

# StudentFilmmakers



## Decisions, Decisions



Organization and Naming Your Shots



Chasing the Muse



Filmmakers Network Spotlight: Zina Melekki

# Table of Contents



*Spring is here, and across the country and around the world, we see hope and optimism about ending the pandemic. Let this spring be a time for renewal, rebirth, new beginnings, and a time to revitalize our commitment to following our dreams. Do what you love, and you will never work a day in your life. I want to thank our readers, writers, and sponsors. We hope you get insights, inspiration, and enjoyment from this issue of Student Filmmakers Magazine. Also, I invite you to join our online community forums and hope you can participate in our upcoming Zoom meetings and contests*

~Kim Edward Welch

## CAMERAWORK

04 Jake Campos Talks Drones

## CINEMATOGRAPHY

06 Decisions, Decisions

How to keep inspired and surround yourself with the right creative partners.

By Robert Scarborough csc

10 Organization and Naming Your Shots

Shot Lists from Pre-Production through Post-Production

By Peter John Ross

16 Chasing the Muse

By Lloyd Walton

## DOCUMENTARY

12 How to Maintain Sharp Focus

When Shooting Documentary Action

By Courtney Hermann

13 Handheld Camerawork

By Michael Rabiger

34 The Filmic Narrative

By Tony Stark

## ART DEPARTMENT

14 The Typical Clichè of Producers Confusing Comics and Storyboard

By Giuseppe Cristiano

## PROFESSOR'S PERSPECTIVE

19 How to Learn Filmmaking

By Peter Markham



# StudentFilmmakers

*StudentFilmmakers Magazine* [www.studentfilmmakers.com](http://www.studentfilmmakers.com)

## **Publisher and Editor**

Kim Edward Welch

## **Associate Publisher and Editor**

Jody Michelle Solis

## **Contributing Writers**

Thomas Ackerman, ASC, John Badham, Kristen Baum, Nandi Bowe, Al Caudullo, Martie Cook, Giuseppe Cristiano, JC Cummings, Michelle Danner, Amy DeLouise, Mark Dobrescu csc, William Donaruma, Pamela Douglas, Bryant Falk, Fred Ginsburg, CAS, Ph.D., Michael Goi, ASC, ISC, Dean Goldberg, Michael Halperin, John Hart, Courtney Hermann, David K. Irving, Jared Isham, Oscar Jasso, Dr. Rajeev Kamineni, Michael Karp, SOC, John Klein, Tamar Kummel, Justin Matley, Richard La Motte, David Landau, Lee Lanier, Kaine Levy, Bruce Logan, ASC, Peter Markham, Scott A. McConnell, Monty Hayes McMillan, Steven Joshua Morrison, Dustin Morrow, M. David Mullen, ASC, Hiro Narita, ASC, Snehal Patel, Howard A. Phillips, Michael Rabiger, Peter John Ross, Brad Rushing csc, Robert Scarborough csc, Marco Schleicher, Dr. Linda Seger, Sherri Sheridan, Mark Simon, Michael Skolnik, Pamela Jaye Smith, Johnny Lee Solis, Scott Spears, Shane Stanley, Tony Stark, Peter Stein, ASC, Anthony Straeger, Michael Tierno, Sara Sue Vallée, Lloyd Walton, Peter Warren csc, Bart Weiss, David Worth, Nancy Rauch Yachnes

## **Advertising & Sponsorship Opportunities:**

Kim E. Welch: 917.743.8381

## **Contact StudentFilmmakers.com**

[www.studentfilmmakers.com/contact-us](http://www.studentfilmmakers.com/contact-us)

917.743.8381 (US and International)

## **Subscriptions, bulk orders, and collections:**

[www.studentfilmmakersstore.com](http://www.studentfilmmakersstore.com)

For subscription, mailing address change and distribution inquiries, send an email to

[www.studentfilmmakers.com/contact-us/](mailto:www.studentfilmmakers.com/contact-us/)

*StudentFilmmakers Magazine*, established in 2006, is published in New York, New York by StudentFilmmakers.com. Opinions are solely those of the authors. Letters, article queries, photos, movie stills, film submissions, and unsolicited manuscripts welcome, but returned only with SASE. Submissions are subject to editing for style, content, and to exclusive rights provisions in this publication. Advertising: Rate card upon request.

