *The Living and the Dead* in 2006.

I suppose it's good when you get names, everyone feels a little more confident and excited about having them on board. But frankly, whether ninety per cent of the British acting 'names' other than Hugh Grant or Ewan McGregor will make any difference to your box office is debatable.

I have always worked with lesser known actors. Mainly because what I've done is a youth trilogy of films, set in London during the 1990s, where most of the actors ranged from the ages of about 18 to 30, and in this country, there are very few actors within this age group who are well known. There are maybe a few from TV whom I have used, but in terms of British public awareness, you have really got maybe only a handful of actors who are known. And even if you take actors like Andrew Lincoln or John Simm—good actors who have done quite a lot of stuff, if you were to stop the average person on the street and ask them whether they had heard of them, they would probably say no, and even if you showed them a photograph, it's likely that half of them would still not recognise them.

Arguably the named actors are actually better actors, so the quality of acting will be better—but that is not necessarily true, perhaps it is for some of them, but certainly not all of them.

How would a budget increase from £100,000 to £500,000 affect the film you made?

It very much depends on who you are talking to and depends on how much you are going to push the low-budget nature of the film. But in my opinion, there is not much difference in making a film for £100,000 than for £500,000 as far as the script goes, other than having more money to spend on a good crew. The real difference starts to occur when the budget rises from £500,000 to £1 million and upwards.

In the last year or so I have written two scripts: one was for a £3 million type film, and one was for a £500,000 type film. The point is to ask yourself 'Would I prefer to get another film made in the next year, or would I prefer to try and get a higher budget, and get paid more money, but maybe not make another film for the next 2 or 3 years?'

Ultimately it really depends on what the requirements of the script are. In the end you have got to work to what your story is, and then hope for the best. I have tended to write scripts that I know can be done for not much money, which is why I have managed to do three films when a lot of people have only managed to make one in the same amount of time. In terms of getting to the next stage, there is no real reason why for instance you should need to spend a lot on locations. If you look at a film like *The Shining*—that is only one location. Or this horror film that we are doing at the moment, again that will be one location. *Reservoir Dogs*, was essentially one location really, with just a couple of exteriors. So there is no real reason why if you are limited to just a few locations it should be a bad film. If you are a good filmmaker, you should be able to rise to the challenge of making something interesting, wherever it may be—whether it's set in a bar, an aeroplane or a town. Again, it depends on what, as a writer/filmmaker, you are looking at first: whether you are writing because you know you already have a lot of money, or you are writing because you just want to make a film.

For example, for the first film that I made, I knew I could only raise a small amount of money and wrote accordingly. For my second film, I was told that if I could make a film for about £100,000, someone would finance it and they would underwrite it—so I then wrote a script based on that. My third film *Club Le Monde* I had written the script for ages ago. It could have been made for £1 million but we did it for just over £400,000. It comes down to me feeling that it is a lot easier doing something on a lower budget than a higher budget.

Why? What complicates things when the budget is higher?

You have more people on set so you are going to have more problems with communication. If you have a lower budget, then theoretically you have a smaller crew, so there are fewer people to actually communicate with and deal with. And then there's the logistics of it all: if you have a bigger budget film, then it's going to be a longer shoot, so you have got to have more

coordination and more people. If you have more money then you have more complications and more that can go wrong.

This country is quite interesting in its attitude to work, because I think a lot of people now will only work on a film if they are paid. One always gets the impression that in the US people are more likely to work for nothing on a low-budget film. I remember watching a documentary about the making of the film *Pi* and seeing over fifty people working behind the scenes, and thinking 'Hang on, no one got paid for any of this.' Yet everyone was still very excited about doing it. In this country you generally don't get this kind of attitude, which is a shame.

On my last film, I had a few problems behind the camera for various reasons, and at times I was thinking: 'For god's sake, you are working on a fairly reasonable script, it is low budget, but so what? You are working on a film, and let's get together and make this a positive experience.' But the attitude in this country does not seem to be very gung-ho, it's very much 'How much am I going to get paid?' and 'That's not very much money.' At times it is worth cutting the crew down to a minimum and just doing it with a bunch of mates over a few weekends—my first film was a bit like that. There was me, the cameraman, camera assistant, a first AD, a sound man and about sixteen actors.

Do you think if you had been offered a few hundred thousand more it would have become a different film?

No, not really, because I wrote it very specifically to be made with virtually no money whatsoever, and if I had got more money, then everyone would have just got paid more, but it still would have been the same script. We may have shot it on 35mm as opposed to Super16, but beyond that, no other changes.

What is your preferred originating format? How does that change as the budget increases?

Format used to have big implications on the budget. Now anyone can make their own film: you can shoot it on a camera that you can buy for as little as £1,000, you can edit it on your equipment at home and you don't need all the crew.

In low-budget films, the theory is that you shoot them, edit them digitally and then you take them around and hope that someone is going to think it is really good, and give you the rest of the money to enable you to finish the film so you can then release it. But you could probably count on one hand the number of times that has happened in this country. It happens more often in the US because there is more of an infrastructure to encourage that kind of thing, and there are more festivals.

And to be honest, with most low-budget films, it doesn't really matter if the images are not pristine. It's not like they are going to be shot in the desert *Lawrence of Arabia* style. And the public who are going to see them are probably more interested in character development and the story and dialogue. So actually, the fact that it may be a little grainy, or some scenes are a little darker than others shouldn't matter. The 'look' is important, but it is less important to me than other things. If a film looks great, but has a really poor story and is not well acted, frankly who cares! With low-budget

films like *El Mariachi*, more than anything it is the energy and the passion that gets the film onto the screen in the first place that is important. Shooting format is important, and often different formats obviously suit different stories, but it comes lower down in the scheme of things than a lot of people think.

My next film is going to be shot on HD. For the kind of films I want to make, HD is a reasonable medium.

I think it's quite exciting to make a film on lower res DV. The quality is such that you look at some DV films, like *The King is Alive*, *The Intended*, *Dancer in the Dark*, *28 Days Later* and see a negligible difference once you see them in the cinema. It doesn't affect your viewing experience—the audience gets involved with a film because of the characters, not because it looks pretty. DV may well be an option for my next film, especially as I personally prefer to make one film a year on low budget than one film every 3 years on a higher budget and have that energy to move the camera around.

Which genres do you think are especially suited to low-budget production?

Some genres lend themselves more easily to low budget than others. Horror films like *The Blair Witch Project* or *Paranormal Activity* testify to this, since you don't need much money to create an atmosphere. You can do a romantic comedy with no money. But you can't really do science fiction or action on a really low budget. Although *El Mariachi* is an action film which was made for very little money, in general, you cannot make an action film on a low budget, since as an audience, we have come to expect the big bangs and big car chases, You're thinking *Bullitt*, you're thinking *French Connection* and it's these kind of things that you can't do for free, and you can't get away just with writing a good script, because an explosion is an explosion on screen, no matter how well you write it.

What impact does a budget increase from £500,000 to £1 million have on the kind of film you would make?

I would allocate the extra money for a good music mix, which in low-budget films seems to get skimped on, because it is the last thing.

I would increase the shooting schedule from 4 to 6 weeks, or would increase pre-production time, or probably do both. So instead of paying for a pre-production team of twenty people for 2 weeks, you would suddenly be paying a pre-production team of twenty for 4 weeks instead. And if you are adding another 2 weeks to the shooting schedule that would increase the budget by about a third.

More time means that everyone isn't under so much pressure and the actors have more time to prepare. It should mean that things work better. It also means the director can try out more set-ups or be a bit more experimental with the camera. It just means that everyone has a little more luxury to do better stuff. Then again, the script shouldn't be so ambitious that you require more time anyway.

So by the time you have paid the actors more and the crew more, that will have already brought your budget up to £1 million, and it is still exactly the same script.

How often is it that an original budget is increased?

Never happened to me. But when you go to the BFI they might say let's raise the budget a bit more and therefore get higher profile people on board, so it can happen that your budget is increased, but very rarely. It's very much like a game of chance that you play. For example, with this horror script, we could have gone for a £1 million budget. We could have paid ourselves more, we could have got more well-known actors, but then it would have meant that the money we were getting from one source, which would have covered fifty per cent would now be only thirty per cent and actually, the other thing with a £1 million budget is that you need to bond it, and will also have to bring in various Skillset levies, which are not that much, but a percentage here and a couple of thousand there adds up pretty quickly. So if you are making a film for £1 million, you could probably make it for £500,000. It is nicer to have more money, but again, it depends on what you are looking for out of a film—are you looking for a quick return for your investors, so that you can then go on and make more films, or are you just happy doing things more slowly, with more money and making it that bit more polished? I'm all for making as many films as I can.

Obviously, I would always take the higher budget if it was offered, as any filmmaker would, but it does add complications and can bear no relation to how good the film is. But everyone gets paid a little bit more, which is nice. For a £500,000 film, you don't get paid that much in proportion to the time and effort you put into it, but you are always hoping that this film will be the one that takes you to the next level.

Seven Essential Steps for Becoming Rich and Famous by Making a Low-Budget Film

All trades are structured in a similar way. The first section deals with news stories of films in production, festival news, business updates and scandal. The next section has articles and analysis of current issues. This is followed by a production focus section, which lists films currently in production and post-production. The final section is a listing of all the box-office reports from around the world. Filmmakers with savvy read the trades and look for news stories which track new trends. The production notes will show which movies are getting funding, and the box-office charts will show how different films are released, the number of screens they are playing on and the decay rate of their box-office take.

Step 5 Savvy

Savvy comes from the Spanish word *sabe* meaning 'to know'. It has two meanings. When used as an adjective it means well informed and perceptive. As in 'S/he is a savvy film producer.' When used as a noun, it means practical understanding or shrewdness. As in 'A producer known for their financial savvy.' Savvy cannot be taught; it can however be learned by following three simple steps:

1 Knowledge is power

Become informed. Learn all you can about every aspect of the industry.

2 Read the trades

The three main trade papers are: *Screen International* (for British and European news), *The Hollywood Reporter* and *Variety* (for a combination of American and European news). The latest news is on their websites:

- *Screen International* www.screendaily.com.
- *The Hollywood Reporter* www.hollywoodreporter.com.
- *Variety* www.variety.com.

These sites all have daily updates, some are free and some are subscription based. For news of independent film production, awards and festivals, subscribe to the excellent free service www.indiewire.com for a daily email update.

3 Internet

This invaluable resource can get you information on any topic or person in a matter of seconds. Before you go to any meeting, you should do a quick Internet search on the person you are meeting. Search for both the company and individual: check with a normal search engine (like Google) and also use www.imdb.com, the movie database. You will find their credits (or lack of) as well as the details of any current productions they may be working on. This way, you may also find their own website, which can be a very useful tool in sussing a company out.

15 Preparing the Marketing Plan

IF ONE LIVES AND WORKS as a filmmaker in Europe, the entire filmmaking process, from start to finish, is described as falling into three stages, although many new filmmakers neglect the third:

Pre-production	Production	Marketing
The script is developed and financing is raised	The film is shot and edited	The marketing materials and press kits are prepared, the film is taken to festivals and markets and sold

figure 15.1
Pre-production, production and marketing

This is one hundred per cent accurate. It describes the filmmaking and marketing process in chronological order: in pre-production one develops the script and finds the cast, in production the film is shot and edited and at the marketing stage the film is promoted and sold. Independent filmmakers describe the progress of their projects in this way as well.

In Hollywood, the process is divided into two parts:



figure 15.2
Make and sell

The film bosses argue that it is senseless to make a movie unless you know it will sell. And to do this, they spend vast resources on trying to predetermine what the public wants to see/buy next. One can imagine a harried junior executive racing to the office screaming 'We have an entire warehouse full of dinosaur T-shirts. What are we going to do?', and the answer coming 'We better make a *Jurassic Park IV*!' The actual shooting of the film is usually the last element of this process, and ultimately the least significant, as far as the marketing and selling of the film goes. So the process looks more like this:



figure 15.3
Sell and make

The Competition

If you were contemplating manufacturing a chair, wouldn't the first thing you do be a trip to the local furniture stores and see what sorts of chair were on sale? You would probably look at the materials and design and try to calculate the cost of manufacture. Even better, wouldn't you try and talk to the manager to see what the customers said about the chairs and find out what types of chair sold best?

In order to see what our competition is, let us analyse who else is making movies.

The Majors

There are eight major studios, and all of them are based in LA; they are what is meant by the catch-all term 'Hollywood'. They are called major studios because they make movies and own and operate cinemas all around the world. Warner Bros, for example, own and operate cinemas from Britain and Germany to Brazil and India.

The major studios make about forty films per year at an average budget of between \$50 and \$80 million per movie. On rare occasions, two of the majors will get together and produce a mega-budget picture, like *Titanic*, to minimise the attendant risk. The majors are Buena Vista, Columbia, Dreamworks, Paramount, Twentieth Century Fox, United Artists, Universal and Warner Bros.

The Mini-majors

Mini-majors make and distribute films like the major studios, but in just their home territory and one other. Pathé makes films and distributes in France and Britain, Entertainment One in Canada and the UK. There are approximately twenty-five mini-majors around the world.

The Independents

An independent (not to be confused with an independent filmmaker) makes movies and distributes them in their home territory. In the UK, Entertainment, run by the Green brothers, makes movies and distribute in the UK only. Vertigo, another UK company, produces movies and distributes in the UK only.

Film Production Companies

These companies make movies for theatrical release and are funded by a combination of the companies listed above and/or private investment and/or stock market offerings. These films are usually made on the 'sell then make' principle. About 300 movies per year are made at budgets of \$3–\$10 million. Company of Wolves, Working Title and Recorded Picture Company are some of the larger film production companies in the UK.

Independent Producers

Technically, most producers are independent as they rely on multiple source financing. But in terms of researching the marketplace, we will consider only those working outside of industry financial support. This is most likely to be the category that you will fall into unless you are financed by one of the above companies.

Every year in the English-speaking world it is estimated that 3,000 films get made at budgets ranging from less than £10,000 to more than £1 million. These films are financed with the filmmakers' own money (eighty five per cent), by wealthy benefactors (ten per cent) and with soft money from government agencies or tied sponsorship from music companies and product placement (five per cent).

Genre

Lloyd Kaufman and Michael Hertz's Troma Studios is an excellent example of a highly successful B-movie studio.

Genre or B-movies are making a strong comeback because of the attractive financial returns. They can be shot cheaply and sold at a profit sooner than larger budget films. There are approximately 500 English-language B-movies made every year.

Adult Movies

Porn is sadly the most successful industry in North America, outstripping defence, education and medicine in terms of profitability.

Bollywood

India creates more films than any other country. Film companies range from small to branches of the major studios such as Sony. The successes of crossover films such as *3 Idiots* and *Kites* have proven that Bollywood films have an international appeal.

Exhibitors

Exhibitors do not make films themselves, but they own the cinemas that are hired by distributors. They have a vital role in the distribution process because, in the end, it is the exhibitors who will look at your film in a special exhibitors' screening and decide whether it has enough appeal to the local audience to merit a playdate. Without a playdate, your film will not be shown in a cinema.

A good example of a negative pick up is *Sister Act* (1992), which was produced by Touchstone Pictures and distributed by Buena Vista in the US.

Who Buys Films?

The majors, mini-majors and independents all buy films for distribution in addition to the films they produce. The strategy is to acquire a backup film that can be released quickly in order to minimise the damage of a blockbuster

disaster. The majors will look at all the other companies making films and see if there is something affordable and good that they can use. When the distributor finds a film, they negotiate a price with the producer, called a negative pick-up, where the producer is paid the cost of producing the negative plus a profit, which is contingent on the quality of the film.

In order to find the right film to buy, each company hires an acquisitions executive (film buyer) whose job is to source and negotiate the purchase of quality product for their company. And this is the person that you must get to see your film and buy it. There are really only about a hundred people in the world that you want to see your film. They are the acquisitions executives hired by the majors, mini-majors and independents to acquire product for their cinemas. Each acquisitions executive is subjected to a barrage of sales materials from other majors, mini-majors and independents seeking to sell their films.

The difficulty an indie producer faces is that s/he is stuck in the same group with so many other films by other equally talented and passionate filmmakers. But to an acquisitions executive looking down, it can look like a blur. Your job as producer is to catch the eye of the acquisitions executive.

What Screenings Do You Want Buyers to Attend?

The ideal place for a film buyer to see your movie is in a preview theatre during business hours. Book a preview theatre such as The Soho Screening Rooms in London. Create a list of potential sales agents, distributors and acquisitions executives from the guides published by *Screen International*, *The Hollywood Reporter* and *Variety* for the major film markets. Prepare an invitation about 4 weeks prior to the screening and send emails and make telephone calls to get a list of names of those coming. It is worth making a follow-up call closer to the date to remind busy executives. Your goal is to get the most senior person from each company to see your film. On the day of the screening, prepare refreshments. You can start the screening 5 or 10 minutes late to allow for latecomers.

Many sales agents and acquisition executives will leave after the first 20 minutes or half hour. This doesn't necessarily mean that they dislike your film. More likely they have another screening to rush to.

Remember to ask yourself three questions whenever you see a movie, short or feature on the TV or in a cinema:

1. Does this demonstrate talent?
2. How did they do that?
3. Could I make that?

Attracting Acquisition Executives

Executives rely on a festival and film market updates to find out about new and upcoming productions.

There are two job titles a producer will look for during the course of producing a movie. A development executive is someone who works with the financier or production company at script stage. An acquisition executive is a film buyer and watches new films at festivals, film markets and at private screenings. A development executive is usually very difficult to meet. You communicate with a development executive by post, email or telephone. An acquisition executive is much easier to meet. It is their job to find you. It is

your job to intrigue them with your pitch, with your marketing materials, to get them to your screening.

It is at this juncture that most indie producers make a serious error of judgement. Most filmmakers will tell you that they envisage hundreds of people lined up around the block in order to see their film. They have aimed their entire film career at this (as well as every single penny they can borrow). Certainly, this is the wonderful conclusion of marketing the film—but is the end result of a successful marketing campaign, not the start of one.

Experienced filmmakers make their movie with about a hundred film executives in mind: the film buyers that are employed by the majors, mini-majors and the independents. Every aspect of their film is aimed at the acquisition executives they want to entice to a preview screening of their film with the sole intention of selling it to them.

A successful filmmaker will research the distributors most likely to buy films of the same type as the one they are planning or have made. Some go as far as to meet the film buyers directly and pitch their project in the hope of securing financing. If the acquisitions person thinks that a written or verbal pitch contains merit, they can then refer the filmmaker to the appropriate development executive.

It is easy to forget that the acquisitions executive is hired as the eyes of the distributor and when s/he discovers an interesting film, they will have to refer the film to the marketing and ultimately the financial directors of the company. Obviously, small distributors have as few as two or three employees, while larger ones have dozens in their acquisitions and marketing departments. But the most important fact is that most acquisitions are simultaneously tracking hundreds of films exactly like yours. You must constantly make them aware of your uniqueness.

Career Route of Acquisitions Executives

An acquisitions executive is one of the most accessible people inside the industry. It is their job to find new talent and sign it before it disappears to the competition. Accordingly, they attend private screenings, go to film festivals and scour the trade papers for news of anything new and interesting. A successful acquisitions executive must have excellent communication skills, be able to negotiate and have a grasp of basic business and legal affairs. S/he is hired because of her/his feel for the marketplace and what will or will not attract an audience.

Acquisition executives come from a variety of backgrounds:

- Festival director: after proving an ability to programme a film festival that becomes successful and demonstrates a feel for the marketplace.
- Cinema programmer: after proving that they can deliver audiences to films, they are then headhunted by distributors eager to capitalise on their ability to pick audience-pleasing films.
- Talent agent: after learning the business and signing undiscovered talent and proving they know what is hot.

- Preview screeners: after watching many films they demonstrate that they can sort the wheat from the chaff.
- Journalists in style or trend press: after publishing perceptive reviews they demonstrate that their taste is relevant to a larger audience.
- Assistant to sales agents: learn the business from the inside out.

Choosing Your Niche

Niche filmmakers like Hal Hartley and Woody Allen make the films they want to make knowing that enough film buyers will buy their films, justifying their production and marketing budgets.

One of the priorities for selling a film is to know the marketplace. If you can identify a sector of the market and predetermine what they will buy, then the choice of film and filmmaking techniques becomes much easier. British filmmaker Jake West was born a horror fanatic. Obsessed by the genre, he lived, breathed and dressed as a goth until every aspect of the genre and its audience became second nature. After writing a screenplay he assembled a minimal cast and crew, secured financing from a private investor of about £15,000 (\$22,000) and shot his first feature, *Razor Blade Smile*. He edited it over the course of a year and sold it to Palm Pictures who in turn collected over \$1.2 million from sales to countries around the world. Although the picture was modest in its scope and in the filmmaking techniques employed, Jake knew that if he could deliver a finished film it would find an audience.

Another filmmaker, Ottawa-born Lee Demarbe, created a fantasy horror film called *Jesus Christ Vampire Hunter* for a little under £10,000 (\$14,000). The film was shot on 16mm and edited at Lee's apartment on an abandoned Steenbeck. To date the film has recouped over £30,000 (\$50,000) from limited releases in Canada. Described by one journalist at the screening at the Raindance Film Festival in 2001 as 'a fun loving romp by a group of talented filmmakers', Lee always realised that he had a film that could find an audience. Even a limited audience could guarantee him a profit.

Key Artwork

Dimensions of theatre posters in the USA are 27 by 40 inches, and in Europe are 30 by 40 inches, and are known as quads.

Before your film reaches an acquisitions executive, key artwork for posters, theatre billboards and DVD/Blu-ray jackets will need to be generated. If you sell your film, the distributor may decide not to use your artwork. (Similarly, a European distributor will rarely use the US posters when they pick up a film.) Not to have artwork makes it more difficult to sell your film. Artwork will always give a visual treatment of your ideas for the marketing plan and can inspire the prospective buyer.

If you are mocking up a video jacket, be sure you include a strong graphic image on the front, and on the spine put your contact details. On the reverse, include a paragraph summarising the film as well as complete credits and an idea of the rating: PG, 12, 15 or 18 (in the USA: G, PG, PG-13, R, NC-17).

It is also a good idea to buy some blank DVD jackets and slide the printouts of the jackets into the sleeve to complete the illusion of a finished product. Remember that certain countries have different video box sizes. The largest is Australia, the smallest America.

Creating a one sheet

A one sheet is sent to prospective buyers, or can be sent by a buyer to exhibitors to inform them of a screening. The one sheet will also be useful in submitting to festivals and markets (discussed in the next two chapters).

Overleaf is an example of a one sheet created for *Tromeo and Juliet*, an adaptation of the Shakespeare play from Lloyd Kaufman's Troma Studios. The film was shot, and a 4-minute trailer was prepared. This poster was taken to the Cannes Market. This low six-figure budget film was marketed as costing over \$1 million, and on the basis of this one sheet and the trailer, Lloyd sold the film for a low seven-figure number.

Trailers

At Raindance we are constantly asked what makes a good trailer. A trailer is a key marketing tool that can be used to sell your film when complete or to raise additional finance before the film is finished. Given that a trailer is a mini-movie used by filmmakers to demonstrate their ability to the film industry it is shocking how many poor trailers are made by so-called talented filmmakers.

Trailer checklist:

- No more than two minutes.
- Has great ADR and foley.
- Good musical score.
- Little or no dialogue.
- Mysterious and intriguing.
- Clear, short titles i.e.: 'A film by . . . '.
- State the delivery date.

Summary

1. Understand the competition and try to work out what your unique selling point will be.
2. Choose a niche market and deliver a product tailored to it.
3. Make fresh and bold marketing materials.

In order to attract the film buyers to your screenings, you need to make a press kit.

1. Choose a title that is taut and tense and tells the story of your film.
2. Graphic images that illustrate the story of the movie.
3. The log line or strap line usually contains no more than ten words that give further detail about the main thrust of the movie.
4. Credit principal cast and crew.
5. Company logo if relevant.
6. List any outstanding artists or bands contributing to the soundtrack.

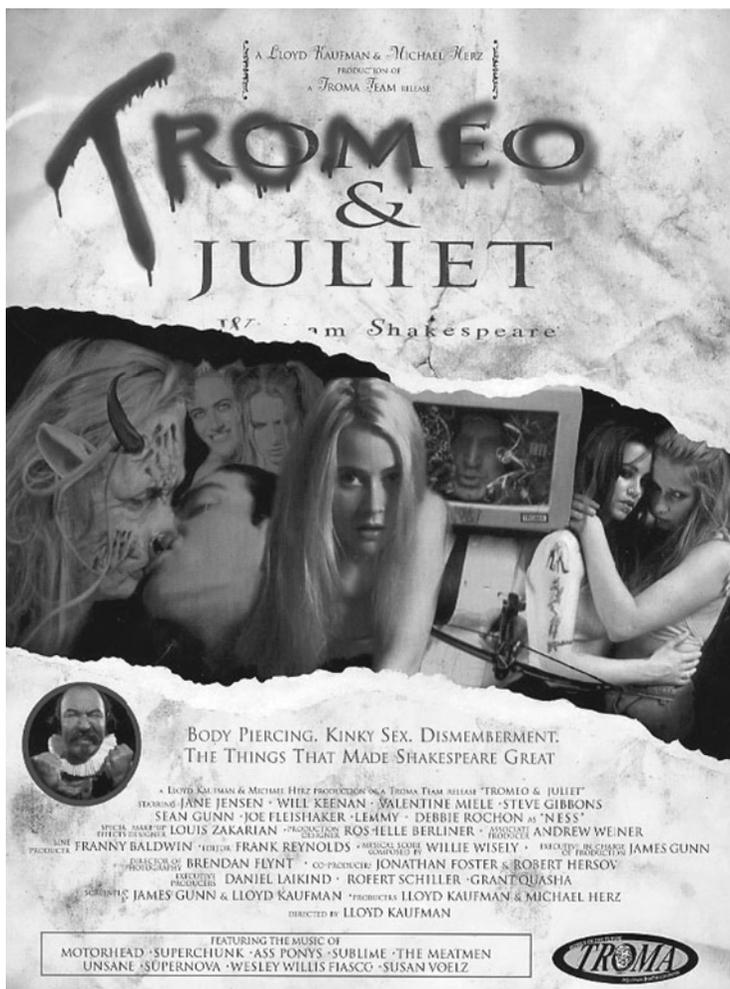


figure 15.4
One sheet
deconstructed

Graham Humphries is an illustrator who does work for The Creative Partnership and has worked on poster designs for many British films.

In Conversation with Graham Humphries

What are the usual stages you go through on a project?

Usually things start with a script or even just a treatment. Either the client will have an idea for a basic visual concept or they will ask me to come up with one. I'll design a basic image or logo, maybe a script cover or display or basic storyboards to indicate how a film might go.

At what stage in the process do you get involved in a project?

It depends. I am working with someone at the moment who came to me with their film when it was in post-production with a rough cut. They were still mixing the sound and had yet to commission some of the soundtrack work. They were looking at producing a poster, which they would take to Cannes,

1. Short synopsis of the film.
2. Additional graphics.
3. Additional paragraph outlining the artistic merit and credits of the filmmaker.
4. Contact details of filmmaker.
5. Snappy quotes from positive reviews.



figure 15.4 continued
One sheet
deconstructed

MIFED and other festivals. At that point they had some visual material—just photographs, stills—and loose idea of campaigns they'd seen elsewhere. So it was just a question of coming up with three or four ideas for posters. That happened a year ago. They just got back to me 2 days ago to say they've finished editing to a final cut. Now we're going to look again at producing a poster as a sales tool, as well as a logo which will go onto the beginning of the film, which will be animated by somebody else. The identity of the film is the logo and the visual feel of the film is translated into the poster.

What makes you turn down a project?

I tend not to turn down work. I usually get excited when anyone approaches me. It's very flattering for them to choose you. So I very rarely turn down anything. It's important to have a mix of everything—a whole spectrum of projects with different ideas. The more you have, the better, because each job helps influence the next.

How do you present roughs?

It can be anything from a sketch, to an almost finished concept, rendered on a computer. I might just place images together and put them with colours. It could be a verbal presentation of an idea and if the idea's strong enough, then we'll take it further. Sometimes money won't be available to go ahead, but you'll talk about a job until some money comes in later that will take things a bit further. If the film goes to a distributor and is a finished product, then you'll present a finished poster.

One romantic comedy I worked on had a series of production shots that they chose and a certain number of pictures from the film. It was just a matter of scanning those in, compositing images onto the computer and adding in other frames to get the texture of the film. I presented four different poster options for that film. But sometimes, filmmakers aren't too sure how to visually present it to the public, so I will show them the options. Usually they have an idea of what sort of films they like in the area in which they think their film is in, and they give me the names of three or four films that have been successful and say this is the sort of thing we want to go for.

What happens when the production company decides to change the title or the lead image on a project?

That happens a lot. Quite often in script stage, the title is just a working title, and it's not until the final stages—when I'm working on the finished poster—that they go to a different title. That's sometimes to do with screenings, and the way the audience reacted to the name of the film; whether it let the film down or took particularly well. Films can even be released in one country under one name and then be retitled for release in other territories just because of the audience.

Another thing that will happen from territory to territory is that a campaign might be figured as ineffectual as it moves from place to place. Sometimes we do adaptations of other campaigns and just change the format a bit. Traditionally British posters are in landscape format [horizontal] and American and international posters are in the portrait format [vertical]. So we change those formats often between the countries. Perhaps it's a cultural thing; a poster which in one place really works is going to miss in another country. It happens all the time with Asian films for example. You just have to look at the material and think that the audience here is going to react differently to this image than that in another country. Cultural triggers change from place to place.

What do you do when a client picks the layout that you like the least?

That happens a lot. You try to think to yourself that even if you didn't like that idea especially, you did put the image on paper. That happens often. All you can do then is the best you can. You can shift the colour use, title treatment and things to make it better. You learn to reject all the other ideas you had about it. And you recycle ideas as well. You think, well, that was my favourite, yet they didn't like it. So put it away and someone else might like it for theirs.

16 Publicity

The American movie *The Cable Guy* starred one of the most famous men in the world at the time—Jim Carrey—the film was wrongly publicised as a comedy. In fact it is a brilliant psychological thriller. As a result, the film scored a mediocre box-office run in America and Europe.

THIS IS THE MOST important element of the filmmaking process, and ironically, the one most often overlooked by new filmmakers. If you hire the best cinematographer, screenwriter and actors in the world to work for you, they will make you a film: 8,000 feet of celluloid with absolutely no marketable value. You cannot sell a film. You can only sell a movie. You turn a film into a movie by using publicity to create a buzz, or hype, for your film. Additionally, publicity will attract acquisition executives to your movie.

Like other elements in the filmmaking process, you must develop a publicity strategy. Your film can suffer irreparable damage with the wrong publicity plan.

Creating a Press Kit for £1,500 (\$2,000)

The single most effective tool in creating publicity is a press kit. A press kit is used to send details of the film to journalists and acquisitions executives. Creating a press kit is made simpler by following the basic steps set out below.

Step 1 Create a Folder

Folders:
100 × 50p =
£50 (\$65)
Embossing:
£50 (\$65)
Total cost:
£100 (\$130)

A stationer will sell stock folders with flaps in which newspaper clippings and press releases can be organised. Ultra low-budget press kits use stock folders from stationers with self-adhesive labels on which the name of the production company is printed. Self-adhesive labels went out with Margaret Thatcher. A better alternative is to get a printer to emboss the folder with the title of your film. Acquisitions executives are notoriously snobbish. The flip side is that they are easily impressed, and you would be amazed what the effect of a little bit of gold embossing can do for your press kit.

For the low-budget press kit you will need to buy 100 folders. A normal film might send out 1,000 or more press kits—beyond the reach of lo-to-no budgets. Through skilful manipulation, you aim to create the impression that you have mailed 1,000 press kits to international executives and journalists, and so create the impression that your film is hot.

You will also want to make an electronic version. Design an attractive PDF and embed photographs and trailers making certain it is a manageable size. You will likely want to make a supporting website containing the large picture and video files.

Step 2 Write a Synopsis

A synopsis is a summary of the story of your film told in an engaging way that captures the reader's interest and makes them want to see the film. A synopsis should never sound like 'and this happened, followed by this, and then this happened'. This type of synopsis is certain to bore. A well-written synopsis should be a teaser. There are three kinds of synopses that you should include in your press kit.

The reason you supply three synopses to journalists is because you want to make it easy for them to write a review of your film, and you offer three different lengths of synopsis because you don't yet know how much space they have in their publication.

These three synopses should be typed up with careful attention to correct spelling and grammar and photocopied for inclusion in the kit.

Hint You are writing a synopsis that should sound like the paragraph on the back of the DVD or video jacket. The point of the synopsis is to make the reader want to see the movie.

1 The long synopsis

A single page, double spaced, in which the story is summed up in three quarters of the page, and the last three or four lines of the page contains an anecdote from the making of the movie which demonstrates your incredible talent.

2 The medium synopsis

Three quarters of a page long, in which the story is summed up yet again, only more concisely, with the last two or three lines devoted to another production anecdote which again demonstrates the talent you know you have.

3 The short synopsis

A half page, in which the first three quarters is a tight and punchy story summary, followed by another production anecdote, this time a mere line long.

Step 3 Write Cast and Crew Bios

You should include brief biographies of the key people you worked with on your movie. Actors' bios should include previous film roles (if any), stage work and awards they may have won. Key crew bios like director of photography, production designer, editor and composer should detail other directors and productions they have worked for, or work-related experience. For example my DoP shot a commercial for Burger King and my production designer designed a table for IKEA.

Be certain that you have a brief, concise and interesting biography for yourself. If this is your first film project, and you have absolutely no other film experience, then you could include your work in your previous life. For

example: 'Elliot Grove, an ex-carpenter, produces his first feature film using project management and organisational skills he learned on building sites.' If your previous work experience, like mine, sounds too lame to be of interest, you might simply list your education credits. Your total cast and crew bios should run to no more than three or four pages and when photocopied should be stapled together to keep them separate from the synopses.

Step 4 Create Ten FAQs

Creating hype and publicity for your film means that you have to give precise direction and guidance to the people who hear about your film: film festival programmers, film journalists and, of course, acquisition executives. I was in London during the launch of Quentin Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs* and was fortunate enough to see his press kit. Scanning it reassured me that Tarantino was not relying on the judgement of film critics or even the film going public to determine that he was an amazingly talented filmmaker. He was printing it himself in his press kit, under the guise of the Ten Most Frequently Asked Questions of Quentin Tarantino During the Making of *Reservoir Dogs*. Immediately following the questions were his answers.

Hint Film hype is not earned. It is manufactured by you. It is you who has the power to turn yourself into a cult filmmaker and your film into a cult movie.

Doing this for yourself will be an easy thing to complete, because the ten questions will be the same ten questions that everyone has been asking you during the making of the film. On my film, the questions were: what was it like working with non-professional actors? If you had to do it over again, what would you do differently? What did you learn about directing films? How did you get the notorious Mad Frankie Fraser to star in your film? Who are your influences? Where do you see the future of British filmmaking?

List your ten questions on a page, and after each question type an answer about five lines long. You are hoping that a journalist will be intrigued by your film, but for whatever reason be unable to reach you in time for their press deadline. If this happens, then the journalist could write: 'Contacted today from New York, Elliot Grove said . . .'

By listing these questions and answers you are also giving the journalist a taste of how you will react to similar questions, and accordingly how you will appeal to the readership of the particular publication.

Step 5 Get Publicity Stills

Although your press kit has a slick, glossy cover, three synopses, cast and crew bios and FAQs, you still need to have photographs. Getting a good publicity still is a true art form. The right still can be used on the poster, in newspaper ads, on DVD covers, on t-shirts—in fact, everywhere your movie

The picture editors of the trade papers frequently bemoan the poor quality of publicity stills available to them. *Screen International* looks for a production still to appear on page three of its weekly and finds this the hardest still to find.

is mentioned. Truly memorable images, like the eyes from *The Blair Witch Project*, cross into popular culture and are mimicked and satirised by others.

Publicity stills that work are photographs that include action. The stills photographer you hire should have a portfolio of stills that demonstrate movement and action within the frame. Ask the stills photographer to attend the shoot on the days that the most action is happening. Perhaps it is the day with the duelling swordsman, the pistol shot or the day you managed to get a large crane onto the set. The photographer needs to take four kinds of stills:

1. Stills of the cast re-enacting key moments of the movie. The photographer cannot click away during the shoot because the microphones will pick up the shutter noise. After a suitable take, ask the actors to hold their marks. You can then rearrange the actors to suit the frame and get the photographer to capture the moment for posterity.

2. Stills of the cast and crew showing off the production values of the movie: show as much film equipment as you can, show the fake head being glued onto the actor, the fingernails being ripped off, whatever—but make sure it contains loads of action. Journalists and the public all concur that a picture tells a thousand words.

3. Get pictures of yourself producing. If nothing else, you will want a record of your efforts to prove that you actually produced a movie. But photos of a person producing a film are pretty lame: generally they are shots of them reading a script or signing a cheque. In order to make the photos of yourself more dramatic, turn to the theatre and use a stage trick used by accomplished stage actors when they share the stage with another actor and wish to upstage them. They pull out their finger and point. Try it. Look at some photographs of filmmakers and they are invariably pointing. Take your stills photographer to the set, tell them that every time you point, you want to hear the shutter go. You can point at anything. You can point at a speck of fluff on someone's jacket, you can point at the sun, you can point at your foot, you can even point at your nose. It doesn't matter. Point and make sure you hear the click of the camera. In actual fact there are really only two times that you point when you are on the set as a producer.

The first is when you say 'You, with the attitude—you're fired. Off the set. Now!' And the second is: 'Thank you for sharing that with me.' At this point you will usually wander off to watch a movie for an hour or two until things cool down.

4. Photos of yourself with celebrities. Even if you do not have a celebrity working on the film, try and convince a local celebrity to attend your set, again on a day with a lot of action. When they show up, give them a polite tour of your set, introduce them to the key people on the crew and allow them time to ask questions. For many, this will be the first time they have been on a film set, and your lo-to-no budget shoot may not fall into their preconceived ideas of what a film set should be like. At the appropriate moment, ask them politely if you could have a picture or two with them. If necessary, offer to send them a copy. When you are ready, make sure that you are standing stage right (camera left). And point!

Hint Always stand on stage right to have your picture taken. Why? Captions run left to right, and this position guarantees that your name will appear first.

To hire a stills photographer for three days cannot cost more than £500 (\$750) on this budget.

The Unit Publicist attends the shoot and ensures that there are sufficient photographs taken for the press kit and organises interviews with the director and actors. These reviews are recorded and transcribed and edited for the press kit and for the website.

If you start studying the publicity stills used by successful film people you will see that they follow these rules.

Step 6 Include Reviews and Third-Party Endorsements

Celebrity endorsements can work wonders for a film. John Malkovich saw the film *The Terrorist* at the Cairo Film Festival in 1999 and allowed his name to be used as a third-party endorsement of the film. As a result the film picked up a UK distributor and fared very well.

Third-party endorsements always work wonders in the world of promotion. All commercial enterprise uses them. You may use toothpaste recommended by the British Dental Association, eat a certain breakfast cereal on the recommendation of a leading nutritionist and see a movie because a certain journalist—probably well known for their taste and judgement—has put a film onto their ‘must-see’ list.

By getting a journalist to see and review your film you are starting to create buzz for your film. Make a copy of the review and include it in your press kit. Even if the journalist disliked your film, the review they print will most likely include a superlative somewhere in the opening one or two sentences. Film journalists have careers too. They want to be quoted and have their name splashed on the poster. If they didn’t like the film and include a superlative, they know that you will quote them out of context. So ‘an amazingly inept first film’ becomes ‘an amazing first film’. When you print their name and publication after the quote, you are helping them with name awareness of their magazine and themselves. Journalists are always trying to increase their stature among the readership or get a better job. With your poster in their portfolio, their reputation is enhanced and they have an even better chance of moving their career upwards. Essentially, you are helping each other.

Journalists and film festivals

Journalists have love–hate relationships with film festivals. On one hand they enjoy and thrive in the glamorous atmosphere of a film festival. If the right filmmakers come to the festival, they will be able to do many interviews in a short space of time that they can warehouse until needed. What they dislike about film festivals is the fact that they have to watch movies—and lots of them. Usually they screen these films alone at home on DVD. Few festivals have the resources to screen the films ahead of time at private screenings for journalists. Supposing you have entered a small regional festival in Europe or America in a town or small city that has a weekly community paper. This paper will have an entertainment section devoted to printing the press kits and photographs of films released by the distributors in the area. The entertainment editor probably has another area to cover as well: perhaps it is sports or holidays. When the local film festival arrives, this film journalist will be asked to cover the festival and preview all the films. When they reach your film, they discover that your press kit has three synopses: long, medium and short. The journalist knows that their work will be made easier by this simple addition to your press kit. Next, they discover the cast and crew bios which are short and succinct.

Finally they see the ten FAQs. Now they can watch the film, make notes and know they have ample information on which to base their review. And

even if they hated your film they will be able to write an intelligent article based on the information you have provided. Journalists want to be quoted, they want a big line printed on your poster and they want their name printed underneath the quote. They are hoping to get a job on that city's daily paper, or maybe move to a national paper or magazine.

Step 7 Create an Electronic Press Kit

A Unit Publicist films key moments of the shoot and key interviews. These materials can then be edited together for the electronic press kit.

An electronic press kit (EPK) contains photos, interviews with the principal cast and crew, either on a disc, sent by email or available as a download from the filmmaker's website.

During the shoot, hire a documentary filmmaker to take a high-quality video footage of the shoot. Include interviews with the key actors, director, producer and other principal crew where appropriate. For example, if your film features prosthetic heads being lopped off, interview the prop-maker and the special effects artists. You are looking for angles that might help you sell in the story of the film later.

When doing interviews, have someone ask key people on the cast and crew questions from your ten FAQs. Then film the answers. If possible, set up some of the interviews in front of a simple cloth or curtain with a poster behind the interviewee. In this way you can deliver the interview to a television station and they can cut in their own reviewer making it look like they were in the same room, when in actual fact they have never met.

You can also include a short trailer for the movie.

Broadcasters welcome EPKs because it represents free content. You will have to guarantee to any television station that the music rights are cleared for broadcast.

Hint Make certain that you also have a NTSC copy of the EPK for use in the USA, Canada and Japan.

Title (Genre)

Production company/ies, Lead production company address, telephone and fax
Shooting locations

(Shooting start date)

Cast: [Up to twelve principal cast members' names]

ExPrd., [Executive Producer's Name]; Prd., [Producer's Name]; Dir., [Director's Name];
Scr., [Writer's Name]; DOP, [DoP's Name]; Ed., [Editor's Name]; LinePrd., [Line Producer's Name]; AD, [Assistant Director's Name]; PrdDsgn., [Production Designer's Name];
Art, [Art Director's Name]; Set, [Set Designer's Name]; Cstm, [Costume Designer's Name]; PrdCoord., [Production Co-ordinator's Name]; Snd., [Sound Recordist's Name]; Cstg., [Casting Director's Name]; Publ., [Publicist's Name]

figure 16.1
Example of a production
listing

Publicity Strategy

Once you are listed in the trades you will start to get calls from acquisition executives. They will always ask to see rushes or a rough cut. Politely put them on hold and contact them when you have finished your film.

Step 1 Get Listed in the Trades

About 3 weeks before the start of your shoot, contact the production listings editor of the trade papers and submit to them the details requested. The trade papers have very little space, and they want to make sure that they only list professional productions. See figure 16.1 for an outline of the information that you will need to provide for a listing.

Hint Who reads production listings? Crew (by the time it is published it is usually too late to get work) and the acquisition executives.

Step 2 Create a Website

Check out the websites for *Memento* [www.otnemem.com] and *The Blair Witch Project* [www.blairwitch.com] for excellent examples of web marketing despite their age.

Creating a website for your film has numerous advantages. You may want to publish a diary of your project on the site, and put up the trailer, as well as providing contact information. Some filmmakers put up clips from the movie, or out-takes and filmmakers' mistakes if they relate to the tone of the project. Make sure anything you include fits in with the tone and 'brand identity' of your film. It is a good idea to use an area of your site to hold your press kit. Here you can include a photo gallery (make sure each picture is captioned clearly with names so press can use them too).

Hint The perfect website contains the following elements:

- An easy to remember name.
- Simple and fast loading.
- No black backgrounds with white text. It takes too much ink to print out.
- A press release section.
- Other professionals will research you and your movie via your website, so include specific details on the film.

You should:

- Assess the competition.
 - Experiment with the best video compression technologies for your clips.
 - Plan for the future development of your site.
-

Step 3 Press Release

There are three times that you will be able to issue a press release.

The first time is on the first day of principal photography, the next time will be on the last day of principal photography and finally, on the last day of

post-production, when the film is effectively complete. The press releases you write should also be archived on your website and ready for inclusion in your press kit.

The trades will also be able to print a still each time you print a press release if the film is interesting enough, so make sure that your unit publicist has taken enough high-quality stills to offer the press a different still each time they receive a release.

A good press release will give background information on the project and the filmmakers, and provide specific details on the who, what, where, why and when of the film. Keep them as brief and as clearly written as possible. See figure 16.2 opposite for an example.

BACKGROUNDER 130

FIRST FOR FIRST-TIME FILMMAKERS
11th Raindance Film Festival
 24.10.03 – 07.11.03

16 Years of Alcohol

Date & Time of Screening	Friday 7 th October, 8pm	Venue of Screening	UGC Haymarket, Screen 1
Running Time	102 mins	Format	HD
Director	Richard Jobson		
Country of Origin	UK	Writer	Richard Jobson
Producers	Hamish McAlpine, Mark Burton		
Print Source	Metro Tartan	DoP	John Rhodes
Principal Cast	Kevin McKidd, Laura Fraser, Susan Lynch, Ewen Bremner		



FILM DETAILS

"Sometimes for some people things don't work out as they might have hoped." So begins our journey into the violent world of Frankie Mac (played by a riveting Kevin McKidd) and his 16 years of alcohol from boyhood to manhood.

As a boy, Frankie's illusions of perfect love are shattered by the alcohol-drenched betrayals of his once adored father. When Frankie himself falls in love, first with Heien (Fraser), then with Mary (Lynch), his aggression and distrust make him unable to sustain any form of loving relationship. The bleak story of Frankie Mac offers us hope at many a turn, but Frankie himself seems unable to understand, until the very last moment, that what happens next really is up to him.

The film is at times poetic and often surreal, but somehow it remains painfully real, like a series of important moments in a life viewed through one's own memory of heightened emotions and senses. Shot on high definition with a minimal budget, the production values are impressive, with camerawork and direction that give us the city of Edinburgh as one of the main stars of the film.

BIOGRAPHY

At 16, Richard Jobson was the front man of Scottish punk band The Skids. He went on to study theatre and film, working with a theatre group for many years before moving to Brussels where he recorded four poetry albums and wrote two books. One of those books is *16 Years of Alcohol*, which is the basis for this, his directorial debut. Jobson has been nominated for best directorial debut at this year's British Independent Film Awards.

figure 16.2
 Sample press release

Step 4 Distribute Completed Press Kit

The first press kits are distributed to the trade papers. You will probably also want to distribute to independent film magazines, such as *Filmmaker* and *Moviescope*. As your scope widens, you might want to include some of the influential websites, such as indiewire.com and filmthreat.com. Other magazines such as *Total Film* and *Empire* might also be convinced to run a story on the making of the film.

Consumer magazines might be interested if you have a story specific to their readership or an actor who is newsworthy. If you do have any big-name actors, then make sure you state whether they are available for interview; this is not only more interesting to journalists, but makes for more effective publicity for the film.

Make sure that you are distributing it effectively. Rather than spending a huge chunk of your publicity budget sending press kits to every publication you can think of, target your mail-out to appropriate titles, whether you are aiming highbrow, lowbrow or anywhere in between.

Approaches to Publicity

The most valuable asset of any PR company is their database of contacts. To do your own PR go to a bookstore, buy every single magazine that has a film section and copy down the names of the journalists along with their contact details. Then telephone each publication and verify their details.

Making Contacts

A blind email landing in someone's inbox is not the best way to get noticed. The two most effective ways of promoting your film are:

Phone/email/phone

Make verbal contact, send the email and then call back to close the deal. Doing this, it's possible to contact a hundred people a day; however, if you miss someone and leave a message, they may call you back while you are on another call, thus starting a frustrating game of telephone tag.

Lunch/email/phone

Go to the time, trouble and expense of setting up a lunch meeting, then email and phone for follow up. This is intimate and personal and you're likely to close (once you have paid the restaurant bill); however, you can only do one meeting a day.

Summary

1. The right press kit will enable you to sell your film.
2. Excellent photographs and images are an essential part of a good press kit.
3. Always search for elements of your project that could attract either notoriety or celebrity status to your film.

If you want to complete your press kit, you will need to be reviewed and interviewed. To do that, you will need to go to a film festival, and you might even win an award!

In Conversation with Phil Symes

Phil Symes is the director of The PR Contact. He has been a key player in film public relations since the early 80s when he formed his own agency. Phil specialises in working with independent producers on a worldwide basis. Recent international launch campaigns include films such as *The Son's Room* (Palme d'Or, Cannes), *City of God, Spirited Away* (Golden Bear, Berlin), *Irreversible*, *The Magdalene Sisters* (Golden Lion, Venice), *The Brown Bunny* and *At Five In The Afternoon* (Jury Prize, Cannes).

How early on in a project do you get involved?

It comes in various stages; sometimes a producer comes to us with a script idea and is looking for support in putting the project together, so we help them to find financiers, production partners, distributors. On a number of occasions we have introduced producers to financial partners, production partners and sales agents. Largely, that work is done at major festivals like Cannes or Venice. For example, we put together a major project with Phil Collins for one producer, Norma Heyman. It was a script called *Buster*; Norma wanted to make the film and had Phil Collins on board, but she didn't have any money for the project. We worked with her at Cannes and introduced her to a number of partners. The film was made and became one of the biggest grossing films in British history. That's one requirement of clients who come to us.

Another situation is a film that is about to shoot and they want a publicist on board to help put together the publicity during production. The main aim there is to interest potential buyers around the world and get them involved at an early stage to presell the film. Everybody wants to have a film ready for release with distributors on board for major territories. A lot of those sales are effected during the period of production. The aim is to get very positive pieces in the key international trades, *Variety*, *Hollywood Reporter* or *Film France*, as well as trying to create some major consumer publicity. We would always go to magazines like *Vanity Fair* or *Harpers & Queen* to position the film as a much sought after product. During that period we will also work with the producers in putting together the press materials that they'll need to deliver to the buyer who is taking the film for a territory. That material is normally the EPK, the electronic press kit, which will feature B-roll footage shot during the production and interviews with the director, producer, set designer, hair and costume, production designer and key cast. Then you'll have the written press kit, which we put together, and that will again be the same thing—a written report on the production, background information on all the people involved, all actors, production people, director, plus stories that happened during production and cast biographies. We will also supervise the photographic material, colour transparencies and black and white images. Our role is to work with the photographer to make sure he covers all the days that should be covered, those that are photographically interesting. We make sure that he has enough photos of the key players and that he has images of the director working on set. The normal delivery requirement is 100 colour transparencies and 100 black and white images. At the end of the shoot we will make those selections, get all the principal actors to approve the images and then we will supply the captions, identifying what's happening in each image.

Sometimes during a production we will be involved taking journalists onto set. That's another phase of publicity, and what that all leads to is publicising films at key markets such as festivals. Once a film is finished, and if it hasn't been sold for the world, then the sales agents will want to take it to festivals and markets for further sales or they will want to take it to festivals for the potential glory of winning a prize or creating international awareness of the

film. And the biggest and most important festivals that we cover are Berlin, Cannes and Venice.

If you get a call from a prospective new client, a new filmmaker, to go to a private screening is there anything that makes you more or less likely to accept the invitation?

We always go and see a new film and base our judgement about whether we will work on it and what we would charge according to our enthusiasm for it. If we are excited about it then we will work on it.

What is the most important element of a press kit?

I think the most important elements are the production story which is the front piece of the press kit, which explains the genesis of the project, gives quotes from the director, producer and some of the cast and is the tip sheet for most journalists. It explains the project to them and provides them with material for editorial they may be writing themselves, and then it should also include up-to-date biographies on the key actors, actresses and the director.

How do you go about putting one together?

Well first you call all the agents of those involved and get their current CV and photos so you know what they look like so when you go on set you can identify them, and also so that you have some background information on them. We will then interview each of them on set during production and those interviews become the basis of the press kit.

Do you gear your press kits differently for different clients?

I think if you're good at PR (I hope we do this) you get a good sense of how the producers or director wants it written. They all have a signature style and we try to adapt each kit to the way we feel each director or producer would want it written. And you determine that from a conversation on set, from knowing what kind of newspapers, magazines and books they read, and you can identify the style that would suit them best. Some like very flowery descriptions while others like their press kits very sparsely written, with just the basic information. You try to judge what the director, producer and sales company are looking for.

How much input do clients have on their own press kits? Do they approve it before it is sent out?

We do it in different stages. During production we will write a preliminary production kit which is a very basic, thin information pack that we put together to get a sense of whether we are working in the right direction. Once they have given their comments on that, we then make that into a much more detailed document. We will then, before delivering it to the producer or sales agent, get the cast to approve their bios. And then it will go back to the producer for their final draft comments. There is always tweaking to be done. We haven't yet had a situation where we've had any document thrown back at us. If you get a sense of how they want it written, you will normally get it right as long as you are willing to work with them.

You've mentioned a lot of skills that a film publicist needs like being able to talk to people, being able to write, having a good eye for a publicity still etc. What are the most important skills for someone who wants to work in your business?

I think it's always helpful if you have experience of journalism. It's journalistic skills that apply: getting to know people, being able to talk to them, being able to get information from them and then being able to translate or convey that information to others. And also knowing how to be persuasive without being a nuisance, aggressive or applying too much pressure on someone is important. There's also some instinct to it; knowing who is the right journalist to approach on a particular subject. But that comes from having read their columns on a regular basis and also being very conscious of what's happening in the bigger picture of the world. There are events outside of the film industry which relate to the subject matter that you're dealing with that you can use to get your message across.

How important is the right exposure? Is 'any publicity good publicity'?

No. Well-considered publicity works but badly considered publicity doesn't. If you are getting a message to the wrong market sector then you are not going to be successful. We work on a diverse range of films; from the German director Werner Herzog to something as popular as *Dancing at the Blue Iguana*, which starred Daryl Hannah and was directed by Michael Radford, who was very successful with *Il Postino*. This is a more mainstream film. This is going to appeal much more to an older woman, a wide range of men, and it will be publicised in the mainstream whereas the Werner Herzog film campaign would be directed to the Herzog specialists, enthusiasts, a smaller market, but a very specific one. So I think you have to get your market right. It would be pointless calling *The Daily Star* or *The Sun* about Werner Herzog—there would be no interest. But they would certainly be interested in Daryl Hannah in the kind of costume she wears in *Dancing at the Blue Iguana*.

Instead of sending out 300 press releases, we try to determine from among those 300, who the key fifty players are—whether it be magazines, newspapers, radio or TV—and just concentrate on those fifty and forget the others.

Do you consider your company different from other publicists?

I think one thing we're very fortunate about is that almost all of the people that work in the office are very, very keen on film. They love working with filmmakers, actors and actresses. They really are enthusiasts for what they do. So to them it's not really just a nine to five job. It's something they love doing and I think that comes across. And they're not the kind of publicists who just want to work on big Hollywood studio pictures. We will get involved with something that seems odd or strange because we think it's exciting. For example at the Berlin Film Festival we were offered a Japanese animated film and a lot of other agencies said 'Oh, is that all you have to work on?' and we said 'It's interesting, it's exciting', and it won the Golden Bear.

Is there a direction that you see filmmakers heading in or that you would like to see?

Originality is very important. We have a lot of first-time producers or filmmakers coming in with scripts and almost every script you read is derivative of something else that has come before. It seems very hard to find a very good, new, original script. So many times we read scripts in our office and say, 'Well that is *Matrix* meets so and so meets so and so.' In terms of the industry, there don't seem to be many independent filmmakers around. Most of them are attached to a consortium company or they are with Film Four, or they're working with Working Title. There is no Palace Pictures out there, there aren't as many talented young independent companies as there were in the 80s.

What's the best thing about your job?

Seeing it work. What I love is if I've worked very hard on a project that was totally unknown, such as the Indian film *Asoka*, then seeing it become something much talked about, much admired and successful at the box office. From a starting point where people were saying that Indian films don't work in this country, we took the film to Venice and it was a huge success and then did very well.

Does it become difficult to find original ways to present a new movie?

I find that if you do work on a certain style of film you get lots of offers of repeat business of that particular genre. And we wouldn't be excited if we did twenty films that were all of the same type and I don't think we could get the journalists interested. For example we worked on a very controversial French film called *Baise-Moi*, which was interesting because it was the first time we'd worked on a film of that type and it became quite successful.

Do you take on a lot of challenging or controversial films?

I think challenging films are more interesting because you don't do a formula job repeating everything that's been done in America. If the film is untested, then that to me is much more interesting. For example at Cannes this year, our slate of films was a French film, an Italian film which won the Palme D'Or, an Iranian film that won a major prize, a Japanese film, a film from Kurdistan, an American film and a film from China. At Venice we had an American film by Larry Clark, a very challenging filmmaker, an Indian film, a German film and a British film from the man who made the *Full Monty*, so we have quite a mix.

In Conversation with Tom Charity

What do you think the role of the film critic is?

