Student**Filmmakers**

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The Future of Filmmaking

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Filmmakers Network Spotlight:
William Bracey

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Kim Edward Welch

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How to Prepare Your
Next Audition

Sara Sue Vallee

The first thing to do when you receive an audition for a role is to read the scene without overlooking any details. Avoid reading as your character at the beginning to really take all the information in. After reading the scene thoroughly a few times, it's time to break it down and analyze it. The table work is essential prior to memorization as to make the following steps easier and add more depth to your performance. You need to determine your objective in the scene, your relationship to the other characters, what the scene is about, the different beats and various tactic actions (always use active verbs as you cannot play emotions; emotions are a result of actions). From there, you have a solid foundation to start the creative work.

It is now time to focus on your given character. Before you read the character breakdown, write down a list of traits and qualities based on

how your character comes across in the scene. Usually, your instinct is a very good indicator. Afterward, read the character breakdown to confirm your existing list and add to it. This will help you understand your character behaviours and reactions. You can now color your performance by choosing some traits to add throughout the scene without over emphasizing them. A character is never just one color but a combination of complexities that shape a whole. Furthermore, don't play the things that you already exude at your neutral actor state as this will come out as over acting. For example, if you already exude naïveté without doing anything, don't add a layer of naïveté to the scene. Make a strong choice and go with something unexpected or opposite from your neutral state while remaining in the context of the scene.

The following step before jumping into memorization is to read the lines with a partner if it's possible to practice listening and receiving the other person's line. If you simply memorize the lines out of context, it will dilute your performance and make it robotic. The scene becomes truthful when the actors listen and receive in the moment, and react and respond organically in the moment.

Now that you have a good feeling about the flow of energy throughout the scene, it's time to memorize your lines. You need to learn them extremely well in order to stay malleable in the audition room. Avoid the pitfall of memorizing them in a robotic way by remaining physical during the process. Doing a physical activity such as exercising, cleaning dishes, folding laundry or throwing a ball in the air while speaking your lines out loud will help you get the lines in your body, and not just your head. Mind and body connection.

The final step to your preparation is to practice the scene in space (if possible with a partner). Make room to practice the entire scene in these various ways: standing, sitting, with the reader close to you, with the reader far from you and moving in space. Practicing the entire scene in all these different settings, fully memorized, will help you avoid any unexpected situations.

At last, before you go to bed and enter the next audition room, do some visualization exercises. Repeat the entire scene in your head like a movie and feel it in your body. The moment you enter that room, put all the table work aside and trust your preparation, it's there. It's time to play, have fun and shine!

Casting Considerations
Maximize Your Chances of Success

John Klein

The annals of film history are littered with behind-the-scenes stories from the casting couch. Harrison Ford serving as a reader during *Star Wars* auditions until George Lucas realized he'd be the perfect Han Solo. Eric Stoltz originally being cast as Marty McFly in *Back To The Future*. Barry Jenkins and casting director Yesi Ramirez insisting on local-to-Miami child actors for the lead roles in *Moonlight*.

As a director, the way you cast your film will be the single best or worst decision you make. A good actor can save a bad script, and a bad actor can ruin the best script. Filmmaking is a kind of emotional alchemy that results from the perfect marriage of person and material, and it's your job to find the people that fit your vision, your project, and your sensibilities. This is true at any level, but in low-budget or student films, you may not have the resources to, say, audition thousands of children the way they did on the *Harry Potter* films. So how can you maximize your chances of success, and what are you looking for when you cast actors in the first place?

First, it's important to know that not every film demands a long, drawn-out audition process. Sometimes, you may already have actors for the roles; on my second feature *Chrysalis*, we had actors Cole Simon and Sara Gorsky already in mind for Josh and Penelope. You may even cast yourself, out of either necessity or an innate understanding of the material (though that presents its own challenges). Still, even in those cases, the audition process can be useful in determining everything from chemistry between actors to what other directions you could take the story. The TV show *LOST* benefitted from this fluid process, in which actors who auditioned, such as Naveen Andrews and Daniel Dae Kim, saw characters either written for them afterwards or changed to fit the complexity of their performance.

On the indie filmmaking level, finding actors willing to work for modest rates requires an understanding and respect of how much they will give you, how vulnerable they will make themselves for you. It's your job as a director to look out for your cast, and that includes looking out for them during the audition process. To that end, make sure your auditions are organized, on schedule, sensitive to the needs of others, and steeped in communication from the get-go; it will go a long way toward cementing a professional atmosphere, and will enable your auditioning talent to feel more comfortable in that vulnerability.

While the look of an actor matters to a degree, leave yourself open to discovery. If the role calls for a threatening, intimidating individual, who's to say someone of short stature can't embody that? If the character is written as male, what would happen if you found the perfect woman to play that role, as Ridley Scott did with Sigourney Weaver in *Alien*? To that end, understand how much diversity and representation in your cast can improve your film; I make it a point in the casting breakdown to say that "all roles are ethnicity-neutral," and you never know how an actor's own background can bring a spark of extra authenticity to their performance.

During auditions, you'll get ten, maybe fifteen minutes with each actor who comes through the door. Keep your sides (pages of scenes given to the actors for their audition) short and to the point, let them run the scene with the reader once with minimal direction, and give them a simple, near-opposite direction the second time. If the scene is obviously romantic, try playing it with an antagonistic edge. The goal isn't to nail the scene; the goal is to see if the actor can take your direction, and still make conscious choices. Callbacks can be longer because you've narrowed that list of actors down to a choice few and can have them read in pairs to see their chemistry or see how they fare with more time and more discussion of the role. But in that first audition, efficiency is key. Don't get behind schedule, as that's unfair to the other actors!

You're also learning who you can work with, much like a job interview. Does this actor fit your vision? Will they listen to that vision? And will you be able to share a set with them for hours at a time every single day? No one wants a toxic presence on set, and you need to listen to your instincts when time in the audition room is limited.

And yet...no matter how well-organized you are, or how good you are at communicating with your actors, you still need that ability to look into their eyes during a scene and believe them, whether your film is a small-town drama or a heightened sci-fi extravaganza. That's tough to find no matter who you are, and it's also not always something that can be taught. In essence, you're looking for an actor who can project truth. It requires you to be observant of the smallest gestures and the biggest emotions, both on and off camera. It requires you to know exactly what you need and yet be open to things outside of that. Casting is a mess of contradictions! It's part of the stress and fun of it, because at the end of it all, there's nothing like finding the perfect actor for a part and the perfect collaborator for your film.

With Erik Fellows

LEADERSHIP
Passion Is Contagious

Shane Stanley

What's essential to being a good director? First and foremost it's passion. Regardless of what you want to believe, filmmaking will be one of the most seductive, yet volatile and deceptive relationships you will ever grapple with. I've quipped it's my "forbidden fruit" or "fatal attraction" because of the pleasure *and* pain it causes but for many of us that is all part of the allure. Filmmaking will rip your heart in two, leave you beaten and broken - both physically and financially - and just when you've mustered up the nerve to put an end to the abuse, it reaches out and asks you - no, begs you - for one more chance promising it will be smooth sailing moving forward.

How do I know this? Because I try to break up every time I finish a film. When it's a wrap – correction - mid-way through pre-production, I swear I'll never do it again and can't wait to get the project over with so I can start looking into alternative ways of making a living. But when all is said and done, the movie has taken shape and my wounds have healed, I start missing my team as well as the fantasy even I get lost in when a new project is on the horizon. Believe it or not, I too find myself inspired by the same dreams that motivate you. Besides, I started working in front of the camera at 9 months old and while I turn 49 this year, have come to the realization; "what the hell else am I going to do with my life?" Sadly, I don't know any other way and if you're as lucky as I am to be so *un*fortunate when you're approaching the big 5-0, you'll know exactly what I am talking about. Confused? Good. But you won't be when your odometer has reached my mileage.

Okay, now that I've discouraged you, are you ready to get uplifted and inspired? I will assume you said, 'hell yeah!' with your fist raised into the sky and will continue reading...

When we talk about passion, I don't mean the desire to be rich

and famous or walk the red carpet surrounded by A-listers, screaming fans and persistent paparazzi. I would like to think by now you're mature enough to realize that's all bullsh*t and extremely thin icing spread out over very fattening cake. Passion is when you can't sleep because your obsessed with the thought of leading your crew into battle. You toss and turn at night because you're driven to tell stories with a camera and wring out every ounce of an actor's soul for that perfect performance. You daydream about going into the edit bay and fighting tooth and nail to get the cut just right and all of the accoutrements perfect. Passion is getting your hands dirty and putting in the time when everyone else is out playing grab ass – not because you should but because you love to and cannot see filling your days doing anything else. Yeah, that's the passion I'm talking about. Sure, you need to know the fundamentals of filmmaking and I believe that starts in your classes, out in the field, and especially in the edit bay where you get first-hand experience on what works, what doesn't and why. But this isn't a lesson on the craft - cats like David Mamet, Sidney Lumet and Elia Kazan have written great books to help with that and I suggest you go read them. This is a lesson in channeling your passion into productive leadership, which is essential to great story telling and plays a huge part when wearing the Director's hat.

Passion is contagious and when the Director is passionate and driven it touches the cast and crew in a positive way and ultimately shows up onscreen. Like respect, leadership is earned, not given

or assumed. I feel it's crucial for a Director to walk softly and carry a big stick and to find the balance of how to handle the two. If you disrespect your team, they will quickly lose respect for you and once that's gone, it's practically impossible to get back. Never forget or dismiss the amount of responsibility the Directing job will shoulder on top of the art of filmmaking itself, but also don't lose sight of how hard your crew works to help make your vision become a reality. Everyone is of equal importance on a set. I didn't say it's a democracy and we're all at the same level but we're all equally important and without everyone working in harmony, it's a lot harder to get anything done. It's like an engine not firing on all cylinders - it just misses. Make sure to let your team know you appreciate them at the end of every day so they feel motivated and inspired to continue working hard for you.

Being successful comes by surrounding yourself with greatness. Ask any Director you admire and they'll tell you the job cannot be done without an amazing team supporting the mission. Always strive to grow and include people on your projects that you not only can rely on, but those who also will elevate and challenge you to become a better filmmaker. Don't let someone's experience intimidate you or discourage you from bringing them onboard fearing you might look inferior to the team or seem like less of a big shot. Some of my greatest achievements were made possible simply because I brought on people who not only had a tireless work ethic but also had tremendous knowledge of their craft. Together we are stronger and that will resonate ten-fold in your end product. I cannot tell you how often I see newer filmmakers cut corners on hiring the right Cinematographer or Editor because

On the film set of "Break Even" in Catalina Island. Directed by Shane Stanley.

On set at 2am filming movie, "Break Even".

they fear they might know more and look inept. The dumbest thing we can do is partner up with someone who's less than the best we can get – especially in some of the most crucial elements in filmmaking.

Being a Director is largely about the ability to lead. It's being able to get a cast and crew of 40-60 people to follow you into the depths of hell and thank you for the experience upon your return, regardless if they got third degree burns along the way. Directors need to possess basic people skills and the ability to look someone in the eye, stand on their hind legs and have uncomfortable conversations without missing a beat – you know the discussions most people try to avoid. You have to be able to talk an actor through a performance when they're struggling or maybe even convince them to come out of their trailer because they're simply scared to death that they'll fail. (You laugh, it happens more often than you think). A Director needs to respectfully tell their Cinematographer when they don't

love a shot they've set up and have conversations with a Producer without losing their cool when they're informed they are not getting that SuperTechno 50 foot crane that was promised or tell the Director an actor has just backed out of the film - conversations that too often take place on set and in front of the entire crew. It's not about having the loudest voice or the hottest temper, its about being a diplomat and showing people you don't buckle under pressure and how you handle adversity. You must understand no two human beings are alike and how you speak to one individual can cut them down and break their spirit while the same words can lift someone else up and encourage them to become your biggest asset. Heck, some of the greatest Directors are the gentlest souls you'll ever want to meet. Legends like Spielberg, Ron Howard and Clint Eastwood come to mind but you have to be a lion leading the lambs and show those lambs you're the boss and your vision is THE vision without being a screaming lunatic. You know, the

'more bees with honey' approach – implement it.

I mention all this because our passion can get entangled with being unkind or even irrational. We artists have the uncanny ability to make excuses for our behavior and if you're not on track to becoming the next Damien Chazelle, it will only be a matter of time before you'll find yourself all alone without a support team that's worth a spit. Admit your shortcomings and apologize for your mistakes. Never be afraid to say, "I don't know," I promise you; it will go a thousand miles. The filmmaking community is a tight knit group and scuttlebutt of improper behavior and poor etiquette spreads like wildfire. Unfortunately a lot faster and further than when you're nice to people.

Most important, don't be reluctant to give back. We filmmakers rely on favors and people going the extra mile for us, so be gracious and appreciative whenever you can. Return the love and bless someone else in return on his or her project when they reach out to you for help. To this day, if I'm available, I'll jump at the chance to edit or operate a camera when someone asks because that's what people did to help get me where I am today. And if there's one thing I've learned in my 48 years working in this business - every day I am on set or honing the craft in the edit bay, I learn something new and grow from it - and I love to learn and grow.