Copyright 2021 [StudentFilmmakers.com](http://StudentFilmmakers.com)

(All rights reserved.) Printed in the USA.

## **Postmaster**

Send address change to:

*StudentFilmmakers Magazine*

42 West 24th Street

New York, NY 10010

**On the Cover:** Robert Scarborough csc with film crew.

## SCRIPTWRITING

20 The Winning Script

3 Important Fundamentals

By Alan C. Hueth

21 Rewriting Your TV Pilot

From First Draft to Second Draft

By Martie Cook

## POST-PRODUCTION

22 How an Editor Should Cut an Actor's Performance

By Dustin Morrow

24 How to Set Up Your Edit Workstation

By Shane Stanley

26 The Auto Track Selector in Resolve

By Bart Weiss

## FILM BUSINESS

30 Don't Work Too Cheap

We Don't Do This as a Hobby!

By Fred Ginsburg, CAS, Ph.D.

## AUDIO

32 Basic Audio Tips for Location Sound Recording

By Michael Tierno

## VFX

36 Tricks for Working with Troubled Green Screen

By Lee Lanier

## FILM BUSINESS

38 How to Plan for a 360-Degree Movie

Marketing Campaign

By Dr. Rajeev Kamineni

40 KOVID KILLED KINO!

Compel Your Audience to Interact

By Anthony Straeger

## TRAINING

42 Oscar & Emmy Winners are Teachers and Alums at

Maine Media Workshops + College

44 Why You Need to Always Be Creating

By Jared Isham

## FILMMAKERS NETWORK

### Community Spotlight

45 Karlina Veras Reid

46 Zina Melekki

# Jake Campos Talks Drones

**How did you get into being a drone pilot, and what would you say are the most important skills every drone operator needs to succeed?**

**Jake Campos:** I started flying in 2018 after seeing the quality of the video the Phantom 4 Pros were capable of delivering. Having a background in both photography and motion helped me develop the skills to turn the interest into a career. Being thoroughly versed in regulations, being able to anticipate and plan for problems before you encounter them; and setting and sticking to safety protocols are all vitally important to being a drone operator. The same applies to shooting imagery, whether video or stills - putting in hours practicing moves and mastering your equipment and shooting workflow is an ongoing requirement for any pilot/operator.

**When it comes to getting certain kinds of shots, what are your preferred camera settings, frame rate, and resolution that you like to fly and operate your drones?**



**Jake Campos:** My default is to shoot 5.2k or 4K 30P in either CinemaDNG or H.264 [depending on if I'm flying my Inspire 2 or Phantom 4 Pro], with D-Cinelike color, sharpness turned down a click, shutter speed at 1/60th. 30p retains the highest image quality, and still allows a 20% speed reduction (slomo effect) when used in a 24p timeline. This just makes the footage a little more cinematic, in my opinion.

Lens choice for scenics can vary greatly out here in the west, as we have a lot of open land. So, I've shot establishing shots or landscape shots with a 45mm on my X5s gimbal [90mm equivalent on a full-frame camera]. The 25mm [50mm equivalent] might be my favorite for this kind of work, though, as it brings near and far objects into a nice relationship. Hard to put into words, but where a long lens will bring a distant peak in closer and larger, and a wide angle will make distant subjects small and can compress them into a horizon, a 50mm equivalent strikes a nice balance between the two. You have to be able to get back

farther, of course, but one of the benefits [at least for the Inspire 2 Gimbals, which don't have continuous autofocus], is that your focus can be set to or near infinity in a lot of cases, allowing you to keep critical focus for more shots, easier.

If I'm tracking something close, I'll try to give myself the most resolution and highest frame rate the conditions will allow. 60fps gives you a lot of leeway in terms of taking a short section and getting a longer clip out of it, which can be helpful when framing and vibration issues are more likely to happen. Be aware of the drop in image quality though - 60p doesn't give the same bit depth or dynamic range as 24 or 30p.