I think film critics are important. In a way I have misgivings about being lumped in with publicity because what I think is important about film critics is they offer an alternative to publicity, to the hype. It depends on the critic and the publication. But I think you have this big Hollywood machine which has enormous financial resources trying to lure 'punters' into the cinemas, regardless

Tom Charity is the editor of *lovefilm.com* and is a film writer of 15 years' standing. Formerly the film editor at *Time Out London* magazine, he has contributed to *Sight and Sound*, *Cahiers du Cinéma*, *Cinema Scope* and numerous other publications. He is the author of *John Cassavetes: Lifeworks* (Omnibus Press) and *The Right Stuff* (BFI modern classics). One of these days he's going to write that script he keeps talking about.

of what the product is. And the most useful, direct role of the critic, is to offer an objective analysis of that product, a guide to consumers as to the quality and the nature of what the film might actually be and also as a kind of cultural commentator, to stand back and look at a wider picture of what might be going on in the movies. Because *Time Out* is one of the few independent publications—we're not owned by a big corporation—we can write exactly what we think without any pressure whatsoever on us from our employers. I think that's a really valuable freedom to have. We can lead our review section with any film that we choose, and that's the film editor's prerogative, which is not necessarily the case in national newspapers where there's a lot of pressure to go for the biggest Hollywood film as the lead review.

How did you start out in the business?

I did a course that was split fifty-fifty between film and English and the film component was also split fifty-fifty between film history and theory and film practice and production. So I had experience from both sides. I kind of realised that I didn't have the patience or the wherewithal to go into filmmaking and kind of fell into film writing. But I can't say I feel very frustrated about that, I think it's worked out pretty well. When I came out of college I applied for a job at *Time Out* that I wasn't really qualified for and didn't get interviewed for. But the film editor liked the samples that I'd sent in and agreed to meet me to talk about whether I would be interested in doing freelance work for him and yes, I was. I always felt an affinity with *Time Out* and I was kind of lucky in that that's where I got a break, almost right at the beginning of my career in journalism. It was actually the first place I was professionally published, so I had an emotional attachment to *Time Out* anyway.

If a new filmmaker invites you to a screening, what makes you more likely to accept?

Well, it happens a lot, specifically with short films. With short films, I invariably say no. And the reason is that I am just too busy. As it is, I have to see three or four films every week for the job. So I don't have the time to go and see extra films just because someone's made them. There's not much I can practically do to help a short film. What I will say to people in that position, short and feature filmmakers, is that it is much easier for me if they send a DVD. I am very happy to give personal feedback but there's no way I can get anything in the magazine unless there is a public screening.

So how does it work with the big releases?

What happens with mainstream releases is that they organise press previews which might be anything from 6 months before release to a week before release. That's how I see most of my films, but we run copy in the magazine with release.

How important is a press kit for a filmmaker and what should they include in their press kit?

A press kit is useful but I don't know how important it is. The most valuable use that has is a list of cast and crew with everybody's name spelled right. And maybe a brief synopsis of the plot with the character names. Sometimes

it's useful to see a brief CV for the talent. But that's it really. It's less useful now for mainstream films because that information is generally available on the Internet.

You and Geoff Andrew have been called the most important film critics by distributors; they are seeking your approval to increase box office.

Er, I don't think it's true [chuckle]. I think *Time Out* is important to a certain sector of the film distribution–exhibition industry. Art house films rely on independent voices like *Time Out* because they can't afford to buy the publicity that Hollywood can. Because Geoff and I are pretty open to art house cinema I think that has attracted a readership that is interested in that kind of film, and that's good for independent distributors.

Our readership, the circulation of the magazine, doesn't compare with national critics or with Alexander Walker in the *Evening Standard*. Anything with TV coverage is going to reach many, many more people than *Time Out* will. But our readers go to the cinema a lot, which is nice. We are a London magazine and London is a huge percentage of the box office particularly for independent films. For that sector, our importance is out of proportion to the readership because Londoners tend to be more cosmopolitan than people outside London and because these films don't get distributed properly outside of London.

How do you feel about being quoted out of context?

It's tricky, really. Quite often, PRs will phone us up to ask for quotes for their films and obviously they do it when they know that we liked the film. I feel a bit torn because you want to support those kinds of films but in the end it's my name on it and I have lost count of the number of times people have given me a hard time over a film I have recommended because it's been quoted on the poster. Often they end up telling me their reservations about a film which I've shared in my review but they haven't read the review they've only read the poster. So I do have mixed feelings about it.

My rule of thumb now is I won't give a quote unless I have written the review and they're not allowed to quote anything that isn't verbatim from the review. Some people are more generous than that—some people will give them a quote and work it into the review. But I think that's the tail wagging the dog.

Is there a certain type of film that you are more likely to give a good review to?

I don't know. I like to think I have very eclectic taste but some people might disagree. Somebody said that there are only two kinds of films: good and bad. And I don't agree with that. There isn't a genre that I feel unqualified to review a film in. But one of the things about working here and being a film editor is that we have a team of freelancers to call on so if I don't think I am going to enjoy a film, then why should I put myself through that? I would rather give the film a better chance so I'll assign a freelancer who I think would enjoy it. If it's a film about the rave scene—I'm too old! So I'll find somebody younger and hipper!

When you review a film do you assess it against your personal tastes or do you try to make a judgement about how the film will be received generally? Do you believe that the readership trust your opinion?

I think it's impossible to try to second guess or generalise public opinion because everybody has their own opinion and no two people are going to see eye-to-eye over a film. So the only way to do it is to be honest about your own reactions to a film and hopefully you can write the review in such a way that you can put the film in context so that people can see where you're coming from and form their own opinion not only on the film, but on the review.

Are you concerned with how other people receive the movies that you review? For example, you weren't too enamoured by *A Beautiful Mind* but it won a Best Film Oscar™.

I wish I could say I didn't care at all about what other people thought but of course I do. You're in a pretty exposed position as a critic. I do read other people's reviews before and after writing mine, and I always did, because I am fascinated by films. I like to be aware of what other people are thinking, what my colleagues are thinking. The crucial thing is not to be swayed by that because, if you end up second-guessing, you are not being true to yourself and if you're not true to yourself, how can you expect your readers to trust you? A film like *A Beautiful Mind* is going to get a very mixed reception. There is a very polarised reception to films—what's a perfect film for the Academy is not necessarily going to be a very hip film in London. I would have trouble, probably, being a critic in LA because it's a business town. I don't think that my perspective is close enough to what the citizens of LA actually want from a movie. Here there is a great cynicism about what Hollywood does, which I think is a healthy thing, and I do my best to promote it.

What advice do you have for independent filmmakers?

I am surprised how little sense of film culture a lot of young British filmmakers have. I don't think they see enough movies, particularly older films. I don't think they have enough curiosity about cinema as an art form. They seem to me to be very fashion led. You get a seemingly endless run of Tarantino rip-offs and gangster films. There's nothing wrong with doing a gangster film, but do they all have to be the same? You just get the feeling that they've seen *Lock, Stock, and Two Smoking Barrels* and they're going to do their version of that. I'm sure they've seen *The Godfather* but have they seen Cagney movies? Have they seen Fritz Lang movies? Do they even know who Fritz Lang is? They should; this is how you learn. You look at Scorsese—I mean he didn't just pick up a camera and do it. He studied film, and I don't mean in college; I mean in a cinema. And they're lucky these days because everything is available on DVD. You can do a film school at home.

How are photographs picked for *Time Out*?

I pick them. We're generally sent a pack of photos or they're on the Internet. More often they're just on ImageNet, which is a website that all the main distributors use. And it might vary from a choice of two or three stills, through

to fifty. Personally I think it's a mistake to only send a couple of stills because you'll just see the same pictures everywhere. And if I have to drop a picture because of space limitations, then I am going to drop a picture that I've seen everywhere else and am bored by. Pictures are important and equally, in a way, it's a mistake to send out too many because you want to have some control over the visuals, over the message that the pictures send out because they are as strong as the words. It's important to let the stills reflect what the film is. I think that's good advice to a young filmmaker: to get a decent stills photographer because you do need about six to a dozen really strong shots.

What about any advice to a young writer?

You know, it's one of the truisms of film criticism that you will constantly find yourself saying that the script wasn't ready and I know how frustrating that is for a writer to hear! I think the most important lesson the film writer can learn is that there can't be too many rewrites; everything can get better. You can listen to other people's opinions but you don't necessarily have to follow their advice. I think a lot of screenplays coming out of Britain could use a little polishing. There are a lot of stereotypes and people are very lazy. One of the things that Americans have done better in the independent sector is that they are more open to putting a fresh spin on stuff whereas a lot of British scripts just tend to recycle but that's not what you want from the independent sector. Originality is key, and I don't know why that doesn't come through more. Everyone seems to be on the fast track to selling out. Independents should use the freedom they have to be outside the mainstream; experiment, and that's what will actually make you stand out. Some kind of flair and originality really does stand out.

What about someone trying to get into film criticism? Do you have any advice for them?

Don't do it. [Chuckle]

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17 Film Festivals

FILM FESTIVALS ARE the result of corporate, civic or national ego. Film festivals are founded by corporations, municipalities or nations to demonstrate their cultural ethic and prove to a larger community that culture exists in the company, city or state.

A city like Leeds for example has a museum, an art gallery, a symphony orchestra, an opera and a film festival. The city fathers who assist in funding the Leeds Film Festival can certainly claim that the city of Leeds is a cultured place, and therefore more attractive to tourists. The revenue generated by the extra tourist traffic thus justifies any public money given to the festival. However, a film festival is usually last on the list of cultural events funded by public money.

Bermuda has a film festival that is part funded by the country's tourist ministry. Tour packages that are sold to film fans include film tickets and accommodation during the end of the low season. In this way the film festival—a cultural event—is used to promote the island's tourist business and fill its excellent hotels and restaurants with customers.

Other film festivals satisfy corporate needs. In London the Sci-Fi Festival used to be sponsored by the Sci-Fi Channel to create awareness for the channel, and its specific programme of sci-fi films.

In industry terms, film festivals are usually used as launch pads for films. Attended by acquisition executives and talent scouts, festivals are full of new product and fresh talent. Acquisition executives rely on the choices made by festival selectors (called programmers) to filter through the vast array of material in circulation. Individual festivals have built reputations based on their programming. In Europe, Rotterdam, Berlin, Raindance and Cannes all have unique programming choices that distinguish each festival from the other. In North America, Toronto, Telluride and Sundance are well known for their programming, while smaller festivals like Montreal's excellent Fantasia Film Festival present unique and original material themed around horror and science fiction.

A film festival's role is to provide an audience of receptive and appreciative filmgoers to view your work. Distributors can also use the festival to build publicity for their film before its commercial release. A festival is also a place where acquisition executives can discover new talent as they have a platform to screen their first shorts and features.

Start Your Own Film Festival

If you have a burning passion for cinema, and you would love the organisational challenge, there is nothing to stop you from starting your own film festival. All you need to do is contact the owner of a cinema in your area and see what they charge for a week-long hire. This is four-walling: you buy all of the tickets for the cinema for that period at a discount. This is exactly how Raindance Film Festival started.

In 1993 there were no other film festivals devoted to first time filmmakers or to British films. In that year there were only six independent films made in the UK—probably the low point in British filmmaking history. The major British film festivals in 1993, Edinburgh and London, specialised in European and world (i.e. American) cinema. British filmmakers were considered freaks with the exception of Ken Loach, Mike Leigh and Derek Jarman. The uniqueness of Raindance Film Festival was to feature British films and films by first-time filmmakers.

Hint To help make your festival successful, create a business plan.

Creating a Film Festival Business Plan

Step 1 Determine the unique selling point of your festival

With so many new festivals opening every week (and closing a few months later) it is more important than ever to find out how your festival will be different from any other festival currently playing in your area. Perhaps your area needs a specialist festival to broaden the range of films for certain key audience groups, for example Asian audiences? Or perhaps you live in an area where there simply aren't many films being shown and audiences could be found for a variety of film genres.

Step 2 Is my festival original?

You do not want to do something that someone else is doing in your area or has done in the recent past. Festival listings are published by *Variety*, *Screen International* and the British Council. Study them and try to get a feel for the different types of festivals already established.

If you attempt to start a festival that is not original, you are likely to fail.

i Limited amount of both private and public funding

In a climate of so many competing festivals, funders are unlikely to back a festival if they perceive it to be similar to another event. This is mainly due to limited resources and a need to balance provision.

ii Competition for audiences from other established festivals

Most people will not travel long distances to go to see films except in the case of the very large or specialist film festivals.

iii Competition for film prints and distribution difficulties

Well-established festivals always get first choice on titles as distributors or sales agents will be confident that the film is going to be seen by a large number of people.

Step 3 Form alliances

Determine what other arts organisations or cultural embassies might exist in your catchment area in order to allow you to share the workload, and perhaps raise sponsorship. If you live in a capital city, then you might consider approaching the cultural attachés of various government bodies. Countries like Germany, France, Italy and Sweden have strong filmmaking traditions and have aggressive cultural policies where each nation is trying to export its own film culture. Of course the drawback is that you will be limited in some respect by the types of film you can screen. If your festival was funded by the Israeli government to screen a series of Israeli films, you may not be able to screen a series of Palestinian films.

Step 4 Choose a time

This is probably the most important step of all. If you chose a time near another festival, or during a time in the calendar year that has frequent high-profile sporting events, you are less likely to succeed. Similarly, scheduling a film festival during a religious holiday like Easter or Christmas would be foolhardy.

Step 5 Draw up a budget

Running a film festival isn't cheap. It takes a lot of time to trawl through submissions and select the films you want to screen and it costs money to contact the producers, sales agents and distributors and convince them that a screening at your film festival will help their film. Add to that the cost of the cinema, the cost of running ads, printing leaflets and catalogues, not to mention bringing over a filmmaker for a special event, and it is easy to spend £100,000 (\$150,000) on a week-long event. Whatever you decide to do, you have to assess the financial impact and cost. Put it on a budget, and then see if you can raise the money to pay for it. See figure 17.1 overleaf for a festival budget.

Step 6 Draw up a marketing plan

Marketing and sponsorship go hand in hand. A sponsor may have a marketing budget of their own that they can use to enhance your event. When you are considering your marketing budget, try and see which local groups can assist you in marketing events within your festival. If you have a German film—try the German cultural organisation; if you have a film about animal cruelty—contact the local humane society; if you have a film or series of films that portray the evils of racism—contact the local commission for racial equality.

You should also consider alternative forms of marketing such as street marketing.

Considered mainstream now, street marketing is a surefire way to get punters into the cinema. Whether it is a few people standing on a street corner

At Raindance, we have calculated that each 120-minute slot costs £4,000 (\$6,000) to run.

Film Festival Budget	Budgeted	Actual
Income		
Box office		
Merchandise sales		
Submission fees		
Grants		
Sponsorship		
In-kind sponsorship		
Total income		
Expenditure		
Venue hire		
Film print transport		
Equipment		
Guest speakers		
Hospitality		
Marketing/PR		
Printing:		
Flyers		
Tickets		
Posters		
Catalogue		
Office expenses:		
Telephone		
Rent and bills		
Postage		
Salaries:		
Director		
Programmer(s)		
Assistant(s)		
Total expenditure		
Total profit / loss		

figure 17.1
Festival budget

near the cinema handing out flyers, a unicyclist juggling fire near the box office or a signwriter chalking on the sidewalk, anything will get people into the cinema. A simple photocopied flyer with the title of the film, the time and place it is screening and a few good one liners about the film can really get people into your screening. Another alternative would be to print an image on a postcard. The cards can be left for collection or used in a mail-out.

Consider putting together a catalogue containing all the films you are screening. This is another useful way to get people into your screening, and it is also a publication in which you can sell advertising.

Step 7 Get listed in the directories and websites

Dull and boring as it may seem, it is important to get your festival listed in all of the trades and on the different websites that contain film databases. If you give awards and have a celebrity jury, listings come easier.

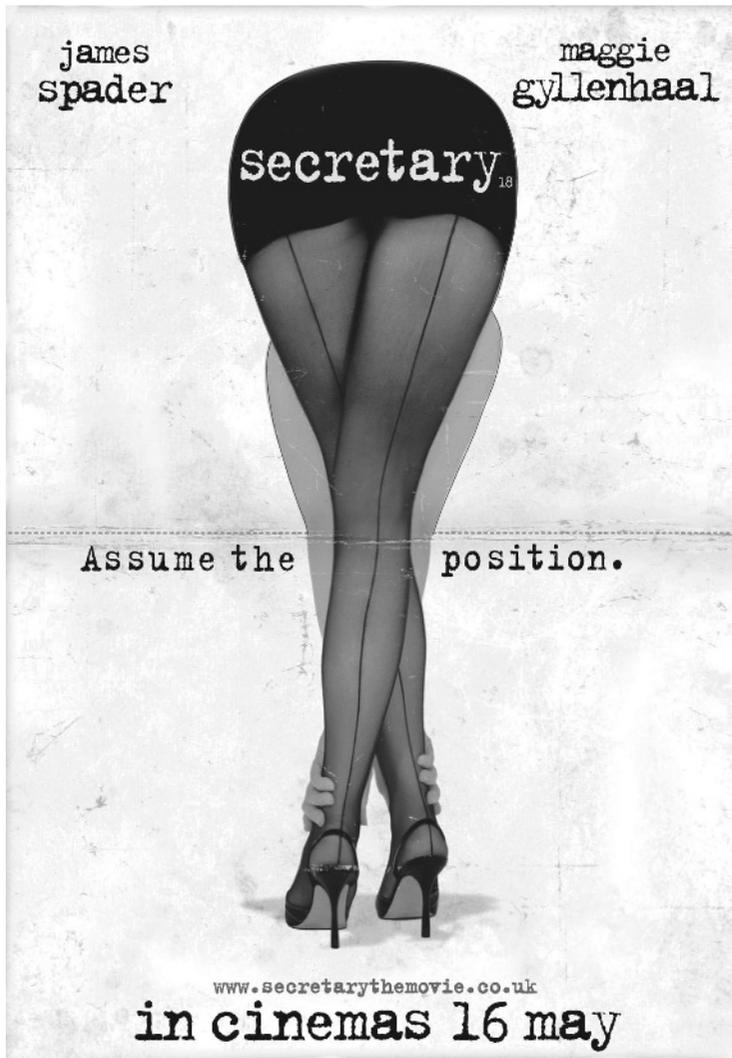


figure 17.2
Secretary postcard.
British distributor Tartan Films used this simple card for *Secretary* in 2003. The postcard is cut around the shape of her legs and bottom and folds just above the log line, so that it pops up, like the secretary in the movie. The film became the number two film in London

Step 8 Raise the money

However you do it—public funding, private investment, sponsorship, cultural grants—you must raise the money. Submission fees and box office will cover half your costs if you are lucky.

Step 9 Programming a film festival

Let us suppose that you have hired your cinema for one theatrical week: from a Friday morning to the following Thursday night. The cinema is now yours to do with as you want.

A film festival has several key elements. Film festivals show movies, they hold talks and seminars, they pay tributes to filmmakers, they throw parties

figure 17.3
Festival schedule

	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu
10.00							
12.00							
14.00							
16.00							
18.00							
20.00							
22.00							
00.00							

and they create atmosphere. It is important to plan your festival time out to the minute, and make certain that you have each of the elements at the correct time.

It would be difficult to run a film festival successfully with the elements in the wrong order. A party at 9 a.m. will do little to enhance the atmosphere, and a series of Jewish films on Passover would also be disastrous for the potential Jewish audience. Remember that festivals need to be innovative and original. Do not copy the efforts of other established festivals. Be original and fresh.

i Devise a schedule

Draw up a screening schedule of available time slots. When the cinema is not a festival cinema, its first showing probably is at noon or two o'clock. Since you have the cinema for the entire week, you can start the screenings earlier if you want. See figure 17.3.

ii Decide on strands

An efficient way to make your festival stand out from the competition is to choose a strand. Strands can feature the works of a single filmmaker, the films of a country, films made by an ethnic minority or a genre. At Raindance we have had strands of films from countries like Japan, Canada and the Balkans, and filmmaker strands with movies by Roger Corman and Shane Meadows. We also have had B-movie strands which show late nights on Friday and Saturday. Strands make your marketing tasks easier, because you are marketing a collection of films, not a series of individual titles.

Premieres, World Premieres and Festival Politics

Film festival directors, like myself, will always choose a world premiere over a national premiere. It is simply more glamorous. As a filmmaker, you have certain trump cards to play with when you submit to film festivals. When you are accepted for the first time to a film festival, it technically is your world premiere. But if that festival is a small festival, you may choose to give that festival a national premiere and save the world premiere for a festival in another country.

Festival politics also kick in. If a film screens at Edinburgh, it is ineligible for the London Film Festival—which only screens UK or world premieres. If it screens in Edinburgh, it cannot screen at Raindance. A film premiering at Raindance is not eligible for Berlin because Berlin specialises in European premieres. A film can screen at Raindance and then Rotterdam however. A film cannot screen at Berlin and Cannes. Sundance winners are usually excluded from the Cannes Film Festival—not because they are ineligible—but because the directors of the Cannes Film Festival would rather screen world premieres.

On the other hand, in order to illustrate how ego boosting the so-called premiere drama is, allow me to relate some stories about my first-hand experience with premieres and other festivals:

We screen many shorts at Raindance. One particular programme a few years ago contained several truly outstanding shorts that were also selected for another British film festival. Screening in our festival would normally have disqualified these shorts, but the producers were eager for them to screen at Raindance because they supported a series of feature films in development and it was important that certain financiers and talent agents saw the work in front of a paying audience. In order to show the shorts, I simply told the festival programmers of the competing festival that we had not received the prints. This bare faced lie was enough to convince the other festival that these films were not shown at Raindance thus preserving their world premiere status.

Although I am not proud of this episode, I did it in order to protect the integrity of the filmmakers and of our festival. I also have been the victim of several world premiere pranks myself, advertising world premiere screenings at Raindance when in fact the films had played in dozens of other festivals.

Playing premiere roulette is becoming more difficult as festivals become more web literate. At Raindance we routinely do a web search on new titles and will know in a matter of seconds which festivals a film has already screened at.

Staff Needed to Run a Festival

Festival Director

The festival director needs to be able to run the festival like any other well-run business. S/he needs to understand commerce as well as being able to communicate persuasively and effectively with potential sponsors and filmmakers. Sponsors need to know what benefits they will derive from giving money to the festival that are unique and different from sponsoring another type of event, like a sporting event. The festival director also needs to be able to persuade distributors to screen high-profile films at the festival in order to give the festival a cachet that can be used by the marketing people.

Above all, the festival director has to have a vision that will lead the festival to a new plane and give the festival a position different from any other festival.

11th RAINDANCE FILM FESTIVAL SUBMISSION REVIEW

Reference number: _____

Title: _____

Country of origin: _____

Running time: _____

Originating format: _____

Screening format: _____

Category: Narrative / Documentary / Pop Promo

Genre: Thriller / Drama / Comedy / Animation / Romance / Experimental /
Horror / Sci-Fi / Family / Musical / Mockumentary

Theme: _____

Brief Review: _____

Rating: Excellent / Festival must
Consider as possibility
Weak

Shortlist for Jury Prize: Official Selection Feature
Official Selection Short
UK Feature
UK Short
Digital Feature
Digital Short
Debut Feature
Documentary

Reviewer: _____

figure 17.4
Raindance film
evaluation form

Programmer

The programmer(s) are the people who view all the preview DVDs and short-list films appropriate to the festival.

Before you hire a programmer, give them a DVD of a film that you have already seen and formed an opinion on. Ask them to evaluate the film according

Festival programmers are highly regarded by programmers of rep cinemas, art-house cinemas and television channels. They are considered very astute at choosing films that will find an audience and are able to test their selection on public audiences over their time at a festival. Festival programmers often move into jobs as acquisition executives.

to their tastes, and then compare their review with your own. If you don't, then you could miss out on some gems.

I experienced this embarrassing situation in 1993 when a programmer for Raindance in New York turned down a black and white film shot with a wobbly camera. The film turned out to be Kevin Smith's *Clerks*, which premiered at Sundance in January 1994—a mere 3 months after Raindance. Make sure you trust the taste of the programmer(s) you hire. Typically, the programmer of each strand in your festival will make their individual shortlists and then confer with the festival director and make a final decision on the films.

Publicist/Head of Marketing

This is probably the most important job on the festival team. The publicist has the daunting task of releasing, not one, but dozens of films (not movies!) with no stars to the unsuspecting general public. The publicist will also need to decide how to approach the trade papers as well. It is one thing to get good reviews for your festival's films in the local weekly newspaper—it's quite another to get a positive notice in one of the trades, like *Variety*, *The Hollywood Reporter* or *Screen International*. Good coverage in the trades will elevate your festival to the point that acquisition executives will start to attend—which in turn enhances your reputation amongst filmmakers eager to do a deal for their film.

Print Traffic Coordinator

This is the second most important job in a film festival and the most underrated. The print traffic coordinator is the person responsible for ensuring that films arrive at the festival in time for the screening and leave the festival to the next destination in time for that screening. In the old days this used to mean lugging huge stacks of 35mm film cans around. These days many festivals show on DCPs (digital cinema packages—hard drives) that are much easier to post and carry. The PT coordinator has to make sure that the films arrive in the correct screening format along with the right sound format. Once the films are at the festival, the PT coordinator arranges for rehearsals at the cinema and trouble shoots any last minute screening glitches. S/he also has to make sure the packages clear customs (a process that can take hours or days). After the screening, the PT coordinator makes sure that the DCP or film print is packaged and sent to the right destination for its next screening. Dealing with other film festivals, film producers and boring customs officials are all part of the PT coordinator's job.

If you enjoy endless telephone bashing and email correspondence with people whose first language is other than yours, then you may be right for this job. If print traffic is sorted, then a film festival runs smoothly. If it isn't, then the festival collapses into a chaos of delayed and cancelled screenings, and if you let down other festivals that follow yours by not getting films to them on time, then you will be tarred with the unreliable brush, and it tends to stick.

Sponsorship Coordinator

Ah! A luxury—to have a full-time person who raises sponsorship and makes sure that there is enough cash to meet the budget of the film festival. In reality, this essential role is often overlooked in the rush to launch the festival, leaving the organisation exposed to financial ruin. Most festivals never run past their third year, due principally to the financial problems that a lack of funds creates. Sort this out if you want your festival to succeed.

Runners

The lowly runner can make or break your festival. A runner will pass out leaflets as part of your street marketing campaign, deliver heavy 35mm film prints to the cinema, answer hundreds of telephone calls and do anything else you can imagine. What does a runner get out of it? A job reference from your newly prestigious festival on their CV is one benefit that most interns or runners desire. Of course that helps anyone trying to break into the industry. The real value of a runner/intern is the fact that they get to watch you cave in under the enormous pressure and learn from your mistakes. If they can give a good neck massage, then their letters of reference will be the most glowing imaginable.

Types of Film Festivals

Film festivals are divided into categories based on the number of acquisition executives that attend.

Majors

The major film festivals, in rank, are: Cannes, Toronto, Sundance, Berlin, Rotterdam and Venice. Cannes is undoubtedly the premiere event. Toronto and Sundance vie for the number two spot, but since Sundance has become a launching pad for Hollywood films, I personally give the number two spot to Toronto—if for no other reason than the important slots it gives to foreign language films. Rotterdam is an amazing festival hosted by an amazing city. Berlin has an excellent festival with Europe's most energetic and charismatic director. Venice is an important festival as well, but is becoming dangerously corporate.

Mini-majors

Mini-major festivals are also excellent festivals to launch your films, and vie with the majors for industry and celebrity turnout. Festivals such as Locarno, San Sebastian, Tribeca and Karlovy Vary have hundreds of celebrities and paparazzi attending and can be a useful springboard to getting your film noticed.

City Festivals

There are many city festivals that attract the attention of filmmakers and filmgoers alike. They do not have a sizeable industry presence, very few acquisitions executives and are designed to appeal to the cineastes within their borders. Edinburgh, Leeds, Cambridge and London are some of the important UK festivals designed for local residents. Palm Springs, Telluride, San Francisco and Montreal are a few of the many in North America.

Genre Festivals

A themed film festival, such as the London's Frightfest and the Sci-Fi Festival will attract acquisitions executives interested in the particular type of genre the festival specializes in. Sometimes festivals offer wider themes such as the Human Rights Festival or the London Lesbian and Gay Festival (run by the British Film Institute).

Mom and Pop

At the risk of sounding patronising, mom and pop festivals are small festivals that were created simply for the enjoyment of cinema. They are usually run by one or two people and attract local press, but very few if any industry people and virtually no acquisitions executives attend.

Presenting Yourself to a Film Festival

Most film festivals only accept films that come by personal recommendation. In order to be seriously considered for a festival you must form a personal contact with one of the festival programmers and convince them that your film will reach an audience. While this may seem a daunting and unfair process, it is, unfortunately, a part of the film festival game. If you are targeting a specific festival, then it is prudent to find out which individual is programming the specific strand that you want to screen in, and make sure that you speak to and form a personal relationship with that person. When that person screens your film, you want to make sure that you are able to communicate with them after the screening and find out precisely what they felt about your film. At this point too, one needs to be persuasive, but not desperate. Nothing will turn off a festival programmer quicker than the whiff of desperation surrounding a film project.

In order to develop a festival tour, you must do some careful research. Observe what sorts of films a particular festival screen before you submit. Find out who the programmers are, either by calling the festival directly or by looking at their websites. Once you have decided that the festival you are pursuing is appropriate to your marketing plan, request the correct application forms and submit your film.

What it Costs

Film festivals usually charge submission fees. The larger festivals like Toronto, Sundance and Cannes do not charge a submission fee but may not look at your film on DVD. You need to hire a screening room when the festival director is in town and wait for them to see the film on a cinema screen. This does sound terribly old-fashioned (it is). So the free festival submission really boils down to the cost of duplicating the submission form, and hiring the preview cinema for the screening of your film for upwards of £150 per hour.

Attending a Film Festival

When you get a call or email from a festival offering a screening slot, you will have to make sure that you have a film print, or high-quality digital copy, in the required format, usually DCP. Your film will need to be shipped to the festival to arrive some days before its first scheduled screening. If the film is travelling from outside the EU, then customs forms will need to be completed, and a customs broker may need to be hired to clear your film through customs. The festival you are screening at will usually provide you with the necessary paperwork and broker details. Technically, when your film arrives in the UK from outside the EU, it is assessed for value and VAT is charged to the film festival as a temporary importer. Once the film has been screened and returned to the filmmaker, the festival can reclaim the VAT. Once your print shipment details have been finalised, it is time to think about your own personal plans and whether or not you wish to travel there as well. If you do, the festival may have low-cost accommodation organised and have preferential rates on airlines. It is generally a good decision to attend festivals, provided you can cope with the financial cost.

Denys Arcand's *Love and Human Remains* (1993) and Spike Lee's *She's Gotta Have It* (1986) were both sold immediately after their festival debut screenings. *Love and Human Remains* was in such demand at Raindance an extra screening which was laid on also sold out. A deal memo for world rights was agreed on a coffee table outside the cinema.

Four Reasons to Attend Film Festivals

1 Do a deal

The primary reason for submitting your film to a film festival is to have it screened in front of acquisition executives who will 'discover' your film and make you an offer on the spot. If you are attending one of the smaller festivals, it is unlikely that this will happen. Film buyers travel through the major and mini-major festivals and would only consider a side trip to your screening at a smaller festival if you carefully planned the publicity surrounding your screening. They might reasonably ask why you had not been accepted into a larger, more convenient festival.

2 Win awards

If you read bios of filmmakers, you will often see the phrase 'an award-winning filmmaker', but the names of the awards are never mentioned. That is because there are only three awards worth naming on a CV.

The most prestigious award is the Oscar™. Even a nomination is mentioned on a filmmaker's CV. The Academy has carefully presented itself to the industry as a credible event, although in recent years it has become known

as a marketing contest with the cleverest and most expensive marketing campaigns winning the awards. Following that, the Palme d'Or at Cannes is highly esteemed. Its cachet has become established because it is judged by very high-profile industry jurors at the most important film festival of the year. The third most sought-after award is the Golden Bear presented at the Berlin Film Festival.

Many festivals offer awards to any filmmaker attending their festival as a means of attracting entries. A friend of mine, Dov Simens, had a 20-minute live action short starring William Forsythe. He submitted to the Montreal Film Festival knowing that they had a 35mm live action science fiction short film category and gave out gold, silver and bronze medals. There was one other entrant and he won the bronze. A few weeks later he did the same thing at the Cincinnati Film Festival and now calls himself a multiple award-winning filmmaker.

3 Sit on a panel

If award winning is not your thing, then get yourself invited to sit on a panel. Not only will it help you hone your public speaking skills, but you can then claim that you were directly involved with the festival.

4 Getting reviewed

Film journalists really do not enjoy film festivals. Suppose your first film festival is a small regional film festival, a mom and pop film festival. The local weekly newspaper will have a film journalist who creates the weekly centre spread on movies from the press kits supplied by the major distributors. But with the film festival approaching, s/he will have to watch all the films entered into the festival and write reviews. As a producer, you want a good review, and hope and pray that the pictures you sent to the festival with your press kit are attractive enough to get printed in the newspaper.

The film journalist for this small weekly newspaper also has career aspirations. S/he would like to work on one of the daily papers, or get a job reviewing films on a radio or television station. Because the newspaper is so small they also have to cover the horse racing, but a festival really gives them some hope of a ticket out of Smallsville. Journalists have learned that they should always print a superlative in their review, even if they hate it, because they know you will quote their review out of context. For example: 'Elliot's first film is a fine example of how not to make a movie' becomes 'Elliot's first film is a fine example'.

When you quote the journalist out of context they then can include your quote in their portfolio. If their quote makes it onto your poster, be certain you include their name and publication and send them a copy!

Cannes Film Festival

The Cannes Film Festival is arguably the largest and most exciting film event in the world. I heartily recommend that every writer, director, producer and actor go there at least twice: the first time just to be awed and to discover

how the festival works and the second time for business or pleasure, depending on what your ambitions are.

Cannes is composed of four things: screenings, parties, tradeshows and networking. It takes place in mid-May and is actually an amalgamation of several festivals: The Directors' Fortnight, Un Certain Regard, the main festival competition, shorts and classic films. Admission is free, but to get a ticket to the screenings you need an invite.

Routes to a Screening Ticket at Cannes

Go to a sales agent

Get your hands on a copy of the official catalogue and find out who the sales agents are that are handling the film. All or most of the sales agents with films in the festival also attend; find out where their temporary offices are, and go and use your powers of persuasion to see if they can get you a ticket.

Go to the festival office

The film festival hands out tickets for the evening screenings each morning. They only give tickets to people with passes. Some passes are free; other passes come as part of the Marche Du Film accreditation. To get a pass you must register about 2 months in advance. You can register with any one of the French guilds or unions as a special guest: producer, writer, director, cinematographer, journalist, cultural representative etc. Each French guild or union has an allocation of tickets which they dispense on the morning of each screening. To add to the confusion, each organisation has a different office in the festival building (called the Marché) which you must locate. Then you stand in line and hope they aren't 'sold out' before your name is called.

Stand outside the cinema

Stand outside the cinema in a tuxedo or evening dress and hope that one of the invitees who shows up doesn't make the dress code and is barred entry. When this happens, politely ask them for their ticket.

Routes to a Party Invite at Cannes

Cannes is a party festival with upwards of two dozen parties every night where you can enjoy the views over the harbour, the free drinks and food and to be impressed by the guest lists. Getting a ticket to the party of the moment is a fine art. Some travellers to the Cannes Film Festival spend their entire day trying to get a party invite.

Go to a sales agent

There will be parties after the screenings of many of the top films in the festival. Go to the sales agent, see if they will give you an invite. In the worst case, if you can't get an invite, see if they will give you the location of the party. Then it is up to you to see how successful you are with the bouncers at the door.

Go to the event organisers

Few companies have the wherewithal to actually organise the party themselves. Indeed, many of the American companies would be lucky to have a single francophone employed by them. They hire the services of one of the professional event organisers. Many of these party and event organisers are based in London. Call them up, and either offer your services in exchange for a ticket or see if you can convince them that your presence will enhance the atmosphere of the party.

Go the national film organisations

The Irish, the Canadians, the British and the South Africans are just a few of the many nations with formal film presences in Cannes and they all regularly throw parties. Walk into their pavilions and ask for an invite. They are usually easier to get than film parties.

Hang out at the *Variety* or American pavilion

The *Variety* and American pavilions are the hangouts of the serious Cannes partygoers. Attend either of these pavilions early enough in the morning, and not only will you get a free coffee and croissant, but will hear about any upcoming parties. It is not unknown for serious party ticket-trading to go on. You'll overhear bartering along the lines of 'I'll give you two of my Sony boat party invites for one of your BBC Films lunch tickets.'

Trade Show

Cannes is really all about the trade show. While the festival is about the glamour, the red carpet and the celebrities, the trade show is a terrific place to make useful contacts.

Stroll through the Riviera or along the Croisette into the lobbies of one of the luxury hotels and you will see display after display by broadcasters, distributors, producers, sales agents and manufacturers. In 2013 over 1,800 companies exhibited in Cannes. If you do want to go to the trade show, you will either need your pass (which you must arrange 2 months before the festival) or have a letter from one of the exhibitors inviting you to a meeting within the trade show area.

Networking

Another great reason to go to Cannes is to meet fellow writers, directors, producers and actors—all of whom are trying to do what you are. Meet at the cheap bars like the Petit Carlton away from the action, or just stroll along the beach with a bottle of wine and see if you can find someone to collaborate with.

Business Cards

Whatever you do, do not go to Cannes without a couple of hundred business cards. You will need them to introduce yourself to everyone. Business cards also make you look professional.

Getting Your Film into Cannes

Every January, Thierry Frémaux, the artistic Director of the Cannes Film Festival visits London to view the year's British submissions to Cannes. The screenings take place at The Soho Screening Rooms (formerly Mr Young's).

In theory, if you have a British film, in order to be considered for entry to Cannes you need only get your film to the Soho Screening Rooms and M. Frémaux will see it, love it and screen it at his festival. It's even free to submit.

Here are the hiccups. The films can only be previewed on celluloid, so your film has to be at print stage. The screening rooms charge £250 for a 2-hour screening slot. M. Frémaux has to watch dozens of features on a single weekend. Imagine how many times he says the word 'next' before he stretches his legs and waits for the projectionist to thread the next film. And would you like to hazard a guess at how many of the features he watches all the way through?

Maybe a better strategy is to submit your film to a smaller festival; the programmers are more likely to watch your film all the way through, and if it is selected, it won't be lost amongst the thousands of others.

Hint The top ten film festivals by acquisition executives:

- Cannes
- Toronto
- Sundance
- Berlin
- Rotterdam
- Venice
- San Sebastian
- Tribeca
- Rome
- Karlovy Vary

Summary

1. Understand how festivals work so you can make them work for you.
2. Do your homework, and help the festival promote your screening.

3. Go to Cannes.

But what if you still haven't sold your film after attending film festivals for a year? Should you panic? Of course not. Go to a film market.

In Conversation with James Youngs

James Youngs is a producer for Giant Films where he has worked on *Act of God* (2009), *Age of Heroes* (2011) and *The Most Dangerous Girl in the World* (2013).

How did you start out as a producer?

I did university; I did my degree in film at Manchester. Then I went and did an MA at Westminster in Film Theory, and then I went to London Film School. So I did a good 8 or 9 years of education within the film area, then left film school and set up my own company doing promos and corporates; short films as well. So by that time I was sort of a producer in my own right, to a certain extent. Obviously I hadn't done any features.

Was that Giant Films?

No, I had a different company called Cowboy Snooze which was my own company. Then Nick O'Hagan, who started Giant Films, he sort of found me and asked me if I could help out on a film that he was putting together—this was the first film I did—and I said, 'Yeah! I'd love to help.' And then he said, 'Well, when can you start?' and I said 'well, now' and the next day I was in Norfolk prepping this period drama that we did. So that 6 months of my life was just a runaway train; keep it on the rails as best you can really.

How would you describe what you do?

Well now I'm partners with Nick at Giant, so we have that company together. My role has changed somewhat; when I first started out I was very hands on in production. So we would essentially line produce all of our films. We'd raise the finance, we'd develop the script, we'd get the actors: the whole lot really. Then we'd go away and make them, which is incredibly difficult and time consuming and you'd literally almost do stop-start. So you'd start something, and stop [when it's finished] and start the next one. Now we try to have more projects going at the same time which means you can't physically produce them, line produce them. We try to do everything else; we do all the finance, the legals. When it comes to the actual filming we'll take it up to a certain point but then we'll hand over to a line producer and then hopefully in our privileged position we can just look at rushes each day and concentrate more on the creative [side]. Obviously there is everything else going on in the background; dealing with the agents, the finance, the distributors and the sales etc.

When you're working on a new project, what are you looking for? What appeals to you?

Obviously ideas; ideas are always great! But empathy is always important when you read something. You have to relate to what you're reading. Even if you don't necessarily like the material, the story, if you can generate empathy

with your reader, then I'll read the whole thing very quickly. That's what I find with some scripts—they might not necessarily be something I would always lean towards, but if it's written with real characters that I can relate to, then that's something that then engages you and you think, 'well actually if it engages me and I'm not interested in it, there's certainly an audience there.'

Would you say your attitude changes producing shorts rather than features?

Shorts are really difficult! They're so difficult to make and anyone who makes a short should be applauded because you're essentially asking someone to tell a story in under 12 minutes. Within 30 seconds the character has to be as strong as it can be, the audience have to know exactly who that character is straight away. With a feature film you might be able to develop it; you can take a bit longer. Obviously it's not a great discipline to have, but you can develop it slower. So, with short films it's really difficult. I've made an awful lot of short films and they are really hit and miss. You think you've got a nice idea and then if you don't get that first 30 seconds right, you're already gone. You'll spend the rest of the 5–10 minutes trying to make it up. Whereas a feature you can get it wrong a little bit, and then you pull it back, and people are only going to remember the last 10 minutes anyway so you're ok!

In the current economic climate, has it become harder to produce and get finance?

No. For some reason, for us it's always very, very difficult—I shouldn't say difficult—it's always a challenge to raise finance. Always, no matter what 'climate' we're in! If anything, the last 2 to 3 years have been better for us, which is ironic considering what's going on in the rest of the world. We've been able to raise finance and we've actually been very busy. I think sometimes when a country is in a difficult position, people start to feed money into different areas. It hasn't affected us that much, and sometimes that's where the best stories come from—hardship. So you get people who really try much harder when there's no money around, because they really have to strive to get something good.

You pride yourself on 'consistently producing quality for significantly less than your competitors'. What's your strategy for that?

I think what Nick and I have tried to do—and Nick's a very well-known line producer; he's come up through that route—is understand production. I think that does make a difference. If you understand the producing side in terms of the creativity, the casting, the financial, but you also understand the system to make a film, the engine that makes a film, then you can look at and say, 'OK, we have to save there, we have to save there, and there.' Therefore you'd be amazed; you look after the pounds and all of a sudden you've saved £5,000, £10,000—that's how you keep the economy very efficient.

I suppose doing the MA at LFS helped with understanding the

film engine.

Yeah, the good thing about the London Film School is that you have to learn everything. You have to do your bit on editing. When I was there we were doing film cutting, splicing film on Steinbecks. You have to do your camera-work as well. I don't know if I could do it now, but I was taught to lace some Panaflex, I was taught to lace an Arri ST for example! And sound as well. You're taught all the disciplines, and therefore when you go onto a film set you have a certain relationship with all of your HODs because you have a knowledge of their skills as well. So, if a DoP comes up and says 'oh yeah, we definitely need a techni-crane' you understand the implications of having that. Or a sound recorder saying 'we need another ten radio mics'—you understand the cost implications and the difference between having a radio mic and a more directional mic. So you can make decisions that aren't uninformed, and therefore your crew have—I don't want to say respect, because that sounds a bit like the military—but they sort of help you a bit more.

Would you say that's one piece of important advice for aspiring producers—to know everything?

Without a doubt—to be able to have knowledge of what your crew are doing. When a gaffer comes up to you and says 'we're going to have to switch all the lights to HMIs'—to know what implication that has on your power, for example; pulling two and a half times just to get an HMI started as opposed to a tungsten. You have to know that straight away. You have to know whether you can tie in to a location or you have to bring in a generator. It's all those sorts of things. They may not help you creatively necessarily, but they'll certainly help you with production.

Is Giant Films quite a close-knit company?

There's certainly a family element, and that's the same with Recorded Picture Company and Hanway. They treat us the same; we're part of that little family, so if you need help from a bigger company or a bigger producer, for example Jeremy Thomas, we can go to them. And we try to filter that down, so all of our crew that we use there's a family sort of feeling to it. Same with the cast, it's really important to look after everyone who is working for you. Someone like Danny [Dyer], it's important you have a proper relationship with them, because they're human beings as well!

What's the right way to deal with agents?

Agents are doing a job, and it's a very important job. They're protecting their client, they're making sure their client picks the right projects, they're guiding and advising. So it might seem like the agent is the producer's worst enemy but they're not. They are making sure that the product they are selling to you is as good as it can be. It's important to respect the agents because they will help you. People like Michael Wigs, who is Ray Winstone's agent, he's incredible; he's so supportive of a project and he'll be extremely honest with you if he doesn't think something is right for one of his actors. That's what you need as a producer; you need guidance from them as well. They know

their actor better than you do; you might have seen every film but they know what their capabilities are. They know what direction they want to take them.

I actually enjoy working with agents and I have good relationships with all the ones I work with. Dealing with them—I think you have to listen to them because they're experts in what they do. That's the advice I would give anyone dealing with an agent. With American agents it's different because you have a manager as well, so you're dealing with two people. That can be a bit trickier, but again I think you approach them in the same way, and the same way with the manager. Listen to what they have got to say, because they're also seeing all of the young talent coming up, so you can almost get inside information from them; who is going to be hot. They can tell you whether he/she is doing this, or he/she is doing that in a year's time, and there's going to be all the release.

They are a useful piece of information but dealing with them can be tricky I have to admit. But that's because they're doing their job and they probably think the same of producers. So there's a harmony there somewhere!

Any project you're particularly proud of so far in your career?

I think every project I do—and that goes for short films, commercials, films—I'm always proud of what we do because it always seems so impossible. It's like the impossible dream. When you finish it you think, 'Wow, how on earth did we manage to do that? It seemed impossible!' Sometimes it becomes a bit unreal, you don't believe the finance has closed; you don't believe you're actually shooting, you sort of go into a daze.

I think the film we did with Danny, the war film, in terms of its budget and its production value and what we were trying to achieve with that, I think that was something everyone who worked on it, everyone who acted in it, should be proud of that. Because we did a war film for a very low amount of money and we were shooting in the snow in Norway—it was incredibly difficult!

Also the first film I did, with Jean Simmons, who died a couple of years ago. That was a period drama which was even lower [in budget]. It's not very often you get to work with a Hollywood great, for example. They are the moments that you have to take; the sleepless nights can go away, but the only things you really remember are spending time with one of the most famous actors who ever lived. So there are moments that you just have to be proud of; that you've achieved, that you've done. Some people never get the opportunity to do it, so you have to appreciate the position you're in sometimes.

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Seven Essential Steps for Becoming Rich and Famous by Making a Low-Budget Film

Step 6 Bottom

By bottom I mean energy, and plenty of it.

Bottom is a term I learned growing up on the farm. Whenever we needed a new horse, my father and grandfather would go to an auction and look at the horses on offer. After the health of an animal was checked, the owner was always asked if the horse had bottom. Because bottom is a subjective quality, it was usually better to see the horse before the auction in a working environment, but this wasn't always possible.

A horse with bottom knows when the chips are down. There are still a good 6 hours' work left to do in the field, the storm clouds are gathering and there are at best only 4 hours of good light left to get the job done. A horse without bottom will just sit down in its harness and refuse to go any further. But a horse with bottom will knuckle down and strain, trying to get the job done in impossible circumstances.

There will be many times during the course of getting your movie made when you will have to work well past your level of endurance. When I am working on a production, I wake up each morning saying: 'I have never been this tired in my life!'

When Roger Corman visited Raindance he was in his late seventies and still producing over thirty movies a year. I asked him what his secret was. He said: 'Getting and having energy means following a few basic and simple rules.'

He never drinks before his evening meal and then he drinks as much as he wants, and he has a power nap every afternoon. I found him behind the screen at a cinema where he was about to give a talk, lying shoes off, face down on a sofa. I coughed. He opened one eye and leapt into action.

18 Film Markets

SUPPOSING YOU ATTEND several film festivals and execute a finely planned sales and marketing programme and still do not sell your film. Should you despair and give up? The answer is: not at all. Film markets are there to serve you. There are three major film markets:

AFM

The American Film Market runs in January and November.
www.americanfilmmarket.com

European Film Market

Each year in mid-February during the Berlinale (Berlin Film Festival) a major film market takes place in and around Potsdamer Platz.
www.efm-berlinale.de

Marché du Film

Held during the glamorous Cannes Film Festival in mid-May, the Marché du Film is perhaps the most important of the three film markets.
www.marchedufilm.com

How Film Markets Work

Film markets are no different than any other type of market. There are goods, vendors and buyers. At a market, an organiser books a convention space and a series of screening rooms. The organiser then lets out these spaces and screening slots to interested film sellers and advertises the companies and films attending in the hope of attracting film buyers.

At the AFM, the market organiser books the Loews Hotel in Santa Monica. The bedroom furniture is replaced for the duration of the event with office furniture. Film vendors book bedrooms, and install TVs and VCRs. The entrance to the hotel has a large board that lists the companies attending, along with their suite number. Interested buyers can then locate the temporary offices of the companies selling the films they are interested in.

As each buyer enters a suite, they present their business card and take a seat. The film sellers will have prepared a one sheet and a trailer for the film. The buyer will then watch the trailer. If the asking price for the film is above \$50,000, the buyer will then usually demand to see the film in a cinema. The vendor then contacts the market organiser to schedule a screening (if one hasn't already been set up) and the buyer will attend the screening, along with other prospective film buyers. Following the screening, a deal is made.

Who Attends Film Markets?

Have you ever gone into a photocopy shop, opened up the flap to get a copy of a letter and found someone else's paper in the copy tray?

This is what happened to my friend Dov Simens when he attended the AFM. On the opposite page is what he found.

This represents the high and low estimate for what a low-budget feature expected to gross at that year's AFM. Buyers from each of these territories were attending. A buyer from Korea could be the owner of a small cinema chain, or of a major cinema chain that also owns a television station and a home video distribution label. In all, every year at the major markets, between 4,000 and 6,000 film buyers attend.

How to Attend a Film Market

If attending a market is so simple, why aren't all independent filmmakers attending film markets with their finished films? Like most things in filmmaking, it's down to money. It costs to attend a film market.

First you need to join the market. It costs between \$15,000 and \$20,000 to join the market. Then you need to rent the display space. On top of that there is the cost of shipping film prints to the market and of paying for screenings at the official market screening rooms.

Having spent all that, you need to create a presence for your film by buying advertisements in the trade papers clearly identifying the screening times and location of the screening. On top of that you may want to have a party or event to promote the film.

It is said in the industry that in order to make a minimal presence at Cannes, AFM or MIFED will cost a minimum of \$50,000. Given the increasing importance of Cannes as a launch point for films with distribution, films aiming to make a sale are having to spend more on getting noticed.

Most independent filmmakers cannot afford this. This fact has given rise to a new film professional: the sales agent.

Sales Agents

Sales agents represent several different films at a film market in order to balance the cost of attending the markets against the potential income from several films. In fact, sales agents are usually foreign sales agents.

Living in the Home of the Dead		
Asking Estimates		
All US\$		
Budget approx £500,000		
Territory	Withholding Tax	Projected Sales
Europe:		
Belgium / Luxembourg		20,000
France		80,000
Germany / Austria/German-speaking Switzerland	25%	85,000
Greece / Cyprus		15,000
Israel	5.45%	15,000
Italy	8%	85,000
Netherlands		15,000
Portugal	5%	10,000
Scandinavia / Baltic States		70,000
Spain	10%	90,000
Switzerland		20,000
Turkey		15,000
UK		Financing Territory
America		
North America		300,000
Argentina / Chile / Uruguay / Paraguay		15,000
Brazil	15%	30,000
Columbia		15,000
Mexico	25%	20,000
Others	15%	30,000
Asia		
Japan	10%	125,000
Hong Kong		25,000
India		
South Korea		80,000
Others		50,000
Australasia		
Australia / New Zealand		50,000
Miscellaneous		
East Africa / West Africa		
Middle East	20%	15,000
South Africa	15%	20,000
Eastern European Territories		60,000
Others (including all non-theatrical rights)		50,000
Total Projected Asking Sales (with W/H)		\$1,405,000
(Not splitting Scandinavia)		

Figure 18.2
Asking estimates for a
£500,000 film

Living in the Home of the Dead		
Settling Estimates		
All US\$		
Budget approx £500,000		
Territory	Withholding Tax	Projected Sales
Europe:		
Belgium / Luxembourg		10,000
France		65,000
Germany / Austria / German-speaking Switzerland	25%	70,000
Greece / Cyprus		10,000
Israel	5.45%	10,000
Italy	8%	75,000
Netherlands		10,000
Portugal	5%	5,000
Scandinavia / Baltic States		45,000
Spain	10%	60,000
Switzerland		15,000
Turkey		10,000
UK		Financing Territory
America		
North America		150,000
Argentina / Chile / Uruguay / Paraguay		10,000
Brazil	15%	15,000
Columbia		7,500
Mexico	25%	12,000
Others	15%	10,000
Asia		
Japan	10%	80,000
Hong Kong		20,000
India		
South Korea		65,000
Others		30,000
Australasia		
Australia / New Zealand		25,000
Miscellaneous		
East Africa / West Africa		
Middle East	20%	
South Africa	15%	10,000
Eastern European Territories		45,000
Others (including all non-theatrical rights)		40,000
Total Projected Asking (with W/H)		\$904,500
(Not splitting Scandinavia)		

figure 18.3
Settling estimates for a
£500,000 film

Tips and Strategies for Cannes

The Cannes Film Festival is the largest and most prestigious film festival in the world. Each May, hordes of filmmakers, international sales agents, distributors, film financiers, film entrepreneurs, producers, writers, stars and cineastes descend on the seaside port of Cannes for a 10-day marathon of screenings, parties and workshops. There are several competitions running in the festival, and in addition, the Marché du Film operates at the same time.

If one is serious about a career in film, a trip to Cannes in late May is simply imperative. To make the most out of your trip to Cannes, consider following one or more of the following strategies for financing or selling your film.

Have a Plan

Although Cannes looks glamorous and casual, astute insiders plan their trip beforehand. Get a copy of the trades about a month before the event and email and call to set up meetings. Actual meetings in Cannes are very fluid, and it can become difficult to adhere to a schedule, but at least you have a strategy in place from the moment you arrive.

Have Something on Paper

Cannes is not the place to bring your seventeenth draft screenplay; people are too busy rushing around to even consider reading scripts. Instead you should prepare a one sheet which includes a summary of the project, the pitch, key personnel and a brief description of what you are looking for, be it investment (include a brief budget) or a sale.

If you are aiming to sell your film at Cannes, include phrases like 'All rights available except Romania' (if that were the case).

If you aren't able to get a sales agent, then you'll need to prepare your own sales estimates. See figures 18.2 and 18.3 for an example of asking and setting sales estimates for a £500,000 movie.

Play Ping-Pong

There are always an incredible number of people at Cannes, and you can have more one-on-one meetings in a day than you could in a year back home.

The ping-pong theory is that if you hang out in the right places you will bump into people with whom you could, given a little charm and a producer's savvy, develop useful relationships.

You might have blagged a ticket to the legendary MTV party, you might be on the red carpet at the Palais, you might be nursing a drink on the terraces of the Majestic or getting plastered at the Petit Carlton. In any of these places, it is likely you will bump into film executives. Get their business cards, and chat them up.

Make sure that you maximise the benefits to your film from your time in Cannes. Make the most of your little black book of new contacts. If you talk

My movie, *Table 5*, was edited for free on the condition I gave the editor the Romanian television rights—since he owned a late-night Romanian cable station at the time.

about a treatment that you have, and the contact says they'd like to read it, make sure you follow that up quickly and politely. Even if you just send a brief email once you're back home to say how good it was to meet them, this will help to distinguish you from the vast numbers of new people that all film executives meet every year at Cannes.

Hint Cannes is a marathon that tests your ability to go without sleep and the recuperative powers of your liver. Whatever you do, pace yourself, or you will burn out.

The Nick O'Hagan Method

Nick is a Raindance favourite and is one of the most happening producers in the UK at the moment. He has researched the people who book offices in Cannes and discovered that most of them book rooms at the Grand. His strategy is to get a table in the shade at the Grand Hotel and order a coffee. Sooner or later, anyone he wishes to see will walk by, and he jumps up and offers them a drink. If he needs to meet someone, he always says: 'Meet me at the Grand'.

An advanced method would be to take a table at the Carlton or Majestic bars, sit there with your lawyer or head of business affairs, hire a bevy of buxom beauties and then wait for everyone and anyone to drop by and see what the action is all about.

The American Pavilion Strategy

To pitch, you need to know where to pitch and who to pitch to. The American Pavilion, along with the other national pavilions like the British, German, Canadian, South African and European Media pavilions are excellent places to meet other filmmakers at your level.

A few strategically placed drinks should enable you to garner hot tips on who is looking for what. The pavilions also become a trading market for party tickets. Desperate pleas along the lines of 'I'll give you three Barclays Bank tickets for one Opening Night Afterparty invite' will become familiar.

Pavilions all run business centres and for a relatively small fee (I paid €300) they offer a service providing free coffees and croissants (useful for meetings), Internet access and conference rooms. They will also receive your messages and mail.

Sellers Sell

Film sellers attend Cannes to sell completed pictures. They are not there to look at new projects unless they have brought along an acquisitions or development executive. Remember that making a bad contact can be worse than making no contact at all; don't pester someone to listen to your pitch when they are not buying.

Check the guides; these people will be listed, with their job title (buyers are highlighted), in the guides supplied by the main trades before and during the market.

Dress Code

Cannes is casual, and whatever you do bring a very comfortable pair of shoes along. If you plan to go to evening screenings at the Palais, or some of the parties, you will need formal dress.