Until next time, keep shooting! ✎
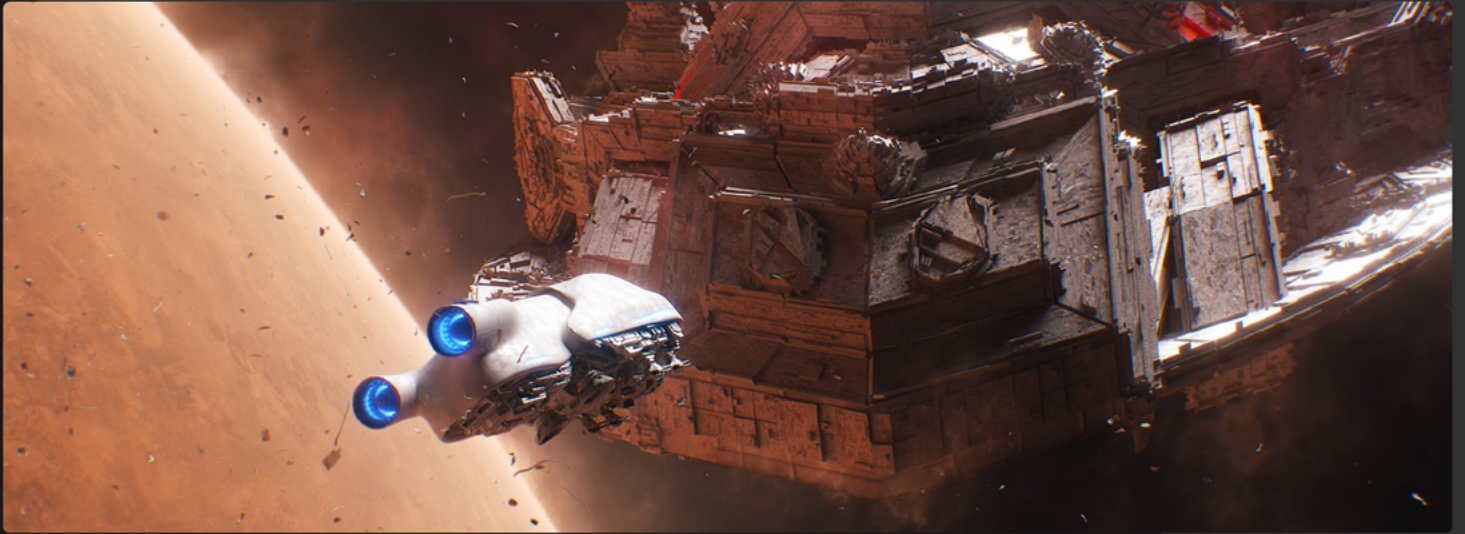
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Mindful Nourishment

Hiro Narita, ASC

Some students explore possible careers in the film industry, while others are simply fascinated by filmmaking. Cinema is a synthesis of art and technology, and I believe there is no short cut to success in the field. I find that students - and professionals - who excel in filmmaking take a broad perspective on art and intertwine that understanding with their own unique life experiences.

In my youth, reading and writing were not my favorite undertakings. That might have led me to think in images, and eventually, I took the path of image making as a graphic designer, eventually, as a cinematographer. This reasoning, I began to realize, was a tenuous one because both words and pictures are symbols and tools of how we perceive our world and shape ourselves, and they are intrinsic to communicate among ourselves. There was much learning waiting for me on the road.

A turning point in my life came when I saw *Knife in the Water,* Roman Polanski's first film. I noticed that the camera always seemed to be in the right place giving the viewer - me - a personal perspective of the scenes unfolding, and what I did not see evolved in my mind's eye. That, I realized, was the power of a movie; the sequence of images in measured tempo alluring the viewer to engage in the emotional interaction. Images imbue words, and vice versa. I noticed it, but I wasn't mindful of then. Words and pictures dancing around and shape-shifting is a unique art form in filmmaking. And what is outside of the frame, what is implied, is also a part of viewing experience. This film was shot in black and white, yet they resonated in hues unseen but experienced. Decades later, I saw *The Postman/ Il Postino* (in color) by Michael Redford. A beautiful exploration of romance, politics, and delicious potency of words, is a different example of a film whose words

and pictures weave and create a tapestry of vivid and impressionistic experience.

Successful films, I believe, embody realism but transcend it. They let us recognize, connect with the stories and characters unlike our own, and expand our horizon.

Often, I told my film students, carry a notebook or sketch book, jot down any thoughts that come to your mind or inspiring images you see - even if they are imaginary - and eavesdrop on conversations and make note of how people often talk in metaphors. They may not make any sense or even seem like jumbled nonsense at the time, but later they may connect, integrate and reveal a life of their own. A student of storytelling must constantly be on the lookout for inspiration, agitation, and innovation.

Cinematography - creating emotional rhythm, mood, composition and visual scale - is like a symphony: no one instrument can create a vast array of tone or chord. Similarly, lighting is not independent of creating images that communicate emotions

veiled beneath them. You might argue that light is both an explicit and implicit aspect of an image. I want to emphasize here that although lighting is technically required to expose film or tape, the so called "painting with light" is a very personal art. It sometimes involves cutting the light off. "The beauty of things you don't see," the phrase I often use shows us the importance of the viewer's imagination, to fill in the blank space on a canvas, so to speak. In masterful examples of cinematography you find out that the lighting in itself seems to lack, even violate, logic; light produces emotions and sensations which the observer transforms into personal experience, even if antithetic to realism. I believe discovering what light does, what people see in it, and feel from it, is the key.

In my experience with students, I often find them anxious to emulate "Hollywood" movies. By no means, does this lack merit. Many Hollywood movies are inspiring, and professionals draw their inspiration from other filmmakers, and that is evident throughout the history of cinema.

If students of cinema begin to realize why they want to tell a story with moving images, whether narrative or non-narrative, the techniques to achieve them should follow their instincts first rather than formulas. Curiosity and discovery are essential ingredients in that endeavor.

And the question of whether or not to study filmmaking in specialized film schools comes up often. I am sure some schools are better equipped with facilities than others, or perhaps some provide inspiring instructors. AFI, for instance, has a strong tie with the industry and the exposure to active professionals is great. Yet I meet many accomplished and interesting filmmakers coming out of leftfields of study such as architecture, economics, literature, fine art, etc., and, more significantly, they happened to be in a school or in an institution with a group of aspiring students who nurtured each other's creative spirit. Their common desire is to tell stories, some with moving images. A specialized film school may give a student a jump-start by providing him or her with plenty of ingredients, a wealth of techniques, tools, and recipes, but he or she still has to harness inspirations and manage their own talent to cook up a delectable plate of movies.

For a decade, I have had opportunities to see many students' films from around the globe, and I am very impressed by some of their original, creative results reflecting their cultures. Storytelling is universal and sees no boundaries. I hope it will permeate further and encourage the sharing of our diverse thoughts and ideas.

I took a meandering route myself. I was a practicing designer for several years during which "one thing led to another" before I settled into cinematography. What fascinated me was that a movie, though two dimensional in form, transpires three-dimensional awareness: time, space, and psyche. Not only cinematography but filmmaking in general taught me about people and their cultures and also opened up a deep layer of consciousness waiting to be explored.

In recent years, I have been devoting my time in cabinet making, which I find a strong connection, surprisingly, to filmmaking: Everything is connected, creatively.

After graduating from San Francisco Art Institute in 1964, Hiro Narita, ASC became a director of photography for over thirty years in the film industry. Recipient of numerous awards he is a member of the American Society of Cinematographers and Academy of Motion Pictures and Sciences. His work includes Star Trek VI: The Discovered Country (Warner Brothers), Honey, I Shrunk the Kids (Disney), and Never Cry Wolf (Disney). He directed documentary film, Isamu Noguchi: Stones and Paper (PBS American Masters).

Photo by: Paciano Triunfo, 2019, on the set of Late Lunch, directed by Eleanor Coppola.
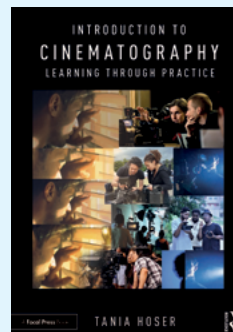
Creating More Cinematic Images

Extraordinary Shots

David Landau

Many young filmmakers have great ideas, energy and commitment, but sometimes their hard efforts lack that cinematic look. A common mistake made is to film everything from a "normal" point of view. In other words, from the way a normal person standing and watching would see things. This is the standard for sit-coms, talk shows, game shows, soap operas, news, sports and most documentaries. It gives the audience a normal view of the action. But artistic movies take advantage of the fact that the camera can be placed in extra-ordinary positions and places, giving the audience a view that they don't normally get. Sometimes the camera gets placed on the ground – an extreme low angle looking up. Other times high up to ceiling – an extreme high angle looking down. Many times the camera will be placed so that something obstructs the picture edges – an obstructed frame. These types of shots make the project more "movie" like and can easily be done by anyone, of any level of experience.

Low angle shots looking up give the viewer an unusual point of view that also telegraphs to the audience that the person or thing the camera is looking up at holds power and authority. As children we all look up at our parents and other adults who are more powerful than us. This is used all the time in cinematic storytelling. The person with more power in a dramatic scene is always filmed from a slightly lower angle

– just below their eye level – while the person who is inferior in the scene is filmed from slightly above, looking down.

But a low angle looking up can also position things that are important close to the frame while keeping a wider view of our subject further back in the frame, such as the still from the movie "Stray" (See Frame 1). The low angle position of the camera allows the viewer to see the entire surroundings, giving them a sense of the place the action is happening in. It also allows the subject to be in almost full frame. But she isn't in full focus. Instead, the handbag closest to camera is, directing the viewer's attention to the bag, which could easily be otherwise overlooked. The subject sees the bag, as does the audience. The fact that the bag is bigger in frame and in focus gives the bag

mystery and importance. What's in that bag?

This shot has visual depth and while conveying a sense of mystery and intrigue as called for in the screenplay. While this shot was accomplished using what is known as a hi-hat with a camera fluid head on it, students with equipment limitations can do the same shot using a pillow on a milk crate or even a cardboard box and then placing the camera down on it, aiming it up. This is a wide angle shot using a 25mm prime lens. But if you have a camera with a zoom, you can just zoom all the way out and slide the camera into place.

Notice also the framing of the shelving unit. The vertical bar divides the frame in half, with the subject on the left and the mysterious handbag on the right. This provides a symbolic wall that keeps the subject from just going

over and picking up the bag. It reflects her hesitation to act. She has an inner conflict as to whether she should go look inside that bag or not, and the camera positioning and framing helps telegraph that to the viewer, subliminally but instantly.

Now let's look at a high angle shot from the same film. In this shot, (See Frame 2) the camera is positioned up against the ceiling. The subject is small in the frame and in the lower third of the frame. Thus, the audience immediately senses that she feels small, alone or has made a big mistake and realizes it. She is small in her environment, although she is the brightest thing in the frame, attracting the viewers eye instantly. Again, this is shot with a wide-angle prime lens, a 35mm, and from a jib extended twelve feet up. But young filmmakers can create a similar shot by simply

Frame 2: Still from the movie, "Stray". High angle shot.

putting their camera on top of a tall ladder – again using a pillow to cradle the camera and allowing it to aim down. Just don't let go of the camera.

Another way to add cinematic images to your film is to shoot some shots in extremes. We've just looked at two wide angle shots – meaning that the field of view is wider than the normal field of view of the averge person. The field of view of the normal person is considered to be equvalent to around a 50mm lens (on 35 mm film or sensor cameras). In other words, how wide of an image the normal person (with two eyes) sees. This is while films are shot with a frame that is wider than it is tall – because humans have two eyes and see more horozontally than they do virtically. We also maintain our distance from people when we talk with them and certainly whan we just watch them. So doing a few shots that break from this standard comfromity adds visual variety and interest to your film. Let us look at another still from the movie "Stray".

This is called a "hair-cut" shot, (See Frame 3), as it is cutting off the top of the subjects' head and hair. In hair-cut shots the chin is always kept fulling in the frame. People in correctlt think that the nose is the center of the head – it isn't. The nose is the center of the face, but the eyes are positioned in the center of the head. When we talk to someone, we look at their face and ignore the forehead. Its just what we do. Sowhen we film an intimate close-up of someone, we position their eyes in the upper third of the frame and keep their chin inside the bottom of the frame. This type of framing makes the audience feel closer and more sympathetic to the subject. We feel more for her. Because we read from left to right, by having her positioned on the right side of te frame, she becomes more sad in our view. We see the out of focus flowers first than we see her. This is unbalanced framing, giving the viewers eye a bit of nothingness before it sees thesubject as it scans left to right. Even though this is only a matter of nano-seconds, this emptiness before the subject makes her more vulnerable, isolated and alone. While this was shot with an 85mm prime lens, the same can be done with a zoom shooting zoomed in and backing up the camera.

All of these things have nothing to do with budget or how professional the equipment is. Cinematic images can be made on any busget withany equiopment, if the time is taken to be more crearive withcamera place, angles and framing. ✒

Frame 3: Still from the movie, "Stray". Hair-cut shot.

Is the Future of Video Production
Remote?

Amy DeLouise

Covid has changed production, possibly forever. Today we are facing an interesting convergence of mobile video, online video, archival content, and remote workarounds for production, as well as even more critical cloud and remote workflows for post-production. Even when we "return to normal," aspects of these workflows and strategies will remain. In this article, I'll take a look at some innovations and tips for managing the challenge of work-from-wherever-we-are production and post.