**If you could share 3 Drone Operating Do's and 3 Drone Operating Don'ts what would they be?**

**Jake Campos:**

## 3 Drone Operating Do's

- #1. *Do keep yourself engaged in flying and operating*, even if you don't have work. Join forums, get on mailing lists, stay informed and up to date.
- #2. *Do practice often*. You cannot be coming back up to speed on set, with eyes on you and people's safety at risk. You have to come in with muscle memory and workflow already dialed.
- #3. *Do study other's work* and try to replicate it, or at least the elements that will strengthen your work. Keep notes!

## 3 Drone Operating Don'ts

- #1. *Don't let repairs wait* - always try to be ready if a job wants to shoot ASAP.
- #2. *Don't break the rules*. It's unprofessional, unsafe, and hurts every other pilot.
- #3. *Don't split up your kits*. Keep all the tools, batteries, cables, etc., *everything* that your machines use in your drone kits.

**How are you navigating and keeping active and creative during these COVID pandemic months?**

**Jake Campos:** I shot a personal drone project at the end of March 2020, which was early in the pandemic, but at the moment was very therapeutic. With everything shut down

and nobody knowing just how bad it would get or how long it would last, and with the added stress of my wife being pregnant, it was incredibly helpful to be outside *creating*. Completely in the moment, focused only on the flight and the footage. Since then, I've been lucky enough to have gotten a few more drone video jobs, so have been able to shoot safely outside and edit at home. When I have shot in studio, making sure everyone is in a mask the entire time, limiting the total amount of people in a space, ensuring there is good ventilation [and

setting up an air purifier for when talent has to be maskless], keeping distance, and sanitizing everything has been mandatory. The ASMP [of which I'm a member] has safety protocols. It's forced people to get a little creative, like with remote art directing, but it's also, in the better examples I can think of, just been another process that most professionals I work with handle just like any of the other random curveballs this business throws at you.

*"I live and breathe to make stills and video content. On the ground and from the air. With offerings that range from active, lifestyle, and fashion commercial shoots, to providing editorial and corporate imaging services to companies like White House Black Market, HOKA ONE ONE, New Balance, FERA Style, Mainline Overland, TAB Bank, Certiport Pearson VUE, and ABC's 20/20, I am fueled by the variety of work I've encountered and always looking for a new challenge."*

[www.jakecampos.com](http://www.jakecampos.com)

# BREAK IN & MAKE IT

Learn how-to concepts and skills  
@ [studentfilmmakersstore.com](http://studentfilmmakersstore.com)



# Decisions, Decisions

*How to keep inspired and surround yourself with the right creative partners.*

By Robert Scarborough csc

It's easy for a cinematographer or any creative professional to go months without working on a project that satisfies their creative self. When the job is 'just a job' for too long, you can start to lose sight of your original aspirations. There will always be a struggle to find the right balance between financial obligations, the need for self-improvement, and seeking out meaningful creative gratification. This is something we all fight through no matter what stage our careers are in. I still battle with it all the time: *what projects to say yes to, what projects to say no to*, and acknowledging when best to take a job because it will help pay the rent over the winter. There will always be peaks and valleys but finding your creative balance and the people to join you on your creative journey is key to having a rewarding and sustainable career.

When I first started shooting professionally in the early 2000s, someone told me, *'just shoot anything you can.'* I understood this meant

learning on the job through trial and error, and I tried my best to heed those words...until I couldn't. I was shooting anything and everything, and I will admit that this approach did have its upsides, so I can't totally disagree with this ethos. I met great people, learned a lot from my mistakes, and started to understand basic camera and lighting techniques in more detail... But I soon realized I wasn't totally happy with my creative self. There was going to be a point where I had to put this shoot-anything philosophy behind me. Shooting anything meant I wasn't spending enough time on projects that satisfied me creatively, and it was pretty clear my focus on, and interest in, what I loved to do was starting to ebb. I just didn't have the right balance of projects.

After graduating film school, I started working as a production assistant to pay the bills. In between the paying jobs, I would try my best to find small projects that would help build my cinematography reel piece-by-piece. Short films, a few no-budget indie feature films, documentaries – anything that needed a camera and lights pointed at it. When the documentary/reality TV show boom hit in the early 2000s, I was shooting shows and long form documentaries for Nat Geo, Discovery, Home and Garden, CBC in Canada... And to an outsider, it looked as if this young, just-out-of-school camera guy was doing exactly what he wanted. Yes, I was paying the bills, but I was also slowly losing track of what my ultimate creative goal was: *to shoot movies*.