Formal dress for men means a tuxedo and a slinky dress for women. Trainers and sandals are forbidden at many of the late-night venues.

Publicists Can Help You

Publicists rule Cannes. It is they who control the guest lists of all the top parties, they manage the major stars and know where they are staying, and they can sometimes get you a ticket to an incredibly glamorous event if you treat them properly.

Bring Your Lawyer

If you are really serious about doing a deal at Cannes, it is essential to bring your lawyer along. Not only will they have many useful contacts, but should the need arise, they can rough out a deal memo on the back of a menu or napkin and polish it up on a laptop at the hotel, or on one of the computers at a pavilion.

While it might appear that the added expense of bringing a lawyer is too rich for your budget, you never know when you might strike gold and need a lawyer on the spot to finish off negotiations.

The Hotel du Cap

About four kilometres east of Cannes is a swanky seaside resort called Cap d'Antibes, or Cap for short. The Hotel du Cap is where the A-list talent and players hang out. No trip to Cannes is complete without at least one visit to the glitzy bar of this power pen full of the likes of Weinstein, Elwes, Bruckheimer and co.

Parties

Most of the serious networking takes place at any one of the hundred-odd parties that take place during the Cannes Film Festival. Your first job on arriving at Cannes is to discover what parties are to be held, assess which ones are the likeliest to offer you a real chance of meeting people and then trying to get an invite or ticket.

Getting into the right party involves a fair amount of social nous and a degree of luck. One tactic is to walk up to the maître d' or security guard at a party venue, present your business card and barge through. This technique

Managing director of Salt, Samantha Horley has more than 13 years' experience in international sales, working with prestigious companies including Polygram, Summit and Myriad. She has handled sales for a diverse and impressive array of films including box-office hits including *Fargo*, *American Pie*, *The Blair Witch Project*, *Memento*, *U-571* and *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*. Samantha has been managing director of Lumina Films (as Salt was formerly known) since September 2004.

will work at lower echelon parties and afternoon drinks soirées on the terraces overlooking the sea.

To get a truly hot ticket in Cannes, like an invite to the *Variety* party, requires some successful preplanning. Unless you know one of the party organisers, or someone in the upper levels of MTV, your best bet would be to make friends with a publicist or other insider who might be able to give you a tip.

Once you have your MTV ticket, you have to decide whether to go and network or to trade your ticket for other parties which might also be difficult to get into.

My friend Rinaldo Quacquarini of *Moviescope Magazine* in London attends Cannes with filmmakers' software company Final Draft. During Cannes I would see him several times in the course of the day as our paths crossed on the Croisette as each of us raced from meeting to meeting. When he found out that I had not one but two hot party tickets, he started pleading with me to give him one.

About 6 hours before the party started I got a text message offering me £500 worth of software for the tickets. I then passed him in the Market, and said: 'Sorry, Rinaldo' and he laughed and said, 'I'm only kidding.' Then, around an hour before the party was due to start I got another text message, this time offering me £1,000 worth of software for the pair of tickets.

The next day he sheepishly grinned and said 'The sick thing is, I would have given you a grand's worth of software. And I don't care if the party was crap! I just wanted to be able to say I went!'

The hot parties that I have been to are actually quite disappointing. Held in various venues around Cannes, including Pierre Cardin's futuristic house in Miramar, the party tickets are hot simply because there are only 1,000 of them, and there are over 40,000 delegates at Cannes.

Summary

1. Decide which markets you want to attend, and make a plan.
2. Having a sales agent is beneficial.
3. Film markets can be useful for attracting interest in your film before it is shot.

Selling your film means getting distribution.

In Conversation with Samantha Horley

You handled the sales for *The Blair Witch Project* and *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*—both first-time features, the former considered particularly original in the horror genre at the time. Can you tell me about the sales processes for those films? What made them sellable?

Yes, I handled sales on *The Blair Witch Project* and *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*. They both came to us as finished films. I wasn't anything to do with the acquisition process on *The Blair Witch Project*; that was picked

up out of Sundance as a finished film by Artisan. But I was part of the acquisitions process on *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*. There was a big screening for all the sellers, and I was at Summit at the time; everybody was there. I know that a lot of people walked out afterwards and passed. Whereas me and my boss at the time, David Garrett, just looked at each other and went 'yep' and he said 'let's go and get it.'

They were films that were privately financed. They arrived completed. Polygram had the UK on *Lock, Stock* but famously *Lock, Stock* had been through various incarnations. Initially it had a love interest in there, and it had been recut and recut and recut. So by the time I saw it, it was the finished film.

In terms of first-time features, they were very much by people whose first-time feature shone like bright metal on a sullen ground! So that was pretty easy decision to make, but a lot of fun. *Blair Witch* was a really interesting film to work on, because it was so low budget and Artisan had to put in a huge amount of money to blow it back up to 35[mm], to do the sound all over again, and so while it was an ultra low-budget film it ended up having to be polished, and obviously did incredibly well because it was the first of its kind.

Is that still a concern for interesting low-budget features now? Although they might not be as rough as *The Blair Witch Project*, work still needs to be done to prepare them for theatrical release?

I think there is an inherent problem with low-budget films becoming big successes; it's the production values, the cast, the quality—and when I say the quality it's even down to not having time and money for editing, that sort of thing. So I think that certainly schemes like Microwave, iFeatures; the films, while they may have been fantastic calling cards . . .

I still think there is an inherent problem with people paying money to go to the cinema to see a film which they might be able to pay the same to go and see *The Avengers*. So I still think that in terms of a wide audience, the films are always going to be limited, unless you can turn it into an event, and I think *Blair Witch Project* is an amazing example of turning a low-budget film into an event. *Paranormal Activity* is another one. So I think that in terms of reaching the wide audience it's got to be something that completely elevates it. A little worthy drama is going to have an awful lot of trouble breaking out.

An event in the sense that you experience it?

Exactly. It's a must-see, it's a word of mouth, it frightens the pants off of you. I think that if you're trying to do anything but something like that it's tough.

How much does social media play into that process?

I've got to say I'm in two minds about social media. On the one hand, I really get interested in filmmakers who are very busy in social media and have a lot of people following them on Twitter on Facebook. But actually, I have found that doesn't necessarily mean anything, because it's almost impossible to prove whether that translates; if it's just friends, friends of friends, flying the flag.

It's been very hard for anyone to prove what difference it makes. What I like to see if I'm speaking to filmmakers is that they are thinking about how to market their film. That's much more [important] for me in terms of if I was to pick up a

film that's got a busy social media campaign around it. The first thing is I want to know that they know how to market their film to the right people in the right way, to the right audience. I have worked on films where the director has a completely different idea who the audience is to what I do, and that is a massive problem! So that can help me know really quickly if the filmmakers have identified the right audience and know how to talk to them.

So when you're approaching a director or producer, what are the initial questions to ask them to gauge whether or not you want to get more interested in their film?

The first thing we're looking at is the hook, the pitch. What is it? What is your film? If someone launches into this long diatribe about 'the importance of this' and 'it's a wonderful exploration of . . . '—I'm losing interest. We work in commercial films. Even at the low-budget end, and we do low-budget films, we are working at a commercial end with films that have a hook and a pitch. The classic example of a film that we did that was low budget and pretty successful for us is *The Infidel* with David Badiel and Omid Djalili. Of course everyone here [in the UK] knows who David Badiel and Omid Djalili are, but international people didn't know who they are. Omid is not a household name like he is here.

What we had for the film was a million quid budget, which while obviously not a microbudget, still a pretty low budget for what this was. We had a hook which was 'It's a British Muslim who's discovered he's adopted and Jewish.' That hook went around the world in our mail out and people were just like, 'Oh my god, it's hilarious.' Everyone could see that it was universal, it could happen in almost any major city in the world. People then read the script, and the script lived up to the pitch. We were able to create a one sheet, some concept art which was Omid in Muslim garb and had him doing a Jewish shrug holding a bagel. It was so simple and that was our bestselling presell movie ever. So we are always looking for what the angle is, what is the pitch? Whether it is a comedy, horror, action, thriller, love story; we also do films aimed at an older audience as well, but each one has to have something about it which makes me go, 'I know what that film is. I like that idea, and I know who it's for.' I think there are many, many films out there which slip between the cracks because there is not a clear enough focus.

Working with the hook and the pitch, how do you go about promoting and marketing a film to buyers?

There's a market during Cannes Film Festival that runs alongside it; there's a market during Berlin Film Festival that runs alongside; there's the American Film Market which is the standalone market; use hundreds of sales companies all over the world—we take an office, it's basically a hotel room; all the furniture is moved out, and we all turn it into an office. The buyers will be taking meetings all day and they'll be looking to buy movies. So we are competing with everybody. We'll be having a meeting with the buyer and you'll start telling them about a movie, and they will look around the room to the poster. They'll sit there, and while you're talking they'll be looking at it, and all the time what they'll be thinking is: what is the tone of this film? Who is the audience for this film? Is this in my head the same film that Sam is pitching at me? Which

cinema chain is going to take this? How many DVD units am I going to sell based on something like this that I had before last year? TV station—is this going to be one for [ITV] or ZDF? That is what they are doing that entire time!

So what the concept art—the poster, the one sheet—what that does is really help them work out how they're going to market the film. It might not be the final thing that they're going to use, but they want to know that the film they've got in their head is the same one that we're handing to them. So it can be incredibly important and certainly on *The Infidel* the one sheet helped us sell the film, no question. We don't do trailers, we do various things: it can be very helpful for a film to have some kind of sizzle reel. So, for example on *Twist*, which is our 3D parkour movie, we put together a little sizzle reel of amazing parkour, because a lot of buyers out there—especially if their first language isn't English—say, 'What's parkour?' Ironically, in France they don't call it parkour, they call it yamakazi, which I have now learnt! So we put together an amazing sizzle with some really cool music and just loads of different parkour, and so they could get a feeling of what the energy was going to be for the film. Also we have filmmakers doing their own sizzles; filmmakers quite often will put sizzle reels together with bits of other peoples' movies, so you can see what the feeling, the flavour, the look of the film is that they're going to try to do. They can be very cool; they can also be completely ridiculous. If you've got a million quid film and you're only using bits from \$100 million studio movies it's completely ridiculous.

Once the film is in production, or post-production before it's completed, we might want to put together what we call a 'promo' which will be 3 or 4 minutes, and it will show a lot of the film. You're assuming that people have read the script at that point. It's not like a trailer, you're not teasing people; you're actually going to be showing them quite a lot of the film.

Foreign and domestic—What are the different considerations?

We call it UK and International. But then the US guys call it Foreign and Domestic—Domestic being US. Domestic is by and large seen as US. But the US guys refer to everyone outside the US as foreign, so its 'foreign sales'. I do like to remind them that it means they're calling me a foreigner! In terms of the difference between them—you're always looking for a UK film that's going to work in a UK market, because it's incredibly rare for a British film to work internationally that hasn't worked here. I can give you examples on one hand over the last 10 years of films that have done that: *Easy Virtue*, *Death at a Funeral*, *Saving Grace*, *Croupier* and *Once*. Those are the classic examples that have [worked], but incredibly rarely. So first we're looking for a film that's going to work in the UK, but then a film that's going to work in the UK might not necessarily work internationally. So comedies—*The Inbetweeners* is a great example of a film that did amazing business here but it did absolutely nothing internationally apart from a little bit in Australia. So we're all the time looking for films that we think are going to work everywhere. Then in the UK you definitely want to make sure the film is being handled by the right company in the UK that's going to help make it a launch pad for the rest of the world.

But various different territories are looking for various different things. Going back to comedies: we want a comedy that is going to work in Germany, going to work in France, in the US, because comedies just do not work in

Japan—you cannot sell a comedy in Japan. Even Judd Apatow movies go straight to DVD in Japan! But then you might be able to do well with a horror film—but then horror films don't necessarily work in other territories so well. So all the time we're going to be looking for films that will work in as many territories as possible, because we have to sell the film in as many territories as possible. It may be that we need to do a couple of presales which will be the cornerstone of financing the film. Also, the more territories we sell the film in the more money we get, obviously, because we work on a fee-based basis. It's no good to us if we're picking up a film that's only going to sell in one or two territories—it makes no sense at all.

How important is genre in marketing a film?

Genre is possibly the most important thing, and I talk a lot about that. I give sales talks to filmmakers because the first thing you say when you talk about a film: 'what is it?' Filmmakers are really funny about that; they want to create a new genre; they say, 'It's got no genre'; 'It crosses genres.' But actually, if you said to someone 'what did you see last night?' 'I went to see this film.' 'Oh I haven't heard of it. What is it?' 'It's a thriller starring . . .' or 'It's a comedy about . . .'

Everybody pigeon holes it—completely, totally, utterly from the start, everybody pigeon holes it. If you don't pigeon hole it, someone else is going to pigeon hole it: I am; the buyers are; you get onto iTunes or LoveFilm or Netflix—they are all in genres, all in categories!

I've had some hilarious people saying 'I'm creating a brand new genre.' Well then I'm not interested! Or people make up genres. I had this really great one where I said, 'I can't work out what genre this is' and he said, 'It's an adult fairytale.' Ok. So of an evening, do you and your Mrs. get onto iTunes and say 'what kind of film do you want to watch tonight, dear?' You say 'I want to watch a thriller' and she says 'I want to watch a romantic comedy' and you go 'ok let's settle on an adult fairytale'—nobody does that!

It is the most important thing, and it's also really important to be honest! I did a talk recently, and I'd been given everybody's stuff to look at, and a lot of them hadn't put genre. One had put thriller and I thought this doesn't sound like a thriller, and she said 'well, no, really it's a drama but I've been told that people don't want dramas anymore so I've called it a thriller.' Well then don't make a drama! Make a drama, call it a drama. Make a thriller, call it a thriller. Don't pretend it's something it's not, because everyone will recognise immediately that it's not that; your film will get completely lost or it won't get made.

What is the process you go through when you take on a film?

We don't take on any film unless we really fall in love with it and are really passionate about it. It takes an awful lot of energy to be really enthusiastic about a project all the time.

We are looking for films that are going to be able to sell and our taste is very commercial, so we are looking for the whole package. But then again we often get involved in films that need a bit more work in terms of development, packaging the right cast or need a more experienced producer to come on it. Once we've been on that process and run numbers that we think are achievable at that budget level. It's a long drawn out process before we say yes.

What are you looking for from a first time filmmaker?

I'm looking for a unique voice, production values, how someone is with a camera, how someone is with lighting. It's extraordinarily important in how it looks, I don't think that needs to be expensive, it's about how you use your camera, angles and close ups, your stillness, energy and I'm also looking for performance. I've seen shorts that look amazing but with actors who are completely wooden and in some cases with actors who I know are not. So in those cases what really scares me is that someone does not know how to work with actors. I love seeing something in a short that is so imaginative, different and cool that you can only do in shorts. They can actually mean something.

What do you look for in a filmmaker on a working level?

I have worked with filmmakers who wouldn't listen to anybody else and were a complete nightmare. They don't know about a lot things, I've been doing this a really long time and I am a good person to ask for advice about what the market wants. Then again I've also worked with filmmakers who were so collaborative that they are trying to get what everybody wants into their scripts and onto the screen.

So I think there has to be a happy medium between working with incredibly experienced producers who will be on the phone to me all the time. 'Who means more in this territory?' 'What do you think about this?'

I've worked with producers who have done everything they could to protect their director, so the director can 'fulfill his dream'. A producer should be the person in the middle to act as the go between the likes of me. People will say 'oh no filthy commercialism', yes I will make money but I also want to make this movie successful and launch this filmmaker's career, that's what I love doing.

So a producer should be a bridge not a brick wall?

Yes, a producer SHOULD be a bridge and not a brick wall. I think people protect their directors from understanding the business. They don't bring them into financing meetings and I think it's really misguided. Directors should be understanding the business, if a director is all about the art and nothing else then there is a place in the world for that director. They are going to find it harder and harder to get their movies made as their movies fail commercially.

So what about financing?

On the sales side of things, we, and a lot of other sales companies, are like producers, co-producers and exec producers. We actually do produce films as well. When we co-produce it's because we are out there, helping to finance the film and not just by preselling it. But by putting in our own money and building the finance plan so from that perspective if we are going out to find an equity investor to put in \$1 million into a movie we need to be certain that we are going to be able to get that money back because our names are on the line. So that's why we need to be involved in helping the film get made because many things can and do go wrong. We are often consulted, involved in and a part of the decision making and final cut committee because all the money involved in the film wants to make sure that the face to the market, that's us, is involved in as much as possible to get their money back.

So you can't create markets, they have to be there?

Yes. We are looking for films that sell in all media. When I do a deal with North America, we are selling it to the US and Canada and I am selling the theatrical cinema rights, the DVD rights, Blu-ray, VOD, Internet etc. They are actually things people are putting into contracts because the modes of watching a film are changing all the time.

There are various different genres that work in various different media, for example horror can work very well on DVD but really bad for television because a lot of countries in the world have very strict criteria about the time of day you can see certain types of rated films. Dramas are terrible for DVD for example, even Oscar nominated dramas can still sell very few units. They are not the films that people want to buy and own. On the other hand, you are still able to make money out of football hooligan movies which don't do well in the cinema but do great on DVD. We are always on the lookout for films that we think can do well on all media. Films that are the big crowd pleasing movies which are great for theatrical, DVD release, TV etc.

Films sell at different times, a film can sell on a prebuy stage before its even shot a frame, based on script, on cast, on director, on package on budget, on all those things a buyer will sum up that and they may make us an offer. It's almost impossible to presell first-time directors unless they are multi-award winning, super exciting, biggest commercials maker in the UK.

A film can also sell in post-production so on footage or a promo, that gets less and less these days. Buyers are wary of us being able to polish something that may not be that good but they are still very good to keep a buyers interest or they can sell when they are finished.

We do very well in Sundance and Toronto, a lot of our films have premiered there in midnight sections, whether its *Grabbers*, *Donkey Punch* or *White Lightnin'*. You are always thinking about where to show the film for the first time to the international community. If you've got a drama and it gets into a festival you've got a good one then brilliant. If you've got a drama that doesn't get into a festival then you can almost be dead. That's why dramas are so dangerous! They are tricky to get into the theatre, don't sell on DVD and if they don't work on any of those other media you can't sell it for television. Dramas live by awards and the chemistry which lives by the director and a lead actor. Or they don't sell at all.

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19 Distribution

WRITING A SCRIPT is long and arduous. Shooting and editing a film is hard and exhausting, but once your film is finished, the work is really only ten per cent completed. Getting your film out there is a challenge equal to if not greater than the physical act of making it.

Distribution is a term that defines the methods and techniques used to connect an audience with a consumer. In reality it means a filmmaker tries to sell their film to theatrical distributors, broadcast networks, DVD companies and VOD platforms (video on demand).

Nothing has changed more dramatically in the movie business than in distribution, and it has all happened while I have been presiding over Raindance.

A Recent History of Distribution

In the old days the studio system owned the movie theatres and they controlled what went onto the screens. A new film opened in the big movie theatres in the big cities and then rolled out to screens in smaller and smaller towns until no one was left to see the film. The studios were then left with a big library of films which had been exploited meaning there was no further revenue to be obtained from them.

When the studio system was dismantled by the American government in 1948 the movie theatres could now show anything they wanted to. Theatre bookers went from cinema to cinema to show the theatre owners (exhibitors) their new wares, and if the exhibitor thought the film would attract an audience, they booked it into their cinema's playlist.

When television was introduced in the late 1960s the studios first panicked and then they realized that TV was a perfect place for their old films. They then had another idea: making a movie opening an event. Spielberg's *Jaws* was the first movie where the thousands of prints were made in the labs and shipped to cinemas all around the country, and then the film opened at the same time.

The studio system had another white knuckled moment with the introduction of home video, cable television and DVD until, again they saw the revenue possibility of monetizing their back catalogues using this new technology. These new distribution technologies were incorporated into the distribution system, and the concept of windowing was born.

I started Raindance in 1992 when making an independent film took quite a bit of clout and money. Independent filmmakers shot on film. With so few

figure 19.1
Traditional film
distribution windows

1st Window	Theatrical screenings	1-2 months
2nd Window	Airline/Hotel	2-3 months
3rd Window	Video-On-Demand + Foreign Theatrical	3-6 months
4th Window	DVD rentals/sales	4-9 months
5th window	Pay-Per-View/VOD	1-2 months
6th window	Premium Cable	3-6 months
7th window	Basic Cable	4-6 months
8th window	Broadcast network television	one showing
9th window	Independent TV Station Syndication	Continuous
10th window	Ancillary: Schools, cruise ships, prisons, retirement homes, oil rigs	Continuous

independent films being made, and made with high production values afforded by film, distributors snapped them up for decent prices, sometimes paying advances so the films could be made.

The digital revolution started in the mid-1990s and by the turn of the century the market was glutted with cheaply produced independent movies. Prices crashed. Sales agents would sell a stack of titles to European or Asian distributors for a few thousand each, leaving the American independent filmmakers looking back home to America for a deal that would allow them to recoup their investment. The problem was, with the market awash with too many movies, distributors could afford to cherry pick the audience award winners from the big festivals like Sundance. Unless you had the festival kudos no cinema owner would chance an independent film in their expensive movie houses.

Fortunately for filmmakers, the DVD market was flourishing in the 00s. It was possible to make a decent return from an independent movie if it had a decent campaign image and fit into one of the genres, particularly horror or sci-fi.

But on Valentine's Day 2005 an event took place that would change the way filmmakers would be able to find their audiences. It was the day that the three cofounders of Youtube.com registered the URL on the internet registry service www.whois.com and with it the entire distribution "windows of opportunity" started to change.

Suddenly the Internet and its associated social media marketing tools could provide an alternative distribution strategy and by the mid-teens, much of the spare capacity was being mopped up and prices starting to rise.

Hint It is important to take a reality check:

You will most likely not get an advance unless you have a bankable star attached to your project. You will be lucky to get any cash back from a distributor before 9 to 15 months from the release of the film. This is a cash flow issue—they are waiting to get paid by the retailers. You will be fortunate to get any kind of distribution at all.

The Traditional Distribution Formula

It is the aim of every filmmaker to sell their film to a distributor. The distributor, theoretically, pays the filmmaker a sum of money (the advance) plus a percentage of box-office receipts as the film passes through the various stages of release (the windows).

Cinemas, hotel premium screenings, airline, pay or premium cable, home video, terrestrial television and ancillary markets such as schools, prisons, oil rigs and cruise ships all contribute money to the distributor. From this money the distributor deducts their expenses and the amount of the advance and then pays to the filmmaker the money as agreed in the distribution agreement.

A filmmaker needs to understand how distributors work and what they need in order to do their jobs properly. Despite the mistrust filmmakers have of distributors (and distributors of filmmakers) this understanding will make money for both sides.

Delivery Schedule Basics

Delivery marks the start of the distribution life of your film. The distributor who has purchased your film will have a list of items that they require from you. This list is known as the delivery schedule, and you will not be paid for your film until you have provided the distributor with everything that they ask for.

Hint A basic delivery schedule will include:

- A master of the film, be it on film or digital.
- Copies of the contracts with the actors.
- Chain of title.
- Proof of the clearances of any music.
- Publicity stills.
- Outtakes and other material relevant to a DVD, Blu-ray or VOD release.
- A script with the dialogue as shot.
- Other related promotional and publicity materials.

How Distribution Companies Work

Distribution companies make money on the difference between what they pay for a film and the money they receive from the box-office returns and the returns from television, DVD and Internet sales. A distributor buys films for their country or territory. Some distributors distribute in more than one territory.

How distribution companies see films

Before a distributor buys your film, they must see your film. Each distributor has an individual in charge of recommending films. This person is called an acquisition executive, and it is their responsibility to track up-and-coming films

through the pre-production and production process. If the film is hot, the film can be bought in the pre-production or production phase. Sometimes, the producer will create a teaser or trailer to entice film buyers.

1 Festivals

More often than not, the first time a film is screened is at a festival. Buyers attend film festivals to discover new films. Festivals are also a good chance to see how a film plays in front of an audience and give a distributor a chance to see how the filmmaker's marketing materials are working.

Two useful websites for researching film festivals are www.withoutabox.com and www.filmfestivals.com.

Hint Acceptance into a festival is further proof of the provenance of your film. Make the most of festival screenings. If a film buyer cannot attend, send a festival report. If the screening is sold out, or critically acclaimed, or if you win an award, send this information as soon as possible to the appropriate buyers.

2 Markets

Film market screenings rely on the advertising of the film in the trade press. The three major film markets, Cannes, American Film Market (AFM) and the European Film Market (EFM), are crowded with product, with as many as 3,000 films vying for buyers' attention. Buyers at a market will only see the most distinctive films. It is at market screenings that the pedigree of a film becomes important, be it because of the stars in the film or the director.

3 Private screenings

It is possible for a filmmaker to go to a major city like LA, New York, Paris or London and set up a private screening at a preview cinema and invite acquisition executives to attend. Since it is not as competitive as a film market, one theoretically has a better chance of attracting acquisition executives. If the person cannot attend, they will often send a junior to watch the film, and recommend it or otherwise.

A ploy often used by filmmakers is to call such screenings a world premiere trade screening in order to attract the attention of film buyers.

Hint Do not jam private or festival screenings full of cast and crew, as they will distract any film buyers at the screening. Far better to screen the film in front of one or two buyers, than screen the film to the same few buyers, surrounded by crew ecstatic at the catering credits.

4 Submitted screeners

Even if your film screens at a selection of markets, festivals and industry screenings, it may be impossible for certain distributors to see your film. In such instances, call and find out if the company accepts DVD, Blu-ray or online screeners, and submit it along with your latest press kit.

Hint Keep updating your press kit to include the latest awards and festival screenings.

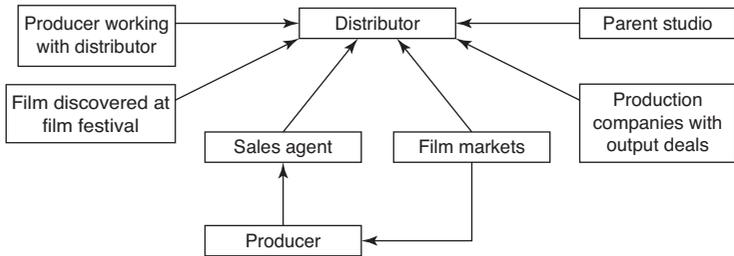


figure 19.2
How distributors acquire films

For every film, the distributor's sales department negotiates an individual and strictly confidential deal with each exhibitor's booking department. Under English law, the maximum is 2 weeks. After 2 weeks the distributor and exhibitor can continue playing the film if it has reached a sufficient audience.

Commercial screenings of film prints are now extremely rare. Most European cinemas screen on DCP only.

Marketing and media costs have risen dramatically in recent years. The cost of print advertising has doubled, and the cost of radio and TV advertising has skyrocketed.

Preparing the Distribution Marketing Plan

Once a distribution company has acquired a film, they need to prepare for the marketing and launch of the film.

The creative process of planning and executing a marketing campaign can have a huge effect on the performance of a film at the box office. A good marketing plan will create visibility, awareness and interest in the new film, peaking with the opening weekend. After the opening weekend, the distributor hopes that the film will get good reviews and word-of-mouth. In fact, distributors place far greater value in word-of-mouth than ads and trailers on television to create good box-office numbers. Hence astute filmmakers acknowledge the need for the right hook for a film at script stage.

When a new film is acquired, the distributor will hold a private screening for their marketing personnel to decide how to position and market the film for maximum audience appeal. The marketing team will then develop a strategy on how to reach this audience.

A total budget is then agreed for the cost of advertising the film and the duplication of screening prints, be it digital cinema package (DCP) or, depending on the territory, a film print. This is the P&A budget—the prints and advertising budget.

P&A Budget

When your film goes to a cinema for release, the following costs need to be budgeted for:

Cost of prints

Cost of exhibition copies. Currently these are digital copies i.e.: DCP.

Booking fee

A distributor will pay £2,000–£5,000 to a booking agent to schedule your film within the appropriate cinemas. A good booking agent will know which

cinemas are likely to attract better audiences for your film and will present your film to the exhibitors on your behalf. Distributors have Theatrical Sales Agents within their companies and so do not use booking agents. A filmmaker releasing their film without a distributor may use the likes of Miracle Communication (Martin Myers) which would constitute a booking agent.

Distribution fee

Usually the distributor will charge one third of the box-office gross.

Posters and quads

Quads and one sheets for the cinema foyers are a very effective way of promoting your screening. Hung a week or two before the opening, they will have a 'coming soon' paper shoved under the glass, removed and replaced with 'now showing'. Four-colour quads cost £10–£15 each depending on the quantity you order.

Trailers

Certain cinemas and chains will show trailers of your film in the weeks before it opens. Copies of the trailer will need to be provided on DCP.

British Board of Film Classification

For the film to play in the UK cinema, it must have a censorship rating. Censorship criteria have been relaxed over the past few years in the UK. You will need to submit the film to the BBFC for classification. Allow for this in your schedule and budget.

Publicity

A good publicist will promote your film for between £2,000–£3,000. If your film has been bought by a distributor then they will take care of this for you.

Advertising

The sky is the limit, but £10,000 should be spent here for basic ads. Again, the distributor will take care of this for you. Many distributors only book online ads on Facebook and Google.

Marketing Terminology

Marketability vs. playability

Marketability is how easy the film is to sell to an audience, whereas playability is how well the film stands up to an audience and so how well it performs in the marketplace.

Hint Marketability and playability are not necessarily the same thing.

Does the film work, does the film grip the audience's attention, does it deliver what it promises in the title and the marketing campaign? For example

The Cable Guy was marketed as a comedy starring Jim Carrey. It was in fact a psychological thriller starring Jim Carrey in a diversion from his usual role. The film disappointed at the box office.

Blockbusters with top stars need heavy marketing budgets to publicise their releases. As competition between films and distributors increases, marketing decisions become more crucial. Inspired marketing cannot save a bad film. A fine film can be lost in the melée if it does not have a clear, distinct promotion.

Word-of-mouth

The most effective form of publicity is word-of-mouth. If your best friend goes to a movie then calls you up and says 'Hey you have got to see this' you are much more likely to go and see the movie. Many distributors invest in free 'Talker Screenings' in the run up to the movie's release. These ensure there is a buzz about the film in the local markets.

Buzz

Distributors hire research companies to track the awareness of an approaching release in the months and weeks coming up to a new release. A film is competing not only with other films, but with other leisure pursuits. It is effectively a new product launch.

Often a distributor will use several film festival screenings as an attempt to create good word-of-mouth. UK distributor Pathé's head of marketing did this with the English premiere of *The Blair Witch Project* at Raindance and Tartan Film's Hamish McAlpine and Laura de Casto did the same when they screened *Secretary* at Raindance East. Both screenings were a way of drumming up interest. Fortunately for Raindance, both films had exceptionally successful releases.

Promotions

Major promotional partnerships can involve a year's forward planning. Sometimes a film will partner with a product or an event. In America, the Oscars™ offer an obvious marketing hook, and certain films are carefully (and expensively) positioned according to their nominations. Distributors can often use extra press advertising and quotes from reviews following awards won or nominations. These ads are usually turned around the very night they are won in order to meet newspaper ad deadlines. Some distributors use award wins to help push new release windows. See figure 19.2 overleaf for an example.

Opening weekend

The total box-office take from each cinema screen showing a film on a Friday, Saturday and Sunday is added together to calculate the opening weekend gross. Sometimes this amount is inflated by including the box-office take from preview screenings in an attempt to catapult a film into the coveted number one slot.

Distributors are sent to the weekend figures late Sunday night, and live in dread of the 3 a.m. call. By the time business opens on Monday morning, exhibitors and distributors know whether or not the film is a hit.

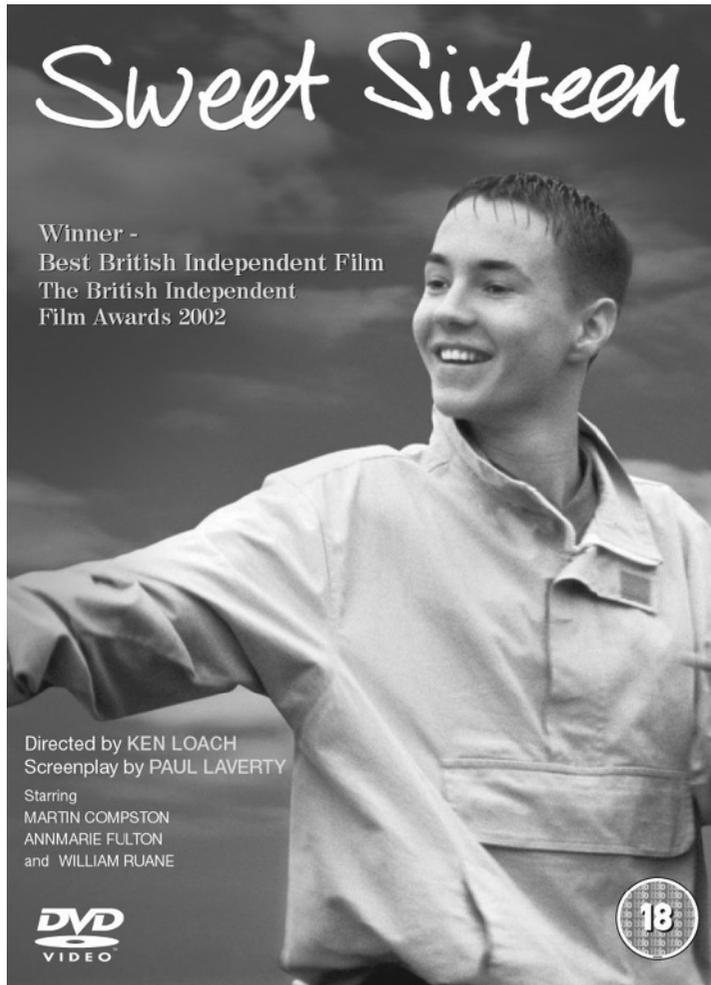


figure 19.3
Sweet Sixteen DVD
cover citing British
Independent Film
Awards win

Holdover meetings

On the Monday following a film's release, with the opening weekend box-office figures at hand, the distributor's marketing team meets to discuss the film's performance and to decide what (if any) changes need to be made to the marketing campaign, and more importantly, whether or not to continue the film's run in cinemas.

If the film is deemed to have legs, then the distributor's sales people will call each of the exhibitors and try to convince them to hold the film for another week's run. If not, the film may be pulled from the cinemas before its scheduled run is over.

Exhibitor

An exhibitor is the individual or corporation that owns the cinema. While they make money from a percentage of the box-office take, they also make

a considerable amount of money from the concession booth. Hence, an exhibitor is more likely to consider a lower percentage from the box office if they can see a large advertising and promotion campaign guaranteed to get people into the cinema ready to buy their expensive popcorn and drinks.

Distribution and Marketing Tools

Poster

The poster is arguably the single most important marketing tool. The right image can create an enormous amount of interest, both in the media and in the general public. *The Blair Witch Project* used a single still in its campaign. If you contacted Pathé for images, you were sent just this single one.



figure 19.4
The unforgettable
publicity image for *The
Blair Witch Project*

Media advertising

Depending on the budget of the film, the distributor will book advertisements in magazines, newspapers, television and radio. As the cost of these ads spirals, distributors usually limit themselves to a few well-placed ads. In London, the ads are placed in *Time Out*, *The Guardian Guide* magazine on a Saturday and *The Evening Standard* (afternoon newspaper) for a single insert on the day prior to the film's opening. Television spots are reserved for the big-budget Hollywood movies or high-concept films.

Trailers

A well-cut, succinct trailer can play in cinemas and online in the weeks running up to a film's release to create interest.

figure 19.5
Front and back of
the eye-catching
Tartan Films postcard for
Ivan's XTC



Hint Try to avoid making a trailer that is so explicit the audience feels like it has seen the movie in its entirety. Try to make something that is more of a mood piece.

Publicity

A well-planned release will include a PR campaign to promote the director and lead performers in the months before the release of the film. A good publicist will seek to find any unique hooks that can be played to the local press.

Different publications have different lead-in times. The style monthlies, like *Dazed and Confused* and *Tatler*, will have a 3-month lead-in time. The film magazines like *Empire* will have a 6-week lead-in, while *Time Out* and the daily newspapers need a week's notice. A distributor will often need to fly in the lead actors twice: once for the long lead-in publications, and then right before the opening of the film for the dailies, and possibly the premiere.

Promotions and merchandising

Distributors often try to tie in the release of a film with a product release or relaunch and offer a price incentive. For example, Pret à Manger, the British sandwich chain, offered a discount for anyone who bought a sandwich who also wanted to see the Robert Altman film *Pret à Porter*. *Transformers* ran a competition with T-Mobile, where customers of T-Mobile could enter into a competition to win a part in the next *Transformers* film. Galaxy Chocolate partnered with *Sex and the City* to promote the film's release on all their chocolate bars. More recently Samsung teamed up with *The Inbetweeners* to give away DVD box sets of the series ahead of the film release and also offer customers the chance to win a holiday to Crete.

Postcards

Postcards are a cheap and effective way to market a film. A good postcard has a visually pleasing image, a great title and logline. The reverse of the card can also offer a brief summary of the film, and still leave room for a mailing label. They can also be left in cafés, bookstores and cinemas to help promote the film.

Hamish McAlpine of Tartan Films used a clever postcard for a UK marketing campaign which the American filmmakers had used to market the screenings of the film *Ivan's XTC*. By doing a series of targeted mailings before the film opened, the distributor managed to create memorable word-of-mouth buzz based solely on the image (see figure 19.4 opposite).

Preview screenings

Several weeks before the opening of the film, and timed to coordinate with the lead times of various publications, the distributor will arrange for preview screenings for journalists to come and see the film. Even if a particular publication's deadline is not for several weeks, preview screenings allow a journalist to see the film, write the review and save it for publication just before the film's official opening.

The trick is to get journalists to attend the screening, and distributors will usually offer light refreshments, including ample amounts of alcohol.

Premieres

Official premiers are another chance to create attention, especially if the stars can attend. Big Hollywood movies usually use this occasion as another chance to get coverage and build hype for their movie. Premieres usually hit the news bulletins on the evening they happen. Sometimes a distributor will choose to partner with a charity. Tickets for the event will be sold at a premium, with the proceeds used to defray the cost of hiring the cinema, flying in the talent, and with all the profits going to charity.

Festivals

Prestige festivals like Cannes, Sundance, Toronto and Berlin offer another celebrity opportunity for distributors to create hype for their films. These festivals stage heavily publicised gala screenings where the stars attending are interviewed by scores of journalists and with newspapers ever-hungry for a 'starlet on the red-carpet in a jaw-dropping dress' shot, the screenings become front-page news around the world.

Trade press reviews

The major trades attend the major festivals and review festival films. These trade reviews are highly prized, if favourable, and highly damaging if not.

Market screenings

A heavily publicized market screening at Cannes, European Film Market or the American Film Market will attract international distributors.

Internet

Distributors often mistrust the Internet as a medium for promoting their films. Part of their fear is based on the threat of piracy, and also the fact that a

In London, the latest James Bond premiere was held at the Royal Albert Hall and tickets sold for £1,000 each. The event was sold out, and after the huge expenses of bringing in high-quality projection turning the Albert Hall into an ice palace, flying in the stars and feeding the 5,000-strong audience, the charity Cinema and Television Benevolent Fund raised over £500,000. The distributor was delighted with the front-page coverage as well.

distributor in one territory cannot protect their territory from encroachment from web-based viewers abroad.

Done correctly, and with sensitivity, the Internet offers unlimited low-budget opportunities for promotion.

The classic example is *The Blair Witch Project*, which used the Internet to create a whispering campaign about the fate of the three filmmakers. The makers of *Six String Samurai* discovered that the word 'samurai' is one of the most popular words entered in search engines and managed to create a huge interest in their film (which sadly failed to deliver at the box office).

Secretary, a film full of sexual oddities, was promoted on the net in the UK using a series of quizzes about which letters on the keyboard got the secretary spanked or pinched.

Summary of the distribution process

A studio is a vertically integrated film company that makes films and distributes films in every territory. Here are the major film studios:

News Corporation - owns 20th Century Fox.

The Walt Disney Company - owns Buena Vista, Walt Disney Studios and Miramax/Dimension Films.

Viacom - owns Paramount Pictures.

Sony - owns both Sony Pictures and MGM (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer).

Time Warner - owns both Warner Bros. and New Line Cinema.

NBC Universal - owns Universal Studios.

Anatomy of a movie deal in 60 seconds

A producer/studio acquires rights to film a story from true-life story, treatment, adaptation or screenplay. The screenplay is developed/rewritten. Casting and production finance are confirmed. Principal photography takes place in studios and/or on agreed locations, followed by post-production and editing. Master print delivered to distributor. Delivery determines release strategy and, release date. Distributor presents the film to exhibitors and negotiates agreements to have film shown in cinemas. Marketing campaign to create buzz is launched. Film festival debut for the movie with gala screening and celebrity after party. Test screenings used to judge audience reactions or to evaluate alternative marketing. The exhibition prints delivered to cinema. The cinemas decide to extend the run subject to demand. A film print goes to rep cinemas. Excess film prints destroyed.

Film distributed on DVD and/or pay cable. Film distributed VOD and on terrestrial television. Film released in ancillary markets (prisons, schools, nursing homes). Copyright returns to the filmmaker. Potential second revenue stream to the producer from remakes and sequels.

Studio distribution

Of the major studios, all distribute themselves in the US (domestic), yet only Fox, Sony, Warner Bros. and Buena Vista International distribute their own films internationally. The rest (Universal, Paramount, MGM/UA and Dreamworks) distribute under Paramount or Universal.

Distribution Terms

Opening weekend

The cumulative total of the tickets sold to a film in all cinemas in a territory on a Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

Wide release

A film released immediately on more than 300 screens in the UK and more than 1,000 in the US. At £1,000–£2,000 per print (and although the cost of duplicating a DCP is under £100, the cost of creating a master DCP can approach £2,500), wide releases can cost a lot of money, and so are reserved for those films most likely to enjoy big box-office openings. If the film is likely to benefit from word-of-mouth, distributors may open it on the Wednesday or Thursday ahead of the first weekend to encourage this.

Saturation release

A film opening in many theatres in one area (for example London's West End) supported by extensive regional advertising and publicity.

Platform release

Intends to domino the audience, perhaps beginning with a two or three cinema release, building over subsequent weeks to nationwide coverage. In the UK distributors often open a film in the West End, even on just one screen, for a week before nationwide release.

Miramax used this strategy brilliantly with the release of *The Crying Game*, which opened on two screens in New York. The distributor didn't book additional screens until the film was sold out for every screening, and then opened the film city by city.

My Big Fat Greek Wedding is an example of a film that opened slowly to a large number of screens and then built its release as the film received high audience figures.

Wide-multiple release

If a distributor has a film with a major star which they fear will get bad reviews, they will often open the film in as many screens as possible, knowing they have a limited number of week(s) to earn box-office revenue before bad word-of-mouth damages the film's revenue.

Exclusive engagement

Sometimes a film opens exclusively at one cinema, or a number of screens at a single cinema, perhaps ahead of extending the run or broadening the release.

Day/Date release

Richard Gere's *Arbitrage* opened in cinemas and on VOD on the same day. Exhibitors dislike this strategy because they fear smaller attendances at cinemas. However it is increasingly popular distribution strategy among independent filmmakers. Raindance started this trend in 2006 when eight

festival features and two shorts programmes played on the same date and time in cinemas and on the now-defunct Tiscali platform. Home viewers were given a time frame in which they could log in and watch the film on the same night as it was playing in London. Incidentally, when I approached filmmakers and asked them if they would permit an Internet screening, they all said 'no', but when I asked if they would be interested in a virtual screening they all said yes.

Distribution Deals

When a distributor agrees to distribute a film, they sign an agreement with the producer that sets out the different aspects of the deal. The deal you make will be based on one of the following six principles.

1 Studio

The company you are producing for is owned by a studio which will handle all aspects of the distribution.

2 Output deals

A distributor agrees to handle the entire output of the production company making not only your film, but other films as well. For example Buena Vista International has an output deal to distribute all Miramax films in Europe.

3 Pre-sales

Distribution rights are sold during pre-production, usually for a cash advance. For example Buena Vista bought the rights to *Pulp Fiction* before the film was made, thereby ensuring that there was enough cash to make the film.

4 Negative pick-ups

The distributor agrees to hand over an agreed cash price on delivery of the completed film (the negative).

Often the major studios and major distributors will have several films available on short notice to open quickly to plug a blockbuster disaster. *Sister Act* is an example of a film that was quickly released with minimal publicity, only to succeed beyond the distributor's wildest expectations.

5 Outright acquisition

Rights for a territory or series of territories are purchased after production is completed.

These are agreements signed with distributors whereby they agree to hand over money when a completed film (i.e. a negative) is delivered. These agreements are signed prior to completion of the film.

Both parties need to come to a common understanding of what quality the completed film should be—including script, cast, technical and production standards. A completion bond will need to be in place to ensure that if the film runs out of money, or unforeseen events occur to prevent the film meeting its required standard, reshoots and re-edits can occur until the delivery requirements are met.

After a third party (e.g. a lab) agrees that the film is satisfactory, the distributor pays the producer. This payment is usually the costs of production plus any interest on loans accrued. In some cases an advance on the film's potential profits may be paid, although the higher the advance the lower the profit share of distribution royalties.

6 The standard deal

In a standard distribution deal, a distributor will agree a nonrefundable advance payment to the producer of the film in exchange for the rights to distribute the film in a certain territory. The distributor then attempts to recoup the money and a profit through the money taken during the release of the film.

Once the distributor has recouped the advance and the expenses of releasing the film, an agreement is made where additional profit share is paid to the producer.

As part of the agreement, the distributor will also commit to an amount of money to be spent on prints and advertising for the film. The producer will also have to agree to a delivery schedule of when prints, soundtrack, publicity materials and other items will be handed over to the distributor. The distributor will also agree to the distribution fee—approximately thirty percent.

Anatomy of the Box Office

Let us assume a £1 million box-office gross based on a 100-print release in one week. The table below demonstrates how a film that grosses a very respectable box-office income could end up making a loss.

Box-Office Gross		1,000,000
Less VAT/Sales Tax 20%	166,666	833,334
Less Exhibitor cut 50%	416,666	416,666
Less DCP	5,000	411,666
Less PR and Marketing	175,000	236,666
Less Distributor cost (30% of Box Office)	249,999	-13,333

Type of Film	Fees (in £ per minute)			Fixed Charge
	First hour	Second hour	Thereafter	
Shorts, features and trailers for theatrical release	£7.00 per minute	7.50	5.60	£100.00
Shorts and features for video release	£6.00 per minute	7.75	6.48	£75.00
Shorts and features for video release, previously classified for film	£4.50 per minute	5.20	3.47	£75.00

table 19.1

Why Films are Released in Cinemas

People don't rent or see films. They watch movies. This is the reason why so many films are released in cinemas despite the fact they lose money; to turn the film into a movie. When members of the public see the advertisements

and reviews, they think of the film as a movie because it will play in a cinema. The cinema release will enhance the other release windows. Distributors know that a television, VOD or DVD sale will be more valuable should the film be released in a cinema. It's an expensive form of advertising. Often a distributor will open a film in just two screens: one in England and one in Scotland so it qualifies for the National Distributors List meaning all the film journalists will likely review it, as it is now a national release. The distributor will budget for a loss on the release knowing that their film is now a movie, in marketing terms an astute and relatively cheap way to guarantee credibility and increase revenue from other windows.

Other Release Windows

Pay hotel or airline

This small and short window is positioned directly after the theatrical window. When screened on airlines, a film is sometimes still being screened in cinemas in the destination country.

Luxury hotels also show near-first-run movies. Suites and bedrooms have several free-to-view channels and then several pay-per-view movie channels, including two or more porn channels. The movies shown are recently screened theatrical releases. The distributor, hotel and producer split the revenue from this window.

VOD

Video on demand allows a home user to access a movie through a set top box or through a website (Netflix, Lovefilm, Blinkbox, iMovies). This window has largely replaced DVD in America and is trending to do the same in Europe and Asia. The all-important window will also demand exclusivity and its own window.

DVD and pay cable

The operators of these two windows dislike each other. If you go into a video store, you will see titles with disclaimers like: 'not to be seen on TV for 6 months'. Conversely, on premium channel TV channels you will often see the phrase: 'exclusive to Sky TV'. A savvy producer will take the highest offer, and then use the other operator for the next window. So he will sell to DVD for a 9-month window, followed by pay cable for another 9-month window, or vice versa.

Terrestrial television

It is difficult for many independent filmmakers to place their film on terrestrial TV because of the populist demands on all of the mainstream stations. No matter how worthy and intelligent your film, it is probable that the programmers for these channels will give your movie a miss in favour of a film with real movie stars and expensive production values.

If your film does find a home on terrestrial TV, it is likely that the distributor who has purchased your film will already be looking for the TV rights fee to offset potential losses from the cinematic release.

Martin Myers, a colleague of mine, negotiated the airline rights for *Withnail and I* with a major British airline to coincide with the tenth anniversary of the release. He achieved a low six-figure number on intercontinental flights departing from the UK for a 6-month period.

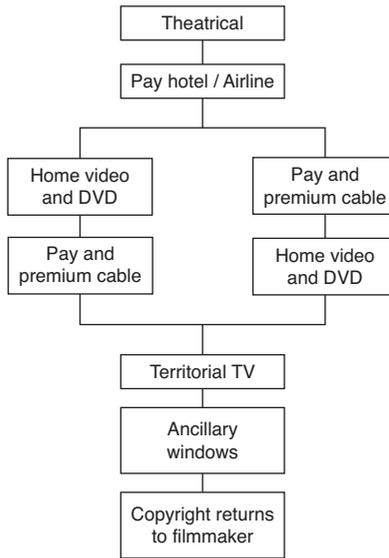


figure 19.6
Release windows

Ancillary

Ian Kerry's innovative Flicks in the Sticks programme exploits this window by using a mobile digital projector which tours small communities in the west of England. Last year he organised 500 screenings with the box office divided between the distributors and local organisers.

Many producers overlook the revenue that can be gained from screenings in prisons, hospitals, cruise ships and schools. Should a film become very successful in other windows, it is almost certain that receipts from this window will escalate dramatically.

Rise of pop-up cinemas like the event-based Secret Cinema, the social network Rooftop Films and Nomad Cinema often do special events in association with the filmmakers.

Some UK producers like Stuart St Paul are creating movies based on adaptations of public domain novels which appear on high school English literature courses knowing that they will have a certain number of DVD sales. This helps to explain the great number of Thomas Hardy novels filmed, and also makes Merchant Ivory productions of E.M. Forster novels look like ancillary marketing genius.

In Consultation with Claes Loberg: Branded Entertainment

Claes Loberg is an international expert in branded entertainment, who divides his time between London and New York.

The market for films (and film concepts) is becoming increasingly complicated; it's no longer just studios that are interested in great ideas.

The media world has fragmented in recent years: we have seen the rise and rise of the Internet, video-capable mobile phones and tablets have become commonplace, and the number of television channels has proliferated. These developments have had a tremendous impact on the media and entertainment industries, with the ramifications still not fully understood.

For the film industry these new media represent new channels with which to reach the public, an opportunity that the industry has been quick to recognise: *The Blair Witch Project* famously exposed the marketing potential of the Internet, Hollywood has turned multichannel television into an important distribution outlet, whilst mobile phone technology is now at the stage where full movies on the go are a mass-market reality.

However, although new media have so far benefited the film industry they are now ushering in changes that will undermine many of today's conventions. Professional piracy and amateur file swapping have decimated the music industry; the film industry will be next—there are serious doubts as to whether there will be an audience willing to pay \$10 to watch a film in 10 years' time.

Depending on where you sit today that may be a good or a bad thing: if you're sitting in a grand office built on the profits of film distribution then this change is one to be feared; if you're a young filmmaker struggling to get an audience for your films then this change will bring opportunities. For now, the route to the largest audience (and the greatest income) is still to produce a film so good that people will pay money to watch it in a cinema but other ways to become a profitable filmmaker are emerging.

Alternative Buyers of Your Film

As a filmmaker, your 'customers' have traditionally been the studios and distributors—if you couldn't sell your concept or film to them then your masterpiece remains forever yours. Television has long provided an alternative avenue to reach mass audiences (though not an easily accessible one); the Internet has also provided an alternative method of finding an audience but carries the significant disadvantage of also lacking any kind of remuneration or funding.

Studios and distributors will remain as potential customers but their buying power will fall as they lose control of the audience. Professional piracy is growing and file swapping of feature films is growing as consumers get the bandwidth to be able to download them. Hollywood will fight the trend, using technology and the law, but there are currently no indications that this is a fight that they can win.

This does not mean that the film industry will die but it does mean that it will change: budgets are likely to decrease, films will increasingly be marketed as 'events' and simultaneous global release dates will become more common. Film styles may also change: the studios may increasingly look for films that 'need' the big screen experience, or for films that appeal to audiences that are most likely to be tempted out of their homes and into the cinemas.

Although Hollywood will evolve to find its niche, the demand for the films we enjoy will not change. Instead other buyers will emerge to fund the projects that Hollywood can't.

Branded Entertainment

It was rumoured that the Bond film *Tomorrow Never Dies* was the first film to reach profit before release solely due to product placement income. Brands, or companies that own them, have been funding films and content

In June 2013 George Lucas and Stephen Spielberg publicly predicted on the death of cinema as we know it and the birth of event cinema which will mainly show hugely budgeted films and market them as events similar to West End or Broadway shows. This is a sobering thought for independent filmmakers seeking theatrical distribution.

In 2003 Nokia launched a new mobile telephone that was the world's first phone able to record movies—an astonishingly short 15 seconds. Raindance embarked on a series of branded entertainment spots for Nokia between 2003 and 2007. Their tagline is 'sharing the moment', and we ran a series of competitions for filmmakers to create 15-second short films for the company. The best ten were screened at the Raindance Film Festival each year in what became known as UGC: User Generated Content.

for many years; the product placement industry has grown rapidly since *E.T.* drove the sales of Reese's Pieces candy, and many television and cinema adverts have legitimate claims of artistic merit.

In 2001 BMW commissioned a series of five short films using David Fincher as Executive Producer. These films, directed by a number of first class directors including Guy Ritchie, John Frankenheimer and Ang Lee, starred Clive Owen as a driver for hire. Each film was approximately 8 minutes long, and was exciting and stylish. In the films the Clive Owen character drove a BMW but the films lacked any logo close-ups or lingering shots of the car. The aim of the films was to communicate what BMW 'means' not what the car 'does'—it showed that BMWs are stylish, are exciting and some of the films also illustrated other facets of what BMW means, including safety and reliability.

The BMW films are great examples of branded entertainment—quality films that attract an audience whilst representing a 'brand world'.

2012's James Bond's *Skyfall* was financed largely through product placement. For the first time Daniel Craig's Bond drank a beer (Heineken's £45m) instead of a martini.

Every brand is defined by a number of attributes that are created by the company's activities, products, services and marketing. These attributes are typically adjectives such as 'quality', 'fun', 'cool', 'trustworthy' or descriptive captions such as 'value for money'. Marketing professionals group these attributes together to define the 'brand character'. For example, the brand character of Nike could be 'skilled', 'sporty', 'fashionable', 'athletic' and 'winning'—from these words alone you can almost picture the character that Nike customers aspire to—the toned athlete breaking first through the finishing tape.

The 'brand world' is an extension of the brand character to include the setting: the Nike brand world might be 'skilled', 'sporty', 'fashionable', 'athletic', 'winning' and also 'everywhere' and 'anywhere'. The Coca-Cola brand world could be 'fun', 'friends', 'satisfying' but also 'endless vacations' and 'beautiful places'. The brand world provides important extra information when you're creating entertainment.

Creating entertainment that reflects a brand world is very different from product placement. Entertainment can reflect a brand world through a setting, through one or several characters, through a plot line or device, etc. For example, BMW films conveyed the BMW brand world by using a character that BMW drivers could identify with and by showing the performance of the car. The short film/trailer *Lucky Star* communicated the Mercedes brand world by depicting the world of the man who knows everything, and showing that he drives a Mercedes. More famously Tony Scott's *Top Gun* illustrated the brand world of the US Navy by showing its men to be brave, honourable and daring (the characters in *Top Gun* may fall out with each other but they all do the right thing when America is threatened . . .).

Is Your Script Branded Entertainment?

Some film ideas lend themselves to branded entertainment (*Top Gun* being the most obvious, though there are others such as *The Italian Job*). Other films have been able to accommodate branded entertainment (the recent

Bond films, Robert Zemeckis' *Castaway* and Steven Spielberg's *Minority Report*) but increasingly scriptwriters are writing films with potential clients in mind.

To understand whether your film concept could work for branded entertainment you first need to understand the brand world that you believe your film could reflect.

Branded entertainment is different from product placement. This means that it can be more difficult to assess which films will be appropriate for which brands. With product placement, this can be easy: if the scene requires a car, a beer or suit then it is likely that Ford, Budweiser or Hugo Boss would be potential brands for placement. For branded entertainment, you must take a step back from your film and evaluate the messages that it communicates: is it an anticapitalist lesson? A warning of the perils of love? A celebration of friendship? It is the messages that your film communicates that will dictate whether it could become great branded entertainment.

A celebration of friendship? Then it might be right for Coca-Cola or Vodafone. A favourable view of the surfer's lifestyle? Then Quiksilver or Billabong might be interested.

A note of caution: companies are used to advertising—they define the audience they need to target, they find an angle that will appeal to that audience and create content that will exploit that appeal. They are not used to buying or investing in films that are in the can or halfway through shooting. Major advertisers are targeted with hundreds of ideas and concepts every year—the ideas they commission are the best—getting an advertiser to spot and invest in the branded entertainment potential of your idea is not easy.