Audio Matters Most

Let's start with getting better audio for online and mobile video recordings. We've all be faced with having to conduct an interview over the internet or having to use a clip that our client or talent self-records with a mobile device. Regardless of platform, the priority is audio. Professional soundies will cringe, but there are some affordable options for non-pros. Wired mics avoid interference best, and can come at a fairly low price point. Producer Nicki Sun recommends the Power DeWise wired lav mic which runs at about $40. iPhone video consultant Kim Foley recommends customized solutions to her clients, including the Mosotech Omnidirectional Condenser Lavalier Mic, which at press time was under $20. (Remember you may need adapters for iPhones.) If you can go up a bit in price, the Rode Smart Lav/Condenser at under $80 is a solid mic. If you need distance from your mobile device or computer, then wireless is the way to go. I'm a fan of the Samson Go Mic Mobile package, which gives you a wireless direct-to-mobile signal for under $200. In the same price range is the Saramonic Blink500,

which works with mobile phones, computers and tablets. If you are recording podcaster-style, you can't get better than the Rode NT-USB podcast mic, which runs about $250. For significantly less, the Blue Snowball gives a decent sound. Avoiding hard surfaces, noisy appliances, and being close to your computer fan will significantly help your sound. Some talent go as far as recording inside a closet or anywhere with dampened sound such as a carpeted hallway. When using VOIP to record an interview producer Walter Biscardi recommends using e-Camm recorder with Skype, and making a backup audio recording direct to his Zoom h4n. When recording online, whether using Skype or Zoom, "it's always a good idea to make a double ender recording," advises Rich Harrington, CEO of RHED Pixel. This means hitting record at on both "ends" of the call. The recording you make

directly into your computer will be significantly better resolution than the one that gets recorded to the cloud. (Pro Tip for Zoom: Be sure to "Enable HD" in your video settings, and "Optimize for third party editor" in your recording settings, to ensure a better data rate.)

Getting Creative with Remote Production

While networks are using LiveU for their at-home remote anchor feeds, Netflix has announced it is getting back to the set with increased safety protocols. But for many in production, neither of these solutions is workable yet. People like editor-producer Chad Horn of Bard Tales isn't waiting to see what happens next. He's crafted a customized, shippable 4K kit, complete with a mirrorless Canon DSLR, lens-mounted ring light, wired lav and a camera mounted shotgun mic as backup. He will even include a beam-splitter prompter if needed. Using Canon software, he can allow remote control of the camera by a DP. And he can stream the shoot to executive producers via Microsoft Teams, Zoom or Facebook Live, so that they can weigh in on the setup. (The rig is sanitized between shipments, if you were wondering.) "Twitch streamers have been using this kind of tech for years, " explains Horn, "so now we're

using these tools to be sure the footage we're editing isn't low quality cellphone video, but actually decent 4K LOG footage with discreet audio channels." It will be interesting to see if such rigs become more popular, with crews becoming remote expert consultants rather than on-set creatives.

Post Workflow Strategies

In my own work, one of the issues has been ensuring that real-time collaboration continues with my editing teams. For years, we've had a remote-team setup in my production company, but have always liked being "in the room" for final edits, audio mixes and color grading. I will not reinvent colorist Robbie Carman's excellent article on remote set-up using Streambox for synchronous color-grading sessions. Sound designer and mixer Cheryl Ottenritter, of Ott House Audio also uses Streambox when offering remote synchronous client remote mix sessions. Streambox, Cinesync, Evercast, Source Live and Session Link Pro all offer low latency, high quality synchronous reviews of video productions. Evercast also includes pre-Vis options, such as streaming Maya or other animation platforms. A slightly different post-production tool for the work-from-home user is BeBop. This system was designed to help avoid costly individual hardware and software purchases, and allows the user to remotely access a powerful virtual computer in order to create VFX projects, edit media files, animate, process images, or collaborate in real-time.

Other collaboration tools for reviews and feedback that were once "nice to have" are now becoming essential. Frame.io, Vimeo and Wipster all provide frame-accurate client reviews and the ability to share comments back to the team. I've been a personal fan of Wipster—that's my affiliate link in the previous sentence--because I think they've been especially responsive to the needs and interests of the post community. Project management software such as Basecamp, Slack, and Teams is even more vital to keep teams and projects organized across different time zones. I'm also becoming a fan of Milanote for sharing storyboards, vision boards, deliverables lists and more at the early phases of a project.

Rich Harrington recommends using these kinds of tools, but reserving a Slack channel for quick-turnaround internal discussions that need to happen outside the channels with clients.

Of course, one of the key puzzles should remote production become the norm is security. Just as Zoom sessions have been "bombed" by outsiders, so could your synchronous reviews or remote edit sessions. Many of the solutions providers noted above discuss security in their marketing. The key question when comparing pricing and providers is what level of encryption are you getting? And do the cloud storage back end servers actually store your media files? If so, what kind of redundancy and security is part of this package? I'll have to leave that for another article.

The Rise of the Archive

Stock footage has always been a valuable tool for storytelling. But now, news and sports organizations are busily digging through their archives, desperate to deliver new content. And there's no reason why other organizations that deliver content—corporations, associations and nonprofits—can't do the same. Now more than ever, organizations need to be reviewing their own archives, tagging those old clips, and bringing them online into their DAMs so their content producers can tap those resources. It's a great time to be working on an anniversary video production. Or showing your donors how you've been there all along, creating impact in the world.

I started my career delivering archival content to feature films, as both art department research for production design and as clips to appear in the films themselves. While the internet has certainly made digging easier, the process of tracking down rights holders can remain elusive. Just because you find an image on Google doesn't mean you can get the sync rights. And even images you source from a well-known archive like Getty may

still require tracking down certain rights holders. Consider national resources like the Smithsonian Digital Archives and the National Archives collection, which often contain historical content that is no longer copyrighted or is federally-created and therefore available to use.

For now, we are all getting used to the new normal of both producing in 2D and effectively living in a 2D world of Zoom calls. Let's hope that out of the challenges, some creative workarounds will carry us forward in new and positive ways.

Amy DeLouise is a writer and digital creative director getting used to the new work-from-home world of remote production. She blogs about production issues, and has authored a variety of LinkedIn Learning courses and a new book on nonfiction audio from Routledge Press.

Stage Crafting VR
The Future of Filmmaking

Sherri Sheridan

Where do you think the new Disney series The Mandalorian was filmed? Iceland and Africa maybe? No, it was all done on a soundstage in Los Angeles costing one tenth of the normal budget. Flying cast and crew to multiple locations waiting for the perfect lighting and weather can get very expensive. Industrial

Light and Magic developed the technology to create a virtual production platform.

StageCraft: Dressing the set by rigging scenery, designing costumes, make-up, gathering props, audio engineering and hanging lighting.

StageCraft VR: Shooting actors against large high-resolution LED and LCD screens with mapped 3D VR sets. Laser projectors are also used on special screens. The backgrounds are shot using a 3D VR camera by one person on location. 3D animated sets are built before any shooting so they
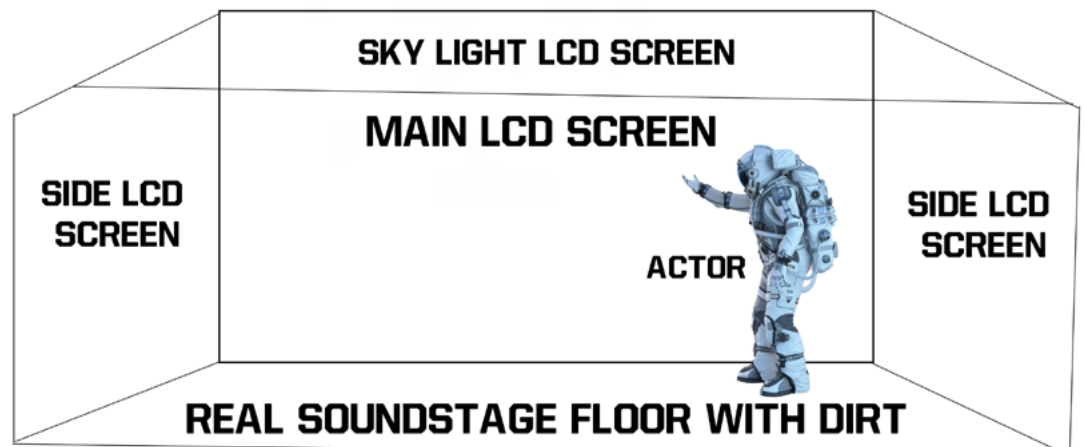
Notice the way video projection is set up around the actor.

can be placed behind the actors on the soundstage. These ready to go backgrounds produce realistic lighting, depth and movement effects. Blue and green screens are also used along with real set pieces in the foreground. Actual dirt, sand, grass or floor tiles are placed on the stage area where the actors perform that match the background scene.

The main workload for using 3D virtual sets switches to the preproduction phase instead of postproduction. Most virtual set movies shoot actors on a bluescreen. Compositors then spend lots of time in post pulling a clean bluescreen key, and trying to make the sets look real by adding reflections, color and lighting tricks to blend the layers together.

This always looks a little off. The actor's eyeline match cuts also miss the mark with the 3D characters dropped in later.

Digital StageCraft VR wraps the sets around the actors on the soundstage and catches every reflection and lighting change. Light determines the color of the shot.

Another cool aspect of this new technology is that when you move the camera inside this soundstage space on set the parallax changes.

Parallax: position and direction of background object appear to be different when viewed from various positions.

This means when your actor is on the soundstage against the VR 3D

rocky set, you can move the camera around them to see different sides of the rocks on the screen. This is super tricky to do in post with plain bluescreen actors against 3D sets with moving camera shots.

The Mandalorian takes the art of designing narrative reflections to a whole other level using the main character's shinny chrome futuristic knight helmet. In one scene, we see creatures leaping between rocks, over the character's head, reflecting off the top of the helmet. All the red rocks around him are bouncing off the helmet too as he walks by along with every place he goes.

Everything is reflecting off his mirror like head creating a whole new visual style for the emerging technology.
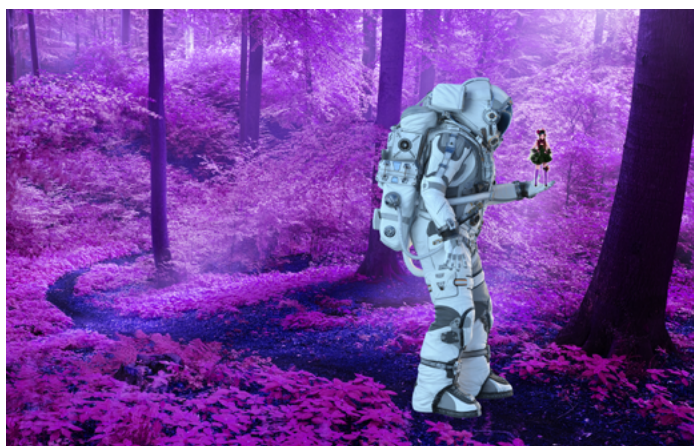
If you shoot your actor on a bluescreen you cannot get the color of the light and reflections in the visor as the actor moves his head.

Shooting the actor on a StageCraft VR type set wraps the subject in the setting, reflections and light. As the camera moves around the scene, the bark and sides of the trees change for parallax views.

VR Production

Pros

- Speeds up storyboarding process using 3D virtual sets.

- AR (augmented reality) can be used while shooting the locations to help the filmmakers determine the best places. The 3D dinosaurs in Jurassic World were added to lush jungle valleys and streams during scouting to get the best match.

- Director can walk through a set using 3D VR goggles to see the best shot setup.

- Actors can see the background elements and react more realistically getting better dramatic performances.

- Story comes to the front since you can see the final shot taking place on the soundstage and fix anything that is not working.

- Multiple takes of the same shot are easy and inexpensive since the set is interactive in real time.

- Costs one tenth of what it would to shoot on a real location.

- Lighting and reflections match the background on the set to make it look very real.

- Special effects are already baked into the background screen, or final playback layer, during filming with actors to make sure everything is working together.

- You can shoot in magic hour all day long using these techniques. The weather does not matter, permits or time of day.

- Real actors can interact with non-human 3D characters in real time on a set.

- Moving camera shots on set with the background parallax shifting.

- Directors can visualize their new ideas on set with the actors.

Cons

- Very expensive screens, VR cameras, laser projectors, computers, iPads and people who know how to stitch it all together.

- All the set elements need to be in place before the actors are shot.

- 3D animated scenes need all the worlds and characters ready to go.

Is it really a con if you have to do it anyway? Even if it is expensive this

This spaceman does not look like he is in the shot since the lighting and reflections do not fit. There are no reflections on his visor in the scene and he is too white for the red lighting.

Even with a simple bluescreen setup, you can do a hue saturation shift in post on the character to match the set lighting. The reflections on the helmet are more difficult to fake if the head is moving. How can you take local set on earth and make it look far away? This waterfall got a red hue color pass in post to look more like Mars. Adjusting just the color on the various layers makes everything look more real.

new process still ends up costing a fraction of the old budget. Shooting in exotic locations, trying to get perfect lighting, with 100's of cast and crew members, is much harder and more costly.

StageCraft VR Process:

1. Make digital storyboards for your film using photographs that look like the final shot.

2. Layer each image, character or plane like you would for animation in a program like After Effects. This allows you to pan and scan the photo backgrounds with the characters running around on top.

3. Edit these shots together to get a story reel or animatic with sound that fits the actual final cut. This will save you lots of time reshooting, since you can see if the story works right away. You want to get as close to a final cut as possible at this stage.

4. Use 3D photography at high resolution for the sets to create a virtual world.

5. Identify which set pieces need to be built in the foreground. You want objects the actors can interact with to make it seem like they are in the virtual world. Sitting on shinny motorcycles, wearing chrome helmets or climbing over real rocks on the set.