When I was PA'ing, I used to carry around a sleeve of DVDs with my fresh-out-of-school reel on them and pass it off to whoever may be interested. Once, on set of a music video, my naive, overly-self-confident-younger self walked right up to the director and told him I was not only a PA but a DP as well. He didn't know me all that well, and to be honest, looking back at that choice, I can't say that I would recommend doing the same. I handed him one of the very DIY-looking DVDs, and he took it. I can assume that most directors, producers and key grips I gave the DVD to just tossed it directly into the garbage, but this one time – and this is something I feel changed my career forever – this director told me it was best I come over to his place, have



a drink with him and his partner, and we could give it a watch on a proper TV. I couldn't believe it. He was someone I respected creatively, and he wanted to see what I could do with the camera. We watched it together over a glass of wine, and we became good friends. And it was this director and his partner who put a camera in my hand for the first time outside of film school and led me down a path to working as a professional cameraman – that I will not soon forget. The big take from spending time with him is that he told me to always service my creative self first, and the work will come. They are words I still abide by to this day.

Sometimes my younger self butts heads with my older self, reminding him of how important that constant search for balance is. My younger self has to keep reminding my older self that when he is working on something creatively challenging and fulfilling, when he is actually inspired by the work at hand and by his collaborators, that's when he is most creatively free, and therefore, the most happy and satisfied. When you free yourself up to allow for ideas to present themselves, the work will come.

Figuring out what projects best suit your current financial and creative needs can be tough to sort through. One simple trick I use to figure out if I should take a job or not is to follow a simple checklist system. *Does the project check at least two of these four boxes?* If not, I usually pass.

- (1) Does it pay the bills?
- (2) Does it feed your creative interests?
- (3) Does the project challenge you in some way that pushes you outside of your comfort zone?
- (4) Are the people involved collaborators who you respect and want to work with?

If the project checks two of these boxes, I know the project is right for me.

The next step is aligning yourself with the right support team. Choosing an agent is always something hard to get a handle on unless you have spent many years in the



industry. If I had any advice on the subject, I would simply say this: align yourself with someone who puts your career aspirations in line with your creative aspirations, and make sure they do not fall into the trap of being a *yes person*. Try to gauge whether or not the agent has your best creative interests in mind and that they listen to what you want out of the

relationship, and where you want your career to go. That's not to forget that you and your agent are a team, so listen to their advice, but don't allow them to push you in directions that take you off the rails to your ultimate creative goals. Make sure the agent is asking the right questions about what your intentions are as an artist and where you want to be in five or ten years from

now. If your agent is telling you to shoot anything and everything, that puts you at risk of not standing out. If you have trouble defining your creative style, that usually means you are being pulled in too many directions. You need to make more specific choices, and saying *no* to projects, is a way to consolidate and focus your creative intentions. Make sure you check in with what those are, regularly, to make sure these ambitions are being chipped away at. If your creative self is being fed properly, it's easier to do your best work, and hopefully, with time and focus, the work will be what gets you noticed.

And finally, align yourself with the right directors and creative partners. This is something that requires constant energy and thought. You can't sit on your hands and assume like-minded people and interesting projects will just fall into your lap. You have to spend time seeking out new work and potential collaborators. Find directors through watching everything. Find new and emerging talent online. It's easy to get complacent, but as soon as you do, the interesting projects will stop landing in your inbox. Keep pushing forward with your goals in mind and the projects that suit your creative needs will present themselves.