Advertisers are increasingly using advertising agencies and specialist branded entertainment agencies to assess the merits of entertainment ideas. If you believe that your idea could reach the mass market as branded entertainment, then the best preparation you can do is prepare a treatment (as per usual) but also identify as fully as possible the branded entertainment angle you see within your film and the brands that you see it being relevant to. If you can get a branded entertainment agency to read and represent your idea to the major advertisers then you're on the road to creating branded entertainment.

The British
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Censorship

Summary

1. Make it your business to find out what distributors need.
2. Consider the publicity required by a distributor.
3. Don't underestimate the importance of an original hook.

Now let's put together a plan of attack to create a viable business plan.

In Conversation with Simon Franks

Simon Franks is the chief executive of Redbus. He is one of the UK's leading film distributors and producers. He was the executive producer of *Bend It Like Beckham* (2003) and *Good Night and Good Luck* (2005).

What does your production company do?

Basically our production business is linked to our distribution business and the idea of it is to bring product into the distribution entity. We look at the production business effectively as a supplier for the distribution arm and we try to focus our production efforts on movies that we have an interest in from our distribution point of view. So we are really a very marketing-driven production company because when you are distribution focused you are starting off with a customer and working on what they want to see and then working backwards. Rather than coming at the industry from, let's say a more artistic point of view, saying, 'What movie would we love to make?', the first question for us is, 'What does the audience want to see?' In terms of what we actually do, we make about three to four movies a year. Either fully financing or co-financing, co-producing and we hope over time that could rise to maybe five, six, but I don't really ever see it going beyond that. Four really is the number we're happy to stay with.

What does your job here at Redbus entail?

Well, I started this company. Now I'm chief executive. I run the operations of the business, both on a day-to-day level, and also on a strategic level. That encompasses overseeing the people who run the marketing group, the people who run the production group, the people who run the finance group: they all report to me and my job is to coordinate all their efforts.

Can you give us a rundown of a typical day at Redbus?

I can give you an idea of a typical day for me but not for the company, really—we have a lot of staff. We have offices around the world so I do lots of different things, many of which are very boring. My job is probably one of the least sexy media jobs, because a lot of it is about running a business. We're a business more than we are anything else and as a business there's a lot of administration, there is a lot of quite tedious effort that has to go into making sure the business is kept ticking over. But if I was to give you for example a cross section of a week, you would get a more interesting flavour. I probably, two or three times a week, go to a screening or a movie that has been made but that doesn't have distribution. I probably read three to four scripts a week, which is nothing—our head of production and head of development probably read twenty a week. But I read three or four which will be scripts they passed onto me which will have gone through all the readers and they've read them and are seriously considering.

I will also sit in the marketing meeting, which is where the distribution group talk about movies we are releasing and schedules and P&A (prints and advertising) spans and things like that. I will probably have maybe a meeting with a head of an exhibition, for example the head of Warners or Odeon or one of the cinema chains. I might have a meeting with someone at the UK Film Council, which [was] the government body that supports the film industry. I will most probably be involved in one or two meetings with our investment bankers. We are quite an acquisitive company and we look to maybe take

stakes in other production companies or even buy out other distribution businesses, so we might be doing that.

Those are kind of the things we do, but obviously that changes around market time. During the markets, I'm obviously in Cannes, I'm in Venice, I'm in Toronto, I'm in Sundance. So for the festivals and the markets I'm obviously away and my day during those times changes dramatically cause I'm out there meeting filmmakers and producers. I'm out there trying to spot films that haven't been noticed and I'm trying to spot talent that hasn't been noticed.

What would someone do to get your job?

I wanted this job, so I started a company to get it. You can't really get this kind of job because I own the controlling share of this business. So, on that basis I control the company. So to have a job where you control the company, you have to start it I guess.

How did you go about starting the company?

That's a fairly long story. I mean it doesn't happen overnight. It involves a lot of luck and a lot of hard work. I was in investment banking and I was quite fortunate. I left university, got a good job and I'm sure you know you can make quite quick, big money in the city. I got to a situation where I was twenty-five, twenty-six and I had made quite a lot of money, not enough to retire but enough to start a business, which is what I always wanted to do. My only real passion was films. I love watching movies. I love the enjoyment and the buzz of creating movies and unfortunately I didn't have any other way to express myself creatively other than coming from the business side. I decided I would leave banking and start a business. I was very lucky—because I worked in banking I knew lots of people my age who had also spare money that I could get them to invest. I set up a tax scheme and we raised about \$3 million and started the business. We just got lucky from day one. We picked up a few projects here and there. We started off picking up a project for \$50,000 and probably made \$300,000, which is not big money, but if you do that a few times a year, it starts adding up. Then a few banks started having confidence in us and starting lending us money. Now today we have revenue in the tens of millions. I think probably this year revenue will be in the region of \$14–\$15 million. There is a linear progression in the business and we have grown at a steady pace. I'm happy to say the rate of increase is growing as we get more and more talented people on board.

Whenever I get asked to look back on how I started it, the key is to find people. We were very lucky because Universal Studios bought Polygram, which was the big European studio and the leading independent in Europe and in the UK as well. What happened was, we did a deal with the head of the UK business and took over the entire Polygram group, which was the head of theatrical, the head of distribution, the head of marketing, the head of PR. Overnight that brought us the profile and the prestige and most importantly it brought us a skill base that meant we had experience beyond our years, because most of these people had been distributing movies for 7, 8 years. So we grew, had a few hits, and you make a lot of money in this business with hits. The rest is history.

What projects are you currently working on? What would you say is the biggest thing?

I don't think I can answer that question. You have to understand, our production business is attached to our distribution business, and they are very strategically linked. So the main focus is not one or two key projects per year. It just isn't that way. The distribution team will tell you they focus on every movie exactly the same. They're doing twelve movies, or thirteen, fourteen movies this year and they give the same amount of commitment to each of them. Each one is important for them. I think obviously on our own productions, we probably work that little bit harder and obviously *Bend It Like Beckham* is an example of that. We were involved from the earliest stages in the development of the movie throughout production and then distributed the movie. I think it has been a huge success. I think part of that is down to how early we got involved in the marketing stage and how hard we worked on it.

In Conversation with Martin Myers

Martin Myers is the fourth generation of his family to enter movie business. An accomplished professional with broad experience of the film and video business in both corporate and independent sectors, Martin has handled the releases of *The Princess Bride* (1987), *Ong-Bak* (2003) and *Papadopoulos & Sons* (2012).

How did you start out in the business?

My father was a distributor in a company called Miracle Films. Throughout the 60s and 70s it distributed foreign language and sex films—*Yellow Emanuel* and *My Swedish Funny Hill*. I loved what he did and wanted to be involved in the business. When I was 18 I went to live in Paris for a year, and worked as a runner for 20th Century Fox. I spent the mornings learning French.

When I returned I worked for United Artists, which became You Are People (the CIC) in the 80s. My first meeting went very well; it was with Maurice Young, a legend. I then met the managing director Alfie Jarred—a good friend of my parents. He gave me the job but said “I'll give you 6 weeks, if you fuck up you're out”. I stayed there 3 years. I spent a year going around the various departments—publishing and marketing, booking, accounting, the international division—and then they shipped me off to South America. I spent a year in Chile learning Spanish, running the cinema in the evenings in Santiago and learning about international distribution. Unfortunately a year later Alfie died.

They brought me back to the UK and I spent another two years at the UIP which was fun. Then the sales director my father had left to go to EMI, and so I joined my father. The first film I released with him was the *Care Bears* movie in 1986. We then became consultants to the company Investron, and set up Investron Pictures. In 1987 we released films—*Dirty Dancing*, *Princess Bride*, *Young Guns* and *Buster*—some major films. In 1990 they went into administration, and we got taken over by HTV television. We changed the name of the company to First Independent Films, and released films like *Misery*, *Dumb and Dumber* and *City Slickers*. We bought a script stage, and during that period released a lot of big films.

In 1999 the company got sold to United News Media. I left the company and set up my own business under Miracle Communications, basically releasing and distributing films, and doing airline sales for various clients. First Independent became one of my clients, although they paid me off and were

honorable to all the directors and staff, they didn't realize they had to bring me back on board. There were films that I'd bought and acquired that needed me to be able to release them. So that really kick-started what I do now. I now work for a number of clients, I release their films theatrically, I book the cinemas, I do all the collections, I organize the posters for the cinemas, I do their airline rights, television sales and have now produced my first film in the States. I am on the verge of producing two low-budget horror films this year, and I'm producing a million-pound movie as well. I find I get a lot of directors and producers coming to me directly. I just worked on *Wee Man of Scotland*, which is going to do £400,000 in the box office. Everything else is the icing on the cake.

You mentioned you get directors and producers who approach you, what can they bring that will impress you?

It's not really what they can bring but what I can bring to the table. If you sell the film to a mainstream distributor they can offer you a lot of money, which is great. But if they're offering you something you don't expect then my route is kind of interesting. I say everything is in three different boxes. My box is theatrical; we spend the P&A and release the film, if it works all that revenue goes back to the producers directly. I can help set up a DVD deal, N-Lines and digital deals, which becomes the income stream. Whereas the distributors cross off all the rights, they're paid in advance and spend the P&A money, so the chances are you won't see money for a few years, in my route the money comes through much faster.

I always insist on having regular meetings with my clients, we meet every fortnight to discuss everything. I just did a film, *May I Kill You*, and I met regularly with the director and his team—it's important that everyone is singing off the same hymn sheet, otherwise things start to fall down the cracks.

When it comes to distribution are there ways you can tackle that?

At the end of the day, booking a film is about relationships. A lot of the people who have the big jobs in the exhibition market started in the industry at the same time as me, we're all friends—we're honest with each other. If I've got a film that is not a great movie but I need to release it, I'm completely up front—life is too short to bullshit. Even if a film is great it's all about the marketing as well. I've got *Bulu Quo* coming out. Status Quo is going to go on tour with the band and then start the *Bulu Quo* tour with their nine new songs. Marketing is so important especially with Facebook and Twitter—the fan base we're getting is incredible.

In the last couple of years, online marketing must have been so important.

Yes, there are a number of companies I work with—Organic Marketing, Porter Frith and Think Jam—which is purely online marketing and PR. I don't believe that young people, 15–25, are cinema-goers. They read reviews, hear what their friends are saying from social media sites—it's massive for kids. Maybe I shouldn't be, but I'm on Facebook all the time! If people see reviews on these sites, they're more likely to go and watch it.

Are there any projects you're particularly proud of?

I've got great memories of *Dumb and Dumber*, we bought it at script stage and paid a lot of money for it, it really worked. We had to buy nine other films from an entertainment package just to get it. It delivered and was good fun! *Misery* was a great film to work on; Kathy Bates came to the UK and was fantastic to work with. Then for *Buster* I spent a week travelling the UK with Phil Collins. They were doing screenings and meeting the general public. In 1987 we did *Dirty Dancing* and had Patrick Swayze in the UK; he'd only worked on an American TV show so nobody knew who he was. I couldn't even get arrested with him. He then went on to become a big star.

One of the films I remember fondly is *Twice in a Lifetime*, released by Miracle films in 1984. Gene Hackman was in the UK shooting *Superman 4* at Pinewood, I managed to contact him and he was a real gentleman. He agreed to stay for 2 or 3 more days and work on my movie. I offered to pay for his flight and his hotel, but he was a real gentleman and had already paid the bill. There are some actors and actresses out there who are real assholes—they put things on the hotel bill that they shouldn't.

When it comes to international distribution, are there any big differences?

A lot depends on the film. If it's a UK movie, for it to have success internationally, it has to have a UK theatrical release. If I was buying a film from a US sales agent or producer, the first thing you need to know is who's releasing it in the US, what the P&A is, how many prints are going out, will it go to DVD or TV. That makes a difference to your plans and how you are going to market. Obviously across Europe it would be dubbed or subtitled in different languages, the artwork would change.

I worked on *Naked* with Mike Leigh, I did *Raining Stones* for Ken Loach, which were both wonderful movies. But when you go to the US, the American audience is sometimes very intellectual, and some of them in the middle of the country are not so much—they don't understand the dialect. Scottish films in the past, like *Trainspotting*, had to be subtitled as the English couldn't be understood.

Internationally it is the same as the UK; it changes in terms of artwork for certain genres. Horror works everywhere, comedy is very subtle in different territories—English comedies don't work for instance in Germany, and German comedies don't really travel over here.

Going back to some of the big changes in digital distribution, what are your thoughts on Netflix and things like that?

Cinemas have changed completely digitally, there are very few real projectors left. The ones that are left are mainly used for independent work, and smaller rural cinemas are still using 35mm film. I think within the next year they're really going to struggle to get films because everything is digital now. Some cinemas now are playing Blu-ray because there is no 35mm. On the other hand, digital has made life much easier although the films don't really ingest properly, films arrive late sometimes due to transport issues. It's the same issues as with film but you don't have

seven reels to hump around. You have to deal with the virtual print fees; you have to do a deal with the cinema to pay the VP fees which are quite expensive.

You've got all the new digital platforms like BlinkBox, BT Vision, Netflix, Film Flux . . . it's a business—but it's not taking over the DVD market. In another 3 or 4 years it will. The DVD market has changed because of the HMV and Blockbuster situation.

Do you think it will have an effect?

People still collect CDs; I've met people in Berlin who collect vinyl. I think people still like DVDs. People still like to go and browse and look at the product on the shelf and feel it, they might go do that and then buy it online. A lot of people won't do an online food delivery service because they want to go out, see and feel the tomatoes and apples they're buying. I think HMV will survive at a much smaller level—they closed 66 shops last week and 43 the week before but they'll keep their flagship stores open I hope. There is a generation that won't go online and buy.

Do you have any sage advice for marketers and distributors, maybe some lessons learned?

I think the key thing is to work with people you can trust. There are a lot of sharks in this business, if you can find the right people to talk to first and work with then that's a big plus. Getting into distribution is very difficult, people try and distribute films on their own, and have come to me or another competitor of mine in the business for help. Everyone thinks it's easy, but it's not. It's all about relationships and networks. There's a hierarchy to go through. The cinemas don't like people they don't know, so they deal with me or other people I can recommend. I do lots of small films for producers and directors, but I think digitally if you want to put it online and distribute the film that way that's quite easy. But if you want it in the cinemas there is a correct way to doing it.

I'm helping this one young director now with a short, I've mentored him and now we've made some money. Everyone has to start somewhere because it's very tough out there and the business is contracting. So relationships and honesty are very important!

20 Alternative Distribution

Say minimum required audience for a film is 50,000 people. If you've made a film about a niche subject, there might only be 10,000 people in England interested in that niche. No distributor will pick up those UK rights. But if you know that there are another 25,000 in the US, 7,000 in South America, 7,000 in Australia etc., soon you have the required audience. The traditional distribution model of many companies, each taking rights for an individual territory won't work, but one team (the filmmaker) releasing centrally, online can find all of that audience.

TRADITIONALLY, YOU MAKE a film and sell it to a distribution company. They then arrange marketing and publicity to raise awareness of the film and book it into theatres where people can go to see it.

With the rise of video, DVD, cable and the Internet, other distribution channels became available—and were quickly snapped up by the distribution companies as new 'windows' from which they could make money.

However, many filmmakers are finding that their film isn't suitable for traditional distribution, won't be picked up for social issue reasons or don't feel that a distribution company will service the film as well as they could. These filmmakers are looking for alternative methods to distribute their films.

For these reasons producers are taking on the distribution of their films themselves. This is called 'self-distribution'.

Hint The first priority of any distribution plan is to put eyeballs onto your movie. The second is to monetise the audience seeing your film. The third is to ensure that the revenue generated by the distribution plan exceeds the cost of the campaign. The fourth is to generate enough revenue to cover the cost of making the film. The fifth is to generate a profit.

Self-distribution has advantages and disadvantages that you need to be aware of before you commit to it.

Advantages

You are in control of the process.
If successful, you will keep more of the film's profits.

Disadvantages

It is a lot of work.
It will cost money.
You continue to take the financial risk for the whole film.
You won't be able to sell the rights to a traditional distributor.

There are lots of ways to self-distribute your film.

I dislike the term 'self-distribution' because of the implications of failure or similarity to vanity publishing. With so many filmmakers distributing their films it has become an acceptable and viable alternative.

Releasing in Cinemas

You can book cinema screens and release the film theatrically. Because you're not a known distributor you probably won't get such a good deal from the cinema, but that doesn't stop this being a viable option. It is risky because you will have to put up a lot of money upfront, but if you fill the cinema you can turn a profit and really raise the profile of your film.

If successful on a small number of screens the cinema is likely to be very open to expanding your run: making it longer, playing in more screens, opening in new locations etc. *Papadopoulos & Sons* (2012) was an independent British film that used this strategy to great effect—although filmmaker Marcus Markou had to remortgage his house to afford it!

It used to be that self-distribution meant getting a van, a bunch of fly posters, and hitting the road. A few days before you pulled up into a town, an advance person would leaflet the place, and when you arrived, you would do some local radio, screen your film at the local rep cinema, collect the box office (minus the venue's share), sell T-shirts, posters, CD's and whatever else you thought you could sell, collect all the nickels and dimes, tank up the van with fuel and hit the road again.

Probably the most successful self-distributed movie we ever had at Raindance was an ultra-low-budget comedy/horror/adventure/musical called *Jesus Christ Vampire Hunter*. Filmmaker Lee Demarbre took this film on the road in his native Canada and the States for over a year and reputedly earned back at least ten times the film's budget.

DVD Sales

It's very easy to author a stack of DVDs and get professional looking covers made. You can sell these from your website, at festival screenings or even by striking up a deal with a retailer like HMV or Amazon.

VOD

Major distributors and exhibitors don't like VOD because it breaks their window and territory model by making the film available at any time to people anywhere in the world.

Video on demand is the most common way to self-distribute. If done right, it can be an effective way to make money from the film, but it can also be the lazy and tired producer's token effort.

There are basically two types of VOD when it comes to self-distribution. You can either set up a system on your website that takes payment and allows people to watch the film, or you can deal with an aggregator website, like BlinkBox, iTunes or Netflix.

The advantage of an aggregator website is that your film has been vetted by a third party and deemed to be of a certain quality. It will appear on lists next to Hollywood releases and gain a legitimacy from that. You are likely to get more views by people who haven't heard of your film before (versus

them coming across your website). The disadvantage, of course, is that you will have to cut a deal with the website that will eat into your profits.

Simultaneous Release

Distribution strategies of this type are no longer the exclusive domain of pioneering solo producers. In 2013 Ben Wheatley's *A Field In England* was released by Film4 in the UK simultaneously in cinemas, on DVD and Blu-ray, on television and on VOD.

Other high-profile early hybrid releases include *Margin Call* (2011), *Arbitrage* (2012) and *Bachelorette* (2012).

Also known as a day/date release, this strategy involves releasing the film online at the same time as you have a theatrical release. The theatrical release can be a self-funded one (as above) or it can be a high-profile festival screening. The advantage of this hybrid strategy is that the online income is boosted by attention the theatrical release draws.

Hint There are three ways for an owner to make money from a film online:

- Advertising revenue—the film plays with adverts before/during/around it. The viewer can watch the film for free, the advertiser pays the owner to place the adverts.
- Pay per view—the viewer pays a one-off fee to the owner to stream or download the film.
- Subscription to aggregator site—sites like Netflix and Lovefilm use a subscription model; viewers pay a monthly fee to watch as many films as they like. From that income the aggregator site pays the owner, either a one-off fee or a certain amount per viewing of the film, or a combination of both.

Self-distribution Checklist

So you've decided you want to self-distribute. The first thing you're going to need is a PMD or Producer of Marketing and Distribution (a title coined by Jon Reiss, a filmmaker and author of *Think Outside the Box Office*). This person will oversee the distribution process, ideally from the pre-production stage of the film. Ideally they will have a team working with them, but depending on the budget this can be a one-person role. It can be a hat that you wear, but think of it as a separate role. The PMD will need:

A Budget

One of the big advantages of self-distribution is that it's cheaper than the traditional route. But that's not to say it's free. If you're serious about it, you'll need to budget for it: prints/DCPs, posters, advertising space (physical, print and online), PR—it all costs money.

Time

It's going to take a lot of work over a long period to distribute your film. Make sure you've got the time to commit to it from the start.

In the independent filmmaking world jobs and skills are merged. Be careful you don't overload your key staff.

An Audience

Self-distribution normally works best when there is an audience already clamouring to see the film. You can create this audience through your social and other media efforts during production of the film. See Chapter 20 for more information.

The Rights

It's worth repeating—make sure you can prove the chain of title for the film and have cleared all the rights. If a disgruntled former employee takes issue with the film being in the cinema and has a legal leg to stand on, the cinema chain will be suing you.

Video

You will need video content to market the film. Primarily that is a professional looking trailer, but it can also include interviews with cast and crew, behind-the-scenes (BTS) footage, video tips and anything else you can think of.

Graphic Design

You will need a professional looking poster, as well as someone to handle stills, and other marketing materials.

Copywriter

Someone on the team needs to be able to write good copy for the press pack, website and all other marketing materials. This is an overlooked skill; don't just assume anyone can do it simply because they can write.

Timeline

The sooner you know you're going to be self-distributing your film, the better your campaign will be. The timeline below assumes you plan on self-distributing from the very beginning. Even if you are aiming for traditional distribution, following this plan will not only ensure that you are in a good position to turn to self-distribution, but that you will have everything a distributor is looking for when they pick up a film.

This is a list of the different items you should prepare along with the tasks and duties that need to be performed in order to create and implement a successful marketing strategy for your film.

Hint This checklist assumes you have been engaging with and identifying your target audience. It already assumes you have created a business plan and budget.

During Pre-production (2–4 Weeks Prior to Shoot)

Production stills photographer and videographer hired, briefed and scheduled.

Draft synopsis of the film's story. Make three versions: long, medium and short.

Create sample Twitter and Facebook posts, as well as a twenty-five word synopsis for news bulletins and festival submissions.

Consult with graphic designer regarding images, potential poster and other promotional materials like postcards and one sheets.

Prepare press release for the trade papers.

Set up Google alerts with keywords from your film. Key cast and crew should also be on your alerts page.

Prepare pitch video to show to any potential sponsors or funders.

Secure URL and social media accounts. Start developing website.

Choose email client to handle fan database for direct email marketing.

Identify merchandising that could be created for additional income.

Production (3–6 Weeks)

Collect content for website and press kits. Bios, production notes, interviews and comments from special guests makes great content for DVD extras and websites.

Manage website development and launch accordingly.

Produce videos of cast and crew during shoot.

Contact local media for local coverage.

Oversee stills shoot.

Launch director's blog and update daily.

Add relevant Google alerts.

Create a 'bible' with relevant delivery documents like signed contracts from cast and crew.

Post-production (3–6 Months)

Create a content calendar and plan strategic releases on information.

Get film listed on IMDB.

Launch email campaign with weekly updates to investors, cast, crew and new audience members.

Choose publicity stills from the shoot.

Create key artwork.

Design title logo, write strapline and prepare a one sheet.

Research film festivals appropriate to your film.

Schedule content to your social media assets and start populating.

Install social media monitoring tools. Analyse conversations about your movie and respond to any questions or comments.

Update press kit. Create a series of video clips in a variety of lengths for different online media outlets.

Create a compelling trailer.

Organise test screenings and analyse feedback.

Apply to film festivals.

Finalise key artwork. Print postcards, posters and business cards.

Update IMDB profiles.

Create a database of film journalists and bloggers.

Consider long lead press placement in magazines.

Start booking theatrical space.
Book advertising both online and offline.

Release (6–12 Months)

Plan and coordinate premiere party or event.

Attend festivals.

Maintain social media channels and website.

Maintain email communication with fans/influencers.

Deliver advance promotional material to cinema.

Apply for awards.

Collect feedback from audiences.

Create a store on website for DVD and merchandise sales. Create VOD setup.

One thing I have learned through producing independent films with Raw Talent is that throwing money at problems doesn't necessarily make problems go away, and often the job is done with half the energy and passion needed for success.

Alternative distribution can mean that having limited financial resources can actually work to your advantage. The big agencies working for the big films are so tired and burnt out that their approaches to marketing are so staid. Additionally, when anything new comes along they are paralysed by board and committee meetings whereas you, being broke, can turn on a dime. This means that your fresh, bold and innovative ideas, your sparkling taglines and spellbinding videos, can be launched in the twinkling of an eye.

Seven Deadly Sins of Self-Distribution

Getting your film made is easy, compared to the struggles filmmakers have in getting their films distributed.

At Raindance Film Festival we work with countless filmmakers trying to get their shorts, features and documentaries screened to as wide an audience as possible.

Of course the filmmaker's wet dream is to have their film picked up at a film festival by an international distributor who hands them a fat cheque—a cheque large enough to pay back all the investors, all the bills, and leaving enough left over to enjoy a few months' secure living.

This scenario rarely happens.

Self-distribution has become an option for filmmakers seeking an audience and financial return. It's being touted by self-appointed experts as the quick-fix to a filmmaker's distribution woes.

Sometimes self-distribution works. Sometimes.

When it fails, it is because the filmmaker has committed one of the seven deadly sins of self-distribution.

Deadly Sin #1: Pride

I see filmmakers all the time who ask me for distribution advice. I won't ever charge for advice like this (unlike some of my worthy colleagues). I will ask in the first instance who they have shown their film to. Usually filmmakers go down a lengthy list, from large distributors all the way down to lowly

sharks. If no one on their list has agreed to distribute their film, I know pretty much at once that another lousy film has been made.

No amount of marketing can rescue a bad film.

Hint Learn to admit when you've screwed up and made a stinker and learn lessons (however painful) that will help you on your next film.

Deadly Sin #2: Greed

In today's wintry economic climate, the prices of films have dropped like a stone. I have sat in meetings in sales agents' offices with filmmakers who were being hounded by creditors on a half-million picture, to be told that their film would net a maximum of \$20,000 worldwide.

Trouble in this case was the producer and director decided they deserved big fat salaries.

Every picture has an income potential. Figure out what that revenue is before you hawk the family silverware.

Hint Never ask too much. It's a fine line between fair and greed.

Deadly Sin #3: Sloth

Why is it filmmakers think that success is all about shaking hands and signing autographs?

The reality is that a career in the arts, or media is very, very hard work. If you are not prepared to do the dirty work yourself, then you better have a big pile of cash to pay others to do it for you. Self-distribution is no exception; you need to work hard at it or it will never work for you.

Hint You have to put in the hours to get the results.

Deadly Sin #4: Envy

The reality is that people with less talent, people who don't work as hard and people who are less deserving than you are going to be the ones who gain success. Get over it.

Hint Keep your hands on the handlebar, your feet on the pedals and your eyes on the road.

Deadly Sin #5: Gluttony

Seems to me that a lot of people become filmmakers, and I think guys in particular, because of all the stuff. Stuff like: free lunch on a film set (in what other industry do you get free lunch?) Others view a career in the film industry as a glorified dating service, or a way to access a (probably illegal) hedonistic lifestyle.

Hanging around at film festivals and red carpet events might be amusing, and refreshments tasty, but you can't live on canapés alone.

Hint Toys are for boys—you don't need all this shit. Never forget the age-old maxim that works a treat: early to bed and early to rise makes a filmmaker happy and wealthy and wise.

Deadly Sin #6: Lust

Blindly seeking fame can be in itself reason enough to make a film. It might not meet my own personal goals for a career, but it is a specific goal that can be measured against a point in time when the filmmaker/hero either attains or gives up the fight for his or her goal. However, making decisions purely to attain one's goal at the expense of others is wrong, no matter what your career or business.

An accomplishment based solely for your own pleasure is entertainment in its basest and cheapest form. If you are to rise above the rabble you need to forsake lust and learn to live and work with humility.

Deadly Sin #7: Anger

Want to annoy another filmmaker? Criticise their work. No matter how nice and polite you are, say one eensy weensy thing against their film and they explode as if you had spit on their baby. And when a filmmaker hits the anger button, all reason flees. Don't be that person.

Hint Remember that people have a right to say what they think about your film. Very few people in the world can actually relate to you from your side of the fence. Lashing out shows everyone how threatened you are. And when you are angry, you won't hear anything important anyone is saying.

Seven Most Frequently Asked Questions of Elliot Grove about Self-distribution

I have been working at film sales and distribution through the Raindance Film Festival and British Independent Film Awards since 1992.

Here are some questions (and my answers) that I have had over my time at Raindance:

1. How do filmmakers utilise the current state of sales and distribution?

Every day at Raindance we say the same thing: 'All films have an audience. The trick is to identify and find them.'

Finding them need not be difficult. Every city and every nation has a hard core of film fanatics that love great films. These can be sourced through film festivals.

A filmmaker need not stop there either. Every film has other communities which can be tapped into. The documentary, *Banaaz a Love Story*, which premiered at Raindance in 2012, is a great example of this. This powerful documentary about honour killing in the UK attracted not just the Asian market, but caught the imagination of the women's rights movement in the UK and beyond. Another example is how I am trying to engage the kimbaku subculture with our latest movie, *Love.Honour.Obey*. without veering into the fetish scene.

Another asset this particular film enjoys is its director, Ate de Jong, considered one of Europe's finest directors and who enjoys cult film director status in the Benelux at the David Lynch level. We are experimenting with different ways that we can engage with his cult status without destroying his more commercially minded fan base.

Part of a filmmaker's business plan is how you will go out and capture these special interest groups. The ability to store your film online on a variety of servers, from Distrify, to Blinkbox and Amazon means that your film can have a multitude of monetisation options.

Blinkbox, the indie UK online distribution outfit started by ex-Channel 4's Michael Comish and Adrian Letts (now owned by Tesco) has an astounding 2.8 million monthly users—triple that of Amazon's Lovefilm, and making it an important destination for a film's online distribution strategy.

2. How important is a theatrical release?

Less and less important. The tradition of 'you gotta get theatrical' is waning. At Raindance we see more and more filmmakers using the festival route to garner awards, great reviews and create buzz. Because of our festival's social media we can often help push a film when it is released in other markets. That said, the national press and reviews that come with a theatrical release are never a bad thing.

3. Should I give transactional rights to a broadcaster?

This is a tricky one and one that should be treated with great care. First of all, a broadcaster's default agreement normally includes transactional rights. But you could find your film on Mexican cable TV and suddenly it's on iTunes with the money, or transactional rights, dripping to them and cutting you out of this important window.

Don't be bullied into this one. If someone wants your film badly enough they will drop these from the contract.

4. How do you find a good aggregator?

The filmmaker horror stories I have heard would fill a website!

There are complaints of opaque aggregator accounting and stories of aggregators renegeing on paying, going bust and phoenixing under a slightly different name.

The first test of a filmmaker's aggregator savvy is to know the different components of an aggregator's service.

5. How should filmmakers react to piracy?

Piracy sucks. But filmmakers can be a little paranoid and precious about it too. Honestly, at an independent level there simply aren't that many people who will want to pirate your film.

Alternative distribution strategies like day/date screenings and VOD release can help to cut out piracy, which is driven in part by the window policy of big distributors.

6. Can documentary filmmakers make it big?

Yes. There are an increasing number of successful theatrical documentary releases these days, from filmmakers like Herzog, Marsh and Spurlock. This looks set to continue, and combines well with VOD and also television releases.

7. How do you know which kinds of films do well?

Genre films with known names tend to perform very well on VOD. Horror always sells. Drama is always tough. Other than that, in general the good films do better than the bad ones.

21 Social Media

FILMMAKERS WHO UNDERSTAND and utilise social media can give their films a 'lift' that could well mean the difference between commercial success and oblivion. Getting a film off the ground is a daunting task. Understanding and using social media to advantage is one way filmmakers can shortcut the perilous path to commercial success.

Despite the obvious value of social media, its application to filmmakers is still a subject where there is a hunger for basic understanding, both in straightforward fiscal terms, but also in terms of branding and brand extension. Most filmmakers view social media strategy and associated commitments as an unnecessary commitment on top of the struggle to get their films made. Seen as a burdensome chore it is often served at the end of the food chain—not, as I believe it should be, at the front.

What you get are exhausted filmmakers asking the question: 'Do we need to get a Twitter?' with no strategy or means of assessing their results.

I'm going to try and point you to a few basics. Cover these and you could look like you are the consummate social media expert. Potential distributors will love you.

Just Shut Up and Start

Back on the farm they used to say that a barn full of hay got filled, one forkful at a time and one forkful needed to be first. Just pull your finger out and get going!

Simply start and start simply. Tell everyone on your team that your film project is a social media project. You need to set up accounts immediately on the 'big 5': Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+ and YouTube. Encourage everyone on your team to get involved in the process. What is the process? Letting everyone know what you are doing, and filling the digital airwaves with items of interest.

Personally, I am a Twitter addict—I like the short microblog posts, and the instant feedback you can get from posts and questions. My Twitter followers also come up with tonnes of suggestions and ideas, which is an extremely valuable resource and asset.

Listening is a really important part of social media—something that the big corporate companies have learned slowly. Companies like Nike, Dell, Ford and Comcast have realised the value of engaging their customers on social media and developed very sophisticated ways of tapping into their customer (audience). Should it be any different for a filmmaker? What if your film is controversial or thought provoking? What if your movie has issues that fall outside the socially acceptable? Surely a good social media audience will give you a chance to explore and engage with your audience—all potential future customers.

Define Your Social Media Objectives

The 'why' of social media is a more important question than the 'how'. Specifically define what you want to achieve for your film or your filmmaking career with social media. The next step is to develop a plan, decide which social media tools will fit with your objectives and strategy. And then execute.

Typical objectives might include:

- Creating awareness of a crowdfunding campaign.
- Promoting your festival screenings.
- Getting people to watch your trailer.
- Calls for volunteers during production.
- Informing investors.

While these objectives are pretty clear, getting results using social media is far less clear. Social media requires patience and persistence. Social media also requires a consistency to your approach to your audience. Social media is about creating a community around you and your work. Social media is about listening. All of these factors add to your brand—and remember a brand isn't about logos, websites or social media. It is what people think about you or your movie.

Web marketers will tell you that the best way to attract people to your profile and the best way to develop a following is to create fresh, bold content. Useful information like how-to videos, infographics, blogs and webinars are some online tools available to distribute this high-quality content, and hopefully your film too.

Creating the actual web tools to deliver on these channels is very simple. Executing and maintaining them is not. To succeed, filmmakers need to embrace the concept and demand total involvement from everyone on the team.

Running a Website

Good old-fashioned websites are still a mammoth tool, and of course it makes sense to have your site compatible with mobile devices. But don't get tempted by relying on a remote person to do your updates. Not only will it drive you crazy, but you lose the 'feel' of a website when you can't jump in, correct a typo or add a paragraph or two.

Design your website with clean and easily understood navigation. Try to keep the formats consistent throughout the site.

Make sure the key members of your team have access to the content management system (CMS) and know how to update your site. Many CMSs are easily understood, and tutorials take minutes (i.e. WordPress).

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)

The simplest way to increase your website's online visibility is through unpaid or natural 'organic' searches which rely on SEO. Search engine optimisation is the process of making your website appear more often on web search lists, meaning that more people are likely to visit your website or blog. SEO considers how search engines work and how keywords (such as 'film') included on a webpage influence them. The leading search engines, such as Google, Bing and Yahoo!, use crawlers to find pages for their algorithmic search results. Once your web page is included in a search engine it is said to be indexed.

Meta tags are the HTML codes that provide information about the page. Unlike normal HTML tags, they do not affect how a page displays, but include important information about the page, such as the keywords used by search engines.

Hone Your Tactics

Once you have decided what your social media objectives are, start to develop your tactical plan. I'm assuming that, like me, you have a small team. It makes sense to start with very manageable and achievable objectives. This way you can easily measure the results.

One way to measure web statistics is to install Google Analytics. This freeware is easy to install and allows you to track goals. For example, you might want to know how many people click on your trailer or how many go through to your crowdfunding page.

Another tool is to give away something, like a script or production diary. When people visit your site, they can get this really simply by subscribing to your newsletter. Once subscribed you can then direct them to a thank you page. This traffic can also easily be measured by Google Analytics.

Each social media tools has certain features and attributes. Reflect on the types of messages and results you want and from there you can decide which tool to use.

The Right Tool for the Right Job

There are dozens of social media tools and platforms, with new ones popping up nearly every week.

Here are the top five social media tools:

1. Twitter

In 2011 on my annual trip to Cannes I met an Azerbaijani filmmaker whom I had met the year before in London—she'd had a documentary in Raindance Film Festival.

We were walking up the main shopping drag in Cannes (Rue d'Antibes) discussing whether or not social media was changing anything. She then told me how much she hated and despised the thought of Twitter—just as we paused in front of the only English-language news agent in Cannes.

'One moment' she said as she scanned first one, then two headlines. The third newspaper had slipped down in its rack, and in order to read it, she had to pull it up. She read the headline, pulled it up a bit further. 'Wait a minute' she said, and started to read the first paragraph. 'Hold on' she said and went inside to pay for the paper. When she came back I told her she had just demonstrated Twitter: a series of headlines and a link to interesting articles. Now she is one of Twitter's biggest fans.

You can use Twitter to listen and find out what people are saying about certain topics. As your circle of influences grows and develops you can use Twitter to eavesdrop and find out what people are saying or thinking about you or your movie. Twitter is also a really good way to drive people to a cause—or to a page with really good content (like your short or trailer).

Twitter accounts are easy to start and simple to manage. Start a central account yourself, and then encourage team members to open up their own branded account in which they can express personal opinions as well as ones reflecting your film's values.

You don't need to follow everyone that follows you—create a list of interesting people to follow, say interesting things yourself and watch your account grow and grow. With its growth so will the influence and reach become more valuable.

2. Blogging

Huge in the mid-00s, blogging has taken a bit of a rap lately for being unfashionable. However, if you want to build a sizeable list of followers, or become known as an expert authority, or if your film is topical, you will want to create and maintain a blog.

Build a following by delivering well-crafted and informative posts. Blogs also help generate SEO content leading more people back to your site.

I'm personally a fan of the free open-source blogging platform WordPress. It's easy to understand and use and installs with a single click. Google has its own version called Blogger, and there are at least a dozen more. Find one that integrates into your website the easiest.

3. Google+

Google+ has been a bit slow to catch on, but is rapidly establishing itself as an essential social media tool for filmmakers. New features are being added all the time. One of the more popular features of Google+ is Hangouts and Hangouts On Air. The former allows you to have real-time web video chats with multiple people and is a very useful free web conferencing tool. The latter—Hangouts on Air—allows you to live stream your video chat and automatically records it on your YouTube channel.

Speaking of YouTube, you need your own channel.

4. Facebook

My personal least favourite is the juggernaut Facebook, partly because I don't understand how the many moving parts of Facebook work. Facebook itself offers a thorough guide on how to set up a company or business page. Their guide will show you how to connect with people, engage your audience and change opinions. This guide gives the impression that life on planet Facebook is easy to understand when in fact it is not.

Facebook is getting increasingly complicated and is commonly criticised for changing too frequently and therefore being difficult to use. Because of its size it has become a very important social media tool, but not necessarily one that you can leave to the intern.

5. Video

If you really are a filmmaker, why not make movies—movies that help promote your film and your career.

Here is the dilemma: it has become so easy to shoot, edit and publish a video that nearly everyone can do it. The question is, what kind of video do you want to promote yourself, your personal brand? Before you grab the DSLR or GoPro off the shelf, have a good hard look at your videomaking skills. You don't want to look like an idiot, like I did when one of our team uploaded a short promo video I did for one of our courses and got the aspect ratio wrong. This howler managed to attract hundreds of derisory comments before we noticed and took it down. Even worse, the video was a promo for a filmmaking course.

Incorporate a self-branded YouTube channel into your programme and highlight the video content you create there. Many filmmakers prefer Vimeo as a video distribution platform. It features higher quality uploads and a more supportive community but a much smaller reach and fewer tools.

When you start, keep the videos you create within your comfort zone. Very likely you are going to be shy on-camera at first. Rehearse, practise and get a friend to advise until you feel comfortable.

Here are some typical ways filmmakers use video on the web:

- Teaser trailers
- Production stories
- Google+ handouts live from the set
- Q&As
- Promotion videos for crowdfunding campaigns

Who Notices? Measuring Your Results

Creating and maintaining a social media presence is a lot of hard work. In order to see the effectiveness of your strategy, you need to measure the views, clicks and page impressions of your content. The results—called analytics—will give you an idea of the effectiveness of your social media strategy and tactics.

Certain analytic tools come pre-installed on the website you use—like Facebook's Insights. Others, like Google Analytics require an install onto your site. These are free. There are other paid-for analytic tools that range in price from cheap to dear and require a considerable amount of training. For starters, use Insights and Google Analytics. Take the time to learn how to use these powerful tools. The amount spent in training will be paid back a hundredfold when you use this feedback to create new social media content.

In Conversation with TomSka

TomSka (aka Thomas Ridgewell) posts short films and animations on YouTube (with the help of his hardworking team). His channel has nearly 400 million views and 2 million subscribers and generates significant revenue.

Hi Tom, can you tell us a bit about yourself?

My name is Thomas Ridgewell and I am an online digital creative (which basically means YouTube person) and I'd say a digital autobiographer, because I talk about myself a lot, just rip myself apart.

Why YouTube?

I like YouTube just because it's just a lot more fun, and I can do whatever I want and all my mistakes are my own. If I had a real job and I made a mistake, I would be fired and I'd lose loads of money. But if I made a mistake on YouTube then it's my mistake and no one's going to fire me, just the fans will criticize me! I like YouTube just because it's such an immediate connection with the audience, and you're not living by anyone else's rules; it's just you and your audience.

You have to learn to read what they say because it's YouTube—most of the things they say will be 'gay' or 'not gay'! Once you learn to speak their language, you learn how to make 'not gay' films!

What sort of viral content do you make?

I make very short form content because I try to make it for YouTube. I could stretch it out, but I'd rather let it do well on YouTube and land on as many eyes as possible.

I make comedy mostly; action and comedy are the two things that I'm most passionate about. I'll take a joke or an idea for a scene and I'll just boil it down to its essentials and then package it in a fun way for YouTube.

Do you find that people who watch one video watch others too?

For every view that a new video gets, old videos will get a second view. I'll get a million views in a day, where one video gets 500,000 views if that makes sense, because they're all spread out. Especially with a platform like YouTube, it's not like a film where people have to watch the film and go 'oh that was good, who was the director? Oh ok I'll look him up and I'll go watch his films.' With YouTube you can put a thing at the end that says 'go watch my other stuff!' and they go 'ok!' *click*, so that's good.

You get people very invested in you as well, as a creative. Therefore people want to watch you, want to support you, because they like you, which can be a gift and a curse. Because it can mean you put something terrible up, but they're all like 'oh you're so perfect, your hair looks wonderful!' That doesn't happen to me; I have a beard which really gets rid of all the female fans.

Do you focus on other social media platforms too?

It's becoming increasingly necessary now as YouTube are redesigning and basically keeping your content away from the people who want to see your content! But I focus on Twitter and Facebook and more recently on Tumblr, which is terrifying. A terrifying website full of teenage girls and pornography, which never mix.

But yes, Twitter and Facebook are two platforms I use a lot, which I think I understand, just about!

How long did it take to really build up a fan base for your videos?

I found my passion in it when I was about 10 years old, and then I spent so many years just watching content, being minor parts of it and then I finally said—OK I'm going to take what I know now and I'm going to make my first viral video. I did it, and it was 1 minute and 47 seconds, I put it out there, and it had a million views in a month or so. That really launched the 'YouTube career'. Now that same video has 40 million views now, I've done multiple videos in that series, all with similar views. It was about 2008 when I said—I'm going to do this now, I'm going to launch this now, I'm ready! You're never ready . . .

What do you think it is that makes your videos so successful?

I think my motto is—learn from other people's mistakes. Don't just watch good stuff and say 'I'm going to do that!' You watch the WORST things that have 100 views, the things that tank. Especially things like ad campaigns that tank; you can learn a lot from them, and then you don't do any of that! You figure out what the good stuff is, and then the bad stuff you don't do, and you figure out why it didn't work.

If you're doing an advert, don't make people feel stupid. If you're selling something to people, you can just tell them, and they'll be like 'ok'. You don't need to lie, the audience is so interactive and they just get so upset with you.

Learn from other people's mistakes. Also just keep it trim, keep the necessities. With a YouTube video, you've got about 15 seconds to show people what this video is about. If it's a comedy video, you've got to have your first joke in 15 seconds; you can't have a minute build up, you've got to get it out there. You've got to get people aware of what your video is, what you're doing. Basically they're not a passive audience: they will click away in 5–10 seconds if you have a credit sequence or something. Learning what bores them is important as well.

So viral content has its own structure, very different to, say, short films or even features.

You can get away with things like features, but if I wanted to put a feature on YouTube what I would do is make some viral videos around it. I could make a 90-minute film, put it on YouTube and people would just go 'meh'. It would get views, but not that many. I'd put out a marketing campaign beforehand where I had put out like three 1-minute videos, sketches or whatever, set in that film universe. Put those out and then suddenly the 3 million people who watched that video will want to watch that film, which is an interesting way.

But if you just drop it on them and say ‘watch this!’ they’ll say, ‘no, make me. Give me a reason.’ That’s a big part of it.

Social Media Glossary

Aggregator

A web-based tool or application that collects syndicated content with the intent to monetise the content. iMovies is a syndicator, but there are many more aggregators typically that specialise in specific forms of content.

Algorithm

Sites like Google and Facebook use complicated sets of formulas to perform specific functions. Filmmakers attempting to develop content-sharing strategies will have to develop algorithms to facilitate these strategies.

API (Application programming interface)

A programming format that allows other websites or devices like mobile telephone to interact with it. Facebook and Twitter both have APIs that allow you to add or create apps to interact with their sites.

App (Application)

A programme whose purpose is to deepen the experience of the user and to engage with them either for information (i.e. mobile maps app) or for commerce (buying a plane ticket). Increasingly apps are created to be used during a TV show or movie. (See Second screen.)

Archive (or archived topics)

A closed record of a topic or series of comments on an article which may or may not be publicly visible. When the log of a chat is archived it is often called a transcript.

ASP—Application service provider

This is designed for someone who wants the advantages of a website but without the nuisance of support. Blogger and WordPress both offer this service which is supported by ads. The downside is that it does not offer the same flexibility as your own website.

Asynchronous interaction

Online discussions occur independent of time or location when a centralised platform like discussion boards or email can receive messages where they can be retrieved later by participants.

Atom (as in the web syndication protocol)

Atom applies to a pair of related standards. The Atom Syndication Format is an XML language used for web feeds, while the Atom Publishing Protocol (APP for short) is a simple HTTP-based protocol for creating and updating web resources.

Avatar

Social media accounts allow for the inclusion of an image called an avatar. Common advice is to maintain the same image throughout all your social media profiles for consistency.

Back channel

A communication sent by an individual to another one, or to a group as opposed to a public broadcast typically sent by email or SMS. Back channel communications are rarely documented but have a huge impact on the individual(s) who receive them.

Blended learning

When multiple approaches to teaching and learning are used, such as the combination of video, web-based data and traditional print, it is referred to as blended learning.

Blip.TV

Blip.TV is an online video sharing site that provides a free and paid platform for individuals and companies who host an online video show.

Blog (Web log)

A series of articles on a website or a section of a website created by an individual or company with regular entries and commentary on a topic of interest to the writer (blogger). A blog can contain text, pictures and video. The best blogging platforms, like Google's Blogger, allow the posts to be indexed for easy retrieval.

Collective intelligence

Historically, collective intelligence is the shared or group intelligence that is created in the collaboration of many individuals. In the social media context it refers to the consensus decision making seen on websites, blogs and other types of websites.

Comment

Comments are primary two-way interactions on the internet. A response to a blog post, a picture or a video is called a comment. Commenting on relevant blogs is a great way to add followers to one's own blog.

CMS (Content Management System)

The programme that allows a user to update a website.

Crowdfunding

The practice of soliciting funding for a project from an online community. This is the online extension of penny drives, church collections and voluntary donations used for centuries off line.

Crowdsourcing

The practice of asking a group of online individuals for their opinion. For example, which date might best suit for a screening or which new camera to purchase.

Ebook

A book supplied electronically is called an ebook. It is generally viewed on a computer although the viewer can print it out if desired.

Embedding

Many websites, such as YouTube, supply HTML code so a video or photograph on their site can appear as a copy on another website or blog.

Engaged

A reader of a website who posts comments and shares content is said to be 'engaged'.

Facebook

The largest social network has created a whole series of terms which apply to their website:

Commenting

Nearly everything posted to Facebook allows for a comment, which increases the viral nature of the content posted.

Fan

Facebook used to call a person who connected with a Page a fan. They now say the person 'Likes' a page. The correct terminology is to ask someone to 'Like' you on Facebook.

Friend

A friend connection is a two-way connection on a Facebook personal profile which means both parties have to agree before a connection is made.

Like

The 'Like' button has become a universal approval or endorsement method for users to share their opinions with their network of friends.

Message

A message is a private note which is only viewable by the recipient. Think of it as a private email sent within Facebook.

News feed

Your news feed is a rolling set of status updates from friends and pages you have liked on Facebook.

Page

A Page is the best platform a business or organisation can use to connect with new people on Facebook. You can build a powerful and large following on Facebook by posting fresh and original content onto a Page. Pages can also be used for competitions and promotions.

Personal profile

A profile page contains all the personal information of the user. Profiles allow you to share pictures, videos and real-time updates with your friends.

Places

Facebook's geotracking feature allows users to tag friends who are at a certain location.

Privacy settings

Facebook has a wide variety of privacy settings which allow you to decide who can or cannot see your content.

Share

On Facebook, sharing is the same as posting or publishing. It can also mean sharing a link or post on another profile which can create a powerful viral network event.

Tabs

Using tabs, Facebook users can separate different types of content. Tabs can be custom built using custom-built apps.

Tag

Tagging means you can place a link from an item (usually a photograph) to a friend's profile. The person's friends will also see your item depending on the privacy settings installed.

Unfriending

Disconnecting with someone on Facebook.

Wall

Your Facebook profile page and the updates it contains are called a 'wall'.

Flashmob

Flashmob is a term applied to a group of people who communicate through social media and converge at a common public point to perform a meaningless ritual and then disperse.

Geo-location

Tracking the physical location of people.

Check in

Announcing 'I'm here' on geo-location services.

Geo-tagging

Adding a location-based tag to a post, picture or video identifying the place of posting.

Google alert

One of many services offered by Google that allows users to search the Internet, save searches and then receive an email update whenever a new post or article is mentioned. Particularly useful for screenwriters and documentarians researching specific topics and for filmmakers and organisations to monitor their online profiles and audiences.

Groundswell

A social trend in which people use technologies to get the things they need from each other, rather than from traditional institutions like corporations. (Charlene Li and Josh Bernoff, *Groundswell*, p. 9.)

Handle

The name or acronym a user creates and which people see online. For example, the Raindance Twitter handle is @Raindance but the Raindance Facebook handle is RaindanceFilmFest.

Hashtag

A tag used on the social media network Twitter (and now Facebook) to denote that a Twitter message (a Tweet) is related to an event or topic either online or offline, i.e. #indiefilm.

HTML (HyperText Markup Language)

HTML is the core programming language for presenting content to the internet. Its fifth update since 1990 is called HTML5.

Inbound marketing

Inbound marketing is when people come to your site or profile and you try to market stuff to them there. This style of marketing is based on users giving their permission to receive information from the source. This is a particularly effective way to engage with an audience. Marketing techniques and tactics used include SEO, emails, social media, list generation and analytics. This type of marketing is in direct contrast to traditional marketing which is out bound as in radio, TV and print advertisements.

Instant messaging

Real-time and direct text-based communication between two or more people.

Link building

Owners of websites develop a link building strategy to generate links to their sites from other sites in the hope of increasing their visibility to search engines. Blogging is a good way to increase link building.

Live blogging

Live blogging is when an event is covered in real time by posting short blogs or tweets.

Lurker

A visitor to a social network site who only listens and never participates in conversations.

Mashup

Multiple types of media from existing sources combined to create a new work.

Meme

A viral idea, phrase, image or video that is often used or repurposed for humour or to make a point.

Metadata

Digital information about a web page including tags, captions and keywords.

Microblogging

The art of publishing short messages like the 140 characters on Twitter, Plurk and Jaiku. Vine is a microblogging video website where the videos are only 6 seconds long.

Network

Refers either to a social media website like Twitter or to the people you are connected to on those sites.

News feed

A feed full of news which can be tailored by the user to accept only news items of interest.

Paid search

Paid placements of keywords from a specific website.

Pay per click (PPC)

A web-based internet advertising model where the advertiser only pays when a user clicks through to an advertiser's web page.

Permalink

The address or URL of a particular page or post within a blog or website.

Photo sites

Placing your pictures on a website allows you to link to them from social media sites like Twitter. Popular photosites include Twitpic.com and yfrog.com. Typically these sites allow you to upload your images from a mobile or tablet.

Podcast

An archived webcast, either audio or video, that is usually released in episodes. They are available streamed or downloaded.

Poke

A low impact touch on a social network. Sometimes liking someone else's post could be considered a poke, especially when you are trying to attract that person's attention.

Real-time search

A method of indexing content into search engines without delay.

QR code

An image (typically a 2D barcode) which can be read by an app to take a user to a website.

RSS (Really simple syndication)

This allows content from websites, webcasts and blogs to be assembled or aggregated to one website (called a 'reader') or mobile device. Readers 'subscribe' to these RSS feeds.

Second screen

An app or programme designed to interact with a television or movie.

SEM (Search engine marketing)

A marketing strategy utilising paid inclusion in search engine results as well as PPC advertising to raise brand awareness.

Sentiment

Reaction to a blog post or webcast is measured as positive, neutral or negative sentiment.

SEO (Search engine optimisation)

The marketing tactic to increase the volume of traffic to a website by using unpaid or organic search traffic.

Share

To post or re-post content on a social media site.

Share button/bar

A feature added to a website or email allowing readers to easily share the content through a wide variety of social media sites.

SME (Subject matter expert)

Another strategic tactic to increase visibility is to become known as the go-to person on a specific topic thereby increasing your visibility and credibility.

Social bookmarks

Websites that can store a user's preferred pages and allow for easy retrieval are convenient for users and also a good way to increase one's profile on the internet. Popular bookmarking tools include Digg.com, Posterous.com, Delicio.us and Stumbleupon.com

Social media

The media designed to be disseminated using scalable publishing techniques using social interaction tools on the web.

Social media marketing

The technique of building up the number of fans, connections and followers to your blog, web site and social media accounts. The best technique to use

is to create interesting content that you share which allows you to reach more people, engage with them and allow them to see your content and hopefully entice them to buy it.

Social media monitoring

The process of responding to comments and mentions related to your social media networks.

Social networks

The privately owned social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Flickr and Pinterest where people connect and interact online.

Tag cloud

A visual depiction of user-generated tags.

Tags/tagging

The keywords that are added to articles to make the web page more appealing to search engines.

Tweet

A post on Twitter.

Tweetup

An offline event that results from Twitter connections. (See also Flashmob.)

URL (Uniform resource locator)

The technical term for a web address.

Viral

A piece of content that is shared by users without prompting or payment. Content 'goes viral' or 'gone viral' refers to a piece of content that has been shared many times.

Vlog

A blog that contains videos instead of text entries.

Webinar

A web-based seminar, where the presentation, lecture or workshop is transmitted over the Internet instead of in person.

Widget

A small app provided from one website to another for use on blogs and websites. Widgets can show the weather forecast, stock market results in real time, cinema and film screenings or news updates. The content is refreshed by the creator not by the site that is hosting it.

Wiki

A user-generated and user-edited website where many people can write and edit the content, i.e. Wikipedia, one of the world's top ten websites.

YouTube

Created in 2005 this video sharing site has transformed video distribution. Now owned by Google, users can upload their own content making it easy to share. Filmmakers like Freddie Wong and Tom (Ska) Ridgewell have had their movies viewed hundreds of millions of times.

WYSIWYG

'What You See is What You Get,' which refers to formatting tools in word processors, wikis and weblog creation tools that allow users to format without knowing code.

THE ROUTE TO FINANCING your film can be a meandering, confusing and tiresome one at the best of times. Approach this journey without a map, and you will wander and become so disoriented and discouraged you will almost certainly give up. In order to successfully achieve your goal of financing your film, you must develop a strategic plan to assist you. Accept the fact that you will need a business plan, and you are already well on the route to successfully financing your film. Creating a business plan is a special skill that requires a combination of ruthlessly detailed financial calculations, creative thinking and blind luck. Over the past 10 years I have presided over the development of countless business plans for shorts, documentaries and features. Here is a distillation of what I have learned.

Power Tools for Creating a Business Plan

Tools are created in the mind in order to assist you with your work. Here are specific tools designed to assist you in the tasks of creating a business plan for financing your movie.

Any business plan is developed using certain techniques or tools. These tools are effective in business plans for any business. The only difference in a film business plan is some of the technical detail.

Pedigree

This is the most important aspect of preparing your project for financing: building pedigree. The trick is to get the right people to comment favourably on your product as it stands, be it in the script stages or the finished film.

A good, well-made film, properly marketed can return an enormous amount of money to the production company that made it, and the investors that backed it. But before an investor backs any project, s/he will want to be satisfied about the project's pedigree.

Film financing is most commonly arranged by experienced producers and entertainment attorneys through existing industry funds and established film investors. Each of these people or organisations represents a filter that is trusted by an investor and once they have approved the project, they enhance the pedigree of it. In your own life, you probably act in the same way. If a friend you trust calls you and says 'I have just heard a fantastic song by this

new artist. You must get their song,¹ chances are, the next time you are online, you will search out the track and even buy it.

However, it is very difficult for a new producer to attract the interest of an established film investor or production company. So the catch-22 is how to market your project to a production company on your own.

Building the pedigree for your project

When you start out on a project for the first time you have no pedigree because you have never done it before. Your first task is to convince the people that you are pursuing for money that your project is worth considering and financing despite your inexperience. To accomplish this, you need endorsements from people that potential investors respect.