6. Design final background sets in an immersive virtual 3D game engine type environment where you can move around

to get the best angel for your shots. Jim Cameron is using this technology for the new Avatar movies.

7. Shoot actors on the virtual set with final backgrounds.

8. See the story taking shape and make adjustments on final cut in real time.

Why is StageCraft VR so expensive now?

One of the key elements that makes The Mandalorian look so real are the custom background screens. One person goes to Iceland and shots the background using a 3D high-resolution camera that registers depth and distance for VR environments. ILM uses special crystal LED screens for lighting and reflections and high-end laser projections. Crystals need to be grown for five years to make these screens. Each screen has to come from the same bunch of ground crystals to reflect the light the same way. This sounds expensive!

The good news is that if ILM is doing it today, you will be doing it soon on a computer near you. Tech companies are obsessed with making LCD/LED screens bigger and better with higher resolution each year.

How Could You Build A Cheaper Version of StageCraft VR?

What if I told you that soon you could make a Star Wars like film in your bedroom, garage, warehouse or barn using similar digital

stagecraft techniques for a fraction of the budget?

1. Use multiple short throw 4K projectors that cost as low as $150 each and cover about 100 inches against a huge white video fabric screen or wall. Even if the resolution is not as good as ILM, you could create your own visual style that works.

2. Use a wall of seamless LCD/LED flat panel screens as a background set.

3. Three or more seamless 4K screens can be controlled by an Unreal or Unity game engine that allow you to playback 3D sets in real time. Resolution is based on how much graphics horsepower is coming from your computer system.

4. You can still shoot actors on a bluescreens and drop the sets in. You will not get the lighting and reflections, but you will be able to make a feature film in your bedroom. Watch the movie 300 to get ideas.

The future of filmmaking is an immersive 3D VR AI story game engine. StageCraft VR is the next step towards that goal. ↝

Secrets Behind
Unique Immersive
VR Content

Al Caudullo

Immersive VR content creation is a constant state of evolution. New creators are stepping into the format daily. Existing creators are searching for new methods of creating excitement for their video projects.

But what about stepping outside the box to create a hybrid 3D VR180 and 2D 360 project?

The story was ideal for this unique approach. Tell the story

of a disabled woman living in a slum in Bangkok that is about to be displaced because they want to build a Super Mall. Coconuts (https://coconuts.co/bangkok/news/forced-out-inside-bangkoks-biggest-slum-vr-experience/) Tom Ruiz, a fellow VR enthusiast and Managing Editor for Coconuts Bangkok approached to see if I would be interested in creating a VR story in addition to the print story. I immediately jumped at the chance.

Working with Lead Reporter, Teirra Yam Kamolva, and photographer, Chayanit Itthipongmaetee, we immediately started pre-production.

I decided that the VuzeXR camera would be the best tool for this job, by offering you the option of both VR180 3D or 2D 360 formats with 5.7K resolution.

The production plan was set in place. Interviews Sitting on the floor

of the women's sparse apartment surroundings would be done in VR 180 3D. This would help immerse you in the space and become more connected to our subject.

The other B roll shots that were shot showed the area in which she lives were done in 360.

And since the area was very cramped and tight, I got inventive with using a 3 m long boom pole with the camera attached to the top
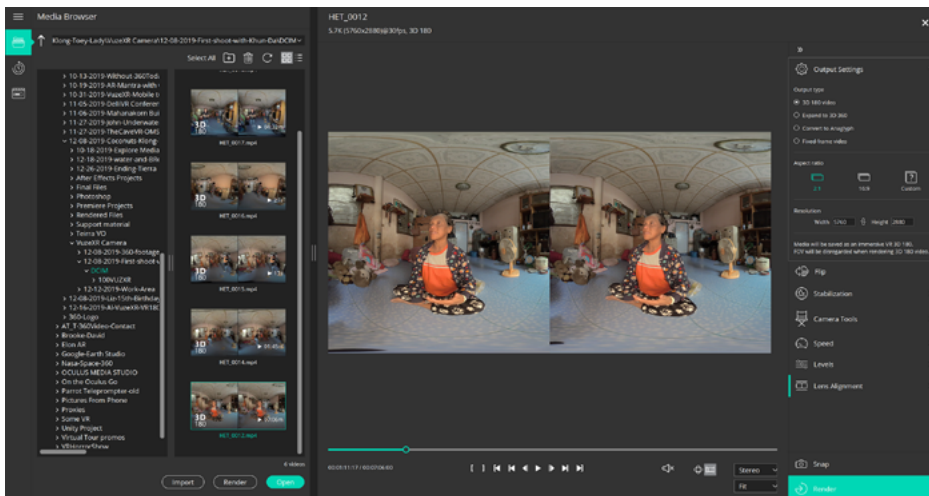
to create some pseudo-drone shots giving you a better feeling for how cramped the area that she lived in is.

Now let's get into the technical of how we prepared the video.

After transferring the video files to our PC in the raid assembly, I then brought them into Vuze VR studio.

The software gives us the unique ability to be able to output our VR 180 3D files as top/bottom VR 180 in a 360 frame instead of the usual side by side configuration.

It even allowed me to render a Pro Res 422 HQ format. Also, you can grab stills and 2D Videos in various formats, including Tiny Planet, 1:1, 2:1, 16:9, and 9:16, or even 3D red/cyan anaglyph.

Vuze VR Studio gives you the ability to adjust your stitch from a two-lens VR Camera. This offers you amazing latitude in correcting your images if they need it. This is the only software that I know of that gives you this important feature.
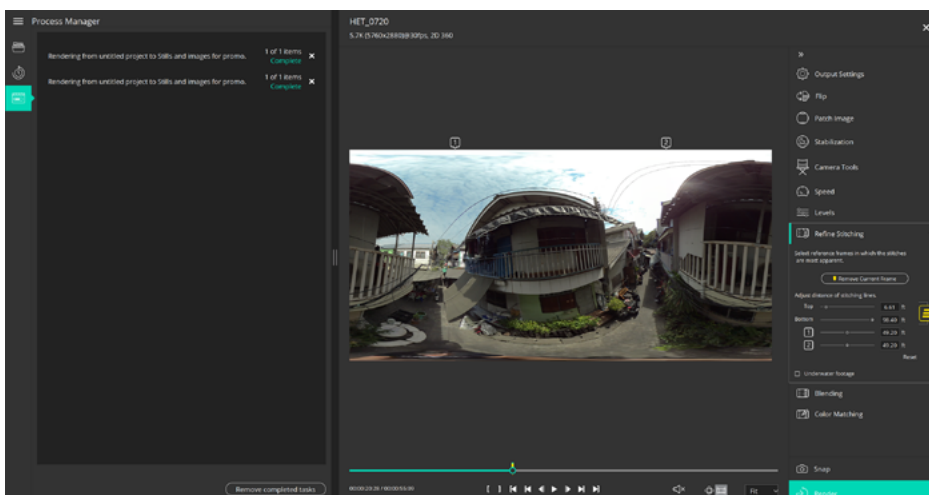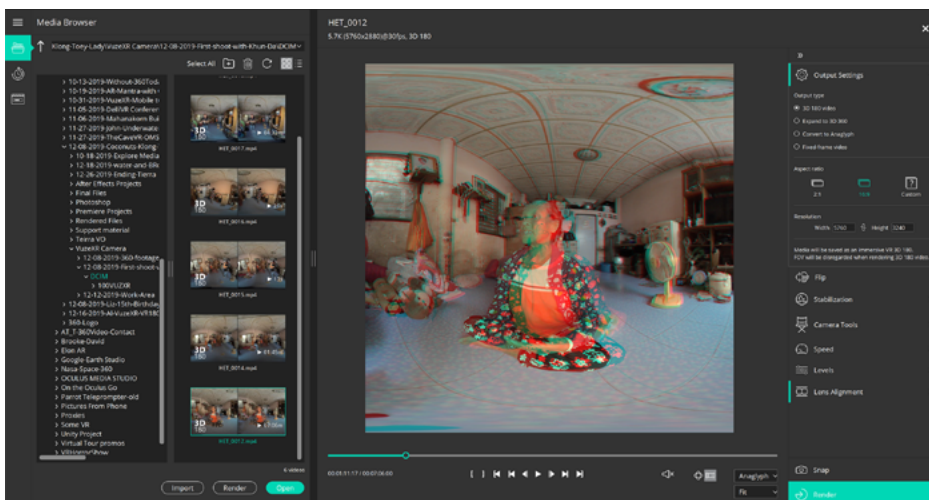
Next, I set up Premiere to create proxies so that I would have an easy time with playback during editing. Using proxies can be a lifesaver, especially once you start adding effects to your files on the timeline. The great thing about it is that when you're done and ready to export to adobe media encoder, premiere knows to use the full-resolution files. If you haven't tried using proxies, I strongly suggest that you do. If you have a hard time finding

proxies for your VR files, please contact me in the comments to the story, and I'll give you a link so that you can download and use them.

With my proxies created, I set up my timeline and immediately started my editing process.

My 360 files were brought on to the timeline and using the immersive tools built into Adobe Premiere, I added VR projection. This tool automatically looks at your sequin settings and mimics whatever it is to match up. So it created 2D 360 files With the top-bottom format. Unlike stereo files where you have a natural separation for the two eyes creating the parallax view, which gives you 3D stereo, these files are simply a right and the left stacked on top of each other.

Since I wanted to establish a connection to the woman, my opening scene was the VR 180 3D. For me to put something on the backside of the 360, I applied the crop tool and cropped 50% on the right and left. I then added the coconuts news organization logo.

Since I recorded the interviews using both the onboard microphones in the camera and external audio recorded from a Rode wireless lav and a Zoom H2N recorder. Synchronization on premiere was easy using Red Giant Complete's Plural Eyes.

For color correction, I used Red Giant Complete's Colorista IV. With this plugin, you can utilize the
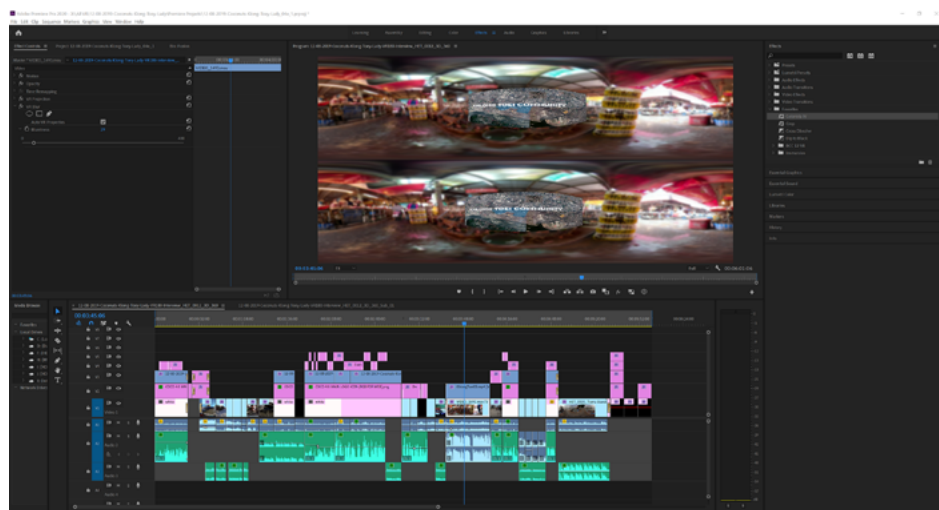
easy on-screen guide, or you dive into some very deep water of color correction — the perfect tool for any content creator.

To readjust some of my 360 shots to the position I wanted, I simply added the rotate sphere plug-in contained in the built-in immersive toolset.