For example, I read a lot of scripts. I open myself to this type of creative research. I ask my agent to send me anything and everything. Horror movies, comedy, sad short films – I will always give it a read. First, I read each project for the story. *Is this story unique in some way? Is the story being told from an interesting perspective?* I always want to lend my creative input to a story that I haven't seen before. Second, I look at a script and ask myself if there is anything that will be challenging, fun, or interesting for me to help bring to life. *What can my skills add to this project?* The last thing I ask myself as a cinematographer is, *do I have a clear vision of how the projects looks and feels?* Sometimes, if



my vision needs clarification, I will speak to the writer and director directly and ask what their intentions are for the story. If then I still don't have a coherent vision of what their intentions are, or if I don't totally agree with their vision, I know that I am not the right person to help bring this project to life. It's completely normal to not see eye-to-eye with a potential creative partner or to not fully understand their vision. Personally, I don't want to walk on to any set unless that vision is clear and concise in my mind. Sometimes that clarity just doesn't present itself, but try not to beat yourself up over it, it's totally normal. Sometimes it's hard to be on the same page creatively with new collaborators, but you have to know when it's best to walk away. Knowing what projects to say no to is a big first step in starting to find like-minded creative partners to work with and ultimately, in finding your own creative vision. Having confidence in your vision gives the team a more clear understanding of how you perceive the story and what you can bring to the table. This way, you can start to have conversations with people who want to use you because you are honest and a valuable creative asset and not just someone who can just point a camera. The creative partners you choose will ultimately dictate how you evolve as a filmmaker and storyteller, so be honest with yourself. Ask yourself, *what can I truly bring to this project?*

Maintaining and feeding your creativity isn't always easy. You can't just turn on a switch and hope the ideas come pouring out. But by being active and taking steps to maintain your creative self, you can increase your chances of finding more fulfilling projects and creative partners that can lead to a better balance in your creative work life.

Keep curious. Keep interested and keep talking to people that help reignite that same fire you had when you first decided to become a filmmaker. Remember to try your best to find creative partners who challenge you and make you

better at what you do. I do believe we are only as good as the team we surround ourselves with and the projects we attach ourselves to. You have to make sure to keep challenging yourself and be sure to feed those creative needs. If you keep the creative tank filled, the work will come.

**Robert Scarborough csc** is a director of photography located in Toronto Canada. He works in both the US and Canada. Rob's portfolio contains a healthy blend of high-profile commercials, documentaries, series TV and independent films. Most recently he won a Canadian Screen Award for Best Photography in a Comedy for his work on the CBC / IFC Baroness Von Sketch Show, Season 4. His feature film work includes ROOM FOR RENT (starring Brett Gelman, Stephnie Weir, Carla Gallo and Mark McKinney), THE DEFINITES, YOUR BEAUTIFUL CUL DE SAC HOME, and b-unit cinematography on NO STRANGER THAN LOVE (starring Alison Brie, Justin Chatwin and Colin Hanks). He was DP on an array of TV shows, such as FOR THE RECORD, BARONESS VON SKETCH SHOW, WHATEVER, LINDA, and others for History Channel, Discovery Channel and National Geographic.

[www.robscarborough.ca](http://www.robscarborough.ca)



**AZDEN®**

*Azden's 250 Series Professional Shotgun Microphones are affectionately known in Japan as "Ni-Go-Maru" (Japanese for "250")*

- Professional Grade Performance • 10-Year Warranty
- World Class Build Quality • Affordably Priced

**4 models for different applications**

Learn more at [www.azden.com/250-series](http://www.azden.com/250-series)