However, getting the right people to comment on your project can be difficult unless they are approached in the correct manner, up the steps of the ladder, so to speak. Below is an expanded version of the pedigree advice I gave for screenwriters trying to sell their scripts in *Raindance Writers' Lab: Write and Sell the Hot Screenplay*.

i The receptionist theory

The bottom rung in the film industry world is the receptionist. This is the person who controls access to the company they work for, and most critically, they control direct personal access to the person you are pursuing. The receptionist also possesses a great deal of very personal information pertinent to the company they work for. Details like executive travel plans, anniversary parties, a special event the company is planning and interoffice personal relationships will all filter down to the receptionist after a period of time. Your goal with the receptionist is to make them your friend, and then court them with your project. You are really hoping that this lowly employee will brag about having heard about a really fantastic film project and be overheard by one of the moguls next to the coffee machine.

A useful ploy for developing contacts with receptionists was used by Raindance producer Oscar Sharp, who regularly lunched with receptionists around London until he furthered his career.

Hint The reception theory is that this person can refer to your project higher up the food chain. Make sure you say thank you properly to any receptionist that helps you.

ii Film organisations

Align yourself with a respected film organisation like the Independent Feature Project or Association of Independent Film and Video in America or Raindance or the Script Factory in the UK. Perhaps you will employ the receptionist theory, or simply join and attend various events and meetings.

Get someone from a film organisation to champion your project to industry funding sources. Organisations like the IFP and Raindance are respected by the industry. Try to get a letter of reference from one of their employees about your project. If you can persuade them to call up the head of development at a film company and recommend your project—fantastic. If you succeed in this, the production company will consider your project—usually by paying one of their freelance script readers to read your script and offer their opinion

about the quality of the script. Some film production companies have close ties with film organisations. In the UK, Working Title, FilmFour, BBC Films, Content, The Works and Pathé are a few of the production companies with close links to Raindance.

Hint A film organisation will only recommend your project if they really like it and they feel that a recommendation will enhance their reputation.

iii Stars

Get a star to read and recommend your script—even if they are unable or unwilling to play one of the parts. Another approach would be to persuade a star physically unsuitable for the part to read and recommend your script with a line like 'if only I had stumbled across this screenplay in 1955 when I was younger—it would have been perfect'. Based on this recommendation, you search out a production company with access to an actor similar to the aged one in their youth.

iv Business, cultural or community Leaders

Which community or business leaders do you know? Perhaps your local car dealer, local councillor, pastor, sheik, bank manager, could consider and evaluate your project.

Do you think you could get Sir Richard Branson, Bono from U2 or Donald Rumsfeld to read your project and like it? Names like these would almost certainly guarantee a positive reaction from any number of film production companies. If you get them to write a letter of reference—even better.

Remember that half-hearted endorsements are as damaging as a negative one, and should be excluded from any promotional literature you may prepare.

Hint Never exaggerate anyone's enthusiasm for your project. Investors have a secret weapon that they use to suss out referees: a telephone!

v Producer

Producers of successful films are often open to becoming mentors on other projects, especially if there is a benefit to them.

The theory is that since they have already succeeded in producing a film—even if not a good one—they will know how to select material and prepare a financeable package. Successful producers may also allow novice producers to work under their wing and use their name to present projects for financing. This will instantly add industry-recognisable pedigree to your project.

Hint If a producer likes your script then everyone in the industry will associate your project with that individual and your project will rise to the same level of pedigree as that person.

vi Financiers

Any financier, but especially a film financier, has the potential to endow your project with impeccable pedigree if they love it enough. So start bombarding your local credit controller with your package.

If you know anyone who works for one of the film financing banks or the insurance bond guarantee companies, so much the better. If they read and love your project, and will agree to be quoted, your project starts to take on the pedigree of old leather topped desks, waistcoats, Earl Grey tea and—most importantly—money. This helps make your film bankable.

vii Reader's report

By acquiring a positive professional reader's report on your screenplay you will be able to prove that an independent film professional has favourably judged your screenplay. Financiers will often request a copy of the reader's report from which they will make their initial judgement about the quality of the script and the project.

Hint Never forget that the raw material of any movie is a well-crafted and original screenplay.

viii Film festivals

Raindance is continually being called by producers and financiers who ask about the pedigree of various filmmakers. If the producer or director has previously had a short film or feature in the festival, we will be asked our opinion of the film and the audience reaction during the screening. We are often asked if we have an archive copy of this original material. If the filmmaker agrees, we can then provide this material to the potential investor or production company.

Hint Acceptance to a film festival along with a positive screening report will enhance your pedigree for subsequent projects. You may even win an award—include this in the package you present to financiers to convince them that respected programmers like your film.

Creating Comparisons

Most business training programmes tell you to execute a thorough business plan when you are contemplating a start-up business.

A good business plan assesses the risks and opportunities associated within the venture, creates a realistic profit and loss account as well as an example of rate of return on investment.

Comparisons are always used in traditional business plans to verify the profitability of a project. Specific profit assumptions are supported by comparing the start-up project to other similar or established businesses in other areas. For example, Bob's Easy Clean, which earned £100,000 after expenses, is similar to

my proposed business and is based in central Glasgow. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that my business, Elliot's Dirt-Off could expect to do similar business based in central Brighton. These assumptions and supporting evidence are then available for investors to consider. The investor then decides whether or not to make the investment based on whether or not the investment proposal described in the business plan meets with their investment criteria and is not too risky for their personal taste.

Creating a business plan for a film, however, is rather different from preparing one for another goods or service-based industry. The reason is that each film that is created is essentially a prototype, and cannot be compared directly to any other. And unlike the clone of a cleaning shop (above) your project has no direct business example to draw from, meaning that you have to create a brand every time you start another film project.

Creating a Brand

Advertising executives guesstimate that for an average release, each dollar spent on advertising nets \$2–\$5 in the cinema.

Each film project is essentially a new brand. The reason Hollywood is so successful in marketing their movies is simply that they have a knack for creating a brand out of each of their new films. The weapon they use is money—and lots of it. It now costs over \$20 million to market an average Hollywood film. Essentially these film companies are creating a brand with money—money which buys up billboards, newspaper and magazine ads, TV and radio spots.

Part of your challenge when you are creating a business plan is to start creating the brand within your package. Being genre-specific not only focuses your investor immediately (i.e. I hate horror/I love horror), but allows the investor to visualise the type of film, and the look of the film from the simple question of genre.

Creating a genre-less film is an almost certain kiss of death. A film that we often see at Raindance that falls into this category is what the American screenwriter William C. Martell calls 'the dying grandmother' movie—where a twenty-something male, struggling to discover the true meaning of life is denied enlightenment until his grandmother becomes ill and dies a slow lingering death. A film such as this has little or no interest to anyone except the filmmaker.

Other low-budget filmmakers like Lloyd Kaufman have created whole careers—even dynasties—by understanding and creating genre-intense brands.

Of the Hollywood companies, only three market their films as 'Made by = . . . ' They are Disney, Dreamworks and Troma. These companies have established brands that say to the cinemagoer that a Disney, a Troma, a Dreamworks picture represents a certain type of experience.

Hint One of the most powerful tools for creating a brand for your film is genre. Is your film horror? Action? Crime? Adventure? Thriller? Science fiction? Fantasy? Or is it a combination of genres like romantic comedy, action-adventure or thriller (crime plus horror)?

Running a Business

The minute you take on an investor, you add a new dimension to your business and to your life. You are no longer a one-person show. You can no longer make decisions on your own. You must now conduct every aspect of your business in a slick and commercially sound manner. Record keeping, tax accounting etc. When you have financial partners, they can exercise creative control as well, whether or not you have allowed for this element when you signed the deal.

If you have accepted industry money then it is far more likely that a particular investor will want to exercise precise creative control. This often means that they, or a representative, are on the set during the shoot, accompany you to rushes screenings and monitor the entire post-production process as well. In extreme cases, if the production falls behind schedule, they will have the right to fire you and finish the film with their own personnel in order to safeguard their investment.

Beware the private investor with a creative agenda: 'I'll invest in your movie, but only if my son/daughter gets to direct and they are sixteen. You get to advise them.' All money comes with strings.

This is an argument for going outside the industry to seek finance, and in the process keeping creative control. By going outside the industry you are playing on the fact that film-illiterate investors will not know what shooting ratio means and preying on the mystique that surrounds the film industry. Although you will still have to operate your business professionally, private investors will usually allow you total creative freedom.

Contents of a Professional Business Plan for Presenting to Private Investors

The document you create will be slick and glossy. The irony is that although investors probably won't read it, it needs to look like something that they might want to read. It needs to look so professional that they are convinced of your pedigree without needing to read it.

1 Executive summary

This top sheet contains the key elements of your movie in a few tightly worded paragraphs that summarises what you have, what you are offering and what you are looking for.

2 Talent summary

A one sheet. Briefly sum up the key talent and production team with credits. Only include recognised shows, radio plays or TV unless the individual has won an award in something pertinent to your production.

3 Budget one sheet

A summary of your budget, condensed into thirty to forty line items. A sample budget top-sheet can be found in Chapter 3.

4 Start date/delivery date

Put down the best and worst case scenarios. An investor will like to know when you have physically completed your film in order to know when they can expect to see the start of a return on their investment. If you include these

dates in your business plan, it will also motivate you to get the production off the ground.

5 Brief synopsis of your project

One paragraph long.

6 Investment merits

List the positive elements like talent attached, deals done, distribution guarantees or simply your firm statement that you believe that this is a commercially viable project.

7 Press release

On another company's letterhead, preferably that of a PR company, stating the start date and listing the key elements, including synopsis. See chapter 16 for more advice on press releases.

8 Media publicity plan

Outline when press releases will be issued, i.e. first day of principal photography, the wrap, first day of post-production etc.

9 Risk factors

Outline the ways this project can fail, despite the good intentions of all involved, and offer contingency plans for these eventualities.

10 Organisation and operations

Brief biographies of key people involved.

11 Appendix

Include a quick primer on how revenue is generated and collected in the film industry or supplementary materials such as press clippings relevant to the project.

Hint Don't get sucked into the business plan event horizon where the production swivels around the availability of a key actor or crew member. There is no such thing as a bulletproof business plan, especially in the film business in which there are so many variables.

Presenting to the Private Investor

It is very easy to try to impress a film-illiterate private investor with a dazzling array of special effects. This rarely works. People with cash to invest in the film industry have their cash because they have shrewdly and creatively run their own businesses and are rarely dazzled by fluff. Best to keep it simple: present no more than ten pages, including press kits, synopses and budget outlines and key summaries.

It is better to distil this from a large quantity of material, with the spare information neatly organised in a presentable way that can be delivered to the investor in a day or two. The cute approach—a CD of songs you would like to use, or a trailer of the movie—only works with first time investors.

Become familiar with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) regulations, and understand how and when you are allowed to approach private investors before you need to become a Public Limited Company (plc). For this you will need the advice of a lawyer.

Business Plan Mistakes

Here are some common business plan mistakes that might enable you to swindle the life savings out of an elderly widower, but are more likely to result in a firm door slam from a seasoned equity investor.

1 Unrealistic revenue projections

Creating graphically pleasing four-colour bar charts illustrating income potential relevant to long-past commercial successes might impress a member of the opposite sex at a night club, but in an investor meeting will make you look like a dud.

A better strategy is to list worst case scenario income projections, coupled with a strategy for managing this: i.e. web sales, DVD and alternative distribution strategy.

2 Misleading foreign sales charts

Every year the trade papers publish sales revenue projections territory by territory around the world. Including these in your low-budget financial calculations means that you are comparing yourself with large budgeted and slick productions from established producers. Relying on these trade projections will make you look amateur.

3 Hying the audience

Comparing the fact that football (soccer) is the world's largest sport with 100 million players and that your film is about football players does not mean that you have a ready-made audience for your movie. This would only have relevance if you were producing a how-to movie about football, not a dramatic feature. No audience will watch your film unless there is a story in the movie worth watching. Marketing money draws an audience to your film, and word-of-mouth and reviews keep the box office coming. This can only be achieved with a great script.

4 The actor's influence

Relying on the market appeal of a name actor can actually harm your project by creating expectations for its financial success. Just because Eddie Izzard or Matthew Modine is in your film still doesn't mean that anyone is going to want to buy it. It is a well-known fact that all actors make a large percentage of terrible films. If you are able to cast a named actor in a part that makes them look good, as well as manage to tell a story, then you have a better chance of selling

your movie. If an actor threatens to hold your project hostage because of their name value, then drop them. The movie will still work if you have a great story.

5 Mentioning *The Blair Witch Project*

Mentioning this unusual success at all in a business plan is a bad idea. *The Blair Witch Project* did not cost \$35,000. The filmmakers who created it planned each and every frame of the film. They had a great script for a unique market, and they were able to market the movie successfully using the then relatively untried Internet marketing strategy. Successes where all the elements are lined up at the same time, like *The Blair Witch Project*, happen about once every 10 years. Don't base your business plan on a one-in-a-million case study. Keep your expectations, and those of your investors, firmly in the real world.

6 The promise

Skilled salesmen never promise anything directly, because a failed promise will always come back to haunt you. You are simply looking at life with blinkered eyes if you think that promising the earth to an investor will leave you better off. It is far better to share the burden of possible failure with your investor. They may be able to utilise their business and marketing skills to help you.

Hint The only things you can predict are death and taxes.

Presenting to the Industry: The Package

Cute doesn't work with industry people—they have seen and heard it all before and only want to see what you have on paper. Serious investors will respect you more if you tone down the hype and present the dirty truth about your project.

The 'package' is the following bundle of pre-production documents designed to answer questions any investor, but particularly a film investor, might have.

1 The script

The script must be properly formatted. As the industry becomes more institutionalised, screenplays must conform to the standard. Failure to do so means that your entire package, no matter how excellent, will look amateurish. Don't use cone bindings; use an Acco clip.

2 Chain of title documents

Proof that you own the screenplay.

3 The budget

Properly typed and covered with a one sheet or top sheet budget, which summarises the entire budget. Include details of above the line (costs of the

talent) and be prepared to justify your fees as producer. In the below the line section, specify any unusual costs such as stunts or special effects which might affect the look of the film.

4 Discussions with potential cast members

Include a diary of availability and copies of all correspondence.

5 One-page cover letter and a short synopsis of the script

Do not reveal the ending. You want them to read the script. End your synopsis or cover letter with a teaser like 'Our movie ends with an explosive song and dance number that reunites the romantic leads in a scene similar to the ending of . . .'

6 Head shots

Include them if you feel they are pertinent.

7 CVs of creatives on production team

Keep them brief, but highlight key work and awards for each crew member. The fact that Jane DoP is embarking on her first feature might seem a bit more acceptable to an investor if you also correctly state that she was the second assistant camera on *Mad Max 3*.

8 Revenue projections

Keep them realistic. It is better to say you have no idea how to get a distribution deal, but feel that you are in a strong position to recoup investment plus profit because the film will only cost £200,000 to make.

At a meeting with several low-budget filmmakers and industry producers, I was admonished by the comment from a producer of several well-known British films that 'your £50,000 budget wouldn't even cover the cost of catering'. I was also told by a civil servant, employed by a now-bankrupt government-funded film organisation, that my £300, 35mm feature film budget would not even cover the cost of insurance.

Hint Only send out the business plan where the investor asks for it, and then keep it to a short distillation of around ten to fifteen pages.

Issues You Must Address

Put yourself into the shoes of the person you are pursuing and you will be able to understand their reservations and be better prepared to answer their questions and address their concerns.

1 Industry scepticism about low budgets

Producers and investors within the industry will be sceptical about your ability to make a movie at a tenth to a twentieth of their production budgets. You are challenging the very foundations of their careers and their businesses. Tactfully outline exactly how you will save money. List production freebies in detail. They will admire your production skills at blagging a £12,000 camera package for nothing. It is something they can relate to. Demonstrate that you understand the logistics of a big-budget shoot, and illustrate how you will be able to achieve similar results using your cottage-industry style production techniques.

2 Marketing plan

Industry financing sources are more willing to accept marketing and publicity plans that break the traditional mould than innovative production techniques. Marketing plans that use the Internet and other low-cost or free techniques like guerrilla marketing to create buzz are proven winners in the entertainment industry. Demonstrating your understanding of new media techniques will add value to the package.

3 Successes can be box-office failures

Equity financed projects need to sell for more than their production budgets to offer a return to the investor. So if a distributor pays an advance greater than the production budget, then the film is in profit. If the film fares poorly at the box office, the distributor loses money, but the film is still in profit. All films have a certain revenue and the producer's trick is to bring the film's production budget in under that revenue level. The skill is knowing where that level is, of course.

4 What happens if you don't get a theatrical distributor?

Traditional industry financiers are paralysed when their projects fail to get a distributor with an accompanying advance. Fail to secure this elusive prize, and you will need to override a fundamental concern of all industry investors. Be quick to fill in the financial gaps with alternative means of creating revenue: self-distribution, foreign Blu-ray and DVD rights, Internet distribution and tertiary revenue streams.

Tertiary distribution refers to schools, prisons, hospitals etc.

The more you can learn to love the business side of the film industry, and understand the workings of it, the better you will be able to use that knowledge to maintain your creative control.

Pulp Fiction was made for \$8 million and took over \$200 million world-wide box office.

5 Be well versed in the mechanics of the film industry

At any meeting with industry people you must understand how the industry works and how money flows during the pre-production, production and distribution processes. You also need to make sure that you have a clear grasp of the roles of the people you are negotiating with, not only so you can properly pitch your project and answer their questions, but to make sure that you are talking to the right person.

6 Don't quote *The Blair Witch Project*

Comparing your project to *The Blair Witch Project* or to *Pulp Fiction* implies that your investor will be part of a similar box-office success. Industry professionals are all too aware of what this doesn't mention. The following are the fees that will eat away at that box-office total:

Exhibitors fee: this can be up to 75% of the box-office take in the UK
Distributors fee: this can be a further 10%–35% of the remaining money

Deferral payments to cast and crew

Interest: the bank charges and cost of your overdraft

Bonus fees to investors

Your producer's fee (see Chapter 14)

7 Legal advice

Before you hit the investor trail, be it private funding or industry money, review your project with a media lawyer who will know which details will need to

be included in your business plan to make it squeaky clean from a legal and accounting point of view. A lawyer will be able to advise about Securities and Exchange Commission rulings. Breaching these rulings is a serious criminal offence.

8 Blue sky rules

Most countries have regulations limiting the promises you can make to an investor. Simple omissions like declaring that your second bedroom is a paid production office or hiring your nephew as assistant director can expose you to legal action from a disgruntled investor.

Hint Don't become a filmmaker as poseur! Just because you have a business plan doesn't entitle you to hang out at media cafés with a smug look on your face. A business plan is just one small part of the process. Many filmmakers grasp their business plan so tightly that they never make the film! Scripts are the currency of the film business. Better than spending months writing a business plan would be to polish the script and get it out to established producers who are expert at getting money for you. After all, the script is the ultimate business plan.

Summary

1. Learn as much as you can about how money flows in the industry.
2. Prepare a lean business plan and relevant supporting material.
3. Never overestimate your return or underestimate your investor. Turn the page for the ten tricks and traps of producing.

Ten Tricks and Traps of Producing

PRODUCING FEATURE FILMS is an occupation fraught with danger, mishaps and misfortune. As Shakespeare said: many a slip twixt cup and lip. Here are the ten areas where new producers trip up.

1 Measure Success by More Than a Theatrical Release

The times are a-changin'. The costs and associated risk factor of releasing a film theatrically are so onerous that it is becoming virtually impossible to secure a theatrical release for independent films. Your film might not be right for a theatrical release. Astute producers in the 21st century explore other avenues of distribution including self-distribution, ancillary markets, television and home video. Another drawback with traditional theatrical distribution is the fact that financial and creative control of your movie can easily pass to the distributor, who can often treat a filmmaker as a necessary evil in their business.

The innovative British writer-director Mike Figgis has been campaigning for an alternative distribution strategy since 1999. The advent of digital technology has opened up new exhibition formats. Figgis proposes using alternative venues to cinemas. By wresting control of exhibition from traditional cinemas and exhibitors, Figgis hopes to bring cinema to a new audience and to keep control of the film with the filmmaker. His approach, championing alternative exhibition venues and creating a new cinematic tradition following the model of fringe theatre, is an exciting new opportunity for producers.

Of course online distribution on websites like Netflix, Lovefilm and Blinkbox offer ways filmmakers can find audiences. Astute filmmakers will learn how to manage the theatrical expectations of their cast, crew and investors and highlight the wide range of alternative distribution opportunities.

2 Learn How to Use Agents

New producers treat agents poorly. The common tactic new producers use is to expect assistance from an agent who represents the talent whom they are pursuing for their poorly paid project. Often a producer will make an approach to the agent without proper preparation.

Before you approach any agent, find out who they represent and what sort of material they need from you to secure their clients. Then find out how to approach them in a way that they will say yes.

Remember that when you approach an agent with a minimal budget, they are working for you for free and need to see what other benefits you can bring. For example, you may have a part for their client that shows off a new skill: a comedy actor playing the tragic or evil character. By taking this role, even for a token payment, the actor may expand their repertoire and/or develop their acting skills. The unusual casting may also help to get your film noticed later on.

If you approach an agent professionally with a clearly thought-out plan you are far more likely to be taken seriously and treated with the same respect that is reserved for established producers. Remember that if an agent is unhelpful or treats you with disrespect it may have nothing to do with them and everything to do with your approach.

3 Presales

Presales are a thing of the past and are virtually impossible to secure for a new producer without a proven delivery record. Learn to do without on your first project. Make your film, sell it and then use that film's record for your next financial model and to enhance your pedigree.

See chapter 25 for tips on demonstrating and improving your project's pedigree.

4 New Money vs. Old Money

Established industry investors are a conservative lot and will try to exercise creative as well as financial control over your project.

It is true that they have systems in place: application forms you can use, a clearly defined evaluation procedure and enough production savvy to know what can happen during the rigours of production. But they are deluged with material from established producers whom they have already worked with and whom they trust.

Keep your eyes open for the new players in town, and pursue them with the attitude that you are willing to take a risk with them if they are willing to take a risk with you. Remember that you cannot skimp on legal representation at this point. Engage the services of an experienced entertainment attorney who will have the expertise to close the deals while protecting your interests.

Private investors new to the industry are less likely to involve themselves creatively, and may have other agendas prompting them to invest in your film. Try to find out what ancillary services you can offer to your investors (while maintaining your integrity).

5 Festivals Besides Toronto, Cannes and Sundance

Most filmmakers argue that unless they are accepted into one of these festivals they will be unable to secure distribution. This is possibly true. But films like *Girls Don't Cry*, *Broken Vessels* and *Amores Perros* didn't preview at these festivals.

There is no doubt that many films entered into the big three do get distribution, but the odds are stacked against getting into these festivals. Very often films programmed at these festivals are included because the festival programmers are pressurised by sponsors. The programmers' decisions often bear no relation to the quality of the film. It is also worth bearing in mind the promotional machinery behind many of the films at these festivals. Increasingly, films screened at Sundance already have distribution and the festival is merely used as a launch for the ensuing publicity drive. You may get more coverage at a smaller festival where your film has more chance to stand out.

It is also a fact that many of the supposed hot films at these festivals die an anguished box-office death. Although a place at Toronto, Cannes or Sundance is a wonderful thing, investigate other launch possibilities and develop a strategy to accompany them.

6 Sales Agents Do Not Advance Money

Assume that you will not get a financial advance from a sales agent who is taking your film to a market. Instead of focusing on the advance, ask yourself if the company you have chosen produces good marketing materials. A good sales agent is capable of supporting a European and American festival tour.

It is more important that they understand your film and are in tune with your creative objectives than that they advance you cash. If a sales agent advances you cash, you can run the risk of incurring vast and onerous interest and penalty payments as they recoup. All this before you see another cent.

7 Big Sale vs. Big Career

Sales agents sometimes pay a big advance for a hot film in order to keep costs down. Then they bundle your film with several others and dump them on distributors. Although you have the kudos of landing a big deal, you lose the one-on-one relationship with foreign distributors. Hal Hartley is an example of a filmmaker who has managed his career successfully by developing individual personal relationships with small European distributors who understand him and his films, thus giving him the attention his films require in order to succeed.

8 Success Is Relative

Holding out for the big deal at the expense of time can be a fatal error. Better a small deal now than hoping for a big one in 2 or 3 years' time when all of the efforts behind your festival and film market strategy have evaporated. Always look at the year ahead and determine where you want to be.

9 Get a Sales Agent Early On

The sooner you find a sales agent the better. Sales agents do more than sales negotiators. They offer excellent advice on how to position films at festivals and markets. They also give invaluable assistance to build profile for the film

and for you and then maximise exposure. In many ways, both the sales agent's and your own career benefit equally from the success of the film. If you wait until the big festival premiere, you are reducing the time available for a sales agent to do their job. You also are gambling on whether or not you are accepted into a festival, and whether or not your film is properly promoted at it.

10 If It Ain't on the Page It Ain't on the Stage

The screenplay is everything. Successful producers read, read, read. They read galley proofs of novels and short stories, spec screenplays, and stage plays. They go to the theatre looking for material and new acting talent and they watch movies, movies and more movies. A good producer always has several scripts in development, and is always on the lookout for a hot new writer and a great new script.

Make absolutely certain that the script you want to produce has that one impossibly bold, fresh, original, dynamic idea that nobody else has but which everyone wants. If you have this you will finance your movie.

24 The Development Process

MOST FILMMAKERS ARE constantly in the development process. The second you have a good idea for a movie, and think about it again, you are really in the development process. In the film industry, development refers to the process of getting a screenplay to the point where it can be presented to financiers and investors, directors and actors. You try and create a package that, when shown to any prospective investor or talent, you will hear the magic 'yes'. This is known as the green light in the film industry.

The Development Path

The simplest way to proceed with the development process is to write your own script without any cowriter or partner or investor paying your rent while you write. When you do this, the legal rights to the script are clear and easy to understand and to explain to distributors once the film is finished.

It starts to get complicated when you write with someone else, base your story on a newspaper article or person's life, adapt a novel into a screenplay or base it on a television show or video game.

The ultimate barrier in the development process comes after the film is made when a film buyer will ask you to prove that you own the rights to the story one hundred per cent. If the answer is no, then you need to acquire the underlying rights to your story and secure them in a written form acceptable to your investors and potential film buyers.

Securing Story Rights

1 Public domain

Suppose you have found an old book and want to turn it into a movie. You cannot assume that merely the fact that it is old gives you the right to turn the book into a movie.

Public domain laws vary from country to country. In the USA, for example, the 1909 Copyright Act gave the copyright to the author from the date of publication for a total of 28 years, and then, upon proper renewal, for a further 28 years. This act was in force in the USA until 1st January, 1978. Since then, US copyright law has gone through a series of changes. Works created

in America now are deemed to have a copyright duration from the date of creation until 70 years after the death of the author.

Other countries vary and certain countries have one law for their own territory and another for other territories. The point is that you will need a lawyer to search the rights for your story if you are basing it on an old book or magazine article.

For general purposes, you will be safe to assume a work is in the public domain if the author has been dead for 100 years.

Hint A useful resource is the US Copyright Office. Visit their website: www.loc.gov/copyright.

This is a fictional example of an initial script clearance report provided by Gregg Millard, who offers an excellent and thorough script clearance service. His contact details are as they appear on the top of this document, and on the website you will find a summary of his services.

Oral permission to use material is totally worthless. You must get everything in writing.

2 Copyright reports

If you have doubts as to the copyright of your project, you must get a copyright report. These reports don't guarantee the safety of your copyright assumptions, but list all copyright facts from public record.

3 Chain of title

As you proceed to verify your claim to the copyright in a story, a novel, a short story or an original screenplay, you must provide written proof from the copyright holder at each step of the way. These written proofs, along with the consent from all the other creative parties in the film (cinematographer, composer, director, performers) form what is called chain of title.

Hint Without a satisfactory chain of title, no one will finance or distribute your film.

4 Fact-based stories

i Based on deceased characters

Until recently it was a legal maxim that nobody can own history. However, in America there have been several instances where states have passed laws protecting famous residents. For example, the state of Tennessee has special laws prohibiting the use of Elvis Presley's likeness without permission, and the same goes for the state of Georgia and Martin Luther King. California also has a law prohibiting unauthorised use of the likenesses of Charlie Chaplin and others.

ii Based on living characters

If the person is still living you need their written permission to tell their life story. You cannot hide by changing the person's name or transporting them to another locale.

iii Son of Sam laws

New York State passed a law preventing any profit from publications about the notorious serial killer David Berkowitz passing to him. Instead, the money

is to go to his victims and their heirs. Most other states and countries now have equivalent laws, meaning that the movie based on the life story of a criminal, still living, becomes extremely complicated. And to complicate matters further, these criminals could still sue you for defamation if they are represented unfairly.

Writer's contract

A producer must be certain that the format of the writer's contract follows the industry standard. If your contract with a writer is written on the back of a napkin, or contains unusual clauses, the lawyers for any potential financier will peruse them for days and weeks, trying to understand them, and trying to find any reason to get them redone.

The writer's contract is discussed in full in Chapter 13: Above the Line.

E&O

Your financiers and potential distributors will ask you for errors and omissions insurance (E&O). E&O insurance applications ask whether or not you have depicted any real people or thinly disguised real people. The insurance company will hire a lawyer to read an annotated copy of your script. In it, you will have marked the script with each case of a scene or character based on fact, and if you are attempting to disguise it, the documentation or proof that you do not need a release.

Additionally, the E&O company will want to see the signed releases from all the characters on which the film was based.

It is relatively easy to get the signatures of the people portrayed in a positive light in your film. The difficult consents are the ones who are portrayed in a negative light, such as the drunk train driver, the corrupt politician, the careless dentist. These signatures should all be collected as soon as possible at the outset of the writing process.

Your lawyer will be able to guide you through the creative boundaries of your story should you be unable to collect certain signatures. In this case you would need to rely on other sources, such as newspaper articles and television and radio news reports.

Copyright registration

The law in most countries states that you own the copyright the minute you create a work. There is no legal requirement to file your work for copyright registration. All copyright registration does is provide you with a birth certificate.

One of the most useful services is the US Copyright Office, which is a central clearing house that records copyright dates and subsequent liens or other legal charges and agreements against a title. It performs much the same function as a registry for land titles.

Most producers file the so-called short form agreement with the US Copyright Office because it merely records the fact that the sale or option has proceeded and does not disclose any personal details such as price or term.

Hint US Copyright Office website is www.loc.gov/copyright.

Titles

Titles are not eligible for copyright. This helps to explain why so many songs use the same or similar titles. The only way to protect a title is to trademark it.

The major film studios and production companies have a system whereby they agree not to use other companies' titles and have created their own system to resolve and mediate disputes.

Independent filmmakers usually obtain a title report (that is different from a copyright report), which is based on searches for similar titles in the entertainment world. Financiers and distributors will want to see a clear title report on the title chosen for the film.

Development Financing

You have scoured underground theatre and have a list of actors so sizzling hot you can hardly wait to launch their careers in the movies. At film festivals you have seen scores of shorts and debut features from which you have short-listed several directors you would like to work with. All of this has been at your own expense. Finally, after meeting dozens of writers and reading hundreds of screenplays, you finally have a script that you really believe in. You visit a printer and get some flashy business cards made up with your name as producer on them. But this is still no guarantee that you will get your movie made.

You need money.

What Is Development Money?

Development money is the sum total you need to invest in your idea until it is in a form (a package) suitable for presenting to investors where it can attract production financing.

Development money is used to pay the writer while the screenplay is being rewritten, the producer's travel expenses to film markets to arrange presales financing, location scouting and camera tests. It also covers the cost of administration and overheads until the film is officially in pre-production.

Typical Development Budget

While there is no such thing as a typical budget, most development budgets will include the following items:

- Script payment fees agreed under the terms of a step deal or option deal.
- Producer's fee.
- Travel and accommodation expenses for the writer and producer to attend development meetings with investors.
- Location scouting and camera tests.
- Creating a budget and schedule.
- Script readings with cast.
- Script editor.
- Cost of duplicating scripts and postage.

- Cost of developing concept for website.
- Production of key artwork.
- Office overhead, usually no more than fifteen per cent of the budget.
- Producer's legal cost.
- Research expenses.

How Development Finance Deals Are Structured

Development money is the most expensive, and financiers who put up development money typically expect a fifty per cent bonus plus five per cent of the producer fees. The bonus payment is usually scheduled to be paid on the first day of principal photography along with the five per cent of the producer's profits as the film starts to recoup.

While development is the most essential money for a movie, it is also the most difficult to raise. Financiers, be they private or industry, consider this money to be the highest risk, and therefore the least attractive from an investment point of view. From a practical level, the more time (and therefore money) that can be put into a film before financing is sought, the better the chance of finance, be it development or production. And the further you can carry the project along without resorting to outside finance, the greater your profit share will be when the film finally comes into a revenue stream.

Case History—The Living and the Dead

Carl Schöenfeld, a friend and producing partner came back from the Berlin Film Festival in February 2003 with the exciting prospect of working with writer-director Simon Rumley, whom he had spent time with in Berlin. Simon had just completed a screenplay based loosely on his experience nursing his ailing mother and also influenced by his interest in horror films.

Simon had already made three low-budget features, two of which, *Club Le Monde* and *Strong Language*, had played at the Raindance Film Festival. *Strong Language* had been nominated for a British Independent Film Award in 1998—although Simon and I hadn't known each other personally then.

Carl and I met with Simon in late February. Simon, very unusually, had producer Nick O'Hagan attached to the project and cut a deal based on the producer's profit share of the film. Carl and Nick would produce, while I would handle marketing and promotion. I then approached a private investor who was willing to invest £10,000 into the project on the basis that he would share equally in any profit share that Carl and I had in the film.

The £10,000 was paid into the account in early April and dispersed as follows:

Option on screenplay	£2,000
Copying and mailing screenplays	£500
Casting agent fee	£1,500
Office expenses specific to the project	£300
DVDs of Simon's previous films	£350
Key artwork	£1,000
100 A4 four-colour one sheets for Cannes	£200
Location scouting	£1,000
Office assistant (6 weeks)	£1,200

The deal was organised as follows. The investor was present at the early negotiation meetings between Simon, Nick, Carl and myself. He was also party to the negotiation of the deal and the profit split structure. Several times one of the parties needed to concede, but the final deal was signed in the first week of April.

From there, I approached a UK distributor, and managed to get the UK rights sold for an advance of ten per cent of the budget. Simon at this point had been shooting some promo reels for the UK Film Council, which had gone extremely well. Based on Simon's success, and on the basis of his previous three features (all of which made their money back) we decided to approach the UK Film Council for funding.

At the same time, we negotiated with Dean Goldberg of Park Caledonia to raise the balance of the budget under the UK tax laws. He was able to commit funds early because of the involvement of the UK Film Council and because the film had a UK distributor.

As part of the exercise, we approached Douglas Cummings of Axiom Films and asked him to provide sales estimates. These arrived with a low estimate of \$900,000 and a high of \$1,400,000. We then went back to the UK Film Council armed with fifty per cent of the budget in place as well as sales estimates well in excess of the proposed £400,000 (\$600,000). To our surprise, the UK Film Council had pages of notes on script changes they insisted on before our application could proceed. Meanwhile, we had been incurring expenses with a casting agent and location scout, trying to get the film shooting by the end of September.

Simon decided that the changes demanded by the UK Film Council were far wide of the mark, and would destroy his creative vision for the project. We decided to abandon the government funding, opting to try the private investment route instead.

We ended up securing a private investment of £188,000 and shot the film in 3 weeks during the summer of 2005. It premiered at the Rotterdam Film Festival in January 2006 in front of hundreds of distributors and acquisition executives, none of whom agreed to a deal. The film then circulated two dozen festivals and picked up a dozen awards. After 18 months the film started selling and ended up being released in fourteen territories including a DVD release in America.

Sources of Development Finance

1 European film industry money

Many film production companies in Europe have their own in-house development departments, which work on script evaluation and rewrites. The money used to fund these ventures can come from a variety of sources, including private investment, share offerings, European government money and profit from previous projects.

See the website www.lotonobudgetfilmmaking.com for information on Eurimage and Media.

Hint Get a production company interested in your project. This will usually be triggered by a certain actor attached to your project or because you have already secured a distribution deal in one or more countries, allowing the production company to see a potential recoup.

2 Housekeeping deal

Sometimes a major distributor or production company will really believe in your ability to find the next hot project. They will offer you money to pay for your time, office expenses and writer's fees. In return, they get a first look or right of first refusal on anything you develop. If they pass on the deal, they will then expect to get the cost of developing that project, plus fifty per cent profit from whomever you eventually sell the project to.

3 Distribution companies

Distributors may read your script and agree to pay for a number of rewrites in order to turn it into a more marketable commodity. When the film is finished, they will take back this money with an agreed profit.

4 Government finance

The British Film Institute is known for believing in writers and creative producers. They finance a wide range of scripts and production slates. Details of their application requirements, and their compensation expectations are at their website: www.bfi.org.uk.

The British Film Institute

BFI development funding is available for all stages of development up to pre-production. Funding is available for the following costs:

- Writer's fees.
- Research fees.
- Reasonable overhead costs of the producer.
- Payments to acquire and option rights to adapt works for the screen.
- Producer fees.
- Producer's reasonable legal costs.
- Script readings with cast.
- Script editors.
- Executive producer/mentor.
- Other specific requirements, e.g. special effects/storyboarding.
- A 'package' to present to potential partners.
- Budget.
- Schedule.
- Casting.
- Training courses to aid project development.
- Other legitimate development costs at the discretion of the fund.

In exchange for its investment the BFI expects its money back on the first day of principal photography, with a fifty per cent premium.

The BFI application documentation checklist includes:

- Details of the key creatives involved (writer, director, producer, actors) with biographies or filmographies.
- One-page synopsis.
- Treatment.

- Draft screenplay (in the BFI preferred format).
- Underlying work (novel, stageplay etc., with relevant option).
- Draft development budget (see sample development budget).
- Example of director's work.
- Details of any cultural, social or economic diversity elements (e.g. people working on the project, characters/settings in the script etc.).

5 Private investment

Occasionally you will find investors who love high-risk, high-potential investments, who are willing to finance you and/or your writer until the script is up and in production.

These investors would be called angels in theatre, and if they finance a successful film, stand to earn many times their investment.

Typically, they can command a producer or executive producer credit as well as the usual high-interest repayments and a percentage of the producer's net profits in the film.

6 Talent

Successful actors often fund development of projects with their eye on a potential starring role. Entertainers in other industries, such as music or sport, are also turning to development as a way to guarantee them the appropriate vehicle in which to launch a movie career.

Tools for Raising Development Finance

The package

Add as many elements as possible. At the very least you should have a director. If you are having difficulty attracting a named cast, surround yourself with a veteran and seasoned crew. Get the best-known director of photography (DoP) you can. Convince him or her that you have the finance in place to pay them at least part of their salary. And emphasise that this will be a chance for them to experiment and diversify.

1 Key cast and crew bios

Create a list of the people involved, and list a two- or three-line bio on each, including their most impressive credits, and listing any awards or newsworthy achievements.

2 Promo reel

A good promo reel is short and to the point. It has clear titles and contact details and contains key scenes that demonstrate either the director's ability with actors, or the 'look' of the film if it is for a DoP.

Hint A showreel is different from a promo reel. A showreel contains a series of short scenes, usually with a single track of music from beginning to end. A promo reel is a series of scenes assembled to show a certain skill.

Some talented DoPs have no desire to diversify as they have based their career on a certain technique that they are satisfied and comfortable with.

3 Development budget

This budget can be done in several ways:

- It can be the projected total budget of the film from start to finish.
- It can list the amount of money needed to finance the project up until the first day of principal photography.
- It can list the specific costs of getting the package ready for investors including option payments, travel expenses and so on.
- Or it can include all of the above.

Making Your Project Attractive

How you state your case and present your position will predetermine the success you have in raising finance. Here are a few tips on how to present your project.

1 Start date and completion date

List and aggressively repeat the specific start date of your film. While working on *The Living and the Dead* at Raindance's production company, we kept repeating the start date of 4th August. Even when it ended up moving back 2 weeks, we waited several weeks before we told anyone, because we wanted to keep the pressure on the lawyers. We were always asked in meetings with financiers and sales agents for the completion date. It became automatic to respond that 'according to our schedule, the completion date, which allows for a standard 10 weeks of post-production, would be October 31st, in time for final selection screenings at Sundance Film Festival'.

These two hard dates give anyone looking at the project the confidence that we knew what we were doing, plus it allows them to visualise the end of the project and to get an idea of when their revenue stream might start.

2 Creative casting

Perhaps your investor has some ideas for casting. You should listen carefully, and keep them informed of the casting process. If a financier starts to feel that they are involved in the creative process, you know that they are hooked on the project, and the rest of the process with them will be much smoother.

3 Start at the top and ski downhill

This is the advice given to me by Dean Goldberg, co-director of Park Caledonia, a UK financing company.

It is far better to ask for more than you need, and then negotiate downhill. Your financier will enjoy taking out the red pen and stroking off certain items saying: 'You don't need this, and you don't need that'. Of course, since you have already started high, you are more able to deal with this financial downsizing.

Pitfalls to Raising Development Finance

Investors seeking to park funds in high-risk ventures such as development finance often resist because of the unproven track records of the talent and

producers. This was one of the guiding principles we had when we created Raindance Raw Talent—a production company combining investment with the unlimited pool of undiscovered talent passing through our doors.

However you do it, you will need to demonstrate to potential investors how you are able to overcome this obstacle.

Untried talent

Your investor may not believe that your director or actors are sufficiently experienced to handle the rigours of the shoot and post-production schedule. Your investor may want to suggest a more experienced director or actors.

Remedy

The classic way to demonstrate talent is to have a portfolio of previous work, be it short films, reviews of stage work or other demonstrations of experience that will help persuade an investor that you deserve to work with a reasonable budget to demonstrate your talent further.

If you are fortunate, your writer or director will have already written other scripts, now made. In this case, include copies of these films on DVD. If your director has already directed a series of short films, supply them on DVD. A film already made in a retail DVD package created by a distributor is a useful asset to your package.

Naturally, you will be unable to advance unless you are able to pitch—to impart your passionate enthusiasm for your project.

Unproven producer

Film financiers are always sceptical of new producers, especially when it comes to entrusting them with a large sum of money. With the risks involved in the creative, financial and logistical elements that are combined in the film-making process, financiers usually are leery.

Remedy

The easiest way to convince a shy investor that you are a good producer is to do your homework and be able to quickly and succinctly demonstrate that you are able to adapt and handle every business and creative variable likely to be thrown your way.

Try to create trust so your investors believe that you can and will meet requirements and delivery schedules demanded throughout the production process. Remember to always take your financier's requirements into consideration.

Another tack would be to surround yourself with veteran accountants and line producers with whom the financier has already worked, or who are experienced in making the type of film you plan.

Summary

1. Create, market and successfully adapt your package.
2. Shoot a promo reel.

No one was worse at pitching than Guy Ritchie. In fact, he was so poor at this essential skill that Duncan Heath of ICM took pity on him and helped him in every way he could. That doesn't mean to say that he didn't have passion or commitment and energy for his project. Those qualities he had in abundance. It was just the verbal communication skills that he lacked.

3. Create a professional development budget and raise the finance and make your project more attractive to investors.

Let's raise some more money and spend it on shooting the film.

A Microbudget Case Study—Love.Honour.Obey. (2013)

Here is a real-life summary of a project I produced during the winter of 2013. The results at the time of writing (June 2013) are still up in the air. One result was you very nearly didn't see this book. I didn't work hard enough on the manuscript for this book due to the time constraints the movie imposed meaning that my ever-patient editor was forced to threaten me with cancellation of the book unless I met the June 30th deadline!

Commercial Reality of Low-Budget Films

In today's changing market the dead zone where films fail financially has widened. It used to be that films in the \$2–\$5 million budgets were pretty certain to lose money. These budgets simply don't stretch to an actor with enough visibility to guarantee a healthy box office. In today's world, the dead zone has widened from \$50 million to \$100,000 (or less). Investors in films made in the middle of this range are at a real risk of losing their money.

With this in mind I decided to produce a film under £50,000 (\$75,000).

The Script

Producers' common complaints the world over are about finding material worthy of their time and effort to turn into a movie.

I started to think about the type of script that could be made for a tiny budget. Practicing what I preach I started looking for a script shot in a limited location with a few actors. Moving from location to location costs time and money, and the more actors the more mouths to feed and transport.

The problem with 'one-room' movies, also known as confinement movies, is that there are too many of them, and very few get noticed, Oren Peli's *Paranormal Activity* and *Phone Booth* being two exceptions.

The reality of my life is that I constantly overcommit myself. I run the Raindance Film Festival, I founded the British Independent Film Awards, I have family with attendant personal commitments and Raindance has offices in seven cities in six countries to which I travel constantly. This provides me with the perfect excuse for procrastinating.

One day, in the autumn of 2012, in the run-up to that year's film festival (where the entire team is working 100-hour weeks) I got an email from a total stranger who said he had just been both kicked out of the education system, and while studying for an MA, told to abandon his desire to be a screenwriter by one of the lecturers as they didn't think he could succeed with a writing career because he suffered from a host of physical ailments including

diabetes, autism, cerebral palsy and right-side hemiplegia. The writer asked me what I thought of this advice. Of course I responded and told him that he could be a writer with this plethora of ailments, and then asked him what he had written. I got a response within hours claiming he had written 208 pieces: shorts and features.

I immediately imagined someone like Stephen Hawking—wheelchair-bound and typing with a gizmo strapped to his chin. I replied and asked him to send me something. A nine-page short arrived a few days later, a short so brilliant that a pair of our MA students started producing it.

The festival came and went and a week before Christmas 2012, I got another email from the writer saying that he had been reading my blog posts and did I really want a no-budget film script with three actors in a house? He had one, and sent it to me. The script PDF stayed on my laptop all through the Christmas break, when finally at 1 p.m. on New Year's Day, totally hung-over, I decided that I had to click on the PDF to tell Mark Rogers (I now knew his name but hadn't spoken to him) I had seen, if not read it. Reading the script was a complete thrill. I now knew I had received the script of my dreams under the most unlikely of circumstances.

The Director

Choosing the right director for a low-budget shoot is actually very challenging. With so many confinement movies being made on the cheap flooding the market, the director of a successful film needs to be highly organized and able to 'see' the film in its entirety. I have watched several thousand such movies during my time at Raindance and am all too aware of the potential pitfalls of choosing the wrong director.

The director also needs to be able to make the script their own and meld in the creative input of the actors and the location. Each one of these elements can really affect the film and, more importantly, the story.

A week after I found the script I took a telephone call from an acquaintance who was in London visiting his children, who asked for a coffee because he was depressed. Over coffee I found out that he had just directed a €5 million Dutch movie in his native Holland which, though commercially successful, had suffered critical disdain for the first time in his nineteen-feature career. I asked him if he had ever directed a microbudget film and he assured me that his first three features were exactly that: financed by friends, family and himself.

I then told him the story of Mark and gave him the script. This was on a Tuesday morning. The very next day he called and dragged me out of an important Raindance meeting raving about the script. 'Never in 20 years have I read such a good script. Why don't you give it to Cronenberg or Lynch?' He was certain that by using his producer skills he could raise the 2–3 million to make a film with a director of that calibre. I reminded him that this process would take several years and suggested that he might want to direct it instead. He agreed and said 'Let's do it! And let's do it for fifty thousand.'

The game was on.

I went back to the very important meeting and secretly sent Mark a text message, who by now was on suicide watch and was suffering the heartache caused by the breakdown of a 7-year relationship. I secretly text messaged him

'A director of repute has just read and loved your script. Be happy'. He messaged me right back 'Who?' I only had time to swipe the director's Wikipedia web link and 2 minutes later to the annoyance of my colleague in the meeting, Mark messaged back 'OMG The cult writer/director of *Drop Dead Fred* DUDE. My favourite movie! Ate de Jong!' And 2 minutes later, his dad messaged back saying he's just had to scrape Mark off the ceiling.

The writer and director worked furiously on the script for 6 weeks while the money was being raised: over 150 emails and six versions of the script. Most of the work dealt with tonal changes: character arc, character empathy and the ending.

Ate de Jong has never made a movie without using all or part of his own money. This personalizes the film to him and motivates him to get the film made on time and on budget.

The Sales Estimates

In order to justify the budget of the film I decided to get a professional opinion on the income potential of the movie. Elisar Cabrera had joined the team having come from a dozen years working for a London-based sales agency. He read the script and loved it as much as I did. He did a calculation of the sales estimates, which showed a worst case scenario of £130,000 (\$200,000). I now knew that our investors would have a pretty good chance of recouping the budget.

Elisar did an all-bells-and-whistles budget based on industry standards of a staggering and unobtainable £256,982 (\$385,000). He then made a budget of £50,000 (\$75,000) detailing the line items that we had to have physical cash for. The question is how to fund the budget.

We decided that we could make and finish the film by this year's Raindance Film Festival, and Ate de Jong worked out that if we were to do this the film would have to start shooting no later than June 1st.

Raindance prides itself on its social media network and we decided we could capitalize on this using a crowdfunding campaign. Elisar and a colleague, Orestes Kouzof started mapping out a campaign when Ate delivered a bombshell: He would finance £20,000. The crowdfunding campaign was launched on March 22nd.

The Finance Model

Knowing we still had a significant part of the budget to raise, and knowing we wanted professional crew and actors, we developed an innovative finance model that we would use to pitch to potential private investors. Namely we recognized that an individual with the financial clout and interest in our project was very significant and valuable, but so too was the input of Mark, Ate and the rest of the crew and cast. We decided to insist on a 50–50 corridor from the first penny. This meant that if we only sold one DVD for £10 (\$15) each side would get just £5 (\$7.50). With this formula we now had something to offer cast and crew.

Another feature of this finance plan, being British-based meant that the private investors we attracted would receive substantial tax credit of up to fifty per cent. Unlike most other UK tax-based film finance schemes, we did not count this tax rebate as income, but merely mentioned it in passing as a way they could derisk their investment.

Ate de Jong has directed and produced nearly thirty movies. His experience proved invaluable. He also insisted on a totally transparent budget and equity share so everyone would know exactly where they stood in terms of the movie, the cash budget and the division of profit, if any.

LOVE.HONOUR.OBEY			
	HIGH	LOW	MINIMUM
EUROPE			
Benelux	\$20,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
Czech Republic & Slovakia	\$10,000	\$5,000	
German Speaking Europe	\$100,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
Greece	\$10,000	\$2,500	
Former Yugoslavia	\$10,000	\$2,500	
French Speaking Europe	\$75,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
Hungary	\$15,000	\$5,000	
Italy	\$30,000	\$10,000	
Poland	\$20,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
Portugal	\$15,000	\$5,000	
Romania	\$10,000	\$2,000	
Russia	\$45,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
Scandinavia	\$40,000	\$5,000	\$7,500
Spain	\$30,000	\$10,000	
Turkey	\$20,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
United Kingdom	\$100,000	\$25,000	\$25,000
Pan Eastern Europe Pay TV	\$15,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA			
Israel	\$10,000	\$2,500	\$2,500
Middle East (CENSORSHIP ISSUES)	\$15,000	\$5,000	
South Africa	\$10,000	\$5,000	
Pan Africa Pay TV	\$5,000	\$1,500	\$1,500
ASIA			
China (CENSORSHIP ISSUES)	\$20,000	\$5,000	
Hong Kong	\$10,000	\$5,000	
India	\$30,000	\$5,000	
Indonesia	\$10,000	\$2,500	
Japan	\$75,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
Malaysia	\$10,000	\$2,500	
Philippines	\$10,000	\$5,000	
Singapore	\$10,000	\$5,000	
South Korea	\$30,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
Taiwan	\$10,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
Thailand	\$15,000	\$2,500	\$2,500
AMERICAS			
North America	\$250,000	\$30,000	\$30,000
Brazil	\$30,000	\$7,500	\$7,500
Latin America	\$50,000	\$15,000	\$15,000
ANCILLARY			
Airlines (CENSORSHIP ISSUES)	\$60,000	\$10,000	
TOTAL	\$1,225,000	\$291,000	\$201,500
After 20% Sales Commission	\$980,000	\$232,800	\$161,200
in Euros	€ 753,846.15	€ 179,076.92	€ 124,000.00
in Sterling	£ 620,253.16	£ 147,341.77	£ 102,025.32

figure 24.1
Sales estimate

LOVE.HONOUR.OBEY.

FILM TITLE

LOVE.HONOUR.OBEY.

Director: Ate de Jong

Writer: Mark Rogers

Producer: Elisar Cabrera

	Item	Qt.	Rate	Estimated Amount	Actual Amount
1	STORY & SCRIPT				
	STORY RIGHTS	1	0	0	
	WRITER AND SCREENPLAY	1	10000	10000	
	STORYBOARD			0	
	OTHER			0	
2	PRODUCER & DIRECTOR				
	PRODUCER	1	10000	10000	
	DIRECTOR	1	15000	15000	
	EXEC PRODUCER	1	10000	10000	
3	CAST				
	ALISON	1	10000	10000	
	AARON	1	10000	10000	
	TOM	1	10000	10000	
	DAY PLAYERS	3	350	1050	
	KINBAKU MODEL DOUBLE	5	350	1750	
	EXTRAS			0	
4	CREW				
	PRODUCTION MANAGER	4	750	3000	
	1ST ASSISTANT DIRECTOR	2	750	1500	
	DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY	1	5000	5000	
	CAMERA ASSISTANT/FOCUS PULLER	2	350	700	
	GAFFER	2	500	1000	
	SOUND RECORDIST	2	750	1500	
	SOUND ASSISTANT	2	400	800	
	MAKEUP ARTIST	2	750	1500	
	SFX MAKEUP	1	750	750	
	WARDROBE SUPERVISOR	2	600	1200	
	PRODUCTION DESIGNER	2	1000	2000	
	ART DEPT ASSISTANT	2	350	700	
	CASTING DIRECTOR	1	2000	2000	
	STUNT COORDINATOR	3	500	1500	
	KINBAKU CONSULTANT	1	2000	2000	
	DIT	12	100	1200	
	RUNNER	12	75	900	
	RUNNER	14	75	1050	
	STILLS PHOTOGRAPHER	8	200	1600	
	BEHIND THE SCENES VIDEOGRAPHER	18	100	1800	
5	LOCATION & STUDIO				
	TRANSPORTATION	1	3000	3000	
	CATERING	1	2500	2500	
	LOCATION FEES (HOUSE RENTAL)	3	5000	15000	
	TRAVEL EXPENSES	1	2000	2000	
	LOCATION LICENSES (STREET)	1	100	100	
	SET CONSTRUCTION/SUPPLIES			0	
	OTHER			0	

6	PRODUCTION EQUIPMENT				
	CAMERA PACKAGE	2	1250	2500	
	SOUND PACKAGE	12	200	2400	
	LIGHTING PACKAGE	2	750	1500	
	DOLLY & GRIP PACKAGE	2	750	1500	
	CONSUMABLES	1	500	500	
	OTHER			0	
7	PRODUCTION COSTS				
	DIT			0	
	BATTERIES	1	200	200	
	REDMAG MEDIA DRIVES	1	6000	6000	
	OFFLINE HARD DRIVES	3	100	300	
	MISCELLANEOUS			0	
	WARDROBE PURCHASES	1	2500	2500	
	SET DRESSING PURCHASES & RENTALS	1	3500	3500	
	PROPS PURCHASES & RENTALS	1	1500	1500	
	HAIR	1	500	500	
	MAKE UP & SPFX MU EXPENSES	1	1500	1500	
	CASTING COSTS	1	300	300	
	INSURANCE	1	2500	2500	
	E&O INSURANCE & TITLE REPORT	1	5000	5000	
	LEGAL	1	7000	7000	
8	SOUND & MUSIC				
	COMPOSER	1	5000	5000	
	STOCK MUSIC / SOUND EFFECTS			0	
	STUDIO HIRE			0	
	TRANSFERS			0	
	MIXING			0	
9	EDITING AND FINISHING				
	EDITOR & EDITING PACKAGE	1	15000	15000	
	SOUND EDITOR & SOUND POST PACKAGE	1	7500	7500	
	ONLINE	1	5000	5000	
	POST PRODUCTION SCRIPTS	1	1500	1500	
	TITLES CREDITS	1	800	800	
	TRAILER EDIT & ONLINE	1	5000	5000	
	COLOURIST	1	4000	4000	
	GRADING	1	7500	7500	
	DCDM	1	1500	1500	
	DCPs	3	500	1500	
	HDCAM SR MASTER	3	400	1200	
	DVD/BLURAY AUTHORIZING	1	1300	1300	
10	DISTRIBUTION				
	PREVIEW COPIES DVD/BLURAY	1	250	250	
	PUBLICITY	1	2000	2000	
	SALES & MARKETING MATERIALS	1	1000	1000	
	INDIEGOGO FULFILMENT	1	750	750	
	POSTER/CAST PHOTO SHOOT	1	750	750	
	PRESS KIT	1	120	120	
	FESTIVAL SUBMISSION FEES	1	650	650	
11	CONTINGENCY				
	PERCENTAGE	10.00%		23362	
Total (without Contingency)				233620	
Total (Including Contingency)				256982	0

figure 24.2a
Industry budget

	days	rate	flat	budget	
pre-prod expenses				1500	1500
producer				0	0
director				0	0
line producer				0	0
1st AD	14	50			700
DP				1000	1000
1st Asst Cam	12	50			600
gaffer	12	50			600
sound				750	750
sound asst	12	50			600
art director				750	750
asst art dir/props				600	600
wardrobe				750	750
make up	12	50			600
runner 1	12	50			600
runner 2	12	50			600
catering	12	50			600
soc med producer				500	500
stunts asst				500	500
editor				1000	1000
Alison				1000	1000
Tom				1000	1000
Aaron				1000	1000
dayplayers	3	100			300
cam/light package				2000	2000
sound package				750	750
location adjustments				2500	2500
props				2250	2250
wardrobe				2250	2250
make up disposables				750	750
cam/light disposables				500	500
snd batteries				250	250
hard drive				200	200
art dep disposables				750	750
location fee				1000	1000
transportation				2000	2000
fuel				500	500
catering				2500	2500
editing				1000	1000
composer				0	0
marketing				750	750
phone exp				500	500
					36000
contingency		10%			3600
				<i>GRAND TOTAL</i>	39600
sound post					

figure 24.2b
Low budget

Start Date

Choosing a start date gives a psychologically important milestone for everyone to aim for. It is especially important when pursuing actors so they know when you are shooting so they can plan their diary. Our initial shoot start date was April 27th, but it actually started on May 12th to account for actor availability.