Here's a link to the finished video on YouTube: https://youtu.be/0PWwaHR272c

If you'd like to be able to watch this in your Oculus VR headset, here is the link to Oculus Media Studio version. Oculus Media Studio is a new platform that allows VR creators to load their videos into Oculus TV so that VR headsets can either stream or download them. https://www.oculus.com/experiences/media/1677187242334527/476366469746345/

If you have any questions about some of the techniques that I've used or the camera that I've used, I'd be happy to answer them, just reach out to me. ☜
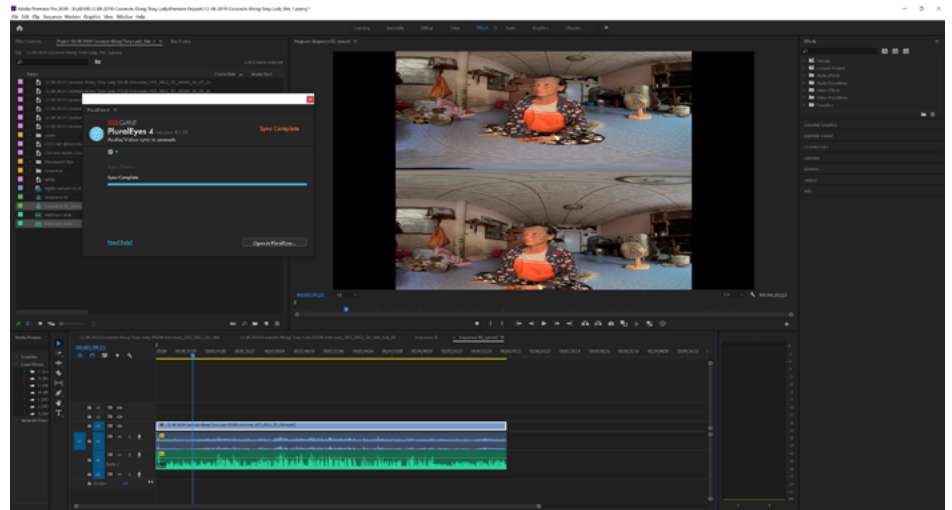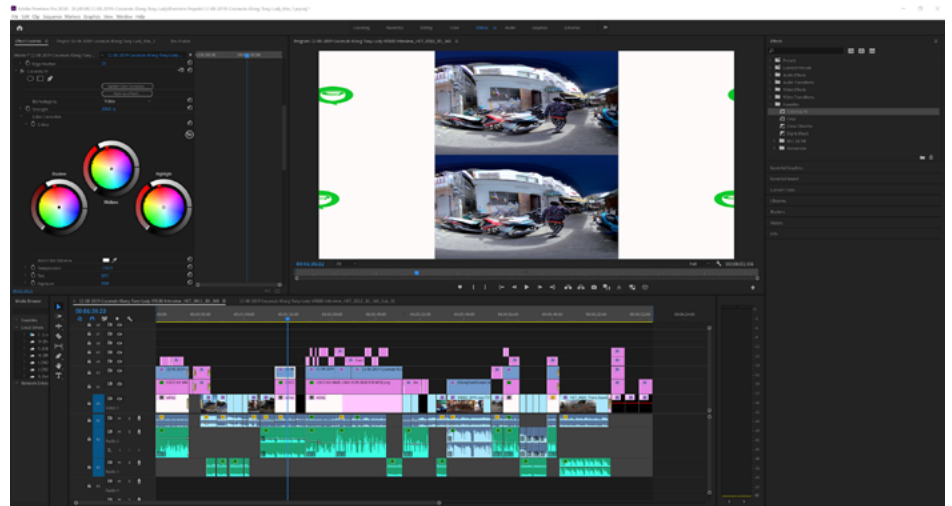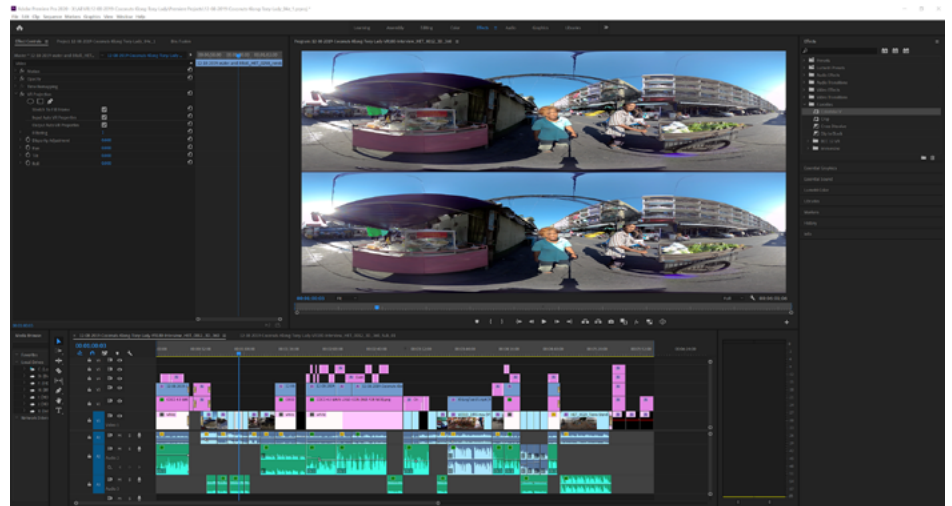
Staff Versus Freelance

Michael Skolnik

Back in the late eighties when I first started working in the television business, freelance pretty much didn't exist.

My first job was in Los Angeles working for a post-production company called Unitel Video, located on the Paramount Pictures movie lot.

It was a staff job with all of the benefits such as paid vacation, health care, etc. Three and a half years later, I moved to Florida also working for a post-production company as a staff assistant editor/colorist.

Then one year later, I moved back to New York also taking a staff job in Manhattan.

Fast forward to 2004, when this all changed for me. While there are still staff jobs obviously, they're harder to come by.

Here are some pros and cons of staff versus freelance. (See chart.)

STAFF	FREELANCE
Pros	
• Steady work • Paid time off • Health insurance • Usually consistent hours and savings plans.	• Higher rate per day • More freedom • High rate of networking which should help you in getting steady work, working at different locations (if you like that).
Cons	
• Harder to network which could be an issue if you're laid off from a staff job. • A good portion of the networks and production companies are going towards freelance. • Pay may not be as high as freelance for the same position.	• Depending on the amounts of hours you work at one company, there won't be any health insurance or a savings plan. • Changing locations frequently. This is not for everyone. • You are not guaranteed work consistently.

In my experiences, it helps to master several positions such as editor, camera and audio, so you will be able to always find work, especially if you choose the freelance route. ➥

> I think one of the privileges of being a filmmaker is the opportunity to remain a kind of perpetual student.
> – Edward Zwick

Think Crew

Team Collaboration and Problem Solving in Real Time

Exclusive Q&A with Think Crew Founder Michael R. Williams
Interview conducted by Jody Michelle Solis

StudentFilmmakers Magazine: What is the inspiration and passion behind Think Crew?

Michael R. Williams: This may sound strange for a filmmaker to say, but I dream about data systems. As a producer and production manager I solve a lot of different problems every day. Some of those are simple logistical issues, but many are caused by a lack of information or communication. All of the data about a show is out there - some of it is in computers, a lot of it is trapped on paper but still more is never used. What if there was ultimately a system where your script could talk to your schedule? What if your schedule talked to your budget? Did a scene just get omitted from the script - ok - your schedule should be able to tell you that your shoot day just got shorter. And your budget should be able to tell you the different ways you just saved money. Of course, those tools are still in the future. Think Crew is the cornerstone of that dream.

StudentFilmmakers Magazine: During Think Crew's development stages, what issues did you want to address and provide solutions for? Did you see a lack in technology or a specific need in the industry that needed to be filled?

Michael R. Williams: I think filmmakers have been frustrated for a long time about the state of software in the industry. When you compare the extraordinary technology that we use on set to the software that we use to organize it all, it's easy to see that it was time for something new. I spent months listening to my peers, finding out what they needed, what tools they dreamed about. I threw all of those ideas onto a list and got to work.

StudentFilmmakers Magazine: What changes or advances in technologies and workflows have you seen over the years, and how does Think Crew address and provide solutions for those changes and advances in tech and workflow?

Michael R. Williams: Not to date myself, but I saw a lot of forward momentum in the 90s. Back then there were new solutions being floated seemingly every month. But ultimately most of those tools faded away, leaving only a few players on the field. By the 2000s, the industry seemed to be gliding on the momentum that had been created during that creative period. Of course, there were disruptors. Scenechronize was pretty revolutionary when it came out. Way ahead of its time. But the tools to build scheduling apps online were in their nascent stages when they launched and ultimately they leaned away from scheduling.

Starting about three years ago, online development matured. It was suddenly possible to create apps that felt great to use in your browser. When I saw that happen, I knew it was time.

StudentFilmmakers Magazine: What are some major advantages for filmmakers using Think Crew browser-based software and tools in the cloud?

Michael R. Williams: I designed Think Crew to work the same way that assistant directors do - so the interface immediately makes sense to them when they see it for the first time.

A lot of people wanted the ability to collaborate with other team members. First ADs wanted to be able to update the scene order while their second AD would be updating the breakdowns. There was no way to do this before Think Crew. Also, because it's in the cloud, they can now let everyone see the schedule in real time and skip the whole PDF process. Of course most people prefer the traditional distribution of schedules, so you can publish to PDF or export your data to Excel or CSV too.

StudentFilmmakers Magazine: Can you tell us more about Think Crew's key benefits for filmmakers?

Michael R. Williams: In the early stages, I came up with the idea to make the day out of days a part of the scheduling process instead of just a publishable document. Our day out of days updates in real time, so as you move strips you can see your day out of

days changing. Also, you can actually drag day columns in the day out of days in the same way you can drag strips in the stripboard. No one had created a tool that could do that before. When you use it for the first time it's like magic. It makes it so easy to solve cast availability issues.

StudentFilmmakers Magazine: What are 3 Best Tips for working in Think Crew?

Michael R. Williams: For people who may be starting out in the industry, I'd say watching our tutorial videos will be a huge leg up. I spend a lot of time making sure that the site is easy to use for all experience levels. That said, if you're new to scheduling there may be some things you haven't seen before. Those videos will be your best friend.

If you are coming from a traditional desktop software background, I'd recommend that you lean in to the cloud based nature of the site. Think Crew can do a lot of things that desktop software hasn't been able to do. So the more you open your workflows up to the idea of collaborating, the easier your job will get.

And Think Crew has some tools that have never existed before - like your ability to drag columns in the day out of days. This also can require a new way of thinking about your schedule - but one that certainly makes your job much easier.

StudentFilmmakers Magazine: What are some things you're doing for education and student filmmakers?

Michael R. Williams: As a former film student myself, outreach is really important to me. One of the things that I realized coming out of film school was that while I had a deep understanding of cameras and editing, I didn't know anything about the management of films. Scheduling, budgeting, accounting - those things weren't being taught. We are putting together an initiative to teach the principles of physical production to students. I'm hoping that we can get that up and running in the very near future.

StudentFilmmakers Magazine: What kinds of technical support do you offer?

Michael R. Williams: As the creator of the site, I answer every tech support question personally. Support is the whole ball game. You can create the best tools in the world but if users feel

like they're going to get stuck then you haven't really solved their problem. We also have a link to a help site in the top menu bar. Tutorial videos have also been a pretty great tool for us too, which we post on our YouTube channel.

Of course, we receive very few questions about usability. Most of what we receive are new ideas from our users. "Wouldn't it be great if Think Crew did this"? I always love those emails. That's what the whole site is about.

StudentFilmmakers Magazine: What sets Think Crew apart from other professional filmmaking software and apps?

Michael R. Williams: Think Crew works on every device. So for instance if you're on a scout and you need to update the schedule, you can pull out your phone or iPad and simply make the changes. And it's not just for small changes. Some people have switched to using their tablets as their primary device. Everything you can do with Think Crew on a computer, you can also do on a mobile device. Desktop software is trapped on computers.

StudentFilmmakers Magazine: If you could share a piece of advice or inspiration with filmmakers, crew, and storytellers around the world, what would it be?

Michael R. Williams: Keep pushing the boundaries. Whether those boundaries are in storytelling, types of camera platforms or the software you chose. The world we live in has changed a lot recently but one of the things that remains the same is that those who make bold choices and use new methodologies will be the leaders in the future. At the risk of sounding cliche, be the change that you want to see in the world.

Ed Catmull Speaks about
Pixar

Scott Essman

After beginning his career as director of the Computer Graphics Lab in Long Island at the New York Institute of Technology in 1975, Ed Catmull became vice-president of northern California-based Lucasfilm's fledgling computer division in 1979. By the time of Lucasfilm's sale of the computer division to Steve Jobs in 1986, it was renamed Pixar Animation Studios with Catmull as co–founder and chief technical officer. After ten years of extensive research and development and the production of a host of amiable short films, Pixar released "*Toy Story*" in 1995 and was on its way to becoming the top computer-animation feature film company in the world, with Catmull installed as full president since 2001.

Jobs sold the company to Disney in 2006 for approximately $7.4 billion in an all-stock deal, and Catmull became president of Pixar and Walt Disney Animation Studios. He is now an advisor, set for official retirement next month, but before the announcement to his stepping down, he spoke about the state of Pixar in its new world as one of Disney's flagship properties on the heels of the release of the widely anticipated "*Toy Story 4*".

Though Disney distributed all of Pixar's films from the outset, Catmull noted a key difference in the relationship now that Disney is their parent company. "Our philosophy coming in," Catmull reflected, "we were going to have the studios all be independent from each other. So, except for John (Lasseter, former chief creative officer of Walt Disney Animation Studios, Pixar and Disneytoon Studios) and me going back and forth [between Disney in Burbank, California and Pixar in Emeryville, California], there's nothing else that goes back and forth between Pixar animation and Disney animation. Two different personalities, two different groups of people, two different creative drives — and that's the way we want it to be."

In addition to supervising Pixar, Catmull oversaw the aforementioned Disneytoon Studios, whose output included Pixar's "*Cars*" offshoot, "*Planes*". "We have Disneytoon studio which is the third studio, and what we do with Disneytoon studios is they take whole series in a world," Catmull described. "So, they've had one series which is in the [Disney] 'Fairies' world, and now there'll be a series in the '*Cars*' world. So, the realization is just have a world of '*Cars,*' and they'll just keep making things in that world and growing it and expanding it and building it. That is what Disneytoon studios will do for us."

[Ed. note: After "*Planes*'" sequel, "*Planes: Fire & Rescue*", Disney reorganized its animation divisions, leading to the announced shuttering of Disneytoon Studios in January of 2018, not long after this interview was conducted.]

Catmull was clandestine when speaking about technical developments in Pixar, leading to new levels of realism in films such as "*Toy Story 4*", which include a variety of newly developed tools—unthinkable 24 years ago when the first "*Toy Story*" film was made. "We never stop changing the tech," Catmull revealed. "It's just integrated in what we do, so, to me, it's all mixed together. It's part of changing things up all the time."

Lastly, when pointing to his long-term goals, specifically for Pixar, Catmull was pat in his response. "It's always been to make great films," he stated. "That's all it is. Nothing else matters."