# Organization and Naming Your Shots

## *Shot Lists from the Script through Post-Production*

By Peter John Ross

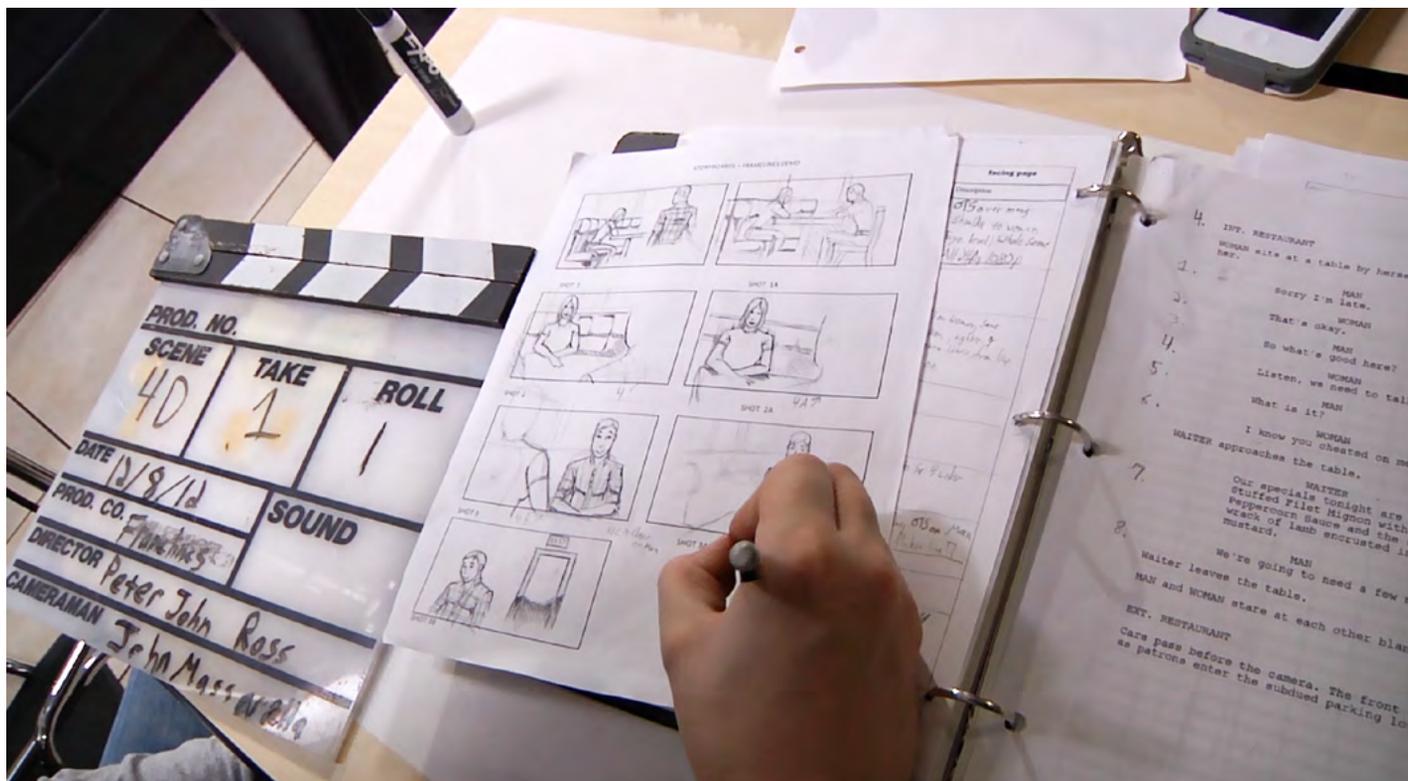


Like so many of us with a desire to eventually work on bigger movies for a living, I like to view my DSLR shorts as a training ground. Even when making a 5-minute short, the kind where you are the all-in-one writer, director, producer, cameraman and editor, you can still prep for bigger shoots and develop good habits. One of these habits is creating and maintaining a shot list and naming your shots.

A shot list is a list of all the camera angles for a shoot, including coverage and cutaways. This can be done from the

script, on the fly during a shoot, or even after the shoot, using the footage and just naming the shots that were obtained.

Shot lists in pre-production usually only blueprint a shoot. A basic shot list of MASTER SHOT, CLOSE-UPS (aka CU's), etc., help plan for time and basically outline what the shoot will consist of. Part of directing is deciding what shots best tell your story and elicit the emotional reaction from a viewer. Storyboards are a great second step for a shot list, but not everyone can draw or get storyboards, so a written list of shots can still achieve the real goal (which is organization).



Making a list of those shots from the script usually winds up being different than when you get there on the day and do the shoot. New shots can come up, two shots get fused into one, or you just don't have time to get them all. During a shoot, LOGGING the shots can be a valuable tool for post-production (thinking ahead). Putting the shot names on the clapper board and slating can still be useful, even if you don't have to sync sound later.

The "script supervisor" will be the person watching the shoot and checking the script, verifying everything from the script got shot, can scratch off each shot as they are completed, and take notes about each take and camera information. Details like which take the director liked, merged or changed shots, audio problems, time code, and notes for post-production. Having a person doing this function can greatly increase the speed and organization of post-production.