Casting

With basic contract templates drawn up, and confident we could raise the entire budget in a few weeks, we approached most of London's top casting agents and hit our first road block. The casting agents were either overcommitted on fee-paying jobs or had issues with the violence in the script. We decided to do it ourselves.

The first task was to find the female lead. Ate and I used our personal contacts and we reached out to some significant household names. We mostly got radio silence. Concurrently our crowdfunding campaign was launched and out of the blue we got a very compelling tweet from an up-and-coming American actress, Megan Maczko, who ended up being cast.

Again Ate and I reached out to the men we each knew. Another list of very impressive names was thrown into the mix. Megan herself had played female number three against a few very well-known names and she contacted them personally. Each of these 'names' turned the project down in one of two ways: by 'Our client is not available on your dates' or by radio silence.

We then did an open call for actors and received over one thousand headshots in 2 hours. We narrowed that down to a dozen, and Ate and Megan spent the next week auditioning. Just as we were closing in on cast, Megan suggested a classmate from LAMDA, Edward Akrouf, an actor she thought would be right for the part. Ate agreed, and then Edward suggested a colleague from another movie—Matt Barber. Presto, the cast was in place. I then secured Sadie Frost for a cameo role on the very last day of the shoot.

Heads of Department

Simultaneously with casting we put the key heads of department together. The first was the DoP, veteran cameraman (and Rainedance tutor) Zoran Veljkovic. Zoran also has his own equipment. Next was editor Jason Rayment and production designer Lucy Attwood. Each had their own contacts, but when Lara Doree joined as line producer we now could fill in the gaps with her contacts including the excellent sound recordist Nigel Albermaniche and first AD Ester Viana. The total number of bodies was approaching twenty, a terrifying thought when the budget still isn't in place and the location hasn't been agreed.

Pre-production

One can never have enough time for pre-production. This is especially true for films without much money—the option of buying yourself out of trouble

Amsterdam, 6th April 2013

Dear James;

We are delighted you want to read the script of LOVE. HONOR. OBEY.

Elliot probably painted the picture; the script will, most likely, surprise you, perhaps stun you, possibly offend you. It certainly had that effect on us, when we received it from the writer. We also feel it is a story that has a liberating potential, portraying a woman who changes from subordinate victim into feminist heroine, an intruder who lives by moral rules that challenge modern society, and a husband who by far embodies the furor to find meaning in life.

It is very tempting to elaborate on the characters. At the same time it would be wrong to divulge too much before you have read the script. Just be assured that it is certainly my intention to make all three characters into deep and true characters with all the complexity that every human being has.

Tom is the part we would love you to consider. To be honest a 'small' film like "Love. Honor. Obey." won't be a career defining picture for you. You have had that opportunity already (and rightly so!). But this film will be – we hope—a benchmark in pushing the boundaries of morality and get the audiences to take a stand. Our challenge is to make a film with a profound impact.

Raindance stands for making films that hopefully reach a wide audience, and at the same time don't cater to solely entertainment. This script is a far cry from what you normally will read, certainly from Hollywood (I love Hollywood films, no bashing intended). If you are intrigued by the script and the character of Tom, I hope we'll be able to have a tea soon, so you can judge face to face if working together may intrigue and excite you.

Always

Ate de Jong
(director Love, Honor, Obey.)



Ate de Jong
The Netherlands
Dutch de Vries

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figure 24.3
Director's pitch letter
to James Nesbitt

doesn't exist when there is no money. The other element of pre-production is scheduling—making sure all the right people and right stuff end up at the right place on the right day.

Scene breakdown

Our first AD broke down the script and started to work on the schedule. This was actually done before we knew who the cast were, and had to be redone several times as the start date approached. One actor had a pre-existing contract in France meaning we would lose him for an afternoon and two days while he travelled to and from France. Another interesting situation was how other heads of department would say things like 'I have to leave for a job in

DIRTY WEEKEND

STUNTS

- page 3 – hammer collides with back of husband's head (twice)
- page 4 – Wife collides with wall
- page 5 – Wife's feet tangled in rucksack, she falls
- page 6 – Tom being dragged across the floor
- page 39 – Man and Alison collide, fight and struggle
- page 41 – fight to make alison swallow tooth
- page 47 – struggle when Man carves into Tom with scissors
- page 76 – Tom smacks Alison / fight – grabs her by her hair
- page 80 – Alison elbows Tom's stomach / his head smacks into door cupboard

SP FX / SP FX MAKE-UP

- page 3 – blood from husband's head
- page 3 – blood splatters down wife's back
- page 6 – blood all over Tom (continues in subsequent scenes) specifically in his hair
- page 8 – bloodsmears in bath
- page 11 – cut off finger with blood in tissue
- page 16 – steam from shower
- page 18 – bloodstreaks on Alison's back
- page 22 – bloody gums
- page 26 – bloodied tissue
- page 32 – fixings in ceiling rattle
- page 35 – pissing in tub
- page 41 – bloody tooth
- page 48 – scissors dragged up Tom's belly, carves, blood runs
- page 49 – Man's arms and chest splattered with muted blood stains
- page 72 – wadded flannel stuffed in taped mouth of Tom
- page 74 – Tom's hand missing two fingers
- page 83 – word 'cheater' carved in his stomach

KINBAKU / SPECIFIC PROPS

- page 6 – wife bound to chair in kitchen (subsequent scenes)
- page 8 – noose and strapping, elastic mouth strap
- page 11 – sex toys, specific vibrator
- page 22 – Alison handcuffed to headboard
- page 23 – long leather strap fitted with padlocked buckles

SPECIAL PREP

- page 10 – water dripping from tap (also later scenes)
- page 35 – pictures of Alison in variety of sexual outfits
- page 44 – video of role playing Alison as nurse
- page 68 – dancing
- page 82 – sonogram picture on iPhone

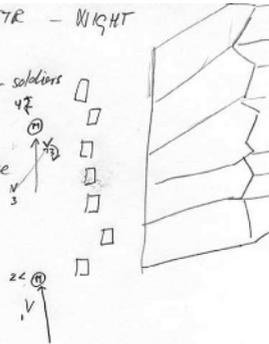
figure 24.4
Stunt breakdown

Italy on June 1st', or 'I can't do days two and three because I have a really well paid job elsewhere.'

Here is where Ate de Jong's vast experience as a producer as well as filmmaker kicked in, and he basically made me confront everyone with the precise dates. We had to work around the actor's French commitment. We then picked a start date of May 12th for 15 shooting days spread over 19 days allowing for the scheduling conflicts and also giving the crew two breaks during the shoot. Art department prepped to start decorating 2 days earlier. We signed a 1-month lease on the house, paid a further 1-month's rental deposit and we were suddenly in pre-production.

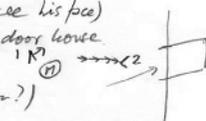
SC 1 EXT DESERTED STR - NIGHT

- 1 FULL SHOT
Street with garbage bins like from soldiers
either TILT DOWN or ZIP DOWN
MAN stops in, close boot.
lace untied, hand in tie, lace
- 2 EXTREME CLOSE
Lace tied very tight.
- 3 Med Close
Shoulder man (no face)
TRACK BEHIND MAN
CAM crosses BACK of MAN
passes rucksack.
man stops, hand up with port-it note
(zipper to house)
- 4 EXTREME CLOSE
port-it note, fingers man, key
(zip up, depended on sh 3)



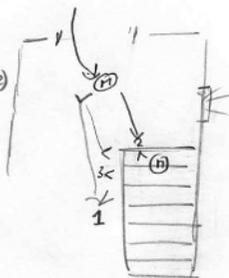
SC 2 EXT NON DESCRIPT HOUSE - NIGHT

- 1 HIGH DOWN FULL
CAM looks down on MAN (don't see his face)
TILT UP - smash zoom in to front door house
- 2 MEDIUM
CAM (hh?) moves fast (stop motion?)
to door, close to key hole
last moment hand with key in, key in lock
- 3 EXTREME CLOSE
inside of lock, twists, tumbler



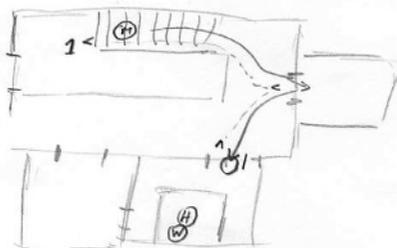
SC 3 INT HALLWAY - NIGHT

- 1 Close
pair ladies shoes + pair
men shoes on steps (bars staircase)
via mirror door opens
CAM PAN + move to feet/shoes
man entering,
rucksack sinks in frame
CAM follow rucksack to
stairs, put down.
hand picks up lady shoe.
- 2 EXTREME CLOSE UP
ladies shoe and nose man,
shoe exchanged for male shoe
- 3 EXTREME CLOSE
zipper rucksack opens.
(possibly CAM moves up/down with zipper.)
Claw hammer out, moves through frame
(doesn't have to be completely clear
what it is)



SC 4 INT LANDING - NIGHT

1 MED CLOSE
 CAT behind feet (no more shoes)
 feet go upstairs, CAT FOLLOWS
 on landing CAT follows hand
 beside body with CLAW HAMMER
 (poor man's steadicum shot)
 (sounds of far away love making
 slowly increases when we get closer)
 to door, opens CAT peels inside
 child's room
 PAN back CAT pov to bedroom door
 CAT stays (low) in door →
 Full bedroom HUSBAND feels WIFE
 hand with hammer comes in foreground.
 (cover) MAN rushes in hits husband.

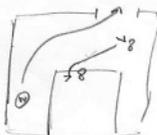


SC 5 INT MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

1 EXTREME CLOSE
 foreground top increase sticks glowing
 background (out of focus) face WIFE
 head in pillows
 moaning → air blowing to increase
 (or flame of candle)
 man attacks.



2/3 CLOSE UP SERIES FACE WIFE
 disjointed JUMP CUTS face wife
 during attack.
 CAT always remains close with face
 wife, even out of focus, sometimes
 loses her, during attack.



CAT never focuses on attack
 we see it happening part face wife
 in series
 - face man falls beside face wife
 - wife falls on floor
 - wife creeps back words on floor
 (blood splatters on her/gown)
 - wife screams
 - wife edge bed tries to pull legs man
 - wife grabs lamp, raises lamp, bears
 man (don't) runs away
 (all focused on her face)
 - wife running towards door
 CAT pans with her (slowly?)

Sc 6/7 INT LANDING - NIGHT

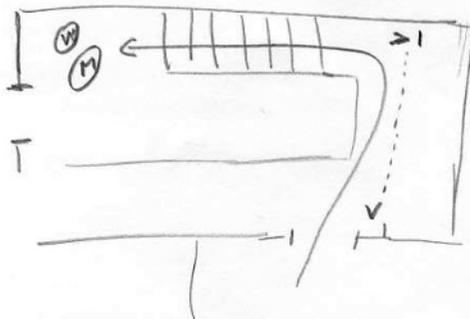
1 wide (fish eye?)(slomo?)

landing wife runs in
towards stairs, seconds later
followed by man chasing
both go down

SLOW TRACK to top stairs
looking down.

bottom MAN karate kicks
her -

She can't escape



Sc 8 EXT HOUSE NIGHT

1 Full Shot

front house with door.

PAN to reveal garbage bin →

row garbage bins in moonlight



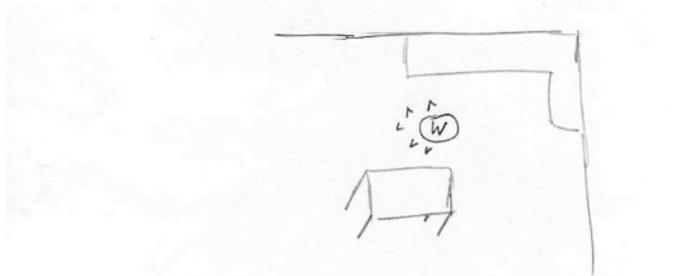
Sc 9 INT KITCHEN - NIGHT

1/8 series of EXTR CLOSE UPS.

concentrating on rope-knots

PAN passed from , beauty, poetic, a fuse
the flesh under the rope secondary to the material.

9 last close up /rope/mouth tilt to eyes which
look upwards, despair.

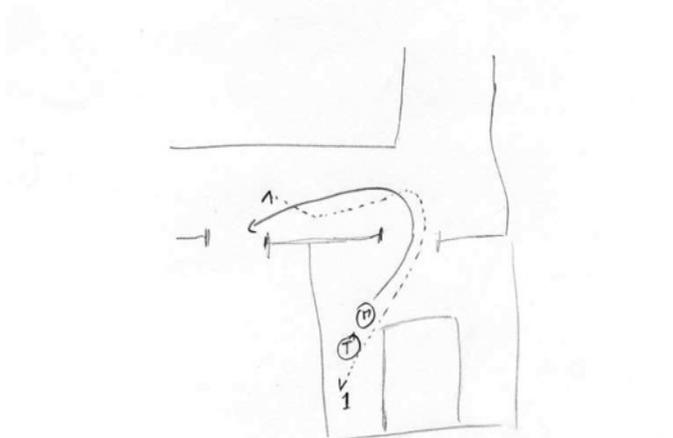


Sc 10/11 INT BEDROOM - NIGHT → LANDING

1 Med Close

Tom's face upside down, dragged across
floor. CAM FOLLOWS

we barely see MAN pulling, at best a glimpse
focus on head Tom,
pulling creates blood streak on carpet because
of head wound.



12 INT BATHROOM - NIGHT

1 Medium

man drops Tom next to bath
(we don't see face man)

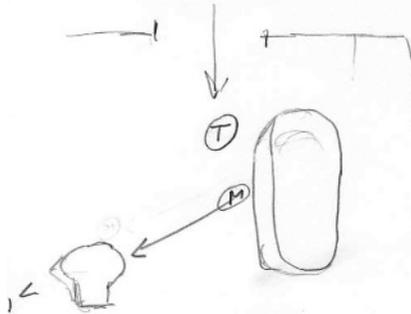
foreground rucksack on toilet

legs Tom dumped, man towards rucksack

CAN focusses on rucksack

hands man get rope out ending in NOOSE

fingers strafe noose/rope



SC 13 INT KITCHEN - NIGHT

1 Close Alison

desperate look ZIPPAN to phone mounted on wall

2 Close Alison, moan, look

turns to look at her pole ZIPPAN to kitchen knives

3 Med Close

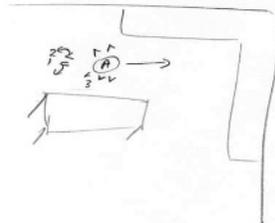
feet, start to "hop" on floor to move chair

4/10 series of shots

Chair feet, hopping (for intercut with SC14)

11 Close

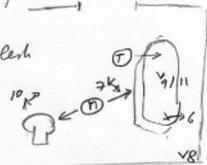
chair tilts over, Alison falls on floor
(don't show fall, only tipping)



SC 14 INT BATHROOM - NIGHT

1/5 EXTRE CLOSE

- rope tightened into flesh
- strand hands
- strand feet
- across chest



6 Med Close

PAN with (bound) feet put on bathtub edge

7 Med Close

Tom lifted under his armpits (don't see face
n/a)
both on edge tub, rolled over.

8 High Down Full

Tim tumbles in tub (man on his back)

9 Close Tim

gets nose strand neck, slip in face
rope in his mouth

10 Med Close

hand take out wire cutter & lighter
PAN/MOVE IN with these to face Tom

11 Close face Tom

lighter on, hand up / front frame
cutter strand fingers
(while cutting finger squish move to mouth Tom
(don't lose sound)
(or cut back to High Angle, include scream)

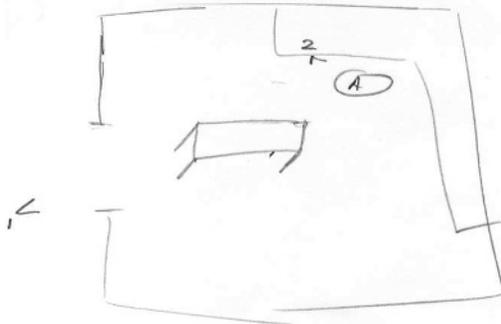
SC 15 INT KITCHEN NIGHT

1 Low wide angle

kitchen background Alison on floor, tied
to chair

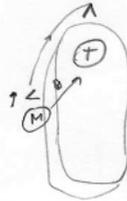
2 Close

face Alison on floor, crying
(TURN CAM?)



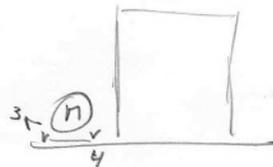
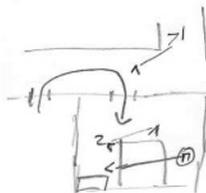
SC 16 INT BATHROOM - NIGHT

- 1 Close
Bloody tissue foreground
face from background
hand man shakes chin from
CAM moves up above taps looking down
water switched on.



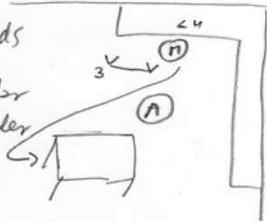
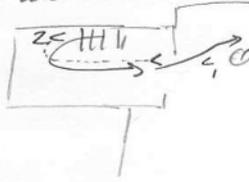
SC 17 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

- 1 Medium.
Man walks from bathroom to bedroom.
He is completely silhouetted, we can't see
his face in detail
PAN with him going in bedroom.
He switches on light
goes in, starts search.
- 2 Med Close
phone thrown next to bed on bed
TILT UP man searching, walks over bed
to drawer, opens it.
- 3 Close
Inside drawer, sex toys,
lifts vibrator, TILT UP with it.
- 4 EXTR CLOSUP nose smelling (no eyes)
then licking.
(if this shot reveals eyes, then shot from
back of head, moving passed his head)



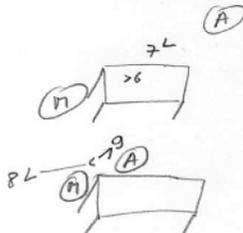
Sc 18 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

- 1 Close Alison
face on the floor looks up towards man
plate with finger, put in front like cat bowl.
- 2 Medium
feet coming down steps
CAM follows feet to kitchen
he just steps over her
lets her lay on the floor.
- 3 Low up head close
man's back searching cupboards
(no face)
PAN with him passed calendar
focus on "Emily" on calendar
MOVE IN if needed.
- 4 Close kettle 5<
lifted, water in cup
PAN with kettle.
- 5 Full Shot.
man sits at table, back to us
woman still on floor.
he picks her chair/bar up.
- 6 Close
him stirring tea slowly
- 7 Med Close
man's pov, Alison over
her body up & down



Sc 18 Cont.

8. O.S. from man to Alison
forches her
knife to close Alison.
- 9 Close man [First time
his face]
"you belong to me now"



SC 19 INT BATHROOM - NIGHT

- 1 High Down Close
top foreground under it Tom
- 2 low up EXTR close
drop developing, drop
- 3 EXTR close
forehead Tom hit by drop



figure 24.5
Director's shot list

Rehearsals

Ate de Jong has earned his cult director status for two reasons: his films, though targeted at a niche audience, always cross over to a wide audience, and he is renowned as an actor's director. We arranged for the actors to rehearse for 2 weeks: the first week at our London studio, and the second on location. That is if we could find a suitable one.

Nudity

Several scenes required both male and female nudity and there was one scene with simulated sex. The director storyboarded the scenes and then discussed them with the actors and their agents and got the actors to agree to the nude scenes. This meant that during the edit the actors would be shown their scenes and would be able to veto anything that went beyond the agreed storyboards.

Stunts and SFX

A couple of scenes involving amputations, and several brawls including a pick-axe in the chest, required a stunt coordinator. We were able to attract one of Britain's top special effects artists who made us fake fingers and a chest plate with an embedded axe and blood.

Another unique and iconic visual element was the use of Kinbaku—an erotic performance art from Japan. Writer Mark Rogers had added this element and was able to put the production team in touch with a top European expert who was available between travels to attend the set.

The Location

Line producer Lara Doree is a great hustler. Not only did she chase all the actor's agents and nail down their contracts, she organized a series of excursions with the director and DoP to various potential locations. We needed a house with a decent sized bathroom for a month: a week of prep, two weeks shoot and a week cleanup.

Lara finally found a house by contacting an estate agency on the outskirts of town, and there we found our home-away-from-home that became our base for the movie for a month. The house was perhaps slightly on the small side, but it was cheap. The downside was it was totally empty meaning that Production Design/Art Department had a much bigger job, and it was 3 miles from the train station, which added money to the budget for transportation.

Insurance

We secured public liability and equipment insurance for the production period for approximately £1,000 (\$1,500).

The Shoot

The production process was quite simple. Everyone signed on for a 12-hour day. Due to the suburban location, we worked from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. The cast and crew had between 14- and 16-hour days including the commute time. We were worried about the security in the house given all the equipment so our production designer, the petite Lucy Attwood, volunteered to live in the house for the duration.

Our line producer and director agreed which rooms were set rooms, which area was makeup/wardrobe and which was catering, green room. Fortunately there was a large clean garden shed at the back of the garden that could serve as catering area.

Because a third of the film takes place in the upstairs bathroom, DoP Zoran shot from outside of the bathroom. To do that we had to buy a handyman scaffold that was sturdy enough to support Zoran, his camera and some lights. We also had to rent theatre blacks to cover the scaffold and allow Zoran to control the lighting.

Our biggest challenges during the shoot were to get enough transport (the house was quite remote).

Sound Recording

We lucked out with veteran sound recordist Nigel Albermaniche. He was able to save us a lot of time by making sure that the sound was well recorded and logged. This is such an important time saver in post-production.

NIGEL ALBERMANICHE - Production Sound Mixer

Email: nigel@nigelalbermaniche.co.uk Mobile: 0788 097 6814

PRODUCTION CO: PRODUCTION TITLE: DATE: SHOOT DAY:
RAW TALENT PRODUCTIONS **LOVE.HONOR.OBEY** **30/05/2013** **DAY 15**
 RECORDER MAKE & MODEL: RECORDING FORMAT: AUDIO TIMECODE FPS: REFERENCE TONE:
TASCAM HS-P82 **24 BIT 48 KHz** **25** **-9DB**
 CAMERA FORMAT: CAMERA SPEEDS FPS:
ARRI ALEXA **25**

ADDITIONAL TRANSFER INSTRUCTIONS:
Remember mute other character Mics when not used!

SOUND REPORT

SCENE	SLATE	TAKE	FOOTAGE FILENAME	TRACK COUNT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	NOTES
69-72	304	1	304-001	4	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Sarah COS11					Use BOOM FOR SARAH MAINLY
69-72	304	2	304-002	4	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Sarah COS11					Use BOOM FOR SARAH MAINLY
69-72	304	3	304-003	4	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Sarah COS11					Use BOOM FOR SARAH MAINLY
69-72	304	4	304-004	4	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Sarah COS11					Use BOOM FOR SARAH MAINLY
69-72	304	1	304-005	4	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Sarah COS11					Use
69-72	305	1	305-001	4	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Sarah COS11					Use
69-72	305	2	305-002	4	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Sarah COS11					Use
69-72	305	3	305-003	4	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Sarah COS11					Use
69-72	305	4	305-004	4	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Sarah COS11					Use
69-72	306	1	306-001	4	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Sarah COS11					Use
69-72	306	2	306-002	4	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Sarah COS11					Use
69-72	307	1	307-001	4	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Sarah COS11					Use
69-72	307	2	307-002	4	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Sarah COS11					Use
69-72	307	3	307-003	4	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Sarah COS11					Use
69-72	308	1	308-001	4	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Sarah COS11					Use
69-72	308	2	308-002	4	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Sarah COS11					Use
69-72	309	1	309-001	5	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Tom COS11	Sarah COS11				Use
69-72	309	2	286-004	5	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Tom COS11	Sarah COS11				Use
69-72	310	1	310-001	5	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Tom COS11	Sarah COS11				Use
69-72	311	1	311-001	5	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Tom COS11	Sarah COS11				Use
69-72	311	2	311-002	5	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Tom COS11	Sarah COS11				Use
69-72	311	3	311-003	5	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Tom COS11	Sarah COS11				Use
69-72	311	4	311-004	5	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Tom COS11	Sarah COS11				Use
69-72	312	1	312-001	5	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Tom COS11	Sarah COS11				Use
69-72	313	1	313-001	5	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Tom COS11	Sarah COS11				Use
69-72	313	2	313-002	5	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Tom COS11	Sarah COS11				Use
69-72	313	3	313-003	5	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Tom COS11	Sarah COS11				Use
69-72	314	1	314-001	5	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Tom COS11	Sarah COS11				Use
69-72	315	1	315-001	5	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Tom COS11	Sarah COS11				Use
69-72	315	2	315-002	5	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Tom COS11	Sarah COS11				Use

69-72	316	1	316-001	5	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Tom COS11	Sarah COS11				Use
69-72	316	2	316-002	5	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Tom COS11	Sarah COS11				Use
69-72	317	1	317-001	5	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Tom COS11	Sarah COS11				Use
69-72	317	2	317-002	5	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Tom COS11	Sarah COS11				GO TO SEPARATE TRACKS TO GET ALL SOUNDS
69-72	318	1	318-001	5	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Tom COS11	Sarah COS11				Use
69-72	318	2	318-002	5	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Tom COS11	Sarah COS11				Use
69-72	319	1	319-001	5	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Tom COS11	Sarah COS11				Use
69-72	320	1	320-001	5	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Tom COS11	Sarah COS11				GO TO SEPARATE TRACKS TO GET ALL SOUNDS AS WE LOST TOM RADIO
69-72	321	1	321-001	5	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Tom COS11	Sarah COS11				Use
69-72	321	2	321-002	5	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Tom COS11	Sarah COS11				Use
69-72	321	3	321-003	5	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Tom COS11	Sarah COS11				Use
69-72	322	1	322-001	4	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Sarah COS11					Use
69-72	322	2	322-002	4	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Sarah COS11					Use
69-72	323	1	323-001	4	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Sarah COS11					Use
69-72	323	2	323-002	4	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Sarah COS11					Use
69-72	324	1	324-001	4	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Sarah COS11					Use
69-72	324	2	324-002	4	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Sarah COS11					Use
69-72	324	3	324-003	4	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Sarah COS11					Use
69-72	324	4	324-004	4	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Sarah COS11					Use
69-72	324	5	324-005	4	Boom 416	Boom 416	Alison COS11	Sarah COS11					Use, GET TO FINAL TRACKS TO GET PAST RADIO POP

figure 24.6
Sound report

DIT

Our DIT saved all the rushes onto three different hard drives which left the set separately for separate locations.

The Post-production

With the editor just outside London and the director in Amsterdam, post-production became a logistical challenge. Ate watched rushes and decided on best shots and emailed his list of shots to Jason Rayment, our editor. Jason and Ate then would spend several hours on Skype per day.

FILM - LOVE-HONOUR OF					AURORA DIGITAL POST - LOG REPORT		Director Notes
Scene	Slate	take	angle	Description			
Scene 4	Slate 3	Take 6	LA	Cutting room floor			
Scene 19	Slate 24	Take 2	CU	Cutting Room Floor			
Scene 67	Slate 182	Take 1	CRF	Cutting Room Floor			
Scene 67	Slate 182	VFX?	CRF	Cutting Room Floor VFX?			
Scene 66	CRF	CRF		Cutting Room Floor			
Scene 65	CRF	CRF		Cutting Room Floor			
Scene 27	Slate 255	CRF	CRF	Cutting Room Floor			
Scene 59	Slate 225	CRF	(A) CU PROFILE	Alison turns to look at the intruder			
Scene 50	Slate 180	CRF	CRF	Cutting Room Floor			
Scene 58	Slate 180	CRF	CRF	Cutting Room Floor			
Scene 31	Slate 163	CRF	CRF	Cutting Room Floor			
Scene 31	Slate 162	CRF	CRF	Cutting Room Floor			
Scene 39	Slate 135	CRF	(A) OS (T)	Cutting Room Floor			
Scene 39	CRF	CRF	CRF	Cutting Room Floor			
Scene 34	Slate 108	CRF	CRF	Cutting Room Floor			
Scene 1	Slate 87	CRF	CRF	Cutting Room Floor			
Scene 49	Slate 57	CRF	CRF	Cutting Room Floor			
Scene 48	Slate 57	CRF	CRF	Cutting Room Floor			
Scene 10	Slate 9	CRF	HA	Cutting Room Floor			
Scene 5	Slate 3	CRF	OS LA	Cutting Room Floor			
Scene 4	CRF	Take	LA	Cutting Room Floor			
Scene 45	Slate 102	Take 1	CRF	Cutting Room Floor			
Scene 17	Slate 71	Take 1	CRF	Cutting Room Floor			
Scene 17	Slate 70	Take 2	CRF	Cutting Room Floor			
Scene 14	Slate 17	Take 1	CRF	Cutting Room Floor			
Scene 31	Slate 161	Take 3	CRF	Cutting Room Floor			
Scene 27	Slate 131	Take 1 AFS	CRF	Alison walks outside the bathroom & intruder comes out with Tom's severed ring finger			
Scene 30	Slate 52	Take 3	CRF	Cutting Room Floor			
Scene 66 B	Slate 274	Take 2	MS TRACK	Cutting Room Floor			
Scene 1	Slate 231	Take 1	DOLLY LALS	Intruder walks down the road to a house			
Scene 1	Slate 231	Take 2	DOLLY LALS	Intruder walks down the road to a house			
Scene 1	Slate 231	Take 3	DOLLY LALS	Intruder walks down the road to a house			
Scene 1	Slate 231	Take 4	DOLLY LALS	Intruder walks down the road to a house			
Scene 1	Slate 231	Take 1	LA MW	Intruder stops outside a house and checks the address & walks to the side door			
Scene 1	Slate 231	Take 2	LA MW	Intruder stops outside a house and checks the address & walks to the side door			
Scene 1	Slate 231	Take 3	LA MW	Intruder stops outside a house and checks the address & walks to the side door			
Scene 1	Slate 304	Take 1	ECU	Intruder unlocks the door			
Scene 1	Slate 304	Take 2	ECU	Intruder unlocks the door			
Scene 1	Slate 304	Take 3	ECU	Intruder unlocks the door			
Scene 1	Slate 304	Take 4	ECU	Intruder unlocks the door			
Scene 1	Slate 304	Take 5	ECU	Intruder unlocks the door			

3 full we see car

229 10-2-0-4

Intruder walks down the road to a house = 229

231
Aurora staff

232-1-2-2-1-NOTE

far strong best

↳ Also per sc 68

Scene	Slate	take	angle	Description	Director Notes
Scene 2	Slate 232	Take 1	CU	Intruder looks at the address on the key stub	
Scene 2	Slate 233	Take 1	OS MS	Intruder walks to the side door	
Scene 2	Slate 234	Take 2	OS MS	Intruder walks to the side door	2nd choice
Scene 2	Slate 234	Take 3	OS MS	Intruder walks to the side door	Seems best
Scene 2	Slate 234	Take 4	OS MS	Intruder walks to the side door	
Scene 2	Slate 234	Take 5	OS MS	Intruder walks to the side door	
Scene 2	Slate 234	Take 6	OS MS	Intruder walks to the side door	
Scene 2	Slate 234	Take 7	OS MS	Intruder walks to the side door	
Scene 3	Slate 38	Take 1	LA PAN	Intruder enters the house and picks up a shoe on the stairs	Seems most organic
Scene 3	Slate 38	Take 2	LA PAN	Intruder enters the house and picks up a shoe on the stairs	
Scene 3	Slate 38	Take 3	LA PAN	Intruder enters the house and picks up a shoe on the stairs	
Scene 3	Slate 38	Take 4	LA PAN	Intruder enters the house and picks up a shoe on the stairs	
Scene 3	Slate 38	Take 5	LA ECU	Intruder picks up the shoe and smells it	
Scene 3	Slate 38	Take 6	LA ECU	Intruder picks up the shoe and smells it	
Scene 3	Slate 38	Take 7	LA ECU	Intruder picks up the shoe and smells it	
Scene 3	Slate 39	Take 1	LA ECU	Intruder picks up the shoe and smells it	
Scene 3	Slate 39	Take 2	LA ECU	Intruder picks up the shoe and smells it	
Scene 3	Slate 39	Take 3	LA ECU	Intruder picks up the shoe and smells it	
Scene 3	Slate 39	Take 4	LA ECU	Intruder picks up the shoe and smells it	
Scene 3	Slate 39	Take 5	LA ECU	Intruder picks up the shoe and smells it	
Scene 3	Slate 39	Take 6	LA ECU	Intruder picks up the shoe and smells it	
Scene 3	Slate 39	Take 7	LA ECU	Intruder picks up the shoe and smells it	2nd choice
Scene 4	Slate 1	Take 1	LA	Intruder walks up the stairs & nudges bathroom door as he passes	
Scene 4	Slate 1	Take 2	LA	Intruder walks up the stairs & nudges bathroom door as he passes	
Scene 4	Slate 1	Take 3	LA	Intruder walks up the stairs & nudges bathroom door as he passes	
Scene 4	Slate 1	Take 4	LA	Intruder walks up the stairs & nudges bathroom door as he passes	
Scene 4	Slate 1	Take 5	LA	Intruder walks up the stairs & nudges bathroom door as he passes	
Scene 4	Slate 1	Take 6	LA	Intruder takes Gonilla First out of his bag	NO PAN still take 1
Scene 4	Slate 1	Take 7	LA	Intruder takes Gonilla First out of his bag	1st choice
Scene 4	Slate 3	Take 1	LA	Intruder takes Gonilla First out of his bag	
Scene 4	Slate 3	Take 2	LA	Intruder takes Gonilla First out of his bag	
Scene 4	Slate 3	Take 3	LA	Intruder takes Gonilla First out of his bag	
Scene 4	Slate 3	Take 4	LA (tilt up)	Intruder takes Gonilla First out of his bag	
Scene 4	Slate 3	Take 5	LA (tilt up)	Intruder takes Gonilla First out of his bag	
Scene 4	Slate 3	Take 6	LA (tilt up)	Intruder takes Gonilla First out of his bag	
Scene 4	Slate 3	Take 7	LA (tilt up)	Intruder takes Gonilla First out of his bag	
Scene 5	Slate 1	Take 1	LA	Intruder enters child's bedroom	
Scene 5	Slate 6	Take 1	LA PAN > OS	Intruder enters the bedroom & hits Tom over the head	miss took OS/2 - ? should be x4
Scene 5	Slate 6	Take 2	LA PAN > OS	Intruder enters the bedroom & hits Tom over the head	but perhaps part to begin pushing
Scene 5	Slate 7	Take 1	LA MS > OS PAN	Tom is making "love" to Allison & intruder hits Tom over the head Allison escapes	
Scene 5	Slate 7	Take 2	LA MS > OS PAN	Tom is making "love" to Allison & intruder hits Tom over the head Allison escapes	
Scene 5	Slate 7	Take 3	LA MS > OS PAN	Tom is making "love" to Allison & intruder hits Tom over the head Allison escapes	
Scene 5	Slate 7	Take 4	LA MS > OS PAN	Tom is making "love" to Allison & intruder hits Tom over the head Allison escapes	
Scene 5	Slate 7	Take 5	LA MS > OS PAN	Tom is making "love" to Allison & intruder hits Tom over the head Allison escapes	
Scene 5	Slate 8	Take 1	LA > TILT PAN/HU	Allison runs out of the bedroom down the stairs with the intruder in tow	one full with pants

Scene	Slate	take	angle	Description	Director Notes
Scene 14	Slate 21	Take 1	MS > OS	Intruder stands up from sitting on bath and takes his Bot Cutters out of his bag in the hall	
Scene 14	Slate 21	Take 2	MS > OS	Intruder stands up from sitting on bath and takes his Bot Cutters out of his bag in the hall	sitting allows for dime (arse!)
Scene 14	Slate 21	Take 3	MS > OS	Intruder stands up from sitting on bath and takes his Bot Cutters out of his bag in the hall	
Scene 14	Slate 21	Take 4	MS > OS	Intruder stands up from sitting on bath and takes his Bot Cutters out of his bag in the hall	
Scene 15	Slate 37	Take 1	MS CRANE	Tom is being torched in the bathroom as Alison broods in the Mochon hears his screams	move down stairs
Scene 15	Slate 37	Take 2	MS CRANE	Tom is being torched in the bathroom as Alison broods in the Mochon hears his screams	guts twice
Scene 15	Slate 37	Take 3	MS CRANE	Tom is being torched in the bathroom as Alison broods in the Mochon hears his screams	
Scene 19	Slate 22	Take 1	HA CU	As Tom lays in the bath the intruder approaches with Bot Cutters	
Scene 19	Slate 22	Take 2	HA CU	As Tom lays in the bath the intruder approaches with Bot Cutters	good suspense take
Scene 19	Slate 22	Take 3	CU > MCU HA	Finger on edge of the bath, intruder waterproofs Tom	
Scene 19	Slate 22	Take 4	CU > MCU HA	Finger on edge of the bath, intruder waterproofs Tom	
Scene 19	Slate 25	Take 1	LA CU	Water drips from the tap	is close (looks on slate 24!) no finger close Tom looking at drops
Scene 19	Slate 25	Take 2	LA CU	Water drips from the tap	had to be Alison's head!
Scene 19	Slate 25	Take 3	LA CU	Water drips from the tap	
Scene 19	Slate 25	Take 4	LA CU	Water drips from the tap	
Scene 19	Slate 25	Take 5	LA CU	Water drips from the tap	
Scene 19	Slate 25	Take 6	LA CU	Water drips from the tap	best drops
Scene 17	Slate 67	Take 1	MS	Intruder goes through Alison's drawers throwing the items onto the bed	
Scene 17	Slate 67	Take 2	MS	Intruder goes through Alison's drawers throwing the items onto the bed	
Scene 17	Slate 67	Take 3	MS	Intruder goes through Alison's drawers throwing the items onto the bed	quietest (jump out on it?)
Scene 17	Slate 67	Take 4	MS	Intruder goes through Alison's drawers throwing the items onto the bed	start w/ scissors not then on
Scene 17	Slate 68	Take 1	OS HA	Intruder finds a pleasure toy in Alison's side table that he sniffs & licks it	
Scene 17	Slate 68	Take 2	OS HA	Intruder finds a pleasure toy in Alison's side table that he sniffs & licks it	
Scene 17	Slate 68	Take 3	OS HA	Intruder finds a pleasure toy in Alison's side table that he sniffs & licks it	use face/hair
Scene 17	Slate 68	Take 4	OS HA	Intruder finds a pleasure toy in Alison's side table that he sniffs & licks it	face
Scene 17	Slate 70	Take 1	OS MS	Intruder leaves the bathroom and proceeds to the bedroom facing a camera	
Scene 17	Slate 70	Take 2	OS MS	Intruder leaves the bathroom and proceeds to the bedroom facing a camera	
Scene 17	Slate 70	Take 3	OS MS	Intruder leaves the bathroom and proceeds to the bedroom facing a camera	
Scene 18	Slate 41	Take 1	CU TRACK	Alison hangs from the light fixture bound, intruder walks in places Tom's finger on counter	
Scene 18	Slate 41	Take 2	CU TRACK	Alison hangs from the light fixture bound, intruder walks in places Tom's finger on counter	
Scene 18	Slate 41	Take 3	CU TRACK	Alison hangs from the light fixture bound, intruder walks in places Tom's finger on counter	more later = better
Scene 18	Slate 41	Take 4	CU TRACK	Alison hangs from the light fixture bound, intruder walks in places Tom's finger on counter	start saying 'good' and close is good
Scene 18	Slate 43	Take 1	MC OS	A remains bound as intruder enters placing Tom's finger on counter then looks through cupboards	
Scene 18	Slate 43	Take 2	MC OS	A remains bound as intruder enters placing Tom's finger on counter then looks through cupboards	
Scene 18	Slate 43	Take 3	MC OS	Intruder enters placing Tom's finger on counter then looks for what then approaches her	best other reveal much better
Scene 18	Slate 43	Take 4	MC OS	Intruder enters placing Tom's finger on counter then looks for what then approaches her	2nd part best (seen?)
Scene 18	Slate 44	Take 1	CU OS	Intruder approaches Alison bound to the light fixture	
Scene 18	Slate 44	Take 2	CU OS	Intruder approaches Alison bound to the light fixture	
Scene 18	Slate 44	Take 3	CU OS	Intruder approaches Alison bound to the light fixture	
Scene 18	Slate 44	Take 4	CU OS	Intruder approaches Alison bound to the light fixture	
Scene 18	Slate 45	Take 1	CU > OS	Hanging from the light fixture bound & gagged the intruder sits on the counter	
Scene 18	Slate 45	Take 2	CU > OS	Hanging from the light fixture bound & gagged the intruder sits on the counter	
Scene 18	Slate 45	Take 3	CU > OS	Hanging from the light fixture bound & gagged the intruder sits on the counter	
Scene 18	Slate 45	Take 4	CU > OS	Hanging from the light fixture bound & gagged the intruder sits on the counter	
Scene 18	Slate 45	Take 5	CU > OS	Hanging from the light fixture bound & gagged the intruder sits on the counter	
Scene 18	Slate 46	Take 1	CU	Hanging from the light fixture bound & gagged Alison turns towards the intruder	
Scene 18	Slate 46	Take 2	CU	Hanging from the light fixture bound & gagged Alison turns towards the intruder	
Scene 18	Slate 46	Take 3	CU	Hanging from the light fixture bound & gagged the intruder increases Alison	
Scene 18	Slate 47	Take 1	MS	Hanging from the light fixture bound & gagged the intruder increases Alison	
Scene 18	Slate 47	Take 2	MS	Hanging from the light fixture bound & gagged the intruder increases Alison	
Scene 18	Slate 47	Take 3	MS	Hanging from the light fixture bound & gagged the intruder increases Alison	

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Scene	Slate	take	angle	Description	Director Notes
Scene 23	Slate 75	Take 1	CU > PAN RIGHT	Alison & the intruder are asleep in bed together	
Scene 23	Slate 75	Take 2	CU > PAN RIGHT	Alison & the intruder are asleep in bed together	
Scene 23	Slate 75	Take 3	CU > PAN RIGHT	Alison & the intruder are asleep in bed together	best for visible dialogue best visible dialogue first choice
Scene 23	Slate 75	Take 4	CU > PAN UP	Alison & the intruder are asleep in bed together	
Scene 23	Slate 76	Take 1	CU > PAN UP	Alison & the intruder are asleep in bed together	
Scene 23	Slate 76	Take 2	CU > PAN UP	Alison & the intruder are asleep in bed together	
Scene 23	Slate 76	Take 3	CU > PAN UP	Alison & the intruder are asleep in bed together	
Scene 23	Slate 76	Take 4	CU > PAN UP	Alison & the intruder are asleep in bed together	
Scene 23	Slate 77	Take 1	CU PAN UP L EF	Intruder tells Alison to get some sleep as she has a big weekend ahead of her	
Scene 23	Slate 77	Take 2	CU PAN UP L EF	Intruder tells Alison to get some sleep as she has a big weekend ahead of her	
Scene 23	Slate 77	Take 3	CU PAN UP L EF	Intruder tells Alison to get some sleep as she has a big weekend ahead of her	
Scene 23	Slate 77	Take 4	CU PAN UP L EF	Intruder tells Alison to get some sleep as she has a big weekend ahead of her	last one in take
Scene 24	Take 1	Slate 165	MW LA PAN	Tom drops off people and cyclists go past Alison & Tom's house	
Scene 24	Take 2	Slate 165	MW LA PAN	Tom drops off people and cyclists go past Alison & Tom's house	
Scene 24	Take 3	Slate 165	MW LA PAN	Tom drops off people and cyclists go past Alison & Tom's house	
Scene 25	Slate 132	Take 1	(I) OS CU	Intruder clears his teeth & spits over Tom in the bath	
Scene 26	Slate 122	Take 1	(I) PAN (A)	Intruder pulls the duvet from the bed where Alison is tied up	
Scene 26	Slate 122	Take 2	(I) PAN (A)	Intruder pulls the duvet from the bed where Alison is tied up	
Scene 26	Slate 122	Take 3	(I) PAN (A)	Intruder pulls the duvet from the bed where Alison is tied up	(watch chin A)
Scene 26	Slate 123	Take 1	(I) PAN (A)	Intruder pulls the duvet from the bed where Alison is tied up	
Scene 26	Slate 123	Take 2	(I) OS M CU (A)	Intruder puts rope around Alison's ankle on the bed	
Scene 26	Slate 123	Take 3	(I) OS M CU (A)	Intruder puts rope around Alison's ankle on the bed	
Scene 26	Slate 123	Take 4	(I) OS M CU (A)	Intruder puts rope around Alison's ankle on the bed	
Scene 26	Slate 124	Take 1	(I) M CU	Intruder puts rope around Alison's ankle on the bed	
Scene 26	Slate 124	Take 2	(I) M CU	Intruder puts rope around Alison's ankle on the bed	
Scene 26	Slate 124	Take 3	(I) M CU	Intruder puts rope around Alison's ankle on the bed	
Scene 26	Slate 124	Take 4	(I) M CU	Intruder puts rope around Alison's ankle on the bed	
Scene 26	Slate 125	Take 1	MCU	Intruder puts rope around Alison's ankle on the bed & tries to seduce her	
Scene 26	Slate 125	Take 2	MCU	Intruder puts rope around Alison's ankle on the bed & tries to seduce her	
Scene 26	Slate 125	Take 3	MCU	Intruder puts rope around Alison's ankle on the bed & tries to seduce her	
Scene 26	Slate 125	Take 4	MCU	Intruder puts rope around Alison's ankle on the bed & tries to seduce her	
Scene 26	Slate 127	Take 1	(I) OS M CU (A)	Alison puts a night dress on concealing a tit, the intruder snaps the tie on A then she lies on him	
Scene 26	Slate 127	Take 2	(I) OS M CU (A)	Alison puts a night dress on concealing a tit, the intruder snaps the tie on A then she lies on him	short
Scene 26	Slate 127	Take 3	(I) OS M CU (A)	Alison puts a night dress on concealing a tit, the intruder snaps the tie on A then she lies on him	Alison's tie great - try to get best w/ out
Scene 26	Slate 127	Take 4	(I) OS M CU (A)	Alison puts a night dress on concealing a tit, the intruder snaps the tie on A then she lies on him	
Scene 26	Slate 127	Take 5	(I) OS M CU (A)	Alison puts a night dress on concealing a tit, the intruder snaps the tie on A then she lies on him	
Scene 26	Slate 127	Take 6	(I) OS M CU (A)	Alison puts a night dress on concealing a tit, the intruder snaps the tie on A then she lies on him	
Scene 26	Slate 128	Take 1	(I) OS CU (A)	Alison puts a night dress on concealing a tit, the intruder snaps the tie on A then she lies on him	
Scene 26	Slate 128	Take 2	(I) OS CU (A)	Alison puts a night dress on concealing a tit, the intruder snaps the tie on A then she lies on him	
Scene 26	Slate 128	Take 3	(I) OS CU (A)	Alison puts a night dress on concealing a tit, the intruder snaps the tie on A then she lies on him	
Scene 26	Slate 128	Take 4	(I) OS CU (A)	Alison puts a night dress on concealing a tit, the intruder snaps the tie on A then she lies on him	
Scene 26	Slate 128	Take 5	(I) OS CU (A)	Alison puts a night dress on concealing a tit, the intruder snaps the tie on A then she lies on him	
Scene 26	Slate 128	Take 6	(I) OS CU (A)	Alison puts a night dress on concealing a tit, the intruder snaps the tie on A then she lies on him	
Scene 26	Slate 129	Take 1	(A) OS CU (I)	The intruder takes a tie from A & snaps it on her then she lies on him they both leave the bedroom	
Scene 26	Slate 129	Take 2	(A) OS CU (I)	The intruder takes a tie from A & snaps it on her then she lies on him they both leave the bedroom	
Scene 26	Slate 129	Take 3	(A) OS CU (I)	The intruder takes a tie from A & snaps it on her then she lies on him they both leave the bedroom	
Scene 26	Slate 129	Take 4	(A) OS CU (I)	The intruder takes a tie from A & snaps it on her then she lies on him they both leave the bedroom	
Scene 26	Slate 129	Take 5	(A) OS CU (I)	The intruder takes a tie from A & snaps it on her then she lies on him they both leave the bedroom	
Scene 27	Slate 130	Take 1	(A) LA PAN	A & the intruder leaves the bedroom into the bathroom closing the door behind Alison is left outside	
Scene 27	Slate 130	Take 2	(A) LA PAN	A & the intruder leaves the bedroom into the bathroom closing the door behind Alison is left outside	best
Scene 27	Slate 130	Take 3	(A) LA PAN	A & the intruder leaves the bedroom into the bathroom closing the door behind Alison is left outside	
Scene 27	Slate 130	Take 4	(A) LA PAN	A & the intruder leaves the bedroom into the bathroom closing the door behind Alison is left outside	
Scene 27	Slate 131	Take 1	MCU	Alison walks outside the bathroom & intruder comes out with Tom's severed ring finger	best
Scene 27	Slate 131	Take 2	MCU	Alison walks outside the bathroom & intruder comes out with Tom's severed ring finger	
Scene 27	Slate 131	Take 3	MCU	Alison walks outside the bathroom & intruder comes out with Tom's severed ring finger	
Scene 27	Slate 131	Take 4	MCU	Alison walks outside the bathroom & intruder comes out with Tom's severed ring finger	
Scene 27	Slate 131	Take 5	MCU	Alison walks outside the bathroom & intruder comes out with Tom's severed ring finger	2nd choice

Close up on Alison's face

take start 3 and (correct memory)

short

Alison's tie great - try to get best w/ out
small piece of fabric the second best
Close up on Alison's face
Start of take by Tom's disapproval ending

best

best

2nd choice

Scene	Slate	take	angle	Description	Director Notes
Scene 28	Slate 192	Take 1	LA CU ACTION	Pepper is ground into the saucepan	let someone else and
Scene 28	Slate 192	Take 1	LA CU ACTION	Pepper is ground into the saucepan	
Scene 28	Slate 193	Take 1	LA CU ACTION	Intruder holds Alison closely as he scrapes salmon into the pan	
Scene 28	Slate 193	Take 2	LA CU ACTION	Intruder holds Alison closely as he scrapes salmon into the pan	
Scene 28	Slate 193	Take 3	LA CU ACTION	Intruder holds Alison closely as he scrapes salmon into the pan	2nd choice
Scene 28	Slate 194	Take 1	LA CU ACTION	Intruder cracks the egg mixture	
Scene 28	Slate 195	Take 2	LA CU ACTION	Alison is whisking the mixture	
Scene 28	Slate 196	Take 1	CU PROFILE	Intruder holds Alison closely as he forces her to eat salmon	perhaps put end without try
Scene 28	Slate 196	Take 2	CU PROFILE	Intruder holds Alison closely as he forces her to eat salmon	
Scene 28	Slate 197	Take 1	LA CU ACTION	Intruder watches closely as Alison prepares the omelette mixture	
Scene 28	Slate 197	Take 2	LA CU ACTION	Alison breaks the eggs into the bowl to make the omelette	
Scene 28	Slate 198	Take 1	LA CU ACTION	The gas stove is turned on	2 hands
Scene 28	Slate 198	Take 2	LA CU ACTION	The gas stove is turned on	
Scene 28	Slate 199	Take 3	CU ACTION	The gas stove is turned on	
Scene 28	Slate 199	Take 4	CU ACTION	The gas stove is turned on	
Scene 28	Slate 200	Take 1	CU ACTION	The gas stove is lit for cooking the omelette	best
Scene 28	Slate 201	Take 1	(I) ECU PAN	Butter is melted in the saucepan in preparation for the omelette mixture	moving butter better
Scene 28	Slate 201	Take 2	(I) ECU PAN	Butter is melted in the saucepan in preparation for the omelette mixture	good
Scene 28	Slate 202	Take 3	(I) ECU PAN	Egg mixture is poured into the saucepan for the omelette	maybe put 1 take
Scene 28	Slate 203	Take 1	(A) ECU	Intruder forces Alison to lick his fingers	do we understand that we not play?
Scene 28	Slate 203	Take 3	(A) ECU	Intruder forces Alison to lick his fingers	
Scene 28	Slate 203	Take 4	(A) ECU	Intruder forces Alison to lick his fingers	
Scene 28	Slate 204	Take 1	(I) ECU PAN	I sense cooking isn't your forte	
Scene 28	Slate 204	Take 2	(I) ECU PAN	I sense cooking isn't your forte	
Scene 28	Slate 204	Take 3	(I) ECU PAN	I sense cooking isn't your forte	
Scene 28	Slate 204	Take 4	(I) ECU PAN	I sense cooking isn't your forte	2nd choice
Scene 28	Slate 204	Take 5	(I) ECU PAN	Is it Tom's? Or ... woman's place in the kitchen & the bedroom? #5 1st 6	
Scene 28	Slate 204	Take 6	(I) ECU	The weekend will go much easier if you embrace it, embrace me	
Scene 28	Slate 205	Take 1	(I) ECU	Alison walks with her arms rope on	3rd choice last shot dialogue with 1st choice
Scene 28	Slate 205	Take 2	(I) CU	Intruder siders up to Alison	3rd choice last shot dialogue with 1st choice
Scene 28	Slate 207	Take 1	AFS CU	Intruder plays sder up to Alison's neck	perhaps only can not work
Scene 28	Slate 207	Take 2	CU	Intruder plays sder up to Alison's neck	as a whole
Scene 28	Slate 207	Take 3	CU	Intruder plays sder up to Alison's neck	2nd choice
Scene 29	Slate 209	Take 3	MVA	The intruder forces Alison to eat at the dinner table	
Scene 29	Slate 209	Take 4	MVA	The intruder forces Alison to eat at the dinner table	
Scene 29	Slate 209	Take 5	MVA	The intruder forces Alison to eat at the dinner table	
Scene 29	Slate 211	Take 1	MVA	The intruder forces Alison to eat at the dinner table	
Scene 29	Slate 211	Take 2	MVA	The intruder forces Alison to eat at the dinner table	
Scene 30	Slate 52	Take 1	MCU CRANE	Toms struggles against his bindings as he hears his mobile phone receive a message	
Scene 30	Slate 52	Take 2	MCU CRANE	Toms struggles against his bindings as he hears his mobile phone receive a message	
Scene 30	Slate 52	Take 3	MCU CRANE	Toms struggles against his bindings as he hears his mobile phone receive a message	3 exists 4 is best
Scene 30	Slate 52	Take 4	MCU CRANE	Toms struggles against his bindings as he hears his mobile phone receive a message	also good but saturday for early
Scene 30	Slate 53	Take 1	HA PAN	Toms struggles against his bindings as he hears his mobile phone receive a message	
Scene 30	Slate 53	Take 2	HA PAN	Toms struggles against his bindings as he hears his mobile phone receive a message	
Scene 30	Slate 53	Take 3	HA PAN	Toms struggles against his bindings as he hears his mobile phone receive a message	