Director of Photography
Multi-Instrumentalist Composer Arranger
Cinematographer
Editors Writers
Independent Filmmaker
Visual Effects Colorist
Video Game Animator
Director Casting Director
Sound Mix
Stunt Hair/Makeup
Voice Actor
Art Director
Executive Producer
Music Composer
Production Designer
360 VR Filmmakers
Short Film
Transportation Caterer
Set Operations Grip
Special EFX Editor
Location Scout
Camera Operator Gaffer
Wardrobe
Costume Designer
Sound Designer
Associate Producers

Join Global Filmmaker Network @

https://networking.studentfilmmakers.com

No Apologies in the Screening Room

Only One Chance for a First Impression

Fred Ginsburg, CAS, Ph.D.

A few years back, I was involved in the planning of a large, corporate event. Although my role for the upcoming event was focused on a couple of audio related workshops, I was still invited to sit around the big conference table.

One of the company employees was an amateur chef and had heard that they were looking for someone to cater the luncheons. So this person applied, and delivered an impressive verbal presentation. It was clearly obvious to all of the corporate types in the room that this employee was clearly a foodie, seemed knowledgeable about cooking, and certainly was abundantly enthusiastic.

There was a lot riding on the success of this event in terms of corporate pride, showmanship, and internal politics. Which meant that the meals had to be Hollywood worthy.

It was decided to allow this eager employee a chance to compete against the other well-established providers -- by contracting her to prepare and present a lunch service to the event committee members.

We were excited to see what she would bring to the table, literally! And, it felt good to see a newbie get an opportunity to play in the big leagues and earn some bragging rights. All of us have been there and done that in our respective professional fields.

Several days later, it was time to sample her culinary skillset. The company had discussed with her what was expected and provided her with a minimal working budget. Her moment to shine was now here!

The food was mediocre, at best. The presentation reminded us of a school lunch, or a cheaply done anniversary party held in the back of a local diner.

When she saw our disappointment, the chef became extremely apologetic. She was rushed for time; we only gave her a week to prepare. The working budget was minimal. She could not afford premium ingredients; nor was she able to rent a commercial kitchen. So she was limited to her apartment stove and cooking utensils. She could not afford to hire a professional staff, so she called in some of her friends.

We all agreed that she did pretty good, for an amateur, considering her resources. But the committee also concluded that the upcoming event was just too important to risk in her hands. Maybe, with a real budget, she could come through. Then again, maybe the results would still be low quality. No one was willing to gamble; so, the committee voted to go with an established chef with an established history.

I know, this is a magazine about student filmmaking, not cooking! The point that the story makes is that regardless of how well intentioned a filmmaker is – ultimately there are no apologies in the screening room!

If you have no money and no production resources – then write a script. If you are really ambitious and think that you can direct and tell a story cinematically, then maybe you should try your best to get something in the can to show....

But only if it is "can" as in film can, not "can" as in bathroom!

However, for the rest of you – the sound mixers, cinematographers, and other craftspeople – always remember this story about the chef.

In the real world (reel world) – you only get one chance to make an impression. Although making

movies may be your driving passion – your clients & investors have more at stake than just giving you a chance to learn through experience.

Your end product must meet their expectations! Unless it is YouTube or a coffee shop local film screening – audiences do not care how you cut corners in order to make a bad film.

And as a craftsperson or a technician – they certainly do not want to hear your excuses for bad production value, or how you might have done better if you had more equipment and a better crew.

I emphasize to my location sound students that, if you cannot do a good job, you should NOT undertake the task.

Run away and save your reputation for another day.

Almost every day, students come up to me and ask my advice about what a minimal sound package could be. They want to use inexpensive ENG/video shotguns instead of full condensers. They want to record them onto a simple two-track recorder, straight in, without a mixing panel. No headphones for the boomperson – if there even IS a boomperson.

Yet when I look at their scripts, I do not see a very simple project. Lots of characters, complex camera shots (without cuts, as if anyone cares that you have not learned about editing), noisy locations, cramped practical locations. A shot list that would instill fear into any experienced AD or Unit Manager.

These underfunded, overly complicated, "portfolio" films are supposed to demonstrate your abilities. You make them to show off your skills so as to get real clients and earn livable incomes in the industry.

But in the end, they have to be noteworthy and memorable. If you made or worked on a low budget,

labor of love, project – and were able to overcome logistical obstacles to produce a short film that showcased great cinematography, crisp audio, and tight editing -- then you have a sample worth circulating.

Invest your time. Concentrate your energy. Forego your salary, even. But draw the line when it comes to signing on to a production that will not, or cannot, let your filmmaking skills shine.

A cinematographer needs a good AC and a great Gaffer more than he/she might need the latest digital camera.

The Sound Mixer must have high quality condenser mics to achieve the reach and acoustic control needed on bad sets. I recommend a trio: a long shotgun with zeppelin windscreen for exteriors; a short shotgun for interiors, and a wide-angle shotgun to reduce interior echo (for close-ups). If you don't own them, then rent them. But don't skimp and use wimpy mics; the harsher the set, the more you need the added performance that premium grade mics will deliver!

Mixing panels do not have to be expensive; Mackie and Behringer offer some great boards for only a few hundred dollars. Mixing boards give you CONTROL over your mics. Not only can you blend live feeds from two or more microphones, but you can actively ride gain during the performance (which you cannot do if you plug straight into a cheap recorder or even an expensive camcorder). The mixing panel lets you equalize the tone & volume of multiple mics, so that they all sound similar to the main boom mic. The board allows you to send good audio to your boomperson. And if you are using a recorder with more than two tracks, it allows you to feed a live mix as well as

individual ISO tracks (raw unmixed feeds from each mic).

You will need at least a couple of good lavaliers. They do not have to be wireless. Lavs can be deployed on the set as PLANTED mics to cover what the booms cannot; or they can be worn by actors.

A couple of decent wireless mics are very useful. There are a lot of units that sell for only several hundred dollars each, or rent for $25-35 per day. Try not to depend too much on your wireless; a lot of things outside of your control can make them intermittent.

You do not need a super, duper digital recorder. More tracks means that you can record a live mix of the production track, along with a few unmixed ISO tracks of individual mics. Most likely, on a low budget shoot, you will not need a lot of tracks. There are a lot of older model recorders at the rental houses that work just fine, and satisfied Hollywood for many years – so save money and don't limit yourself to the latest & greatest. You do not need to pay for lots of tracks that you will never use, nor lots of special features that will not pertain to you.

Make sure that you partner up with a good boomperson! As a Sound Mixer, you need someone who is adept at getting your mic close to the actors and anticipating problems. Booming entails way more than just holding and waving a big stick. On a low budget show, your boom mic needs to be perfectly placed in order to compensate for bad sets, noisy locations, and wanna-be actors!

We all have paid our "dues" and gained valuable experience, along with networking, by working for no or low money on "labors of love". But you do not improve your skills by repeatedly doing things incorrectly, or suffering with childish excuses for equipment.

The reason we work low budget is to gain PROFESSIONAL experience. You can work for cheap, but do not do cheap work. Make sure that every project that you work on is worthy of your name. ☚

Film Score

Budgeting for Time

Kristen Baum

As a director, when you ask a composer to score your film, it's important to understand all that you're asking of them. The scoring process has many moving parts and there's only a fraction that you—the director—will see. The rest happens behind the scenes.

Imagine it as an iceberg. What you see includes the music spotting session, show & tells (where you get together to listen to the score-in-progress and talk about what's working and what needs more work) and recording sessions. It could also include any concept meeting during which you discuss the direction you envision for your score.

What happens below the surface? The composer prepares for the spotting session, by screening the film and creating preliminary spotting notes for the project, noting the INs and OUTs of any temp cues for all tracks, score or song. Any research around the project will likely happen at this phase and could include a survey of other film titles in the genre, instrumentation that may be desired and other possibilities that will help them compose a unique and memorable score for your project.

The composing phase happens after the spotting session. A lot of time is spent in this phase even though it might seem from the outside that it might not take much time at all. A bulk of time is spent in the developing of themes or motors that will drive action forward or sonic qualities that will evoke a mood or place or time period that will be unique to your project and in composing each individual cue. Mock-ups are made (by the composer or an assistant if budget permits), instruments might be recorded for show & tells (solo instruments or voices), and sometimes more than one version of a cue is composed in the search for the exact "voice" for the project.

Once music is approved, each cue is exported (audio and midi) and sent to an orchestrator who puts it into readable form, transcribing every note and orchestrating—adding instruments that will enhance the cue on the scoring stage, creating the scores for the musicians who will play it. Following this, every cue needs to be proofread to insure there's no time wasted on the scoring stage correcting errors. A copyist then creates scores and parts for the recording session. The composer or composer's assistant prints each cue in stems which are sent to a music editor, who prepares each cue in its own ProTools session for the scoring stage. If there is no budget for any one of these jobs, then the composer must assume those duties, adding more to the composer's workload and potentially taking away time that could be used for composing.

The scoring session requires a small army: the composer, orchestrator, a conductor, contractor, musicians and a recording engineer and staff required to fix the music in its digital medium. Following the scoring session, the recording engineer creates a mix of each individual cue, which is then broken into stems and prepared for delivery for the final mix.

Many person-hours go into the creation of a film score. Your overall score budget will be most effective when you take into account the need to hire additional help for the many positions. If there isn't a budget for each position, the demand on the composer's time is increased as a result. The composer then ends up absorbing the cost of those jobs that haven't been budgeted for. It still takes the same number of person-hours to complete the job, it's just that all of those hours must be completed by the composer.

Like many intrepid indie filmmakers, I started fundraising for my feature film, *Bernard and Huey*, with a Kickstarter campaign. I had a killer video, largely about our epic search for the lost-for-30-years script by Oscar/Pulitzer-winner Jules Feiffer. I had cool perks like custom mugs, totebags and buttons. And I had a team of 9 film-school interns and my kids helping me out in my garage.

But if there's one thing I've learned, you shouldn't expect to raise your full budget for a feature just through crowdfunding. Remember, it's called Kick*starter*, not Kick*finisher* (or Seed&Spark, not Tree&Fire). But I figured if I could raise at least ten percent of the budget, that would be enough to hire a casting director, set a start date and pay off

my lawyer (who'd already spent three years working for little more than a chicken sandwich.) So we set our goal at a reasonable $10,000 and launched the campaign!

We did all the usual crowdfunding things right: Got some nice press, spread the word on social media and colored in a campaign thermometer taped to the wall. People responded incredibly well and we hit our goal within a lightning-quick 9 days!

That was the good news. The bad news? People stopped giving us money and we still had 21 days left to go. Unfortunately, no matter how much we tried to post "stretch goals" and convince people

How a Crowdfunding Fail Led to the Must-See Scene of the Year

by Dan Mirvish

that our total budget was actually much more than $10,000, the donations dried up.

I then realized that the most successful crowdfunding campaigns are not for films at all, but rather for inventions and gadgets that backers are simply pre-ordering (Glow-in-the-Dark Legos?! I'll buy two!!). So I decided the best way to keep the campaign moving was simply to invent something. Anything. And then add it as a perk to the campaign.

Mother of an Invention

I'd already been tinkering with some odd lenses I'd picked up at thrift stores, so within a matter of days, I came up with something that I called, "The MirvishScope." Despite sounding like a proctology device, essentially the MirvishScope was a whole new lens system for DSLRs: We would drill a hole in the plastic body cap of a Canon DSLR, then hotglue a plastic lens to it. (I'd seen fellow Slamdance alumnus Ben Wheatley and his DP Laurie Rose do something similar for their film *A Field in England*). But when I tried it, it was out of focus. Until, that is, I held a 3-inch magnifying glass with my left hand about a foot in front of the camera. Voila! The image popped into focus! But better still, it added unique reflections, refractions, flares, and distortion to the image, and would work for either still photos or video. It was the perfect lens system for any dream sequence, drug trip or other artsy-fartsy effect.

The MirvishScope offered some of the same creative control as tilt-shift, bokeh or lens-whacking systems, but gave a totally original look for the final image, as well as a completely unique user experience for the camera operator or photographer. Normally if we're using a DSLR, our left hand is anchored to the lens with our fingers forever slavishly spinning focus and zoom rings. When was the last time you shot something and really let your left hand's freak fly? With my little MirvishScope, the southpaw was finally having most of the fun: twisting, turning, moving in and out like a trombonist in a tripped-out acid jazz solo! Ever since Galileo, people have hidden their lenses in air-tight closed cylinders. But this was a way of opening up the optical magic and going nuts.

The interns and I did some back-of-the-napkin math and figured we could put a MirvishScope kit together for under $5 and add it as a perk to the campaign for just $35. Even if other filmmakers and photographers didn't care about *my* film, the MirvishScope would help them make *their* films! The invention got a wave of new press and tweets for the campaign from the likes of IndieWire, Filmmaker Magazine, NoFilmSchool and several photography blogs. By the end of the campaign, close to 100 people had ordered the MirvishScope and the Kickstarter campaign had nearly tripled its original goal!

Waste Not, Want Not

Of course, once the campaign was over, we realized that building 100 MirvishScopes was not at all a simple matter. We toured a

Chinese optical company across the street from a California state prison. We even consulted an 80-year-old optical guru in a top-secret San Diego bunker for advice. In the end, we found a way to source the parts pretty simply and turned my garage into an assembly-line "sweatshop" to build and ship all the MirvishScopes. (And yes, to avoid new labor laws that protect unpaid interns, I made sure to have at least an hour of "education fun-time" every day, and also to crack open the garage door once in a while.)

At one point during that process, I ordered 100 magnifying glasses from a local warehouse, at $1 each. But as it turned out, they were the wrong focal length and wouldn't work with the MirvishScope! Worse, the warehouse wouldn't take returns. "Oh, no!" the interns sighed. "We just wasted a $100 of pure Kickstarter goodness!"