After the shoot, either the editor or the person who is doing it all need to be able to take all these shots and make editing choices from them. Again, if this is a small, simple shoot with the same all-in-one person writing, directing, shooting, and editing, you may not have made a shot list, but now that you have a card or drive full of shots that now have to be transferred to the hard drive - you should name the files. What good is it to have multiple files named *00001.mts* or *A003\_C21\_0123482.R3D*? By renaming the footage files, you could still have a *shot list* that helps identify what the project is and correspond with your plans.

Now, if you had created a shot list from the script, you can carry the same names through pre-production all the way through post-production. It can be any way you feel like organizing, as long as it can make sense to others. The only thing that matters is that everyone understands it from writer to cameraman to editor. A basic shot list can consist of just saying, "Scene 04, Take 02, Camera A" and abbreviated "S04T02A," or any variation therein. Make up your own systems, whatever ways seem best to you.

The reason to be so detailed and to make consistent notes is because as your projects get bigger and more people get involved, there is a system in place for everyone to know what everything is in every department. You can find out where you are in the screenplay based on a shot list, or if one shot needs a title, or there was a slightly different angle - all of that information is systematically and subsequently organized and easily found when needed.

Having worked as a post-production supervisor and lead editor on feature films, I was dealing with a director who was the only person who had the notes and shot lists, but they existed in his memory. When trying to sync audio to his 16mm film transfers, I was trying to find shots like

"George gets in car," or "Jenny at apartment." *So where in the script does that happen? How many times is George in a car?* It became impossible to do anything without the director present at all times. We then devised a system of naming and assigned scene numbers and shot lists after the fact, and we were able to sync audio for the entire process.

On the big movies and TV shows, the whole production and post-production teams synchronize by shot lists all the way to the end. Even when you're doing it all yourself, you can prep for eventually delegating to people like a different editor or cameraman by being organized with a shot list and making it something everyone can understand. It makes it possible for everyone to be on the same page. By getting into these habits, it won't be a hard transition to a larger production.

**Peter John Ross** is a filmmaker from Columbus, Ohio, who has been nominated for 4 regional Emmy awards, and has won numerous filmmaking awards for his film work. Currently, Ross is making a documentary series.

## FILM & TV MASTERS SERIES (ONLINE)

APRIL 22—JUNE 11

Invite master filmmakers into your home.  
ONLINE. IN REAL TIME. Credits include...

**A Quiet Place, Knives Out, The Walking Dead, Taxi Driver, Raging Bull, The Leftovers, Homeland, Star Wars: The Last Jedi, Twin Peaks, Mad Men, Silence of the Lambs, Goodfellas, The Departed, Breaking Bad, American Gigolo, The English Patient, Sense8, Ocean's Eleven, Black Swan, Braveheart, and many others.**

MAINE MEDIA  
**WORKSHOPS**  
+ COLLEGE

Entire Series Bundle of  
12+ Sessions: \$850

Individual Workshops:  
\$95 per session

[mainemedia.edu/film](http://mainemedia.edu/film)

# How to Maintain Sharp Focus

## *When Shooting Documentary Action*

By Courtney Hermann



Is it just me, or do you routinely find yourself stumbling through a muddy field strewn with debris and fallen logs, struggling to find focus on a surprisingly speedy documentary subject?

Just me? No matter. All documentary subjects move, often unpredictably, and you need to maintain focus if you want usable footage. When you're collecting coverage of a process, shooting an interaction, or recording any kind of profilmic event, here are a few tools to help you avoid chasing focus around even when you're chasing people around.

### Monitors

If your camera comes equipped with an LCD monitor, you've probably noticed that it performs poorly in high ambient light, making focus difficult to gauge by eye. For a low budget solution, attach a sun hood to your LCD. Better still, invest in an on-camera monitor. Popular 7" models are available at a variety of price points. Electronic view finders (EVFs) are a particularly good choice for documentary work because they pair well with a shoulder mounted camera, promoting a compact, stable rig. Some viewfinders allow you to either use the eyepiece or flip it up to reveal a small, high quality monitor.

### Focus Peaking

Focus Peaking is available on many DSLR, mirrorless, and cinema-style cameras. Once activated, a visual

indicator, such as a confluence of colored dots, appears on your monitor over areas of acceptable focus.