Scene	Slate	Take	angle	Description	Director Notes
Scene 35	Slate 14	Take 1	(I) OS MW	Intruder looks at the photos of Alison in different costumes that Tom has made her wear	start better
Scene 35	Slate 14	Take 2	(I) OS MW	Intruder looks at the photos of Alison in different costumes that Tom has made her wear	point to start sc with
Scene 35	Slate 15	Take 1	(I) OS CU	Intruder looks at the photos of Alison in different costumes that Tom has made her wear	from "my legend else"
Scene 35	Slate 16	Take 1	(I) OS CU	Intruder looks at the photos of Alison in different costumes that Tom has made her wear	push back to Alison st and 2nd choice
Scene 35	Slate 16	Take 3	(I) OS CU	Intruder looks at the photos of Alison in different costumes that Tom has made her wear	2nd choice
Scene 36	Slate 51	Take 1	MS PAN	Intruder takes photos of Alison the flashes spill into the bathroom where Tom struggles	bats
Scene 36	Slate 51	Take 2	MS PAN	Intruder takes photos of Alison the flashes spill into the bathroom where Tom struggles	angry outburst good
Scene 36	Slate 51	Take 3	MS PAN	Intruder takes photos of Alison the flashes spill into the bathroom where Tom struggles	(under better from story pool good)
Scene 36	Slate 51	Take 5	MS PAN	Intruder takes photos of Alison the flashes spill into the bathroom where Tom struggles	2nd choice
Scene 37	Slate 117	Take 1	(I) MS	Intruder takes photos of Alison in the PVC catsuit	more combative st end
Scene 37	Slate 117	Take 2	(A) POV MS (I)	Intruder takes photos of Alison in the PVC catsuit	same best timing.
Scene 37	Slate 118	Take 1	(I) POV MS (A)	Alison puts the catsuit on & the intruder takes photos	Alison
Scene 37	Slate 119	Take 2 PU	(A) MCU	Alison puts the catsuit on & the intruder takes photos	clear version of 118
Scene 37	Slate 120	Take 1	(A) ECU	Alison puts the catsuit on & the intruder takes photos	2nd part
Scene 37	Slate 120	Take 2	(A) ECU	Alison puts the catsuit on & the intruder takes photos	
Scene 37	Slate 120	Take 3	(A) ECU	Alison puts the catsuit on & the intruder takes photos	
Scene 38	Take 1	Slate 121	MW	Alison escapes the bedroom, intruder puts the camera down & force enters into the bathroom	
Scene 38	Take 2	Slate 121	MW	Alison escapes the bedroom, intruder puts the camera down & force enters into the bathroom	
Scene 38	Take 3	Slate 121	MW	Alison escapes the bedroom, intruder puts the camera down & force enters into the bathroom	
Scene 39	Slate 133	Take 1	(I) MCU	Alison threatens the intruder with a knife & is restrained by him forced down to the bath	
Scene 39	Slate 134	Take 1	(I) MCU	Alison threatens the intruder with a knife & is restrained by him forced down to the bath	
Scene 39	Slate 135	Take 1	(I) MCU	Alison threatens the intruder with a knife & is restrained by him forced down to the bath	prohibing wife point
Scene 39	Slate 137	Take 1	(I) MCU	Alison threatens the intruder with a knife & is restrained by him forced down to the bath	#1 shot 135 136 pinned pinning to Tom point
Scene 39	Slate 137	Take 2	(I) MCU	Alison threatens the intruder with a knife & is restrained by him forced down to the bath	you sit to better
Scene 39	Slate 138	Take 1	(I) MCU	Alison threatens the intruder with a knife & is restrained by him forced down to the bath	clear version 138
Scene 39	Slate 139	Take 1	(I) MCU	Alison threatens the intruder with a knife & is restrained by him forced down to the bath	good for last part.
Scene 39	Slate 140	Take 1	(I) CU (I)	Alison is forced down to the bath & is made to Break Tom's nose	
Scene 39	Slate 140	Take 2	(I) CU (I)	Alison is forced down to the bath & is made to Break Tom's nose	
Scene 39	Slate 140	Take 3	(I) CU (I)	Alison is forced down to the bath & is made to Break Tom's nose	
Scene 39	Slate 140	Take 4	(I) CU (I)	Alison is forced down to the bath & is made to Break Tom's nose	
Scene 39	Slate 140	Take 5	(I) CU (I)	Alison is forced down to the bath & is made to Break Tom's nose	
Scene 39	Slate 140	Take 6	(I) CU (I)	Alison is forced down to the bath & is made to Break Tom's nose	
Scene 40	Slate 141	Take 1	LA MW	Alison wearing the cat suit is forced from the bathroom by the intruder into the bedroom	
Scene 40	Slate 141	Take 2	LA MW	Alison wearing the cat suit is forced from the bathroom by the intruder into the bedroom	
Scene 40	Slate 141	Take 3	LA MW	Alison wearing the cat suit is forced from the bathroom by the intruder into the bedroom	2nd choice

→ 136E same as 137

Scene	State	take	angle	Description	Director Notes
Scene 52	State 235	Take 1	(A) CU OS JIB (l)	Alison hides the knife under her as she sits down at the dinner table	
Scene 52	State 235	Take 2	(A) CU OS JIB (l)	Alison hides the knife under her as she sits down at the dinner table	
Scene 52	State 235	Take 3	(A) OS MCU (l)	Alison hides the knife under her as she sits down at the dinner table	
Scene 52	State 235	Take 4	(A) OS MCU (l)	Alison hides the knife under her as she sits down at the dinner table	start press shift interesting
Scene 52	State 235	Take 5	(A) OS MCU (l)	Alison hides the knife under her as she sits down at the dinner table	bring her hand good timing
Scene 52	State 235	Take 6	(A) OS MCU (l)	Alison hides the knife under her as she sits down at the dinner table	reveal interesting
Scene 52	State 237	Take 1	(A) OS PAN CU	(l) Intruder asks Alison how her daughter died	
Scene 52	State 237	Take 2	(A) OS PAN CU	(l) Intruder asks Alison how her daughter died	
Scene 52	State 238	Take 1	(A) OS PAN ECU	(l) Intruder asks Alison how her daughter died	
Scene 52	State 240	Take 1	MW	Intruder asks Alison how her daughter died	close proximity of 2:33
Scene 52	State 240	Take 2	MW	Intruder asks Alison how her daughter died	(2:34 + wide that normal)
Scene 52	State 241	Take 1	(A) POV	Intruder asks Alison how her daughter died	
Scene 52	State 241	Take 2	(A) POV	Intruder asks Alison how her daughter died	
Scene 52	State 242	Take 1	(l) OS MS (A)	Intruder asks Alison how her daughter died	
Scene 52	State 243	Take 1	(l) OS MCU (A)	Intruder asks Alison how her daughter died	
Scene 52	State 243	Take 2	(l) OS MCU (A)	Intruder asks Alison how her daughter died	
Scene 52	State 243	Take 3	(l) OS MCU (A)	Intruder asks Alison how her daughter died	
Scene 52	State 244	Take 1	(l) OS CU (A)	Intruder asks Alison how her daughter died	
Scene 52	State 244	Take 2	(l) OS CU (A)	Intruder asks Alison how her daughter died	
Scene 52	State 244	Take 3	(l) OS CU (A)	Intruder asks Alison how her daughter died	
Scene 52	State 245	Take 1	(A) RACU > ECU	Intruder asks Alison how her daughter died	
Scene 52	State 245	Take 2	(A) RACU > ECU	Intruder asks Alison how her daughter died	
Scene 52	State 245	Take 3	(A) RACU > ECU	Intruder asks Alison how her daughter died	
Scene 52	State 245	Take 4	(A) RACU > ECU	Alison looks for a means to kill the intruder	
Scene 53	State 167	Take 1	MVA	Alison & the intruder are reading a book in the lounge	
Scene 53	State 167	Take 2	MVA	Alison & the intruder are reading a book in the lounge	2nd choice
Scene 53	State 167	Take 3	MVA	Alison & the intruder are reading a book in the lounge	extra lower line helps
Scene 53	State 167	Take 4	MVA	Alison & the intruder are reading a book in the lounge	
Scene 53	State 166	Take 1	(A) OS (l)	Alison plays with her hair whilst the intruder reads his book	
Scene 53	State 166	Take 2	(A) OS (l)	Alison plays with her hair whilst the intruder reads his book	
Scene 53	State 166	Take 3	(A) OS (l)	Alison plays with her hair whilst the intruder reads his book	
Scene 53	State 169	Take 1	CU ACTION	The intruder is reading his book	
Scene 53	State 169	Take 2	CU ACTION	The intruder is reading his book	
Scene 53	State 170	Take 1	(l) ECU ACTION	The intruder is snoring	
Scene 53	State 170	Take 2	(l) ECU ACTION	The intruder is snoring	
Scene 53	State 171	Take 1	(l) CU ACTION	The intruder is snoring	
Scene 53	State 171	Take 2	(l) CU ACTION	The intruder is snoring	
Scene 53	State 172	Take 1	(A) CU ACTION	Alison is reading her book	
Scene 53	State 173	Take 1	(A) ECU	Alison is reading her book	best part
Scene 54	State 104	Take 1	MCU > CU	Intruder checks to see if Tom is still alive in the bath	
Scene 54	State 104	Take 2	MCU > CU	Intruder checks to see if Tom is still alive in the bath	best part

Scene	Slate	Take	angle	Description	Director Notes
Scene 55	Slate 155	Take 1	(A) CU	Alison asks what she should wear to the intruder & talks about her work to the intruder	start
Scene 55	Slate 155	Take 2	(A) CU	Alison asks what she should wear to the intruder & talks about her work to the intruder	second part.
Scene 55	Slate 155	Take 3	(A) CU	Alison asks what she should wear to the intruder & talks about her work to the intruder	
Scene 55	Slate 155	Take 4	(A) MCU	Alison asks what she should wear to the intruder & talks about her work to the intruder	
Scene 55	Slate 155	Take 2	(A) MCU	Alison asks what she should wear to the intruder & talks about her work to the intruder	slowly bra feed, breaks good.
Scene 55	Slate 155	Take 3	(A) MCU	Alison asks what she should wear to the intruder & talks about her work to the intruder	
Scene 59	Slate 221	Take 1	CU ACTION	Intruder cuts a small segment of the raw steak	rustic
Scene 59	Slate 222	Take 1	CU PROFILE	Intruder eats the small cut of raw steak	
Scene 59	Slate 222	Take 2	CU PROFILE	Intruder eats the small cut of raw steak	
Scene 59	Slate 222	Take 3	CU PROFILE	Intruder eats the small cut of raw steak	
Scene 59	Slate 223	Take 1	LMS DUTCH	Alison takes the wine glasses & wine to the table	
Scene 59	Slate 223	Take 2	LMS DUTCH	Alison takes the wine glasses & wine to the table	
Scene 59	Slate 223	Take 3	LMS DUTCH	Alison takes the wine glasses & wine to the table	
Scene 59	Slate 223	Take 4	LMS DUTCH	Alison takes the wine glasses & wine to the table	
Scene 59	Slate 224	Take 1	CU PROFILE	Intruder is at the stove cooking steak	
Scene 59	Slate 224	Take 2	CU PROFILE	Intruder is at the stove cooking steak	
Scene 59	Slate 224	Take 3	CU PROFILE	Intruder is at the stove cooking steak	
Scene 59	Slate 225	Take 2	(A) ECU	Intruder offers Alison a slice of raw steak to eat	
Scene 59	Slate 225	Take 3	(A) ECU	Intruder offers Alison a slice of raw steak to eat	
Scene 59	Slate 226	Take 1	(A) MCU	Alison turns to look at the intruder	
Scene 59	Slate 226	Take 2	(A) MCU	Alison turns to look at the intruder	
Scene 59	Slate 226	Take 3	(A) MCU	Alison turns to look at the intruder	
Scene 59	Slate 226	Take 4	(A) MCU	Alison turns to look at the intruder	
Scene 59	Slate 227	Take 1	MW > PAN CU	Alison puts the vat of poison into the intruders wine glass	for the boys more sexy position
Scene 59	Slate 227	Take 2	MW > PAN CU	Alison puts the vat of poison into the intruders wine glass	2nd take
Scene 59	Slate 227	Take 3	MW > PAN CU	Alison puts the vat of poison into the intruders wine glass	lets stay best
Scene 59	Slate 228	Take 2	MW	Alison serves the steak dinner & sits down with the intruder	
Scene 59	Slate 228	Take 3	MW	Alison serves the steak dinner & sits down with the intruder	
Scene 59	Slate 228	Take 4	MW	Alison serves the steak dinner & sits down with the intruder	bring out if we can fix back-up 2nd choice
Scene 59	Slate 228	Take 5	MW	Alison serves the steak dinner & sits down with the intruder	through glasses looks better
Scene 60	Slate 248	Take 1	LA MS	In a candle lit lounge intruder asks Alison to dance	
Scene 60	Slate 248	Take 2	LA MS	In a candle lit lounge intruder asks Alison to dance	
Scene 60	Slate 249	Take 1	LA MS	In a candle lit lounge intruder asks Alison to dance	
Scene 60	Slate 250	Take 1	MS ACTION	In a candle lit lounge intruder & Alison dance	
Scene 60	Slate 251	Take 1	MS ACTION	In a candle lit lounge intruder & Alison dance	
Scene 60	Slate 251	Take 2	MS	In a candle lit lounge intruder & Alison dance	
Scene 60	Slate 251	Take 3	MS	In a candle lit lounge intruder & Alison dance	
Scene 60	Slate 252	Take 1	CU	In a candle lit lounge intruder & Alison dance then kiss	focus on Alison, splash falls
Scene 60	Slate 252	Take 2	CU	In a candle lit lounge intruder & Alison dance then kiss	
Scene 60	Slate 252	Take 3	CU	In a candle lit lounge intruder & Alison dance then kiss	
Scene 60	Slate 252	Take 4	CU	In a candle lit lounge intruder & Alison dance then kiss	
Scene 60	Slate 252	Take 5	CU	In a candle lit lounge intruder & Alison dance then kiss	
Scene 60	Slate 253	Take 1	CU ACTION	Intruder spills onto the coffee table then it spills onto the carpet	shorted
Scene 60	Slate 253	Take 2	CU ACTION	Intruder spills onto the coffee table then it spills onto the carpet	
Scene 60	Slate 254	Take 1	CU ACTION	Intruder spills onto the coffee table then it spills onto the carpet	= 2:15 scene return
Scene 27	Slate 254	Take 2	CU ACTION	Intruder spills onto the coffee table then it spills onto the carpet	
Scene 27	Slate 254	Take 3	CU ACTION	Intruder spills onto the coffee table then it spills onto the carpet	
Scene 60	Slate 255	Take 2	MW	Intruder spills onto the coffee table Alison cleans it up	
Scene 60	Slate 255	Take 3	MW	Intruder spills onto the coffee table Alison cleans it up	2nd choice

Scene	Shot	take	angle	Description	Director Notes
Scene 66 B	Shot 274	take 1	MS TRACK	Tom chases Alison down the stairs into the kitchen	
Scene 66 B	Shot 274	take 2	MS TRACK	Tom chases Alison down the stairs into the kitchen	more believable, less acted
Scene 66 B	Shot 275	take 1	MCU	Tom confronts Alison in the kitchen	
Scene 66 B	Shot 275	take 2	MCU	Tom confronts Alison in the kitchen	
Scene 66 B	Shot 276	take 1	MCU	Tom confronts Alison in the kitchen	
Scene 66 B	Shot 276	take 2	MCU	Tom confronts Alison in the kitchen	
Scene 66 B	Shot 277	take 1	MCU TRACK	Tom chases Alison as she tries to leave the kitchen	
Scene 66 B	Shot 277	take 2	MCU TRACK	Tom chases Alison as she tries to leave the kitchen	but perhaps 274/1 better, bit less
Scene 66 C	Shot 277	take 3	MCU TRACK	Tom enters the kitchen after Alison to confront her about the weekend with the intruder	and on table
Scene 66 C	Shot 277	take 4	MCU TRACK	Tom enters the kitchen after Alison to confront her about the weekend with the intruder	yes, bit
Scene 66 C	Shot 278	take 1	CU	Tom enters the kitchen after Alison to confront her about the weekend with the intruder	and bit
Scene 66 C	Shot 278	take 2	CU	Tom enters the kitchen after Alison to confront her about the weekend with the intruder	
Scene 66 C	Shot 278	take 3	CU	Tom enters the kitchen after Alison to confront her about the weekend with the intruder	
Scene 67	Shot 279	take 1	RA MIRROR	Tom pushes Alison onto the sofa	
Scene 67	Shot 279	take 2	RA MIRROR	Tom pushes Alison onto the sofa	
Scene 67	Shot 279	take 3	RA MIRROR	Tom pushes Alison onto the sofa	
Scene 67	Shot 280	take 1	LA MS	Tom speaks to Alison in front of the couch	(double shot with take 4)
Scene 67	Shot 280	take 2	LA MS	Tom speaks to Alison in front of the couch	
Scene 67	Shot 281	take 1	CU	Tom speaks to Alison in front of the couch	
Scene 67	Shot 281	take 2	CU	Tom speaks to Alison in front of the couch	
Scene 67	Shot 282	take 1	CU	Tom speaks to Alison in front of the couch	
Scene 67	Shot 282	take 2	CU	Tom speaks to Alison in front of the couch	
Scene 67	Shot 283	take 1	OS MCU	Tom gets up & begins to pin Alison against the mirror	
Scene 67	Shot 283	take 2	OS MCU	Tom gets up & begins to pin Alison against the mirror	responsibility including nodding
Scene 67	Shot 284	take 1	HA WA	Tom gets up & pins Alison against the mirror	stop it
Scene 67	Shot 284	take 2	HA WA	Tom gets up & pins Alison against the mirror	best response
Scene 67	Shot 284	take 3	HA WA	Tom gets up & pins Alison against the mirror	
Scene 67	Shot 284	take 4	HA WA	Tom gets up & pins Alison against the mirror	
Scene 67	Shot 285	take 1	CU PROFILE	Tom looks Alison against the mirror	
Scene 67	Shot 285	take 2	CU PROFILE	Tom looks Alison against the mirror	
Scene 67	Shot 285	take 3	CU PROFILE	Tom looks Alison against the mirror	
Scene 67	Shot 285	take 4	CU PROFILE	Tom looks Alison against the mirror	
Scene 67	Shot 285	take 5	RA CU PROFILE	Tom tries to seduce Alison	
Scene 67	Shot 285	take 6	RA CU PROFILE	Tom tries to seduce Alison	
Scene 67	Shot 286	take 1	(T) OS LA CU	Alison kneels Tom in the groin and he falls back onto the coffee table	
Scene 67	Shot 286	take 2	(T) OS LA CU	Alison kneels Tom in the groin and he falls back onto the coffee table	
Scene 67	Shot 286	take 3	(T) OS LA CU	Alison kneels Tom in the groin and he falls back onto the coffee table	
Scene 67	Shot 286	take 4	(T) OS LA CU	Alison kneels Tom in the groin and he falls back onto the coffee table	
Scene 67	Shot 286	take 5	(T) OS LA CU	Alison kneels Tom in the groin and he falls back onto the coffee table	
Scene 67	Shot 286	take 6	(T) OS LA CU	Alison kneels Tom in the groin and he falls back onto the coffee table	
Scene 67	Shot 287	take 1	ELA CU	Tom onto the glass coffee table	more economy
Scene 67	Shot 287	take 2	ELA CU	Tom onto the glass coffee table	
Scene 67	Shot 288	take 1	OS HA	Alison bashes Tom's head in on the coffee table	
Scene 67	Shot 288	take 2	OS HA	Alison bashes Tom's head in on the coffee table	
Scene 67	Shot 288	take 3	OS HA	Alison bashes Tom's head in on the coffee table	
Scene 67	Shot 289	take 1	MS	Alison bashes Tom's head in on the coffee table	
Scene 67	Shot 289	take 2	MS	Cutting Room Floor VFX?	no vfx
Scene 67	Shot 289	take 3	LA CU	Alison bashes Tom's head in on the coffee table	
Scene 67	Shot 289	take 4	LA CU	Alison bashes Tom's head in on the coffee table	
Scene 67	Shot 289	take 5	LA CU	Alison bashes Tom's head in on the coffee table	
Scene 67	Shot 289	take 6	LA CU	Alison bashes Tom's head in on the coffee table	without cloth
Scene 67	Shot 289	take 7	LA CU	Alison bashes Tom's head in on the coffee table	
Scene 67	Shot 289	take 8	LA CU	Alison bashes Tom's head in on the coffee table	clown eyes A away
Scene 67	Shot 289	take 9	LA CU	Alison bashes Tom's head in on the coffee table	ignoring light
Scene 67	Shot 290	take 1	MCU	Alison sits down on the couch & realisation sets in of what she done to Tom	useful for final part.
Scene 67	Shot 290	take 2	MCU	Alison sits down on the couch & realisation sets in of what she done to Tom	close 289

Sheet

↓ write #

Scene	Slate	Take	angle	Description	Director Notes
Scene 67	Slate 294	Take 1	RA MCU	Alison looks at the iPhone that received a message on the mantle	
Scene 67	Slate 294	Take 2	MCU	Alison looks at the iPhone that received a message on the mantle	
Scene 67	Slate 294	Take 3	MCU RA	Alison looks at the iPhone that received a message on the mantle	best for the
Scene 67	Slate 294	Take 4	MCU	Alison looks at the iPhone that received a message on the mantle	shaded but → 296 better
Scene 67	Slate 294	Take 5	CU ACTION	Alison looks at the iPhone that received a message on the mantle	
Scene 67	Slate 297	Take 1	CU PROFILE	Alison looks at the iPhone that received a message on the mantle	
Scene 67	Slate 297	Take 2	CU PROFILE	Alison looks at the iPhone that received a message on the mantle	
Scene 67	Slate 297	Take 3	CU PROFILE	Alison looks at the iPhone that received a message on the mantle	
Scene 67	Slate 297	Take 4	CU PROFILE	Alison looks at the iPhone that received a message on the mantle	
Scene 67	Slate 297	Take 5	CU PROFILE	Alison looks at the iPhone that received a message on the mantle	
Scene 67	Slate 283	Take 1	POV PHONE	Alison finds the message on the phone	rip - for Tom
Scene 67	Slate 289	Take 1	MCU	Alison reveals CHEATER cut into Tom's stomach	
Scene 67	Slate 299	Take 2	MCU	Alison reveals CHEATER cut into Tom's stomach	smart close
Scene 67	Slate 300	Take 3	MCU	Alison reveals CHEATER cut into Tom's stomach	
Scene 67	Slate 301	Take 1	MCU	Alison reveals CHEATER cut into Tom's stomach	
Scene 67	Slate 301	Take 2	MCU	Alison reveals CHEATER cut into Tom's stomach	
Scene 67	Slate 301	Take 3	MCU	Alison reveals CHEATER cut into Tom's stomach	
Scene 67	Slate 302	Take 1	CU	Alison reveals CHEATER cut into Tom's stomach	
Scene 67	Slate 302	Take 2	CU	Alison reveals CHEATER cut into Tom's stomach	
Scene 67	Slate 303	Take 1	HA MW	Alison reveals CHEATER cut into Tom's stomach	
Scene 68	Slate 305	Take 1	OS	Sarah enters the house & Alison shuts the bungee door	
Scene 68	Slate 305	Take 2	OS	Sarah enters the house & Alison shuts the bungee door	
Scene 68	Slate 305	Take 3	OS	Sarah enters the house & Alison shuts the bungee door	
Scene 68	Slate 305	Take 4	OS	Sarah enters the house & Alison shuts the bungee door	
Scene 68	Slate 306	Take 1	(S) OS MCU	Sarah tries to get into the living room but Alison is holding the door shut	
Scene 68	Slate 306	Take 2	(S) OS MCU	Sarah tries to get into the living room but Alison is holding the door shut	
Scene 68	Slate 306	Take 3	(S) OS MCU	Sarah tries to get into the living room but Alison is holding the door shut	
Scene 68	Slate 307	Take 1	(S) OS CU	Sarah tries to get into the living room but Alison is holding the door shut	close vision 306
Scene 68	Slate 307	Take 2	(S) OS CU	Sarah tries to get into the living room but Alison is holding the door shut	
Scene 68	Slate 307	Take 3	(S) OS CU	Sarah tries to get into the living room but Alison is holding the door shut	
Scene 71	Slate 308	Take 1	(A) OS CU	Sarah is outside the living room trying to get in	
Scene 71	Slate 308	Take 2	(A) OS CU	Sarah is outside the living room trying to get in	
Scene 72	Slate 308	Take 1	MW	Sarah bursts into the living room & find Tom on the floor	
Scene 72	Slate 308	Take 2	MW	Sarah bursts into the living room & find Tom on the floor	fill the end
Scene 72	Slate 310	Take 1	MW	Sarah bursts into the living room & find Tom on the floor	fill the end
Scene 72	Slate 311	Take 1	LA > MLS	Tom is helped up by Sarah & he punches her in the stomach	overall best punch good
Scene 72	Slate 311	Take 2	LA > MLS	Tom is helped up by Sarah & he punches her in the stomach	overall best punch good
Scene 72	Slate 311	Take 3	LA > MLS	Tom is helped up by Sarah & he punches her in the stomach	
Scene 72	Slate 312	Take 1	CU	Alison leaves the living room	
Scene 72	Slate 313	Take 1	MCU	Tom is helped up by Sarah	or 302-6
Scene 72	Slate 314	Take 1	MCU	Tom is helped up by Sarah	
Scene 72	Slate 314	Take 2	(T) OS CU (S)	Tom is suffocating Sarah & Alison threatens Tom with a hammer	up / punch / sweater / HARKER ALISON ST. close
Scene 72	Slate 317	Take 1	(T) OS CU (S)	Tom is suffocating Sarah & Alison threatens Tom with a hammer	
Scene 72	CRF	Take 1	OS CU > LA/MCU	Tom is suffocating Sarah & Alison swings a hammer at Tom	

Page 17

Handwritten notes and signatures at the bottom of the page.

Scene	Slate	take	angle	Description	Director Notes
Scene 72	Slate 316	Take 1			
Scene 72	Slate 316	Take 1			
Scene 72	Slate 316	Take 2		<i>Alison at door she walks out ran / cost on</i>	
Scene 72	Slate 318	Take 2			
Scene 72	Slate 319	Take 1		OS CU > LA MCL Tom is suffocating Sarah & Alison swings a hammer at Tom	
Scene 72	Slate 320	Take 1		OS CU > LA MCL Tom is suffocating Sarah & Alison swings a hammer at Tom (= 318)	
Scene 72	Slate 321	Take 1		(A) OS MCL Alison swings the hammer into Tom's chest as he is strangling Sarah	
Scene 72	Slate 321	Take 2		(A) OS MCL Alison swings the hammer into Tom's chest as he is strangling Sarah	
Scene 72	Slate 321	Take 3		(A) OS MCL Alison swings the hammer into Tom's chest as he is strangling Sarah	
Scene 72	Slate 322	Take 1		(A) OS MCL HA Alison swings the hammer into Tom's chest as he is strangling Sarah	
Scene 72	Slate 322	Take 2		(A) OS MCL HA Alison swings the hammer into Tom's chest as he is strangling Sarah	
Scene 72	Slate 323	Take 1		(T) OS MS > LAC Alison swings the hammer into Tom's chest and he falls back onto the coffee table dead	
Scene 72	Slate 323	Take 2		(T) OS MS > LAC Alison swings the hammer into Tom's chest and he falls back onto the coffee table dead	

*note strongly put before A enters
1st or 2nd swing, also feed
best checker (Mar 318)
2nd choice*

*with hammer attached
but more consistency*

324 4/2/3/4/5 two women on set, jip down to his mother

figure 24.7
Camera report

Scene 72	Slate 324	Take 1	MS JIB	Alison & Sarah come yo terms with Tom's death
Scene 72	Slate 324	Take 2	MS JIB	Alison & Sarah come yo terms with Tom's death
Scene 72	Slate 324	Take 3	MS JIB	Alison & Sarah come yo terms with Tom's death
Scene 72	Slate 324	Take 4	MS JIB	Alison & Sarah come yo terms with Tom's death
Scene 72	Slate 324	Take 5	MS JIB	Alison & Sarah come yo terms with Tom's death
Scene 73	Slate 212	Take 1	(I) OS MCU	A shoe mendoor finishes off a shoe when a customer comes into the shop
Scene 73	Slate 212	Take 2	(I) OS MCU	A shoe mendoor finishes off a shoe when a customer comes into the shop
Scene 73	Slate 212	Take 3	(I) OS MCU	A shoe mendoor finishes off a shoe when a customer comes into the shop
Scene 73	Slate 213	Take 1	(W) OS MW (I)	A shoe mendoor finishes off a shoe when a customer comes into the shop
Scene 73	Slate 213	Take 2	(W) OS MW (I)	A shoe mendoor finishes off a shoe when a customer comes into the shop
Scene 73	Slate 213	Take 3	(W) OS MW (I)	A shoe mendoor finishes off a shoe when a customer comes into the shop
Scene 73	Slate 213	Take 4	(W) OS MW (I)	A shoe mendoor finishes off a shoe when a customer comes into the shop
Scene 73	Slate 213	Take 5	(W) OS MW (I)	A shoe mendoor finishes off a shoe when a customer comes into the shop
Scene 73	Slate 213	Take 6	(W) OS MW (I)	A shoe mendoor finishes off a shoe when a customer comes into the shop
Scene 73	Slate 214	Take 1	(W) OS MS (I)	Shoe mendoor comes to the couniter & takes the woman's details for cutting her key
Scene 73	Slate 214	Take 2	(W) OS MS (I)	Shoe mendoor comes to the couniter & takes the woman's details for cutting her key
Scene 73	Slate 214	Take 3	(W) OS MS (I)	Shoe mendoor comes to the couniter & takes the woman's details for cutting her key
Scene 73	Slate 215	Take 1	(W) OS CU (I)	Shoe mendoor comes to the couniter & takes the woman's details for cutting her key
Scene 73	Slate 215	Take 2	(W) OS CU (I)	Shoe mendoor comes to the couniter & takes the woman's details for cutting her key
Scene 73	Slate 216	Take 1	CUACTION	The woman gives the shoe mendoor the key to be cut
Scene 73	Slate 216	Take 2	CUACTION	The woman gives the shoe mendoor the key to be cut
Scene 73	Slate 217	Take 1	CUACTION	The woman gives the shoe mendoor the key to be cut
Scene 73	Slate 217	Take 2	CUACTION	The woman gives the shoe mendoor the key to be cut
Scene 73	Slate 218	Take 1	(I) OS MCU (W)	The shoe mendoor asks if the woman wants to wait or pick up for her key cut
Scene 73	Slate 218	Take 2	(I) OS MCU (W)	The shoe mendoor asks if the woman wants to wait or pick up for her key cut
Scene 73	Slate 219	Take 1	(I) OS MCU (W)	The shoe mendoor asks if the woman wants to wait or pick up for her key cut
Scene 73	Slate 219	Take 2	(I) OS MCU (W)	The shoe mendoor asks if the woman wants to wait or pick up for her key cut
Scene 73	Slate 219	Take 3	(I) OS MCU (W)	The shoe mendoor asks if the woman wants to wait or pick up for her key cut
Scene 73	Slate 220	Take 1	CUACTION	The woman fills out her details

shorted

shorted

??

??

to lengthen looking (if needed also #1)
my slice
to SCENE VERSION key policy #1
interesting but probably not a balder

clear version 2.0 looks best

also p4v 2.0 read down + look
(look in 2.19 better)

For the latest developments on *Love, Honour, Obey*, go to www.lotonobudgetfilmmaking.com.

The director's first cut was test screened on July 9th. About sixty people saw the film in London, our Toronto office and at Ate de Jong's studio in Amsterdam. Audience members were given a survey form to complete. We were interested in people's opinion on the title, the acting and the story.

At the time of writing we are waiting for picture lock so sound post-production can commence. The marketing and social media activities will start as soon as the production team is certain exactly what type of film it is—specifically—what sort of genre it is. At the moment we waver between



Screening Form
Ate de Jong's *Love, Honour, Obey* (Working)

I am: Male () Female () My Age is: ()

+++++

1. What was your overall opinion of the movie?
Excellent () Good () Fair () Poor ()
2. Would you recommend it to others?
Yes () Maybe () No ()
If not, please elaborate here: _____

3. How would you summarise the movie if you were telling your friends about it? _____

4. Were there any scenes or sequences within the movie you particularly liked? _____

5. Were there any scenes or sequences within the movie you particularly disliked? _____

6. What did you think of the movie's length?
About Right () Too Long () Too Short ()
7. At any point did you have trouble following the story?
Yes () No ()
If yes, please elaborate here: _____

8. Do you feel the title fits the movie?
Yes () No ()
If no, can you elaborate as to why here: _____

(The team behind the movie thank you for taking the time to fill out this form, your help is appreciated)

9. When you heard the title - before the movie - what kind of movie did you think you would see?
i.e. Comedy, Drama, Thriller, Romance...

10. Having seen the movie, how would you label its genre?
i.e. Comedy, Drama, Thriller, Romance...

Please rate the following elements of the movie between one (1) and five (5).
1 = Poor, 5 = Excellent

	Poor		Excellent		
Opening	1	2	3	4	5
Ending	1	2	3	4	5
Story	1	2	3	4	5
Pacing	1	2	3	4	5
Drama	1	2	3	4	5
Suspense/Tension	1	2	3	4	5
Makeup FX	1	2	3	4	5
Character Development	1	2	3	4	5
Performance: Aaron (Intruder)	1	2	3	4	5
Performance: Alison (Wife)	1	2	3	4	5
Performance: Tom (Husband)	1	2	3	4	5

If you have any comments or suggestions, please use the space below.

figure 24.8
Audience survey

(The team behind the movie thank you for taking the time to fill out this form, your help is appreciated)

thinking it might not be good enough to get into Raindance and thinking it is so good that Cannes, Toronto and Sundance will be fighting over it.

Timeline

January 1—discovered script
January 8—met Ate de Jong

March 22—Indiegogo launched
April 27—original start date
May 12–29—actual shoot
June 2—post-production commences
June 16—wrap party
July 9—test screenings in London, Amsterdam and Toronto

In Conversation with Tracey Scoffield

How would you describe your job and what do you do?

Tracey Scoffield joined the BBC as a Script Editor, and became Head of Development for BBC Films. In the latter capacity, she executive-produced Richard Loncraine's award-winning *The Gathering Storm* (2002), Stephen Frears's *Dirty Pretty Things* (2002), *Mrs Henderson Presents* (2005), Roger Michell's *The Mother* (2003) and *Sylvia* (2003). When she left the BBC in 2006 she produced a series of award winning television shows and 2013's *Muhammad Ali's Greatest Fight* (2013)

Well my official job title is Head of Development and Executive Producer for BBC Films. So in the head of development role, my first responsibility is to manage the development team within the BBC, because we have a project slate with about sixty-five theatrical projects on it, all of which require some level of editorial assistance. And that's something that we do pride ourselves on here, our ability to develop new talent—producing, directing and writing—and that's what the development team do, they are there to give that kind of support and advice. I manage the team and the development slate. I keep an eye on the development slate and make sure that they are all moving along at a decent rate and along with others here, I'm involved in the selection of projects—either from the independent sector, or generated in house.

I commission projects from writers, producers and directors—anything from a draft screenplay, right back to basic pitched idea. Like a lot of film financiers who are involved in development, we prefer to come in early on a project, simply because then we have an opportunity to shape it in a way that we think is appropriate for our market.

As executive producer I'm attached to some of the projects which I have been personally responsible for commissioning and developing. That means that I get an opportunity to see them through the whole process. Usually people who work in development are heavily involved in the script process, and then they should look at rushes, and should also be involved in looking at assemblies and giving notes on the different cuts of the film. But they won't necessarily be involved in the choice of director, the casting or budgeting discussions. Those are the things that an EP is involved in—from development to delivery.

Dirty Pretty Things was a script sent to me out of the blue—it was an unsolicited script. This year, I have worked on *Sylvia* right from scratch with Alison Owen who is the producer. So I get a very nice handful of my own projects to follow right through the whole process.

On average, how much time does a project take to develop?

They can be really fast. If there's a fair wind behind a project and there is some really hot talent attached to it, and other co-producers in the market place want to invest in it, they want to be attached—then a project can happen quite quickly. But most theatrical projects will take much longer. If you are developing a feature length screenplay with a well-known writer, most good writers are really busy most of the time, so quite often you have to wait for them, and then that process is slow. The standard contract provides for

two drafts and two sets of revisions, but I've very rarely seen a script go into production without at least six drafts.

The development of a project can be held up by the slowness of the writing, by raising the funding and attaching directors to the projects. A lot of directors are either busy or are holding out for other projects that they want to do and are not available to come on board when you want them to. We don't fully fund any films, we have to find co-production partners, so we always have to have a director who they want to back as well. And quite often, if it's somebody who is new, and it involves taking a risk, we can give them the courage of our convictions if they are right for the project, but for a lot of projects which are of a medium budget, by which I mean about £5 million, people would prefer not to take a big risk on them.

In the case of *Dirty Pretty Things* there were various hold ups which were not the fault of the writer, Steve Knight, but it took three and a half years before it went into production, because there were numerous hold ups, a lot of it was unfortunate, but it was all unavoidable.

How do you find new projects?

We find new projects in a number of ways. Firstly, we have a very efficient submission system, so that anybody can submit to us from the film community—be it a treatment, or a script, or a proposal for an idea—we will consider it. We do pick up some projects this way.

We generate our own ideas from inside the department. We will think of an idea for a script and attach a writer to it and then a producer later on. On other occasions, writers or directors or producers will come to us with a verbal pitch and we might take it from there.

We have to be very selective because we have a development slate with sixty-five projects on it—that's a rolling slate, and in theory we invest in between six to eight films a year, but you can see how selective we have to be about ideas.

What is it that you look for in a project?

Good quality, obviously—in terms of the idea and the execution. I'm always looking for things that are different. I look for stories that open up new worlds to audiences, because I think that's what people really want these days. I look for an antidote to Hollywood films—because we can't compete with Hollywood in terms of their stars, or the scales of their budgets, so we have to do something different.

I also bear in mind the things that we've got on the slate already—so sometimes we have to regretfully pass on something that's good, because we have something similar.

It's always very interesting for me to notice trends in proposals and screenwriting—you'll notice one year that there are lots of projects around about serial murderers. This year there seem to be so many projects going round about troubled teenagers. We have made quite a few ourselves actually, both for TV and cinema—*Sweet Sixteen* and the Dominic Savage film *Out of Control*—it's a very popular theme at the moment, which started with *Billy Elliot* I suppose.

Are there certain stories or genres that you won't touch?

Ultimately, BBC Films is delivering these films for broadcast, so we have to be sensitive to what is broadcastable. Obviously that's getting more and more relaxed as time goes on, but we do have to be careful about stories that are either sexually very, very explicit or very graphically violent—but actually, I would not be attracted towards a very graphically violent story anyway, because I don't think people want to watch them, I really don't. It's impossible for us to take on Hollywood genres and play them at their own game, so we can't do action-adventure or large scale science fiction films, or any of those big, expensive genres. But interestingly, Michael Winterbottom's *Code 46*, which screened in Venice and Toronto, is a love story set slightly in the future. It's not a science fiction film, but it's in a future world—and you can do that sort of thing in a low-budget way, just with a very imaginative story, and creating something that looks a bit different.

What is the single most important element?

Well the single most important element for me in any project is the script. If you don't have a good script, you won't get a good director, and you won't get a good cast, and you won't get the money to make the film. I think a director can mess up a good script, but they can't really make a good film out of a bad script. The script is king!

Do most of the directors you work with come from TV?

They come from a variety of backgrounds. The new directors we work with have either worked in television or a lot of them have had a documentary background in fact. Pawel Pawlikowski and Dominic Savage both have documentary backgrounds, and interestingly, will often work in an improvised way with their cast, instead of with a formal screenplay, so their work has a completely different feel to it. We think that documentary filmmakers have a very good instinct for story and can often tell it in a very immediate way—which suits our budget levels and the sort of stories we are looking for.

How closely do you work with writers?

It depends on the project. Some writers are very independent and don't take notes and will hardly come in for meetings. Other writers are very collaborative, and in fact, require that kind of support in order to get from draft to draft, and will want more hand-holding. It just depends very much on the personality of the writer and on the project.

How many writers do you work with at the same time?

Well we've got sixty-five projects on the theatrical slate, and I don't work with all of them, because there are other development producers within the department attached to some of the projects, but I'm constantly looking at new work and meeting new writers—whether or not we commission anything from them, it's my job to be aware of who's out there and try and identify new writers who we want to work with. I'm supposed to know everybody really.

On a single project, do you have several writers working on the same script?

That's very unusual—comedy writers often tend to work in pairs, but no, we don't work with writing teams actually. That's a feature of American TV series,

it's not a feature of the sorts of writing we commission because really, the screenplays we commission feel more like 'signature pieces'—they couldn't really be written by committee.

Many people look at directors and producers in the film industry and call it (negatively) a lifestyle occupation. How would you react to that?

Well it's a part of it, isn't it? It's the reward. If you make a film which people love, then you get a lot of attention and with that comes what people perceive to be glamour—premieres, award ceremonies, parties. But you have to work hard to achieve that, I don't think it happens by accident, you might have a fluke but you can't sustain that by accident.

I think most people actually deserve it—if that's what they want, then they deserve it.

How do you deal with agents?

Well it's very important that we keep up to date with every agent. We talk to agents both in London and in LA about their clients, and we are constantly looking at their work and receiving proposals from them, because they need their clients' work in order to survive, but we need to know who the new people are. American agents tend to be a bit more rigorous, and a bit more attentive than London agents, who give the impression of being rather more passive about their clients' work, but at the same time, it's a style that is more relaxed and friendly actually—American agents are rather aggressive. My preference is more for English agents—because they are more like me! American agents are a breed unto themselves, I mean they are mind-boggling. They are very, very insecure and paranoid. You can tell that when they are ringing you up about a project, and they are hassling you about something, it's because of some paranoid, insecure reason that's got nothing to do with the project that you're actually discussing—they always have multiple agendas. Often they will do this classic thing of sending you stuff that's completely rubbish and inappropriate, because they feel that they have to tell everybody about their clients.

You get these hilarious letters from American agents: 'Dear Tracey, I have great pleasure in sending you this script which I'm sure you will think is absolutely marvellous'—and you can see at the bottom that they have cc'd about twenty names, just to show the client that they are sending their script out! English agents can't be bothered with all that. Sometimes English agents are infuriatingly lazy and basically can't be arsed to represent their clients, and I find that, at the other end of the scale, really unforgivable.

What exactly is the role of an agent?

I think that many agents have different roles in their clients' lives, and a lot of them partly take up the role of editor really, and will look at their work and comment on it. Lots of agents don't really go all out to find their clients work; in fact the clients find the work, and the agents just do the deals. So agents are all very different, and you have to find the right agent for you, you have to decide what you want. If you are young, and you've got a couple of pieces of work under your belt, but you need the agent to sell you—there are certain

agents who are good at that. But there are certain agents who really wouldn't go out and find you work, they will do the deal once you have found the work. Most people consult quite widely before they approach agents.

Is it difficult to raise money in today's economic climate?

It's pretty tough at the moment and has been for the past couple of years. There's always nervousness about films that were being made that were not getting distribution, there has been a real anxiety about investing in films—there is still money around, but it's very cautious. It's taking a long time to settle on projects, and the money is really trying to find projects that are considered risk free—so it's quite tricky for either more unusual projects or more ambitious projects to find funding at the moment. But it might start to pick up, because FilmFour is back in business, albeit in a much more modest way—but there is money there. There are new deals being signed, like DNA signing a big deal with Fox, so there is a lot of production and acquisition money coming into the industry through them, and British films are performing well in the box office and I think that might encourage investors. There have also been about two or three tax funds that have been set up over the past 6 months. It has been bad. We were the only game in town, apart from the BFI, which is not a production outfit, and Working Title. Between us, we have been the only real ports of call for people looking for investment.

What is the largest problem that you face today?

Finding really good projects. There are too many projects that are either bad, or are just not good enough.

Is there one project that got away?

There are loads of things that you pass on, that then get made and you can see the point of them, you can see why perhaps you should have invested in them, but at the same time, there are always reasons why you don't. We've all got stories about things we turned down that then became box-office smash successes. Someone you spoke to for this book turned down *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*—we have a letter to prove it in the files, but I don't think anyone at the BBC regretted that, because it was such a terrible film, and it's not what we are here for really, though Alan Yentob will probably kill me for saying that. I turned down *Saving Grace* but I don't really care—there are other reasons for making things apart from commercial reasons.

The fact is, nobody can see the real commercial potential in an early script because films have such a long journey to go on before they become commercial properties. If it was possible to identify what that big commercial key was, then only commercial films would be made. You have to think that you see something in the script that other people will want to go and see and will find interesting and engaging and tell their friends that they have to go and see it as well.

Why do you do what you do?

Because I have always loved watching films and my mind works with words and pictures—it's the perfect fusion for me.

25 Production Financing

THERE ARE MANY WAYS to finance the production costs of a film. I will attempt to discuss the various ways films are financed based on the chart below.

Sources of Funding	Development	Production	Distribution
Private Funding	Common	Common	Rare
Friends and family	Common	Common	Common
Lenders	Unusual	Common	Rare
Pre-sales	Unusual	Rare	Common
Gap finance	Rare	Common	Rare
Euro tax incentives	Common	Common	Common
Other tax incentives	Rare	Common	Rare
Equipment charge deferrals	N/A	Common	Common
Crew deferrals	N/A	Common	Unusual
Talent deferrals	Common	Common	Rare
Producer deferrals	Common	Common	Common
Soundtrack album	Rare	Rare	Rare
Music publishing	Rare	Rare	Common
Gaming rights	Rare	Rare	Occasional
Product equipment	N/A	Rare	Rare
Crowdfunding	Common	Common	Common

table 25.1
Sources of independent
film financing

Private Funding

Loans or equity investment from sources other than bank loans and money from distributors who acquire distribution rights to your movie are referred to as private investment. There are elementary distinctions between loans and equity finance.

Loans

A loan carries an obligation to repay a fixed amount plus interest. The original amount of a loan is called the 'principal'. Simple interest is calculated just on the principal. Compound interest is calculated on the principal and unpaid interest. Loans for movies often contain other costs. These can include a

commitment fee and the legal costs for drawing up a loan agreement. A loan is documented by a promissory note which is a brief document that spells out the interest rate, repayment and default terms of the loan, and a lending agreement which is a long-form agreement which spells out the details of the promissory note in great detail. This lending agreement can also contain details about warranties, representations, completion bond requirements, collateral, security and takeover provisions.

Most film finance promissory notes prevent the investor from reclaiming their money from the film, although it is not unusual for a film producer to offer their home or other possessions in a last ditch effort to salvage a deal—often with disastrous results.

Loans are relatively simple to negotiate, and are virtually unregulated, although each country has usury laws governing the amount of interest that can be legally charged.

Equity Investment

Securities are investments in which the investor has no say in the running of the business. Securities are heavily regulated.

An equity investment gives a return to the investor only if a profit is earned. In order not to offer an equity investment that would expose you to securities laws, producers and their lawyers often structure these investments to give the investor some control over business and creative matters and endow them with producer or executive producer credits.

If you choose to solicit funds from the general public, say by way of newspaper ads or bulk mailshots, you have to satisfy government regulators that you are a bona fide investment, and prepare a prospectus of investment in which you detail all the risks and benefits of investment. This document must also contain official backup to any claims you make. For example, if you claim that your film will achieve a certain income potential from sales, you must include sales projections from a reputable sales agent. Once you have this complete, you publish a public offering document. This can also be sold through financial brokers.

If you choose to approach wealthy individuals one-on-one, you must also prepare a prospectus and create a private placement document.

Get the bad news early. You meet a self-proclaimed financier of independent films at a cocktail party who promises you the earth. Ask these simple questions: Who is your lawyer? Who are your accountants? What movies have you financed? Who can I talk to at your bank to verify available funds? Are you a principal?

Hint The key to structuring film financing is to maintain a clear picture of the order in which your investors get paid. Distributors, banks, talent deferrals, completion guarantors and private investors will all be clamouring for money. Make certain that each investor's place is clearly assigned when you start to dole out the cash.

Equity pitfalls

Every year at Cannes there seem to be wild rumours circulating about a group of financiers, usually ensconced on a huge private yacht, who have secured hundreds of millions of dollars for equity finance.

Usually they entertain producer after producer and make promises of financing pictures in the \$5–\$10 million range. Only after the dust has settled are the

producers called upon for finder's fees of between a half and three per cent of the total budget of the film. A few more months pass, and the financiers disappear with the producer's money.

Hint The Golden Rule of Equity Finance: Deal with principals, not agents or brokers.

Family and Friends

Friends and family finance most low-budget independent films. Even though you are dealing with people you know very well, there are still legal requirements governing what essentially are securities. But dealing with people very close to you can result in ugly situations should the deal or the movie go south.

The basic rules of engagement for raising money from family and friends are:

- Be professional. Create the appropriate paperwork and get it signed.
 - Risk. Make certain that each individual understands that they could lose their entire investment, and make sure that they can afford to do so.
 - Disclosure. Keep all of your investors informed of the progress of your film. Do not try to hide bad news.
 - Use the investors' expertise. If an individual has the ability to fund a film, they usually have financial savvy that you can tap into if problems arise. Don't be afraid to ask for help.
 - Use an entertainment lawyer. Get all the legal paperwork done by a professional and cover your back.
-

Hint Always act professionally with family and friends.

Presales and Foreign Sales Agents

Sample sales estimates are to be found in Chapter 24.

Another financing route is to convince a distributor in another country or territory to purchase your film before it is made. This is called a presales agreement. The distributor will assess your script, look at your cast and decide what the value of the film will be when it is finished and offer to pay a minimum guarantee (MG) to you upon delivery of the film.

This pre-sales agreement is then taken to the producer's bank who will loan all or a portion of the value of the MG as part of the production loan to the film.

A foreign sales agent's function is to find foreign distributors for your movie and then negotiate and document the terms and conditions of the distribution agreements. When you are arranging finance, a good foreign sales agent will provide a sales estimate for your film, territory by territory. This estimate can then be used to demonstrate the viability of your project to other investors, banks and gap financiers (see below).

Gap Finance

Often there is a gap between the amount of money offered to a producer in equity loans, the value of the guarantees of the presales contracts and the actual budget of the film. In order for the producer to make the film a 'gap' loan will need to be raised by the producer from a specialised entertainment lender. Only specialist lenders will consider a gap loan, as there are specialised skills involved in analysing the risks of the loan. The lender will evaluate the credit worthiness of the companies who have already bought rights in the film, as well as decide how much income will be derived from the sale of unsold territories. Factors considered include cast and production values of the film. Once a positive decision has been made, a commitment fee (in points or percentage of the final loan value) is agreed, a loan is arranged, banking fees are added, legal fees and security agreements are lodged over the company to ensure that the gap lender will be repaid, usually before any other investor in the film is paid.

Hint Gap finance is usually the last route a producer will take due to the high cost of arranging the loan. However gap finance is not an equity loan, and once repaid, the gap financier demands no further part of the proceeds of the film.

Completion Guarantee

If you finance a film using a combination of equity investment and loans, you may be required to provide a completion bond which insures the investors and lenders in the event of the film running over budget and/or over schedule.

The producer generally approaches a completion bond company at the outset of the financing process when they have a script, schedule and budget in place. The completion bond company will assess the material and decide whether or not the film can be completed as set out in the budget and schedule and will offer a bond based on the budget plus a ten per cent contingency.

Sometimes a completion bond company will have a representative on the set to make sure that the film is running smoothly. Should a film go over budget, the completion bond company has three options. The first is to loan additional money to the producer to finish the film, the second is to take over the picture and finish it and the third is to close down the film and repay all the investors.

Completion bonding rarely exists in the low-budget realm for several reasons. First, the bonding companies have strict rules about the amount of filming that can be done in a day. These limits are based on large budget Hollywood films, and there is no allowance (or tolerance) for the amount that a small independent film might be able to achieve in a day. Secondly, the crew that is 'bondable' is a seasoned, veteran (and expensive) union crew that the bonding company recognises from other shoots. Your bonding fee might be £50,000, but you will need an additional million to fund the crew and additional days on the shoot.

Hint If an investor is insisting on a performance bond, try first of all to convince them that you are able to complete your film with the amount of money and time allocated in your budget and schedule. Try to demonstrate that your production will be adequately crewed and that health and safety measures will be adhered to.

Co-Productions and European Tax Incentives

In its simplest form, a co-production is created by two producers who wish to pool their resources—creative and financial—in order to make a film that otherwise could not be made.

In the current marketplace, which is dominated by scores of territorial grants, subsidies and tax concessions, a co-production between two or more producers from different countries allows a film to take advantage of the benefits from a number of territories while still being considered, for tax and grant purposes, a national film of the particular country of each producer. This arrangement allows the film significant financial benefits which can be shared between the producers.

There are two main types of treaties that co-productions can exploit: bilateral treaties and European Conventions. Bilateral treaties are agreements between countries that create financial incentives for a film to be made in each of the participating countries. European Convention co-productions which qualify under a point-scoring system are able to benefit from a series of grants and tax benefits.

Bilateral treaties

Bilateral treaties exist between countries that recognise the benefits for the local film industry if local producers work with producers from another country. These treaties set out the conditions that must be met in order for the project to qualify. Only recognised co-productions are able to attract national benefits.

It is possible to create a film produced by a variety of partners from a host of nations by combining various bilateral treaties and the European Convention in one co-production agreement.

A typical Canadian/UK co-production would benefit from both Canadian and UK labour spend amounting up to about forty per cent of the budget. Please note that these amounts fluctuate according to changes in the treaties.

Hint Countries with current bilateral treaties with the UK:

- Australia
 - Canada
 - France
 - Germany
 - Italy
 - New Zealand
 - Norway
-

General treaty restrictions

- Independence of co-producers: there must be no common management or control between the co-producers.
- Creative, artistic and technical contribution: this contribution, usually measured by a minimum production spend in a territory of at least twenty per cent.
- Labour: cast and crew must be residents of the co-producing nations; however, some treaties allow for leading actors, writers and directors to be from a non-co-producing country.
- Use of facilities/studios: must be situated in the respective co-production countries.
- Financial contribution: the financial contribution of each co-producer must be in reasonable proportion to the creative, artistic and technical contribution for each country.

European Convention of Cinematographic Co-Production

The Council of Europe established the ECCC in 1992. The European Convention does not apply to bilateral co-productions between countries that have already established a bilateral treaty. It does have many similar points to the bilateral treaties. In addition it operates a European points system. A film needs to score a minimum of fifteen out of a possible nineteen points to qualify under the European Convention. See figure 25.1 opposite for a breakdown of the points system.

Text of the European convention is available from <http://conventions.coe.int>.

Hint For latest treaties and regulations check the BFI website www.bfi.org.uk. Countries signed to the ECCC:

Austria / Azerbaijan / Cyprus / Czech Republic / Denmark / Estonia / Finland / France / Germany / Greece / Hungary / Iceland / Ireland / Italy / Latvia / Lithuania / Luxembourg / Malta / Netherlands / Poland / Portugal / Romania / Russia / Slovakia / Spain / Sweden / Switzerland / United Kingdom

An important distinction between bilateral treaties and the European Convention is that the ECCC allows for financial investment from key non-European territories such as the USA and Japan without risking the production's eligibility for tax benefits and subsidies.

Finding a Suitable Co-Producer

The ideal co-producing partner will live and work in a territory with available funds, and in a territory that can contribute to your film in terms of locations, cast or crew. Finding the right co-production partner for your project, or for a series of projects, is a key element in your project's potential success. A good co-producer will meet your requirements in the following areas: expertise, credibility, pedigree, commercial standing and, most importantly, compatibility with you and your project.

National industry bodies regularly publish guides to co-production in their country. These often include information on producers with a track record in co-productions. Research the companies available for co-productions in the country you wish to partner with.

figure 25.1
European points system.
Points are scored for
European elements of
the production

Production Sector	Points available for	
Creative Group	Director	3
	Screenwriter	3
	Composer	1
	Total available	7
Performing Group (performers' roles ranked by number of days on set)	First role	3
	Second role	2
	Third role	1
	Total available	6
Technical Craft Group	Cameraman	1
	Sound recordist	1
	Editor	1
	Art director	1
	Studio or location	1
	Post-production location	1
	Total available	6
Maximum points available		19

A competent authority in the context of a co-production refers to the national body in charge of authenticating a film project under the national guidelines. In the UK the competent authority is the international department of the Film Council.

Structure of the co-production agreement

There are certain minimum requirements for a co-production agreement to meet the requirements of the European Convention and/or any applicable treaties. The arrangement between the co-production partners should cover:

- Film title and key creatives including writer, director and producer.
- Production budget, which should be split by territory to show the national spend for each co-producer.
- Financial contributions of the co-producers and an agreed method of apportioning overspend.
- Method of division of receipts.
- Start and delivery dates.
- Ownership of rights and terms and conditions of their exploitation.
- Provisions for dealing with the failure of any of the co-producers to obtain co-production status from their national competent authority.

Application procedure

Once a co-production partner has been secured and the terms of the agreement negotiated, each partner must submit their proposal to their national competent authority. The application must include:

- Completed application form.
- Co-production agreement.
- Finance plan.
- Budget showing the spend in each co-producing country and in any non-co-producing country.
- Plot synopsis.
- Chain of title.

Competent authorities often consult each other before granting provisional status—a time-consuming process. Veteran co-production producers suggest submitting applications at least 2 months prior to principal photography. Competent authority contact information:

- Australia / The Australian Film Commission / www.screenaustralia.gov.au.
- Canada / Telefilm / www.telefilm.gc.ca.
- France / Centre National de la Cinematographie / www.cnc.fr.
- Germany / BAFA / www.bafa.de.
- New Zealand / New Zealand Film Commission / www.nzfilm.co.nz.
- Norway / Norwegian Film Fund / www.filmfondet.no.
- United Kingdom / BFI / www.bfi.org.uk.

Upon completion of the film, a final submission is made along with a detailed cost report. The final cost report needs to be accompanied by an independent accountant's report—one for each of the countries involved in the co-production.

Hint As new countries join in bilateral treaties, and tax laws are negotiated frequently, producers should note that these guidelines are constantly being updated.

The Definition of a British Film

Tax relief as well as grants and other public monies for films produced under co-production treaties, is only available to a British producer if the film qualifies under the Films Act 1985 revised 27 August 1999 Schedule 1.

The requirements for a British film relate to three aspects of the film:

- The nationality of the maker.
- The percentage of the production cost spent in the UK.
- The percentage of labour costs paid to residents of the Commonwealth or the European Economic Area (EEA).

The maker of the film

This is the producer of the film and the person who makes the key executive decisions about the film.

The maker must be incorporated in a member state of the EEA and must operate under the rules of the state. The location of the office is considered to be the location and thus nationality of the producer. Accordingly, the nationality of the producer and the location of the production company are important.

UK production spend requirements

At least twenty-five per cent of the production cost of the film must be spent in the UK. Certain costs are disregarded when calculating total production cost:

- Any expenditure incurred on the acquisition or licensing of copyright works other than those created for use in the film.
 - Any expenditure, including interest, incurred for the purposes of raising or servicing finance for making the film.
 - Any business overheads not directly attributable to the film.
 - Any amount which is deducted by the filmmaker when calculating the requisite amount of labour costs which must be spent on qualifying labour (see below).
-

Hint Minimum UK spend requirement:

A minimum of twenty-five per cent of costs must be spent on UK qualifying production expenditure.

UK qualifying production expenditure is defined as expenditure incurred on filming activities (pre-production, principal photography and post-production) which take place within the UK, irrespective of the nationality of the persons carrying out the activity.

HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) definition of UK spend introduces the concept of where a good or service is 'used or consumed' in the UK. If they are used or consumed in the UK, the expenditure is treated as UK expenditure (under the rules set out in the clauses of the Finance Bill). If they are used or consumed outside the UK, they do not count as UK expenditure.