"We will not waste $100 worth of magnifying glasses!" I cried out. Always the thrifty indie filmmaker, I vowed, "We will put them in the movie!"

Eventually, we got the right magnifying glasses, put our kits together, and sent out the MirvishScopes. Some of these filmmakers have indeed gone on to use it in their own films, including Skizz Cyzyk, who incorporated footage he shot with it into his award-winning doc *Icepick to the Moon*.

"We will not waste $100 worth of magnifying glasses!"

I vowed, "We will put them in the movie!"

It's Curtains for This Scene!

Once production started on *Bernard and Huey*, I told the art department (led by production designer Anthony Pearce) to string the extra magnifying glasses together with ribbons, forming a curtain. Anthony and his team found an old mannequin arm to support the weight of the glass lenses and used it as a makeshift curtain rod. It took art department intern Emily Ward a couple days, but she made a beautiful curtain!

One of our main characters, Zelda (played by Mae Whitman), is a graphic novelist who lives in a cluttered artists' collective in Brooklyn. Though we did shoot exteriors in New York, we filmed the interior in a real artist's loft in downtown Los Angeles. We used the curtain of magnifying glasses like a beaded curtain as the entrance to Zelda's bedroom.

About two hours before filming the bedroom scenes, I broke the news to our cinematographer, Todd Antonio Somodevilla, that I wanted to shoot through this crazy curtain. Now mind you, we were shooting most of the movie on an Alexa NT with Panavision Anamorphic Primo Lenses. These are the same enormous two-foot long, 20-pound lenses that J.J. Abrams uses (other parts of the movie were shot on Super16 with similar lenses). This was no Canon DSLR, and as we knew quite well, this was no MirvishScope. Todd was appropriately dubious.

Creating Movie Magic

There was no way to tell if this crazy scheme was going to work except to try it. To establish the curtain, we shot one scene of Jim Rash (Bernard) walking down a narrow hallway and getting tangled up in it going into Zelda's room. Since the actual hallway took a hard right turn into the bedroom, we had to cheat the geography a little. Luckily, I found a large 4x4 foot mirror in the room and we did the old magician trick of putting it at a 45-degree-angle behind the curtain. With a few well-placed lights, and with the audience focused on Jim's inspired comic reactions, we were able to sell the effect.

Two scenes later in the film, we'd cut back to an intimate scene in the bedroom between Jim and Mae, with the camera peering through the hanging magnifying classes (now moved to the base of the bed) in a two-minute long dialogue scene.

It was a cramped space, so instead of a dolly, we put the camera on a 4-foot slider and Todd gently slid and panned towards the actors, nimbly trying to aim through the gaps in the magnifying glasses. One advantage of the Panavision Anamorphic Primos is they have enormous focal range, so they can focus on items very close to them. Meanwhile, our taciturn 1st AC/Focus Puller Colin Kelly was down the hall peering into his focus monitor, with me whispering in his ear when and how fast to rack focus through the shot.

It was unseasonably hot in this tiny bedroom and I couldn't ask actors Jim and Mae - much less the crew - to do more than a few takes. Thankfully, we'd done several days of rehearsals in my kitchen prior to principal photography: Todd and I knew we had the kind of actors who were nimble and talented enough to pull off a long "oner" like this with no coverage and

There was no way to tell if this crazy scheme was going to work except to try it.

no safety shots. But for the first three takes, the wireless system between the camera and the remote focus-pull dial wasn't working and I had to call "cut" in the middle of the shot. Finally, by take four, the remote started working and we got the shot! In the end, we only got one usable shot. But thankfully, that's all we needed.

In post-production, colorist Jon Fordham and I digitally zoomed and repositioned the shot, smoothing out the motion and pushing in to almost double the original framing. By masking the digital zoom with the slider push-in, it's a remarkably smooth effect. Even though we were only shooting 2k, the shot retains its resolution just fine. If anything, it brings to mind 1970s-era optical zooms which were consistent with what Todd and I were doing throughout the film. Our sound designers (Studio Unknown in Baltimore) added some subtle "tinkling" of the magnifying glass to cue the audience that we were looking through the same glass curtain that we'd seen and heard two scenes earlier. Composer Luis Guerra added some beautiful source music that he composed for the scene (aka, "scource" music).

The bedroom scene winds up being one of the most memorable shots in the whole film, with many Q&A audiences remarking on it to me. In the end, it's a tribute not just to the enormous talents of Todd, Colin, the art department and the rest of our crew, but also to impeccable actors like Jim Rash and Mae Whitman, the brilliant script by Jules Feiffer, and our talented post-production team.

And of course, it's also a fitting tribute to our 9 interns, 383 Kickstarter backers and especially those 100 filmmakers who got the MirvishScope. Did form follow function or the other way around? Who cares... It's indie film!

All that said, I'm now at the tail-end of another crowdfunding campaign for my next film: *18 ½,* a Watergate conspiracy thriller/dark comedy that we're going to shoot this winter. We're doing the campaign on Seed&Spark (with ongoing fundraising through The Film Collaborative) this time around, and also reached our stated goal early. I've definitely thought about doing a new invention but with far fewer interns in my garage this time, I haven't...yet! ☙

Mirvish's campaign for 18 ½ is finishing up Nov 4 at Seed&Spark with ongoing crowdfunding through fiscal sponsor The Film Collaborative. Bernard and Huey played in over 30 film festivals on 5 continents before getting a 20-city US theatrical release and selling to 50 countries. It can be seen in the US on Amazon Prime and other streaming outlets. Cofounder of the Slamdance Film Festival, director Dan Mirvish is also the author of the Focal Press book, The Cheerful Subversive's Guide to Independent Filmmaking.

Watch this video for this article at Vimeo: https://vimeo.com/320622211

The Budgeting Imperative

By JC Cummings

During these times of economic confusion, it's more important than ever to budget each project correctly. I'm not just talking about purchasing a software program and figuring what you might need or plugging in numbers, I'm talking about crossing "T's" and doting "I's".

It's common for producers and executive producers to focus on rates for crews, equipment rentals, copyright fees, insurance, talent, especially craft services and other important issues concerning a production. Unfortunately, some end up "low balling" other line item estimates making the budget look better to investors or distributors.

It seems each element of a shoot has its shortfalls when it comes to budgets. Controlled shoots (in studios) experience down time with equipment failure, lighting repositioning and talent or script modifications. When on location, problems seem to "rear their ugly heads" when you least expect it, but hopefully you've "bumped up" some budgeted items or added a couple of extra days to offset any unexpected overages.

We know post-production is based on hourly or a flat project rate in the budget, but often editing seems to go over the original estimate. We've all experienced "time" being the biggest villain in post. Then we find out the audio needs "a bit more sweetening" or we detect a 'flash frame' in that shot?

Whoops…what just happened to that budgeted line item? There's so much to account for, we're lucky we don't blow the budget outright.

One line item I often see missing or estimated too low is marketing. What will we do with the project after its complete and ready for presentation on air, screen, broadband/streaming? The realization studios will be "banging down our doors" to get a first look of our creation begins to be a little far-fetched. Then somewhere weeks later we find out you really have to get out and pitch the project. If you don't have a healthy marketing budget or money tucked away, you could find yourself the only audience watching your production. What about fees to submit into Film Festivals…?

This element is more common in projects that have no distribution deals. If an independent producer ventures out to make a production with only passion behind it and not a line item for marketing, the show will have little chance of success and may even die. All the efforts of your creative team can go to waste.

Okay, that's the doom and gloom, but if you take the time and build a line to accommodate marketing you have a good chance for success. Everything takes time, but if you have the money budgeted to get out and sell your product you'll win. Remember, you don't want to be the only one who knows about your production. There's an average of 3,500 programs produced each year with some 1,500 being pitched each month, so competition can be stiff.

If your targeting a network make sure when you call ask for "submission forms" or they may require an agent or attorney to submit on your behalf. Submission forms are usually handed out by a networks legal department or in some cases production acquisition team. The submission form qualifies you as someone with production knowledge, credentials etc. They'll check you out then notify you its clear to submit. Beware…this process may take some time. If you have marketing dollars you can afford to have lunch meetings, make the process easier and maybe get a deal.

So, the next time you punch in those numbers, think about the results. No one wants a show sitting in a closet because they ran out of the most important part of production: the sale. And that's the REEL STORY! ☙

4 Ways Giving Back Can Help Your Creativity and Career

By Carole Kirschner

'Helping others' can sound intimidating. It probably makes you think of huge undertakings like volunteering in an emergency, or tasks you would rather avoid like helping your friend move into her 6th floor walk up. The idea of helping others, especially when you're focused on your own ambitions, can seem like an exhausting task that will inevitably take time and energy away from you and your path to success.

But acts of giving back and kindness (with no thought to what's in it for you) can actually pay off in surprising ways. Helping others can actually help you get closer to your career goals. That being said, don't just do it to get ahead, do it because it creates a positive impact on everyone involved.

Here are 4 ways giving back can help your creativity and your career:

1. Lifting Others Up, Lifts YOU Up

Karma, most of us use that word when we're talking about bad things happening to bad people. But what about the karma of good things happening to good people? It works both ways. If you put good out into the world, good is going to come back to you. Even if the idea that the universe rewards good deeds is too woo-woo for you, it's undeniable that when you help others you usually feel better about yourself. When you make a difference for someone, it gives you a sense of accomplishment and that can boost motivation in other areas of your life. Rather than sucking energy, helping others can actually energize you to work harder, longer and smarter. What

better state to be in to then dive back into your writing?

2. Invaluable Lessons, Transferable Skills

Believe it or not, helping others can actually teach you skills that are highly valuable and transferable to a writing career. Skills like teamwork, communication, problem solving, project planning, task management, and organization. All of these skills are vital to surviving a writer's room, and practicing these skills in a non 'make it or break it' environment can give you more confidence when you need to use them in your professional life. Also, the lessons you'll learn helping others doesn't just come from the actual tasks you're doing. If you're helping out a mentor or volunteering for an organization you admire you'll learn through sheer osmosis! Just being around pro-active, altruistic people will expand you as a creative and as a person.

3. You'll Keep Your Social Skills Sharp

For the most part, writing is a lonely occupation. If you're not in a TV writers room, chances are you're spending most of your days alone in an apartment or coffee shop. That kind of isolation can equal some seriously rusty social skills; social skills you'll need when it comes time to pitch a show, or interview for a writers room. Whether it's volunteering in a group (so you're pushed to be more extroverted than you normally are), or it's helping someone out one-on-one (pushing you to connect to someone on a more

focused level), helping others can be a great way to keep up your people-skills and stay connected to the world. These connections can also broaden your creativity. A lot of volunteer situations involve interacting with people you would never cross paths with in your everyday life: People with different points of view, from different cultures, different ages, and different backgrounds. All of these encounters will give you more to draw on in your writing than just your own experience.

4. It Will Help You Keep Perspective.

All writers get caught up in the drama of their own lives: a script rejection feels like the end of the world, waiting to hear back from a production company can feel like agony. Helping others can be a counter balance to all that drama. Focusing on others takes you out of your own head, away from the anxieties of the business, and helps you keep perspective on what's important (trust me, when you're reminded how little some people have in this world it really puts a script rejection into perspective). Even if you agree to help out a friend just as a healthy distraction from your career worries, chances are by the time you're done helping them your self-esteem will be boosted, and you'll have a greater sense of yourself and the world around you. The better you feel about yourself, the more likely you are to have a positive view of your life, your goals, and have the motivation to keep going after them.

What are your favorite ways to give back? *Let me know* @CaroleKirsch!

Maia Kimadze
Cinematographer, Editor, Director

Current Projects:

For the last 8 years, I work mostly as a DP or a camera op. Right now, am working with the writer/director on a web series that will spread out in 6 episodes, though due to coronavirus the production is on hold. And since I have more time available now, I am also working on finishing my own script and hopefully find funds to produce it in the future.

Most Favorite Scene to Shoot Thus Far:

One of the scenes that comes to my mind right now, there was an argument between two characters and instead of shooting them in one room facing each other, we staged and shot it, characters moving between the rooms and hallway occupied with their own things and arguing, which made the scene more organic. That was fun to shoot.

Challenge & Solution:

There are always minor problems on the set, like not enough black flags to block the light and substituting it with the garbage bags and such.. but one time, second camera operator did not show up on set, and we had to recreate the shot list to cover all the pages for that day. That was a challenge because the time was pressing, but if you have a good crew, it is possible. With that said, I cannot stress enough how important it is to choose a right crew and cast to work with.

3 Production Tips:

#1 Arrive early on set.

#2 If you think there is a better way, do it. Never say: *Oh, it's good enough.* (Considering budget.)

#3 Prepare as much as you can before the shoot, it saves time on set.

https://networking.studentfilmmakers.com/profile/Chaika
https://www.imdb.com/name/nm6791131/

William Bracey
Sound Design, Audio Engineering

Current Projects:

Since the global crisis (COVID19), work has really slowed down to a halt, if we're being honest. Though it has been a challenge, I've decided to keep busy by thrusting myself into projects that I would keep me "sharp" as a sound editor. Also, staying on top of my business responsibilities, such as tax documents, website management, demo reel updates, social media presence, etc.

Most Favorite Project Thus Far:

My most favorite project was reconstructing a movie scene. I love projects like these because you would "strip away" all of the original audio that accompanied the scene. And re-build it with your own material. Dialogue, background, sound effects, and music. It really allows you to become very creative, and I realized that I have a passion for ADR or Automated Dialogue Replacement.

Challenge & Solution:

Being that I have a dedicated workspace / editing suite in my home, that basically means the basement. When scheduled to perform some recording, I have to allow for times of the day when there's less traffic (family, washer/dryer, A/C). I basically found the solution is to ensure all noisy appliances are turned off, and family members are asleep.

3 Production Tips:

Tip 1: Record Everything. You never know what you are going to capture. Sometimes there could be small surprises in what you've recorded.

Tip 2: Gear Lust is Real! Don't fall victim to it. Sure, we all love the shiny new toys that could make sound design a bit more interesting, however, I would argue the best equipment (plugins, mics, multi-track recorder) are the ones that you already own.

Tip 3: Remember to Have Fun and Be Creative. It's fun to allow your mind to wander and just enjoy the art of storytelling through sound.

https://networking.studentfilmmakers.com/profile/29837
https://www.isupplyaudio.com/

Lynne Darlington

Voiceover, On Camera Actor

Current Projects:

I am a voiceover and on-camera actor/spokesperson. I have a VO studio with Source Connect, which allows me to conduct remote recording sessions from anywhere in the world with internet access. Not all of my projects are over Source Connect; some of my clients send me copy, and I record and email the audio directly to them. I have been working on various commercial spots, a United Nations video, and will be recording the names of high school students for their virtual graduation next week. Unfortunately, COVID19 has shut down most recording sessions in NYC at the moment.

My last on-camera booking was as a spokesperson for a corporate video just before everything was halted in March. Since then, on-camera work has been nonexistent as the industry is working on new protocols to keep everyone safe on set. I have noticed on some of the casting sites that the new trend for projects is for talent to self-record. Creative teams are looking for talent to submit auditions and virtually shoot projects with any 4K resolution phone. I am hopeful, as is everyone in the industry, that next month traditional production will begin again!

Creative Process:

Over the course of a day, I receive an average of ten VO auditions from my various agents and clients. They run the gamut in emotion, tone, delivery, audience, etc... Chameleonic VO talent are the busiest. I try my best to deliver on "conversational, real, warm, reassuring, corporate, CEO, girl next door, serious, wry, 'with a wink', upbeat, bright, heartfelt, not too young, not too mature, in the middle of that sweet spot, informative with a touch of genuine emotion, matter of fact and pleasant"... and the list goes on. Each script has to be broken down to connect to the audience, and the point of view of the character. Is this playful? Am I a storyteller? Who are we talking to? Is it radio or TV? The mediums have subtle differences. After a couple of reads, I know where I want to take the script. I step into my booth, trust my instincts, and let it rip. The more clever the copy, the more fun the process; a good copywriter is my best friend. As an actor, I have learned to submit it and forget it - took me a couple of years, but this is a crowded space with intense competition. You will win some and lose some - all part of the game.

For an entertaining and comical look at the VO industry watch Lake Bell's 2013 American comedy film, *In a World...*

Challenge & Solution:

A while ago, I was working with a well-known politician in my studio for a radio spot. I gave him the script, and he immediately started changing lines, and knocking out words. This was radio, where every word is necessary for a :30 or :60 buy. As he was rearranging the meticulously-crafted script, I made the decision to let him do what he wanted and we would get creative in post. Since the script was from his point-of-view, I did not feel comfortable correcting him; it was going to be more heartfelt in his own words. The spot was a success - his delivery was smooth and believable. We added lines to my script to compensate for the lost time.

Voice Over Tips:

Take acting and improv classes, stay current with the recording software and technology, watch commercials and listen to what is trending, make friends with other VO talent, vet all VO coaches and demo producers, believe in yourself, and enjoy the ride!

https://networking.studentfilmmakers.com/profile/29926
http://www.lynnedarlington.com
https://www.facebook.com/lynnedarlington.1
https://twitter.com/LynneDarlington

Contributing Writers

Kristen Baum is a composer with 40+ film credits. She lives and works in Los Angeles and collaborates with creators of media and music around the world. She is a Sundance Fellow of the Film Composers Lab. During her time in LA, she has worked closely on several projects with Christopher Young, including as an orchestrator on Priest and When in Rome.

Fred Ginsburg, CAS, Ph.D., is a highly experienced and award winning professional sound mixer whose decades of work includes features, episodic TV series, national TV commercials, corporate, and government. He is a member of the Cinema Audio Society and the University Film & Video Association. Fred holds doctorate, graduate, and undergraduate degrees in filmmaking; has published more than 200 technical articles along with a textbook, instruction manuals, and hosts an educational website. Fred instructs location recording and post-production sound at Calif State University Northridge.

JC Cummings has become a sought-after Producer, Director, Showrunner, including a production logistics specialist in the film and television industries. Mr. Cummings continues to share his knowledge with over 40 years of "on set" production experience and storytelling as an independent producer. Beginning in radio for a short time, moving to film and broadcast TV, where his career lead him to acquire rights and later producing a successful nationally syndicated children's series. As success continued, Mr. Cummings was contracted to develop other television projects for broadcast networks and outside companies.
www.motionpicturecompany.com

Amy DeLouise is a writer and digital creative director getting used to the new work-from-home world of remote production. She blogs about production issues, and has authored a variety of LinkedIn Learning courses and a new book on nonfiction audio from Routledge Press.

Al Caudullo's multiple award-winning career has spanned 38+ years of video creation, including excellence in HD, 3D, 4K UHD, and now Immersive VR180 & 360VR as the Global Production Director for 360 VR Voice, a global news and production service presenting in 360 and VR180. Caudullo has been a featured speaker at dozens of conferences and seminars worldwide, including in China, Singapore, Vietnam, Thailand, London, South Korea, and the USA.

Carole Kirschner worked as a senior level television development executive for eighteen years; including at CBS and as head of Steven Spielberg's first Amblin Television.
She is currently Director of the Writers Guild of America's Showrunner Training Program and the CBS Diversity Writers Mentoring Program, as well as an author and international speaker. Her book, Hollywood Game Plan: How to Land a Job in Film, TV and Digital Entertainment , is taught in film schools and colleges around the country.

John Klein is a director, cinematographer, and producer in Chicago. His directorial work includes the award-winning short horror film, "Cry It Out," and the feature films, "Happily After" and "Chrysalis", and he's lensed projects of all shapes and sizes, from the micro-budget web series, "Young Couple" to the Lifetime movie, "Nightlights". He also teaches film production at DePaul University and Flashpoint Chicago. Visit his website at www.windycitycamera.com

Scott Essman's filmography includes over 28 productions including, "Jack Pierce: The Man Behind the Monsters" and "Trane and Miles". Essman has published over 500 articles about people who work behind-the-scenes in movies. www.visionarycinema.com

David Landau has worked 30 plus years in lighting for features, TV, commercials, documentaries, industrials and music videos. He teaches lighting and cinematography at Fairleigh Dickinson University, shoots low budget features and corporate videos and summers as one of the gaffers on Project Runway. Five-time Telly Award winner for lighting and cinematography and an IATSE Local 52 member, he authored the book "Lighting for Cinematography" (Bloomsbury Press). Written by David Landau and David Bennett Carren, check out new book, "Next Level Screenwriting," (Focal Press).

Hiro Narita, ASC's filmography of over 73 titles ranging from feature films to episodic television series to documentaries includes "Never Cry Wolf", "Honey, I Shrunk the Kids", "The Rocketeer", "Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country" and "The Scorpion King". Narita has received Emmy award nominations for "Farewell to Manzanar", "Dirty Pictures", and "Half Past Autumn: The Life and Works of Gordon Parks".

Sherri Sheridan is a leading world expert in teaching story to digital filmmakers, animators, screenwriters and novelists. New book coming soon "Filmmaking Script to Screen Step-By-Step" with an app. Other books include "Maya 2 Character Animation" (New Riders 1999), "Developing Digital Short Films" (New Riders / Peach pit / Pearson 2004) and "Writing A Great Script Fast" (2007). Sherri is the CEO and Creative Director at MindsEyeMedia.com and MyFlik.com in San Francisco.

Dan Mirvish is an American filmmaker and cofounder of the Slamdance Film Festival. Director Dan Mirvish is also the author of the Focal Press book, *The Cheerful Subversive's Guide to Independent Filmmaking*. www.danmirvish.com

Michael Skolnik's background entails camera/editor/utility for television broadcasts such as MSNBC, The People's Court, USA Live, Madison Square Garden-Sports Desk, New York Knicks, New York Rangers, New York Yankees, MLB World Series, ALCS Fox Regional Sports,ESPN and 100's of social events. Some of which include: weddings,sweet sixteens, bar/bat mitzvahs, dance recitals etc.

Shane Stanley is a multi-Emmy Award-winning filmmaker who has worked in the industry for over 40 years. He recently authored, "What You Don't Learn in Film School" endorsed by some of the most respected names in front of and behind the camera, which covers Independent filmmaking from concept-to-delivery giving his personal insight school curriculums cannot cover. To see more of his work or to order his book go to: www.shanestanley.net
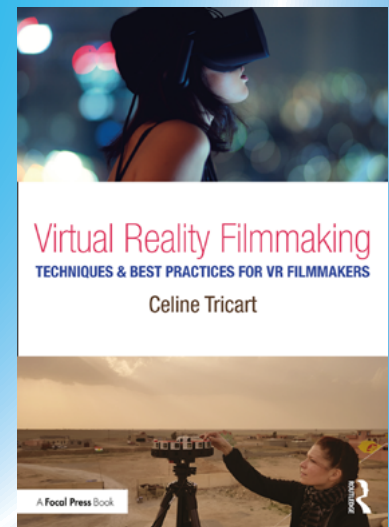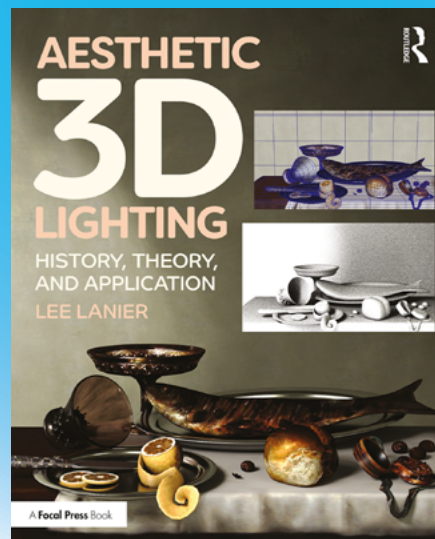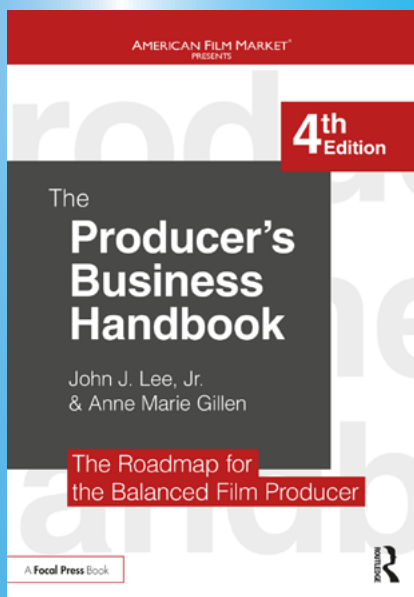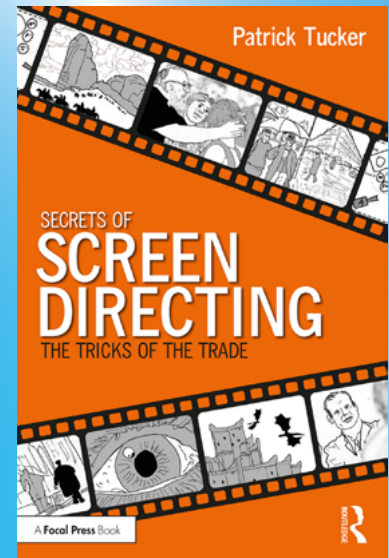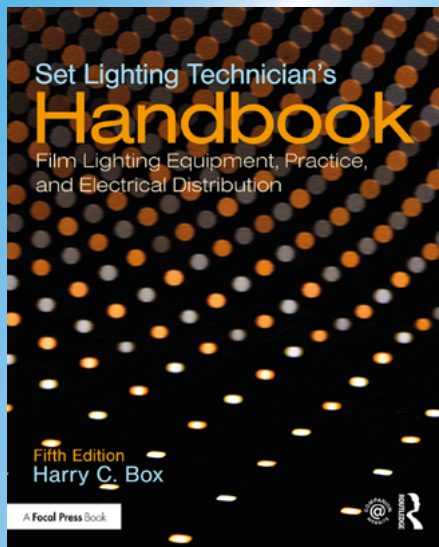
Bilingual actress **Sara Sue Vallee** is a graduate of the prestigious Lee Strasberg Theatre & film Institute and NYCDA. Some of her Film/ TV credits include Spice it Up, On Parle de Sexe, The Truth about the Harry Quebert Affair, Edgar and Away from you. Her first self written and produced short film Away from you is currently running the film festival circuit.
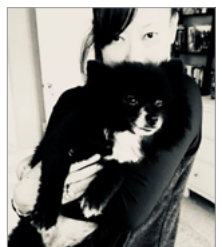
Jody Michelle Solis serves as Associate Publisher for StudentFilmmakers Magazine and HD Pro Guide Magazine. She enjoys content creation, shooting/editing video, and teaching dance/yoga.
www.studentfilmmakers.com
www.hdproguide.com