- Further details on the definition of "used or consumed" are available in HMRC's guidance on Film Tax Relief.
-

Enterprise Investment Scheme (EIS)

'The purpose of Enterprise Investment Schemes is to recognise that unquoted trading companies can often face considerable difficulties in realising relatively small amounts of share capital. The new scheme is intended to provide a well-targeted means for some of those problems to be overcome.'
— Michael Portillo, Chief Secretary to the Treasurer, 1994

The Enterprise Investment Scheme was a 1993 relaunch of the Business Expansion Scheme which was originally launched in 1983 by the Conservative government.

The EIS scheme is a simple inducement to UK taxpayers to invest into qualifying British companies. The scheme offers a series of inducements to investors. Two of the most attractive are income tax relief of up to fifty per cent and the promise of nil tax on profit.

Qualifying is as simple as creating a UK limited company and notifying Inland Revenue of your intent to raise funds. You need to complete an application form and supply them with an outline business plan.

The next step is to secure investment which has two options: do it yourself as a director of your company, or employ a broker who is registered by the financial authorities to do it on your behalf. Brokers can approach people indirectly by creating and issuing a prospectus. They are also licensed to advertise for investment, something you are not allowed to do on your own.

Other Tax Incentives

Various local authorities in Europe and America offer tax incentives for filmmakers to shoot in their locations. Often it is a simple rebate on sales tax spent in a local jurisdiction. Some localities, such as the Isle of Man, offer generous inducements to filmmakers. Contact local authorities in advance of any shoot and regularly check for the latest changes.

Deferrals rightly have a nasty reputation about them, in the industry. In the UK, the crew who worked on the highly successful *Four Weddings and a Funeral* weren't paid their deferrals until 10 years after the release of the film. And the *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* crew have yet to be paid and never will due to the bankruptcy and litigation problems that are now in the hands of the receivers of the production company.

A friend of mine produced a low-budget feature with deferrals. The film opened to critical acclaim. Late one night, the producer received a call from the DoP who couldn't understand why the deferral was unpaid when the newspaper stated that the film had taken half a million at the box office!

Deferrals

Deferrals are simple in theory but complex and difficult to implement. Pay someone later out of profits, offering them a financial inducement to wait, possibly paying them a small percentage of their fee up front.

Hint Avoid deferrals where possible.

Equipment and Post-production Charge Deferrals

Lighting and camera hire facilities as well as post-production facilities will offer to take a deferral on rentals in certain circumstances. Your success at getting these fees deferred depends on your negotiating and sales ability.

Hint Facilities and services have three prices:

1. The cash on delivery price.
 2. The thirty-day invoice price (usually higher than the cash price).
 3. The deferred price (which can be much higher than the cash or invoice price).
-

Crew Deferrals

Often a producer will negotiate a high weekly salary for a cameraperson and then offer a tenth of the salary in cash and the balance on a deferral. The upside is the producer can claim a higher budget which might be a benefit if the film is to be sold under certain tax schemes. But most often, the producer simply has the egoist desire to feel the sound of large numbers rushing through their lips. Far better to negotiate a fixed fee, no matter how low, and then pay it. Deferrals have a habit of haunting the producer months and years after the project is completed and released.

Talent Deferrals

Talent deferrals are common in the studio system, but they also have a place in the independent filmmaking world.

Suppose an actor normally charges £500,000 (\$750,000) per picture. You offer him ten per cent of his normal fee, £50,000 (\$75,000). The actor is looking to recoup the balance of their fee from the proceeds earned by the film.

There are two main ways to do this. First, to give the actor a deferral of ninety per cent by specifying that it will be paid from the proceeds of the film (assuming the film makes enough money) and second, is to give the actor a 'first dollar gross deal'.

First dollar gross deals

This deferral is structured like this: you make a ten per cent down payment, with the balance of the actor's payment secured by ten per cent of the gross from the first dollar. Once you have paid the actor the ten per cent down payment, you do not have to pay the actor anything else until the ninety per cent is also paid—from the first proceeds of the film.

Thereafter, you must pay the actor a ten per cent bonus for everything that is earned by the film.

Assume a contract with an actor for £1 million. You make the advance payment of ten per cent (£100,000) and now you owe them £900,000. The film grosses its first £900,000, and straight away you pay this to the actor. Now you owe them nothing. Happily the film earns another £1 million at the box office. This time you get paid. But you only get £900,000 because you have agreed a ten per cent bonus to the talent for any profit the film makes, so you hand over another £100,000.

Gross participations and deferrals are difficult to negotiate. Often other producing partners and investors will not agree to giving the actor priority—as they too would like to be paid first.

Hint Talent deferrals are an essential element of independent filmmaking today and often are the only way that top directors and actors can be attracted to a project.

Producer Deferrals

Producer fee deferrals work the same way as talent deferrals with the important exception that the producer never gets paid until everyone else has recouped.

Hint Some producers defer part of their fee and treat it as part of the contingency budget.

In many an independent film production, the producer gets no money whatsoever until the film is in profit.

Corridors

One interesting way to finance your film is through the use of a 'corridor', which simply means that you the producer negotiate a percentage of the film's revenue before the investors are paid out.

In a typical film finance model, the investors recoup first and any surplus is divided between the investors and the filmmaker in a pre-arranged profit split. From the filmmakers revenue deferees are then repaid along with producer's profit, if any.

I have used a 50–50 corridor model on several occasions and each time with great success.

Let's assume an investor gives you £100,000 and agrees to a 50–50 corridor. This would mean that if the film was a total failure and you sold just one DVD for a tenner, each side would only get £5. It also means that total income would need to be £200,000 in order for the film to break even from the investors' perspective.

Why, then, would an investor agree to this?

There are several advantages to an investor. By offering key cast and crew deferrals from the first income they can see a potential upside and will generally agree to work at a much reduced rate. This means from an investor's perspective that they are getting a film worth £200,000 or more given the much reduced production costs. Not only does this derisk their investment, it also means that the film has production and cast values that means it can punch way above its weight.

My experience has been that if you don't ask for a corridor you won't get it. And corridors can vary from one per cent to ninety-nine per cent.

Other Sources of Funding

Soundtrack Album

It is a myth that soundtrack albums generate substantial income. In Hollywood the strategy is to get an advance against soundtrack royalties from a record company and use this cash to bump up the music budget. To get a substantial soundtrack advance you need either class A artists performing on the album or a major US/European distribution deal, or both. However, every year some independent filmmaker succeeds in making a film, usually with up-and-coming performers, and secures financing for the film from the record companies or from the artists themselves.

Music Publishing

European producers can often relinquish all rights to their film music in exchange for cash and the rights to use the soundtrack in the film. Music presales are almost unheard of in the US, because, unlike in Europe, music publishers and record companies are separate entities.

Music rights presales will generate thousands, not hundreds of thousands.

Gaming Rights

If your project has the right kind of story, you may be able to sell the gaming rights for a substantial sum. This is usually difficult for independent films, but not unheard of.

Product Placement

Product placement is a deal whereby a manufacturer gives free product, or even pays for the privilege of having its product in a film.

Studio pictures with their accompanying huge marketing budgets can raise substantial money from product placement, which the manufacturers are willing to pay, safe in the knowledge that their products will reach a large audience. With an independent film, you are more likely to get free product only.

The deal-making process will boil down to a simple agreement detailing what products the company is giving/lending you, and your responsibilities to display the product for several time-specific intervals in the film.

Strategies for Raising Finance

There are a host of ways to finance your film. Successful producers seem to be able to blend and mix various financial elements together and when things are looking bleak, they somehow solve financial black holes using their resourcefulness and creativity.

Hint Over a thousand independent films get financed and made every year in English-speaking territories. There is no reason why your film will not be one of these. You will not finance your film until you totally believe in it.

Three Ways to Derisk Your Film Finance Package

I can't tell you how many times I hear filmmakers threatening to throw in the towel and give up what could be a promising career because they haven't been able to raise finance. There hasn't been a single entrepreneur from Steve Jobs to Christopher Columbus who found early seed money easy. But they each managed to derisk their investor's package and so doing made their projects more attractive to investors. A meeting with a potential equity investor these days is rarer than the proverbial needle in the haystack. And the first concern of any investor is surely going to be: 'What's my downside?' There are three key ways a filmmaker can derisk a project:

1 The Power of Genre

Picking a script that contains a strong identifiable genre makes a film more interesting to distributors immediately. Learn how genre works. Learn how film distributors around the world use genre as a hook to market movies. Learn how audiences choose their movies by genre. Get a sales agent to estimate the income stream that your movie can generate.

Then present your derisked project to investors.

2 The Power of Talent

People don't pay to see films. They pay to see movies. The quickest way to turn a film into a movie is by using an actor with star power. The more visible the actor, the quicker they turn your film into a movie. Of course, that can raise the budget too, but it also raises the potential income of the movie.

Do your research and hone your business plan. Present your project to talent and get them excited about participating in your film.

Then present your derisked project to investors.

3 The Power of UK Tax Programmes

The UK has an excellent tax-efficient programme called the Enterprise Investment Scheme as described above. Depending on the profile of your investor, the maximum exposure can be reduced to as little as twenty-five per cent and in some situations as little as two per cent.

Do your research on the Enterprise Investment Scheme.

Then present your derisked project to investors. But hurry. Word of this novel approach is filtering to America and a whole string of American producers are booking airfares to London Town so they can cash in too.

Crowdfunding

Remember that all government tax-led incentive schemes change frequently. Research heavily before you commit to any film finance route.

Crowdfunding is generally seen as a relatively new phenomenon, but what would you say if I told you that it has been going for over 300 years, sort of . . . During the 17th century something called the Subscription Business Model was available where the public would donate money monthly, allowing the book printing agencies to make the books/magazines/newspapers.

A similar business model was also used in 1884 to facilitate the completion of the Statue of Liberty's pedestal. Newspaper publisher Joseph Pulitzer encouraged the American public to donate money in his newspaper *New York World*. Pulitzer raised over \$100,000 in 6 months; over 125,000 people donated \$1 or less.

Crowdfunding has become a viable part of film finance models. In 2013 we started to witness another phenomenon in the crowdfunding arena: the celebrity crowdfunded film with the likes of *Veronica Mars* and Zach Braff. These celebrity-driven crowdfunded projects are often criticised by filmmakers claiming the money for their low-budget films is being drained away by filmmakers already financially secure and able to fund themselves. My opinion is that the celebrity use of these fundraising forms helps publicise this rather modern approach.

The Crowdfunding Industry

The area of collaboration on the web is an area of exponential growth. The *Crowdfunding Industry Report* by Massolution states that over \$2.7 billion was raised in 2012, and by 2015 the figure is expected to top

\$5.1 billion. At the time of writing this edition (mid-2013) there are some interesting developments including the rise of investment crowdfunding (owning shares in a company), localization (targeting specific locations) and use of mobiles. US President Obama passed the JOBS Act in 2012 which allows for investment crowdfunding, but the SEC in America has yet to rule on this. Crowdfunders expect a seismic shift in this sector of the market in 2014/15.

Crowdfunding Models

There are two types of crowdfunding models. The first is for donation-based funding. This was really the start of the web-based crowdfunding movement. Donors can fund just about anything from hobbyists, causes, charities and movies.

The second is investment crowdfunding where a business seeking capital can offer equity or debt. In this model, funders have the opportunity to gain ownership and possible return on their investment unlike the donation only model.

Choosing a Crowdfunding Website

There are hundreds of crowdfunding websites, each catering to different sectors of the market. There are crowdfunding websites for musicians, for charities, for general creative projects, for tech startups and causes. Each website has its own financial model and focus.

To date I have been involved in two crowdfunding campaigns: *The Underwater Realm* on kickstarter.com and *Love.Honour.Obey.* on indiegogo.com.

Here is what I learned:

- Choose between a goal-based target like Kickstarter.com where the filmmaker gets zero if the target is not met, or a hoped-for target (like indiegogo.com) where you get to keep the money raised.
- Decide if you are approaching your customers or fans—or both. Each category will require different perks or rewards.
- Preplan in great detail your marketing assets.
- Do not launch until you have a sizeable social media audience.
- Attempt to get celebrity endorsement.
- Go for '3D' perks—perks that involve the audience like a walk-on part in the film, shadowing the director, being 1st AD for a day and so on.

Trig's Top Five for a Successful Crowdfunding Experience

For many of us filmmakers out there, crowdfunding can be quite a daunting task, but here are my top five tips for a successful campaign that can help filmmakers at all levels run a campaign that'll be the talk of the crowd long after the funds come in.

A one-man consulting machine, John T. Trigonis has worked with numerous filmmakers worldwide to create compelling crowdfunding campaigns that not only reach, but also exceed their goals. An independent filmmaker and successful crowdfunder himself, Trigonis has literally written the book—*Crowdfunding for Filmmakers*—and now puts his skills to greater use with Indiegogo as the funding platform's manager of film, web and video campaigns.

1 Get the lay of the land before your launch out onto the field

Sun Tzu writes about the importance of reconnaissance. Machiavelli harps on the necessity of knowing one's own limitations. I echo these masters in that you must do your research. It's not enough to say that a particular filmmaker raised X amount in X number of days. Look at how they raised that money, and then ask yourself what you can realistically raise. Choosing the proper target amount, the right number of days, who your teammates will be—all of these decisions can be made easier by the amount of research you put into your preliminary phase, not only numerical, but experiential, as well.

2 Make a memorable appearance at the party

The first step of getting to the next level of anything is showing up, and the same holds true for crowdfunding, particularly in your pitch video. Whether you're raising funds for production, post-production or even distribution funds, make sure you show your face in your pitch video—it's the first impression potential contributors will get of you, and you want to make it last. Very seldom do people give to projects; today, people give to people instead.

3 Offer up something more than just stuff

Crowdfunding thrives on the idea that people give us money, and we give them perks, or rewards, for their contributions. But you want to avoid a campaign that is highly what I call "stuff driven"—here's a DVD of my film for \$25; here's a T-shirt, too, for \$50 and so on. These are good "standard definition" perks, which are mandatory, but you'll also want to get a bit more "High Def" such as dinner with the director or a Skype call with your lead actor.

4 Butterflies are out, dragonflies are in

Crowdfunding would not be what it is today without social media. We all have Twitter and Facebook accounts, and now is the time to use them properly. It's important, however, not to talk solely about yourself and your upcoming crowdfunding campaign. You need to build some social proof first. Tweet about things you know, like making movies and obscure English directors. It's also good to share links with your followers and friends. Most importantly, start listening to the people who follow you so they'll start listening to you, which will become especially important when you launch your campaign; the ones who are really listening will be among the first to fund you.

5 Don't settle for a campaign, strive for an experience

My Indiegogo colleague Adam Chapnick has a great saying: 'If you're crowdfunding to raise money, you're doing it wrong.' A closer look at successful crowdfunding will show that the money raised is a byproduct of how much engagement you can muster up from your community. And with so many filmmakers raising funds for everything from horror features to comedic shorts and poignant documentaries, simple campaigns will oftentimes get lost in the flood. Therefore, give your community a complete three-dimensional experience and 4K your efforts by making personalizing every element of your campaign—from your pitch video to your perks and promotion, PR and marketing. It's important for us filmmakers to be just as creative in our crowdfunding as we are in when making our movies.

Top Ten Crowdfunding Websites

1 Kickstarter

Kickstarter was one of the earliest players on the market and has enjoyed several high-profile celebrity campaigns in 2013. The site is mainly for creative projects—everything from a new music album to an art installation, although they have also found donations for innovative technology projects and video games. Movies have also used this site. Kickstarter is growing at an enormous rate. Their site is easy to use. Their model is target based: if you fail to reach your target you get nothing.

2 Indiegogo

Unlike Kickstarter, which has a very tightly curated approval process and maintains a very tight focus on its campaigns, Indiegogo has campaigns for just about everything from personal finance to creative projects and everything in between except investment. They are based in over 180 countries and, like Kickstarter, were early entrants into crowdfunding.

3 Crowdfunder

Crowdfunder is aimed at businesses: tech startups, small businesses and social enterprises (financially sustainable/profitable businesses with social impact goals). Crowdfunder's model offers blended donation-based and investment-based options. They were one of the main drivers in getting the JOBS Act legislated.

4 RocketHub

RocketHub offers donation-based funding for a wide variety of creative projects.

RocketHub uniquely connects campaign owners and potential promotion and marketing partners.

5 Crowdrise

Crowdrise is a place for donation-based funding for causes and charity. Their unique points system helps track and reveal how much charitable impact members and organizations are making.

6 Somolend

Somolend provides debt-based lending for small businesses in America. They have partnered with banks to offer loans which are then backed by friends and acquaintances of the business. They were also one of the strong drivers for the JOBS legislation.

7 Appbackr

This site offers donation-based funding for mobile app developers.

8 AngelList

This is a traditional funder now branching into crowdfunding for tech startups.

9 Invested.in

If you are considering launching your own crowdfunding community to fund your own projects, Invested.in offers a bespoke 'white label' software which will enable you to start your own crowdfunding site.

10 Quirky

Quirky is aimed at inventors seeking donation-based funding to launch their inventions.

Whether or not you are seeking crowdfunding or not, go and browse through these websites and see how they promote themselves and how they grow a collaborative community.

Glossary of Crowdfunding Terms

Here is a list of terms that may come in useful if you decide to start your own crowdfunding campaign!

Ad swap

This is when projects promote each other in a basic synergy type deal by exchanging ad space—this is useful as it is free advertising in exchange for you placing some poster or banner up and helping out a fellow crowdfunder.

Audience interaction

This one is pretty self-explanatory; it's the audiences who are active in the progression of your project, be it by responding to polls, leaving feedback or throwing in their opinion of the plot of the story or the marketing techniques. This is ideal for creators who like to interact with other creative people and it breaks down the barrier between them and the consumers.

Barker

Someone who uses social networking sites and other mediums to promote a project and help show it to the masses. This is great, as friends of the creators can do this and get ten times the amount of people to notice a project.

Call for prompts

Asking the audience to offer up their ideas for input in creative matters. Prompters may get an advanced sneak peak at the results. This activity can be done live (see Fishbowl).

Creator

The person who runs a crowdfunded project; can be an artist, author, musician or inventor etc.

Crowdfunding

A business model in which ordinary people all donate small amounts of their money to achieve what a big production company or bank would do. It allows the creator to go directly to the audience and cut out the long and often unsuccessful process of funding your project using the more traditional

methods. It may even help to find a distributor for the film, as a successfully crowdfunded project shows popularity with audiences.

Cyberfunded creativity

Cyberfunded creativity is a subtype of crowdfunding, which concentrates on creative material in online sites.

Donation button

The small graphic on the screen which may be clicked to take the shopper to a money handling site where they may send funds to the creator. If done through the PayPal 'Donate' button, it allows the shopper to designate the amount (useful if the project has many items of different prices).

Fan

A fan is someone who is dedicated to a crowdfunded project, but who maybe doesn't contribute money to it. Instead they promote the project, comment on the page and create a buzz and enthusiasm for the project.

First reader

This is a volunteer editor. This can be a friend, family member or a fan, who looks over a rough draft and suggests improvements so that you can make before the final version gets published. Some crowdfunding projects provide perks for supporters who do this. Also known as a Beta reader.

Fishbowl

An exercise in which an audience makes suggestions or analytical comments whilst observing the creator (or someone in his/her team) as they make suggestions about their project. In cyberfunded creativity this can be done online, usually on a live blog. The fishbowl technique can also be used for brainstorming business projects or other ideas.

Honor Roll

A list of names accrediting a project's patrons and/or other supporters.

Hub site

Websites such as Kickstarter or Indiegogo that show us many different projects. There are also hub sites that host specific types of content, such as webcomics or fiction.

K-fan

This is a fan who spends £100 or more per year on one creator's work. These fans started the idea of crowdfunded projects.

Landing page

The page that explains the summary of the project and a guide to its parts; how much money they are looking for; when they need it by and what you get when you donate etc. This is for new visitors to learn about the project, and a navigation tool for established fans to find their way through it.

Linkback

The promotion of a project by posting the URL to its landing page. This helps entice more people to the project. Also known as linklove or linkluv.

Patron

Someone who contributes money to a crowdfunded project. It may apply to a specific item for publication, or to the project as a whole. Also known as backer, donor or sponsor.

Perk

A benefit for doing something in a crowdfunded project, such as making a donation or linking back to a post. Perks may be individual (if you pay X amount, you get a signed copy of the script) or collective (if total donations reach Y amount, an extra behind-the-scenes episode is produced for everyone who has donated to enjoy). There are many types of perks and ways to earn them.

Progress meter

An interactive graphic that provides a visual representation of how the venture is moving towards its target. More often than not, something happens when the goal is reached, such as the audience getting a perk. Note that projects often have multiple goals, while most meters can only track one (the highest). A popular source is TickerFactory. Sometimes if the target is not met, all donations are returned to their donors.

Prompter

Someone who provides creativeness and proposals to a creator, usually during a call for prompts. Regular prompters in an ongoing project can build up considerable sway.

Series anchor

An audience member with a prevailing influence over a series.

Sponsor

A person who pays for a specific item to be released. A sponsor covers the whole price; some projects allow for several cosponsors to split the price. (This is distinct from general patrons who may donate toward the project as a whole, rather than individual items).

Swag

The items that are used as perks or promotions as rewards for a project. These may include bookmarks of a book's cover, copy of the DVD or book and other merchandise related to the project.

Tag

A word or short phrase that identifies a project or topic. Tags function in online venues to help people find projects or material that interests them for example a tag for a James Bond book may be 'spy, thriller, mystery'. The

Twitter term is hashtag, for the # symbol that appears at the beginning, such as #crowdfunding.

Tip jar

This is a method by which audiences can donate random amounts of money to a project that doesn't have set prices, or in addition to set prices for people who wish to support the project as a whole.

Summary

1. Money can be found everywhere—learn where to look for it.
2. Government tax structures change constantly. Seek advice.
3. Make sure the budget you raise suits the story you are trying to tell. Knowledge is power. Information gives you knowledge. Turn the page for resources to kick-start your career.

Seven Essential Steps for Becoming Rich and Famous by Making a Low-Budget Film

Step 7 Talent

If you don't have talent, you can still make it in the film industry. There are many filmmakers and film producers who are very good at the other six essential skills for becoming rich and famous in the film industry, but who have little or no talent.

- They are good at raising money.
- They know how to identify a great script.
- They have excellent interpersonal communication skills.
- They understand the principles of business and marketing.
- They have unlimited resources of energy.
- They know their limitations and resolutely know how to say no.

But talent is not one of their fortes, and they still make hugely rewarding careers as filmmakers.

What does the film industry really call talent? And what do they mean by 'a talented newcomer'?

Essentially it is someone who can take a stage play, add a few cheaply produced elements that give it a cinematic feel and from a stage play create cinema. That is what the industry calls talent. If you can do that you will earn a sinfully decadent amount of money, and from the industry executive's point of view, you will be worth every penny.

And if you really think about it, to take a limited budget, and go into production with a small shooting ratio like 4:1 or 5:1, with a limited crew over a short period of time, and make sure the script is good, and then add the editing, post-production, sound and music to the process does take talent.

If you can combine steps one to six with talent, then you truly are an amazing filmmaker, and even I believe you are worth every penny and every second of the outrageously huge amounts of fortune and publicity you will earn.

26 Resources

British Film Institute

First port of call for all things film in the UK including funding, advice, the year round cinema, library and videotheque as well as the London Film Festival.

www.bfi.org.uk

Writer's Guild of America

The guild for writers in America, with a great set of resources for writers around the world—check out their 'resources' and 'tools' sections.

www.wga.org

Writer's Guild of Great Britain

The guild for British writers. Less powerful than the American guild but still your first port of call in the UK.

www.writersguild.org.uk

John August

A great blog and series of podcasts on screenwriting from John August, writer of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *Big Fish* and *Frankenweenie*.

www.johnaugust.com

Done Deal

All inclusive resources for the screenwriter: contacts for production companies, agencies, managers and lawyers; information on contests; examples of all necessary documents and the latest news in script sales.

www.donedealpro.com

Simply Scripts

The best way to write better screenplays is to read the ones that work. This website provides thousands of classic and contemporary film and TV scripts a mouse click away.

www.simplyscripts.com

KFTV

An invaluable portal for searching out full crews or specialised technicians with the right experience across the entire globe.

www.kftv.com

Film Riot

A series of how-to videos on everything from building your own steadicam to basic VFX, very entertainingly put together by a young filmmaker and his friends and family.

www.revision3.com/filmriot

Filmmaker IQ

An aggregator of filmmaking advice from hundreds of sources; they have recently started putting together their own informative videos.

www.filmmakeriq.com

Cinematography

A great forum for cinematographers.

www.cinematography.com

Without a Box

International exchange that makes the process of submitting work to film festivals easy and efficient for filmmakers. Includes extensive information on film festivals around the world.

www.withoutabox.com

Film Festivals

International film festival site with links to submit. Information and news on film festivals and festival films and links to watch festival films online.

www.filmfestivals.com

Movie Maker

Extensive database of links to information on film festivals.

www.moviemaker.com/category/festivals/

101 Public Relations

Slightly dated but fairly comprehensive and highly informative PR site with links to resources which advise filmmakers of the dos and don'ts of public relations.

www.101PublicRelations.com/homeb.html

So You Wanna . . .

Overview tips from pre- to post-production on a low-budget film project.

www.soyouwanna.com/site/syws/makemovie/makemovie.html

Web Film School

Part of Dov S-S Simens' website for his renowned teaching methods which provide a crash course for writing, producing and directing independent feature films. The resources section of his web film school site contains an exhaustive list of industry specific links from A to Z.

www.webfilmschool.com

Indiewire

Unbeatable source for news, buzz and gossip on independent productions, festivals and personalities. The site also contains a variety of well-kept message boards which harbour a community atmosphere and key contact information for companies you won't find anywhere else.

www.indiewire.com

Filmmaking.net

Large site that contains links for various aspects of the UK film industry from production information to film festivals to film reviews.

www.filmmaking.net

Filmmaking.com

An attractive site containing an abundance of great information on a mammoth range of filmmaking topics.

www.filmmaking.com

Film Underground

Dedicated to helping independent filmmakers do what they love by offering links and information on current projects that are underway and on fellow filmmakers in your area.

www.filmunderground.com

Indie Talk

Online community for independent filmmakers with a forum for communication, free ad posting and a screening room to post your film for discussion and feedback. The discussion board is also browseable, providing a substantial resource for general filmmaking information.

www.indietalk.com

Shooting People

Newsgroup site that sends up-to-date bulletins to filmmakers on production, screenwriting, casting, animation, documentary filmmaking and much more. The subscriber community is over 30,000 strong.

www.shootingpeople.org

27 Endpapers

About Raindance

Since 1992 Raindance has led the way in championing independent films and filmmaking. Founded by filmmakers seeking information and advice when the British was foundering, Raindance has become the first port of call for independent filmmakers in Britain, Europe and around the world.



figure 27.1

Raindance courses have launched the careers of many filmmakers including Edgar Wright, Christopher Nolan, Mathew Vaughn and Guy Ritchie. In 2011 Raindance launched an innovative and flexible postgraduate film degree in partnership with Staffordshire University and the charity the Independent Film Trust.

The Raindance Film Festival launched in 1993 to provide a public platform for independent film. Considered by *Variety Magazine* to be a 'breakout' film festival, over forty-four per cent of the 101 films have secured British distribution. Raindance is one of only two film festivals which can qualify shorts for the Oscars™.

In 1998 Elliot Grove and Raindance founded the British Independent Film Awards which has grown to be Britain's premiere awards show for independent film.

In 2013 Raindance Raw Talent was formed to produce bold, fresh and innovative films on microbudgets.

Raindance has branch offices in Berlin, Budapest, Brussels, Paris, Vancouver, Toronto and New York. Raindance has a membership scheme which has attracted over 2,000 filmmakers, screenwriters and directors.

www.raindance.org

Join Raindance: Be A Raindance Member!

Join over 2,000 international filmmakers and benefit from all the perks of a Raindance member.

- Want free script registration?
- Want a fifteen per cent discount on all courses?
- Want access to our online courses and filmmaker resources?
- Want access to legal contracts and documents?
- Want free/discounted access to Raindance & BIFA events?

Get on the inside: join Raindance here: www.raindance.org/premium.

Raindance Feedback

Your comments are important to us. If you read and enjoyed this book, Raindance offers you the chance to participate in spreading the word!

Simply post a review to any website, like Amazon or Barnes & Noble, and when the review appears we will send you a complimentary 1 year's premium membership worth \$100 (North America) or €50 (Europe).

How to Claim Your Free Premium Membership

To prove that you have written a review (positive or negative) send a link to the piece to info@raindance.co.uk along with your name, email and contact details. We will then activate your 1-year membership.

Write and Sell the Hot Script

If you're looking for a straightforward, practical, no-nonsense guide to script-writing that will hold your hand right through the process, read on! *The Raindance Writers' Lab* guides you through the tools that enable you to execute a strong treatment for a feature and be well on the way to the first draft of your script.

Written by the creator of the Raindance Film Festival himself, Elliot Grove uses a hands-on approach to screenwriting based on his many years of experience teaching the subject for Raindance training. He uses step-by-step processes illustrated with diagrams and charts to lend a visual structure to the teaching. Techniques are related to real-life examples throughout, from low-budget to blockbuster films.

The Companion Website contains interviews with British writers and directors as well as a handy series of legal contracts, video clips and writing exercises.

In this brand new second edition, Grove expands on his story structure theory, as well as how to write for the Internet and short films.

The website also contains sample scripts and legal contracts, a writing exercise illustrated with a video clip, a folder full of useful hyperlinks for research and a demo version of Final Draft screenwriting software.

Paperback: 272 pages

Publisher: Focal Press; Second edition (22 September 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0240520793

ISBN-13: 978-0240520797

On the Website

www.lotono
budgetfilm
making.com

The website includes extra material and interviews from the first and second edition as well as printable versions of tables, forms and contracts to enable your production to run as smoothly as possible.

Showreels and Film Clips

Crab to dolly shoot from *Table 5*

Selection of Raindance film festival trailers

Selection of Nokia 15 Second Shorts

Printable Production Paperwork

Location release form

Risk assessment form

Office checklist

Template call sheet

Movement order template

Producer agreement
Writer agreement
Director agreement
Option agreement
Short form actors contract

Extra Information

International standards and voltage chart
Script format guide
Summary of Gregg Millard's script services
Extra information on development funding
Carl Schoenfeld on best practices for business plans
Simon Hunter on directing
Patrick Tucker on directing
Tim Klotz on fight directing

Appendix

Top 101 Film Festivals

January

1. Palm Springs International Film Festival

www.psfilmfest.org

2. Rendez Vous with French Cinema Paris

en.unifrance.org

3. International Film Festival Rotterdam

www.filmfestivalrotterdam.com

4. CineMart

www.filmfestivalrotterdam.com

5. Gotterburg International Film Festival

www.giff.se

6. Slamdance

www.slamdance.com

7. Sundance Film Festival

www.sundance.org

February

8. International Short Film Festival Clermont Ferrand

www.clermont-filmfest.com

9. Berlinale—Berlin Film Festival

www.berlinale.de

10. European Film Market

www.efm-berlinale.de

11. Berlin Talent Campus

www.berlinale-talentcampus.de

12. World Content Market Prague

www.worldcontentmarket.com

13. FESPACO

www.fespaco-bf.net

14. True/False Film Festival

www.truefalse.org

March

15. South by Southwest

www.sxsw.com

16. Sofia International Film Festival

www.siff.bg

17. One World International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival

www.oneworld.cz

18. Tampere Film Festival

www.tamperefilmfestival.fi

19. Hong Kong Film Festival

www.hkiff.org.hk

20. Ann Arbor Film Festival

www.aafilmfest.org

21. Cinema du Réel

www.cinemadureel.org

April

22. MipTV

www.miptv.com

23. Buenos Aires International Independent Film Festival (BAFICI)

www.bafici.gov.ar

24. Tribeca Film Festival

www.tribecafilm.com

25. San Francisco International Film Festival

www.sffs.org

26. Hot Docs

www.hotdocs.ca

27. Udine Far East Film Festival

www.fareastfilm.com

28. Nippon Connection Frankfurt

www.nipponconnection.com

May

29. DOXA Vancouver

www.doxafestival.ca

30. Cannes Film Festival

www.festival-cannes.com

31. Marché Du Film

www.marchedufilm.com

32. Un Certain Regard

www.festival-cannes.com

33. Directors' Fortnight

www.quinzaine-realisateurs.com

34. Semaine de la Critique/Critics Weeks

www.semainedelacritique.com

35. ACID

www.lacid.fr

36. Seattle International Film Festival

www.siff.net

37. Zlin Fest: International Film Festival for Children and Youth

www.zlinfest.cz

June

38. Sydney Film Festival

www.sff.org.au

39. Transylvania International Film Festival

www.tiff.ro

40. Annecy International Animated Film Festival

www.annecy.org

41. Marché International Du Film d'Animation (MIFA)

www.annecy.org

42. Silver Docs: AFI/Discovery Channel Documentary Film Festival

www.afi.com/afidocs

43. Palm Springs Shortfest and Film Market

www.psfilmfest.org

44. Edinburgh International Film Festival

www.edfilmfest.org.uk

45. Moscow International Film Festival

www.moscowfilmfestival.ru

46. London UK Film Focus (LUFF)

www.filmlondon.org.uk/LUFF

47. Karlovy Vary Film Festival

www.kviff.com

July

48. Sarajevo Film Festival

www.sff.ba

49. Bogota Audiovisual Market

www.bogotamarket.com

50. Comic-Con

www.comic-con.org

51. Puchon International Fantastic Film Festival

www.pifan.com

52. New Horizons International Film Festival

www.nowehoryzonty.pl

53. New Zealand International Film Festival

www.nziff.co.nz

August

54. Fantasia Festival International de Films Montreal

www.fantasiafestival.com

55. Melbourne International Film Festival

www.miff.com.au

56. DocuWeeks

www.documentary.org

57. Festival del film Locarno

www.pardo.ch

58. Norwegian International Film Festival Haugesund

www.filmweb.no/filmfestivalen

59. Melbourne Underground Film Festival

www.muff.com.au

60. World Film Festival Montreal

www.ffm-montreal.org

61. La Biennale di Venezia, Venice Film Festival

www.labiennale.org

62. Telluride Film Festival

www.telluridefilmfestival.org

September

63. Deauville Film Festival

www.festival-deauville.com

64. Toronto International Film Festival

www.tiff.net

65. Filmfest Oldenburg / Oldenburg Film Festival

www.filmfest-oldenburg.de

66. Helsinki International Film Festival

www.hiff.fi

67. Fantastic Fest Austin

www.fantasticfest.com

68. Pyongyang International Film Festival

www.pyongyanginternationalfilmfestival.com

69. Zurich Film Festival

www.zff.com

70. San Sebastian International Film Festival

www.sansebastianfestival.com

71. Independent Film Week

www.ifp.org

72. Raindance Film Festival

www.raindance.org/festival-2013

73. Reykjavik International Film Festival

www.riff.is

74. New York Film Festival

www.filmlinc.com/nyff

75. Tri Continents Film Festival

www.3continentsfestival.co.za

October

76. Dinard Film Festival

www.festivaldufilm-dinard.com

77. Sitges Film Festival

www.sitgesfilmfestival.com

78. Pusan Film Festival / Asian Film Market

www.biff.kr

79. MIPCom

www.miptv.com/MIPCOM/

80. Ghent Film Festival

www.filmfestival.be

81. Adelaide Film Festival

www.adelaidefilmfestival.org

82. Chicago International Film Festival

www.chicagofilmfestival.com

83. Abu Dhabi Film Festival

www.abudhabifilmfestival.ae

84. Hamptons International Film Festival

www.hamptonsfilmfest.org

85. London Film Festival

www.bfi.org.uk/lff

86. Tokyo Film Festival

www.2013.tiff-jp.net

87. Sao Paulo International Film Festival

www.mostra.org

November

88. Rome Film Festival

www.romacinemafest.it

89. Thessaloniki Film Festival

www.filmfestival.gr

90. Geneva International Film Festival

www.tous-ecrans.com

91. Festival Cine//B

www.festivalcineb.com

92. Cottbus Film Festival

www.filmfestivalcottbus.de

93. American Film Market (AFM)

www.afma.com

94. Taipei Golden Horse Film Festival

www.taipeiff.org.tw

95. American Film Institute Festival

www.afi.com/afifest

96. Mar Del Plata

www.mardelplatafilmfest.com

97. Turin Film Festival

www.torinofilmfest.org

98. Stockholm Film Festival

www.stockholmfilmfestival.se

99. Cairo International Film Festival

www.ciff.org.eg

December

100. Ventana Sur / Buenos Aires Market

www.ventanasur.gov.ar

101. Dubai Film Festival

www.dubaifilmfest.com

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Index

Page numbers in italics refer to figures and tables.

- accent lights 86
- acoustics 75
- acquisitions 231–4, 308–9
- actors 198–204; auditioning 185;
 - biographies for 240–1; break out
 - budget for 28; casting 204, 211–14, 380; child 33, 123, 203–4; contracts for 199–200, 207; directing 184–5, 191–5; employment laws for 40; finding 202–3; health and safety of 119; insuring 136; lighting of 84; nudity and 99, 391; scheduling 32–3; stunts and 98; working with 191–5
- adult movies 231
- agents 175, 179–83, 359–60
- Akrouf, Edward 380
- Albermaniche, Nigel 380, 392; sound report for *Love.Honour.Obey.* 393–4
- Alberstat, Phil 159
- All Men Are Mortal* 150
- ambient light 86
- ambient sound 75
- American Film Market (AFM) 279
- analogue soundtrack 75
- Anderson, Paul 3
- Andrew, Geoff 253
- animal safety 121–2
- aperture controls 57
- art departments 95–6, 142, 143
- art designers 106–9
- artwork. *see* posters and artwork
- ASA (ISO) 86
- asking estimates 282
- aspirant noises 63
- assistant directors 142
- associate producers 168
- atmospheres 75
- Attwood, Lucy 380
- audiences: for self-distributed films 323; surveys for 414–15
- auditions 185
- Automatic Dialogue Replacement (ADR) 67, 70–1, 157
- Auty, Chris 170
- available light 4–5, 84–5, 86
- back lights 83, 86
- Badiel, David 289
- Baer, David 40
- Banaaz a Love Story* 329
- Band of Brothers* 104
- Barber, Matt 380
- barndoor 87
- barneys 58
- Barton Fink* 68
- base lights 87
- Beautiful Mind, A* 254
- Bender, Lawrence 11–12, 158
- Benning, Sadie 6
- Bermuda Film Festival 257
- best boys 80
- Bevan, Tim 170
- bilateral treaties 425–6
- Blair Witch Project, The* 287–8, 357; poster 303; soundtrack 160
- blogging 334
- B-movies 231
- body doubles 99
- Bollywood 231
- Bolt, Jeremy 3
- Bomber* 72–3
- booking fees 299–300
- boom microphones 64
- bounce lights 87
- box office 309
- Boyle, Danny 210–11
- branding 312–14, 351
- break out budget 28
- Brian, John 74
- British Board of Film Classification 300
- British Film Institute, The 369–70
- British films 428–9

Broken Vessels 22, 40
 budget 3, 21–46; above the line
 167–214; break out 28; choosing
 your 21–2, 28–30; describing your
 23; development 366–73; directing
 186–9; elements of 26; example of
 379; film festivals 259, 260; Hollywood
 22; increasing 215–27; industry
 377–8; *Love.Honour.Obey.* 373–416;
 matching to script 23; P&A 299; pre-
 production 380–1; refrigerator theory
 30–1; self-distribution 323; setting
 realistic goals for 46; *Table 5 30*; top
 sheets for 27, 220; writing to 35–8
 bullying 9
 businesses: film festival 257–8;
 incorporating 130–3; insuring 135–8;
 plans for 347–58; setting up your office
 125–30, 137
Buster 319
 butterfly 87
 buzz 301
 buzz words 23–4
 Byrne, Lucy 6

 call sheets 140, 141
 camcorders 49, 66
 camera crews 54, 78, 79, 80, 142
 camera reports 396–413
 cameras 5–6, 47–9, 53–9; directing 186,
 188; movement of 53–4
 Cannes Film Festival 269–72, 284–7
 cardioid microphones 64
 casting 204, 211–14, 380
 casting couch 10–11
 cast members. see actors
 cat in the window shots 186
 celluloid 53
 censorship ratings 300
 chain of title 364
 Charity, Tom 251–5
 child actors 33, 123, 203–4
 cinema lighting 87
 cinematography 54, 77–94
 clapperboard 79
 clapper/loader 79
 claws 53
 close-ups 186, 189
 Coates, Stephen 72–4
 Coen Brothers 68
 colour grading 161
 colour temperature 87
Commitments, The 211–12
 completion guarantees 424–5
 composers 72–4
 computer-generated imagery (CGI)
 101–2
 continuity 163
 contracts: actors' 199–200, 201;
 deferred payment 200; directors' 184;
 employment 127; producers' 172;
 writers' 178, 365
 contrast 56–7
 cool light 87
 co-producers 169, 425–8
 copyright 364, 365
 Corman, Roger 97, 154, 170, 278
 corridor financing 431–2
 crab shots 55
 craftspeople 143
 crane operators 80
 cranes 34
 credits 86, 167–8
 crews 80, 143; biographies for 240–1;
 feeding 145–6; health and safety of
 119; hiring and firing 140, 143–4;
 members of 142–3; payment of 144;
 union 145
 crossing the line 163
 crowdfunding 3–4, 434–41
 cuts 88, 98, 163
 cyclorama 88

Dancing at the Blue Iguana 250
 dangerous substances and equipment 121
 day shooting 33
 deferrals 430–1
 delivery schedules 137, 297–8
 Demarbe, Lee 234
 designers/design departments 100
 development: executives 232; financing 366–
 73; process 363–420; teams 177
 dialog 61
 dichroic coating 88
 diffusion materials 88
 digital cameras 43–4, 49–50, 66
 Digital Imaging Technicians (D.I.T.) 79, 394
 digital soundtracks 75
 directors 90, 183–91; actors and
 184–5, 191–5; choosing 173, 374–5;
 contracts for 184; fight directors and
 100; hiring 142, 184; job description
 of 183–4; qualities of 145, 189–90;
 responsibilities of 184–7
 directors of photography (DoP) 49–50,
 77–94; career route of 85–6; hiring 85;
 job description of 77, 78–9
Dirty Dancing 319
 dissolve 163
 distribution 295–330; alternative 321–30;
 companies 297–8, 369; deals 308–9;
 fees 300; glossary of terms 307–9;
 international 319; marketing plan for
 299; online 359; release windows
 296; self- 321–2; studio 306; tools for
 303–6
 Djalili, Omid 289
Dr Psychodelia 27
 Dolby Digital 75
 dollies 34, 55

- Doree, Lara 380, 392
 Doyle, Christopher 56
 drivers 123–4
 DSLRs 48–9, 57, 66
 dubbing 75
Dumb and Dumber 319
 DVDs 296, 310, 322
 dynamic range 75
- editing 154–7, 163–5
 Edwards, Gareth 106
 effects: music and effects (M&E) 160;
 sound 61, 67–8, 76; special 34, 40–1,
 96
 eighthing 31, 32
 electricians 5
 electronic press kits (EPK) 244
El Mariachi 22–3, 43
 emergencies 119
 endorsements 243
 energy 278
 Enterprise Investment Schemes (EIS) 429
 equipment: for business offices 125–6;
 insuring 136; safety of 119–20, 121
 Equity 200, 202
 errors and omissions insurance
 (E&O) 365
 errors of continuity 163
 establishing shots 164
 etiquette 13–14
 European Convention of Cinematographic
 Co-Production 426
 European Film Market 279
 European points system 427
 evaluation forms 264
Evita 212
 executive producers 169
 exhibitors 231, 302–3
 explosions 99, 122
 extreme close-ups 186
 eyeline match 164
- Facebook 335, 340–1
 fade 164
 fake blood 97
 fall-off 88
 Faughnan, Sean 133–8
 feature length 25
 festival programmers 263–5
 field of view (FOV) 57
 Figgis, Mike 4, 61, 85, 359
 fight directors 99–100
 fill lights 83, 88
 film 47; look of 3, 51, 95; originating format
 51; production values of 95–109;
 16mm/Super 16 51; Super 8 51;
 Super 35 52; 35mm 25, 41–3, 51, 52
 film buyers 231–4, 312
 film commissions 111
 film critics 251–5
 film drives 55
 film festivals 298, 305, 360–1; attending
 268–9; budget for 259, 260; evaluation
 forms for 264; marketing for 259–60;
 schedule for 262; sponsorships for
 259–60; staffing 263–6; starting your
 own 257–62; submission fees for 268;
 top 101 451–7; types of 266–7
 film industry: buzz words used in 23–4;
 etiquette for 13–14; personality types
 in 9–13
 filmmaking: budgeting and scheduling 19,
 21–46; guerrilla 25, 37, 113; learn by
 doing 1; motivations for 6–7; obstacles
 to 15–16; process 229; resources for
 443–6; safety concerns 118–24
 film markets 279–93, 289–90, 298
 film production companies 368
 film rates 202
 film rights 200, 323, 363–5
 filters 58, 92
 final cuts 156, 164
 financing: checklist for 137; crowdfunding
 3–4; development 366–73; loans 2,
 421–2; model for 375; production
 421–41; raising 433–40; self-funding
 4; sources of 421; working without
 money 3
 fine cuts 156
 firearms 99, 122
 first aid 120
 flag 88
 flare 88
 flash 93
 flat lights 88
 flood lights 89
 focus pullers 79
 foley 67–8, 70–1, 76, 157
 footcandle 89
 formats 47–52, 154, 222–3
 frame rate 53
 Franks, Simon 315–17
 fresnel 89
 Frost, Sadie 380
- gaffers 80
 gels 89
 genre films 231, 291
 Giant Films 273, 275
 gifts 13–14
 glare 89
 gofers 143
 Google+ 334
 gratitude 13–14
 Greenway, Peter 210–11
 grips 79
 Grove, Elliot 328–30; *Raindance
 Writers' Lab: Write and Sell the Hot
 Screenplay* 18
 guerrilla filmmaking 25, 37, 113

Hannah, Daryl 250
 hard light 89, 93
 health concerns 118–24
 Heap, Roland 68–72
 Hellman, Monte 11–12, 158
 Herman, Mark 211
 Herzog, Werner 250
Hey!, Happy! 107
 high-key 89
Hobbit, The 53
 Hodge, John 18
 Hollywood: buzz words used in 23–4;
 etiquette for 13–14; film budgets 22;
 personality types in 9–13
Hollywood Reporter, The 228
 Holmes, Richard 14
 Horley, Samantha 287–93
 hotspots 90
 Hubbard, John 211–14
 Hubbard, Ros 211–12
 Hughes, Simon 106–9
 Humphries, Graham 236–8

I Capture the Castle 173
 illustrators 236–8
 image compression 51
 incident meters 81–2, 90
 incorporation 130–3
 industry budgets 377–8
Infidel, The 289
 insurance 135–8, 365, 392
 interns 128
 iris 164
Irreversible 38
Ivan's XTC 304

Jackie Brown 158
 Jackson, Peter 53
 Jacob, Irène 150
Jesus Christ Vampire Hunter 234
 Jong, Ate de 18, 148–50, 329, 375; pitch
 letter from 387
 Jost, Jon 56–7, 84
 jump cut 164

Kaufman, Lloyd 29
 Keitel, Harvey 11–12, 158
 Kenis, Steve 179–83
 key artwork 234–5
 key lights 83, 90

Lassie Come Home 1
 lavalier microphones 63–4
 Lean, David 154
 Lechner, Jack 3
 Leeds Film Festival 257
 lenses 56–7
Lighthouse 223
 lighting: actors 84; attributes of 86; creating
 depth with 83; shooting without 84–5

light meters 58, 81–2, 90
 line producers 140, 169, 392
Living and the Dead, The 220, 367–8
Living in the Home of the Dead 282, 283
 loans 2, 421–2
 Loberg, Claes 311–2
 locations 31–2, 38–40, 90, 111–24, 392;
 for business offices 125; geography
 of 34; managers 111–12; map for
 low-budget film, 39; release forms for
 115; risk assessment forms 116–17;
 scouting 78, 111; sound 62
Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels
 287–8
 logging 155
 looping 67
Lord of the Rings 212
Love.Honour.Obey. 18, 26, 66, 146, 329;
 audience survey for 414–15; budget
 for 373–416; camera reports for 396–
 413; sound report for 393–4
 low-angle light 91
 low-frequency effects (LFE) 76
 low-key lighting 91
 luminaire 90
 lux 91

Macdonald, Andrew 18
 McGregor, Ewan 204–11
 Maczko, Megan 380
 magazines 57
 magic hour 91
 make and sell 229
 Mantle, Anthony Dodd 78
 Marché du Film 279
 marketing 229; film festivals 259–60; genre
 291; glossary of terms 300–3; plans
 229–38, 299; tools for 303–6
 markets 279–93, 289–90, 298
 Martell, William C. 38
 master shots 186
 matt boxes 57
 matte 91
Mattress Man 40
 medium shots 186
Meeting Spencer 73
 memorandums of association 131–2
 merchandising 304
 meters 55, 81–2, 90, 92, 93
 microphones 63–4
Misery 319
 mixing 76, 160
 money. *see* budget
 monitors 57
Monsters 106
 montage 164
 MOS 76
 motivated lighting 91
 movement order 140, 141
 movie deals, anatomy of 306

moving sources and subjects 91
 music 61–2, 72–4; publishing 432;
 securing, 157–60
 music and effects (M&E) 160
 Myers, Martin 317–20

Netflix 319–20
 net profit shares 202
 night: creating illusion of 91; shooting
 33, 121
 noise 121
 nudity 99, 391

O'Hagan, Nick 221–3, 285
O. J. Hello 29
 on-camera microphones 63
 one sheets 235, 236, 237, 300
 Onworah, Simon 2
 opaque materials 91
 opening weekend 307
 options 177–8
 originating formats 47–52, 222–3
Othello 29
 output deals 308
 outright acquisitions 308–9

PACT 122, 123, 202
 panning 54–5
Paranormal Activity 288
 Pavlo, Joe 102–6
 payments 144, 200
Pearl Harbor 104
 Peli, Oren 44
 Performing Rights Society 159
 period shots 33
 permissions 114, 363–5
 permits 111–24
 personal image 14–15
 personal protective equipment (PPE)
 120–1
 phone cameras 47
 PhotoFlood bulbs 4, 5
Pi 225
 picture editors 154–7
Pillow Book, The 211
 piracy 330
 pitch letters 381
 Pixelvision (PXL-2000) 5–6
 plane lighting 91–2
 popping 63
 pop-up cinemas 311
 postcards 261, 304, 305
 posters and artwork 234–8, 300, 303, 323
 post-production 67, 153–65, 325–6,
 394; checklist for 137; directors of
 photography (DoP) and 83; process 162
 practical light 92
 premieres 262–3, 305
 pre-production 77–8, 153, 229, 325;
 budget for 380–1; checklist for 137
 pre-sales 308, 360, 423
 press kits 239–45, 246, 252–3;
 distributing 246–7; electronic (EPK)
 244
 previews 94, 232, 305
 prints and advertising (P&A) budget 299
 private funding 370, 421
 private screenings 298
 producers: agents and 175; contracts 172;
 credits 167–8; fees for 169–70, 431;
 fight directors and 100; hints for 359–
 62; independent 231; job description of
 168; qualities of 11–12, 145, 170–1;
 Shivas on 172–6
 Producers Industrial Relations Services
 (PIRS) 122
 production 153, 229, 325; boards 31, 34,
 35; checklist for 137; designers 95, 96,
 106–9; financing 421–41; listing 244;
 managers 140; process 77; values
 95–109
 product placement 312–14, 433
 promotions 304
 props 100, 136
 prosumer camcorders 49, 66
 public domain laws 363–4
 publicists 265
 publicity 239–55, 300, 304
 publicity stills 241–3
Pulp Fiction soundtrack 158
 pulse code modulation (PCM) 66
 pyrotechnics 122

quads 300
 quantisation rates 66

Radford, Michael 191–5, 250
 Raindance Film Festival 4, 257, 447–50
*Raindance Writers' Lab: Write and Sell the
 Hot Screenplay* (Grove) 18
 ratings 300
 raw footage 51
 Rayment, Jason 380
Razor Blade Smile 234
 Rea, Stephen 150
 reaction shots 186
 rear title crawl 167
 reflectors 85, 92
 refrigerator theory 30–1
 rehearsals 391
 rental cameras 57–9
Reservoir Dogs 11–12; press kits for 241;
 securing music for 157–8
 resources for filmmakers 443–6
 reviews 243, 305
 Ridgewell, Thomas (TomSka) 335–7
 riggers 80
 rights 200, 323; checklist for 137; gaming
 432; music 157–60; story 363–5;
 transactional 329

rigs 92
 risk assessment 116–17, 119
 Ritchie, Guy 372
 Rodriguez, Robert 22–3, 43, 158, 170
 Rogers, Mark 18
 Rohmer, Eric 4
 room tone 76
 Rose, Bernard 195–7
 rough cuts 156, 165
 Rumley, Simon 223–7
 runners 146–7, 266

safety concerns 118–24
 sales agents 280–1, 361–2, 423
 sales estimates 281, 375, 376
 sampling rates 66
 scene breakdown 381–90
 schedules 19, 21–46; delivery 297–8;
 describing 25; holidays and 32;
 preparing 31; shooting 41
 Sci-Fi Festival 257
 Scofield, Tracey 416–20
 screen combat 99–100
 Screen Industry Training Advisory
 Committee (SITAC) 122
 screenings 232, 298, 305
Screen International 228
 screenplays. *see* scripts
 screenwriters 11–12, 176, 178, 365
 scrims 92
 scripts 4, 18, 38, 362; breakdown 31–4,
 139; buying 176; deals for 177–8;
 directing 188; eighthing of 31, 32;
 rights for 137, 363–5
Seaview Knights 3
Secretary 261
 self-distribution 321–2, 326–8
 sell and make 229
 sequence shots 165
Serbian Film, A 38
 settling estimates 283
 sex scenes 99
 SFX 391
Shadow Dancer 71
 shadows 91, 92
 Sharp, Oscar 146–7
 sharpness 56–7, 92
 shelf companies 132–3
 Shivas, Mark 172–6
 shooting 139–50, 392; day/night 33, 121;
 directors of photography and 81–3;
 originating formats for 47–52, 222–3;
 permissions for 114; ratio 25, 188;
 safety concerns 118–24; schedules
 41; in sequence 33; without lights
 84–5
Shopping 3
 shotgun microphones 64
 shutters 53, 56

side light 93
 silhouettes 93
 Simens, Dov 24, 269, 280, 281
 16 and 24 bit audio 66
 16mm/Super 16 film 51
16 Years of Alcohol 246
 smacking 63
 snoot 93
 social media 288–9, 296, 331–46
 soft light 93
 Solan, James L. 5
 sound 61–76; consistency 62–3; crews
 62, 143; design 68; editing 157–60;
 glossary of terms 75–6; ingredients of
 61–2; recording 62–72, 392; reports
 393–4; sync 66–7; transparent 65–6
 Sound Disposition 68–9, 70
 sound effects 61, 67–8, 76
 soundtracks 72–4, 432; analogue and
 digital 75; sweetening 67–8
 special effects 34, 40–1, 96
 Spielberg, Steven 24
 spill 93
 sponsorships 259–60, 266
 spots 82, 92, 93
 sprocket holes 53
 stab wounds 98
 Stealers Wheel (band) 158
 stereo 76
 stills 53, 241–3
 storage media 57
 Straight 8 Film Festival 51
 street shooting 114, 123
 strobe lights 93
 ‘Stuck in the Middle With You’ (song) 158
 studio distribution 306, 308
 studio system 295
 stunts 34, 98, 391; artists 123; breakdown
 382; coordinators 99
 subwoofers 76
 Sundance Film Festival 3
 Super 8 film 51
 Super 16 film 51
 Super 35 film 52
 surround sound 76
 Swayze, Patrick 319
Sweeney, The 71
Sweet Sixteen 302
 Symes, Phil 248–51
 sync sound 66–7
 synopsis 240

Table 5 5, 30
 tachometers 55
 talent. *see* actors
 Tarantino, Quentin 11–12, 51; music used
 by 74, 157–8; press kits of 241
 tax incentives 425, 430
 television 198–9

- theatre 198, 202
- 35mm film 25, 41–3, 51, 52
- Thomas, Jeremy 171, 208–9
- tilting 54
- Timecode* 4
- timetables. *see* schedules
- titles 160–1, 366
- top sheets 27, 220
- toy cameras 47
- tracking 55
- trade papers 228, 245, 305
- trailers 235, 300, 303–4
- transactional rights 329
- transportation, insurance for 136–8
- treaties 425–6
- tripods 58
- Twice in a Lifetime* 319
- Twitter 333–4
- 2k and 4k resolution 51

- underground and underwater shooting 123
- use fees 202

- variable shutters 56
- Variety* 228
- Veljkovic, Zoran 380
- Viana, Ester 380
- video 335
- video on demand (VOD) 322–3

- visual effects supervisors 102–6
- volts 94

- walkers 67–8, 70–1, 76, 157
- Wallace and Gromit* 74
- Ward, John 81, 83
- wardrobe 100, 136
- warm light 94
- watts 94
- weapons 99, 122
- weather conditions 33–4
- Webb, Floyd 101–2
- websites 245, 332–3
- West, Jake 97, 234
- whip-panning 55
- wild wall 94
- wipe 165
- wireless microphones 63–4
- Wolfe, Lois 3
- Wook, Park Chan 47
- Woolley, Stephen 15
- wounds 97–8
- writers 11–12, 176, 178, 365

- Young Adam* 205, 208
- Youngs, James 273–6
- YouTube 296, 334–7

- zoom 54
- zoom controls 57