### Focus Guides

Focus guides are my favorite focusing tool. They allow you to manually find focus with the help of a focus gauge. Check your camera's manual to see what options are available. In the best-case scenario, you can select the part of the frame needing sharpest focus, and a visual indicator prompts you to adjust your focus ring until the selection is sharp.

### Focus Magnifier

Often denoted by a magnifying glass icon, the focus magnifier enlarges a selected area of the frame, allowing you to closely check focus. Don't forget to turn magnification off after you fix focus or else you may think you're shooting a close-up when in fact, you're in a wide (not that this has ever happened to me).

### Face Detection and Tracking

For shots like the one I describe in the introduction to this article, where a subject is moving through space, face detection and tracking come in handy. If your camera auto detects or allows you to select faces and apply tracking to those faces, you can temporarily put focus on auto pilot and concentrate on not tripping over a log while tracking with a subject.

### One Push Auto Focus

One push auto focus is your little helper and your panic button. If you need to grab good focus quickly, or if you lose focus entirely and need a quick exit out of a totally blurred image, just press the button.

### Depth of Field

Give yourself a better chance to keep good focus the old-fashioned way, by increasing depth of field. If you can't add light, try bumping up your ISO or choosing a wider focal length. This provides a better opportunity to expose using a smaller aperture opening, which yields deeper focus and a better chance that your moving subject will stay sharp. Just don't raise your ISO too high for your camera since that introduces noise.

Have fun and stay focused!

**Courtney Hermann** is an Assistant Professor of Film at Portland State University, an independent documentary filmmaker, and a non-fiction media producer. Courtney's work is distributed by PBS and its affiliates, through educational film catalogues, at film festivals, and through impact distribution to community partners. Courtney earned an MFA degree in Film and Video Production from Columbia College Chicago. She is a co-author of 7<sup>th</sup> edition of the textbook, *Directing the Documentary*.



# Handheld Camerawork

By Michael Rabiger

How you shoot handheld footage—whether documentary or fiction—can either mesmerize or irritate your audience. For great handheld work, see an episode of *Carrier* (2008) or any Maysles Brothers film. For work that misses the mark, surf YouTube. Here are some keys to successful work.

Ideally, choose a camera with accessible controls and that is easy to hold for long periods. Even if you're using a smartphone supplemented with a handle grip, you can share the heart of a family reunion, inject us into a political showdown, or make us guffaw at competing cooks. Using just a wide-angle lens, you can develop skills that immerse us in the psychological center of any human situation.

For a street fair or demonstration, handheld cinematography becomes a creative asset because it complements volatile subject matter. You might have to move close to participants to hear them above from the general din. And as you pan between marching demonstrators, you naturally cover whoever speaks. Yet onscreen, it looks oddly limited. *Why?*

Imagine instead you're covering a baseball game. Would you show only the bowler, not the batsman? Of course not. At any time in human interchange, one person *acts* while the other is *acted upon*. Usually, they switch roles. Most develop intentions, emotions and pressures under the surface, known to dramatists as 'subtext'. *How to find and capture them?* You can begin practice,

wherever you happen to be, by noticing in detail how your senses gather evidence. Your hearing seems to take in everything while your sight probes the situation independently, digging into all its nooks and crannies. Moving around with a handheld camera, you aim to gather the myriad impressions we need to interpret these invisible subtexts. By walking the camera closer to the scene axis (the imaginary line between participants) you can relate to the contestants separately or together in a single frame (in a two-shot or over the shoulder shot, say). Seeing them together or apart, we compare their demeanor and intentions.

To avoid unwelcome surprises, you keep scanning the entire viewfinder frame to anticipate how the action may change or to anticipate new events in the background. Then, before you pan to a new image, you glance past your camera to see where you're going; then you can make a targeted transition. *Oops, you misjudged framing?* Hold the shot for a few moments, then slowly creep the camera to the preferred framing. Given the redundancies in so much human interchange, you'll often be able to edit out your bumpier transitions, especially if you remember to shoot some safety coverage of cutaways and reaction shots.

If a secret emerges at a family gathering, whom you show at different moments will be very telling. You can improve how you do this well by silently talking yourself through the process—something done by actors to lock themselves into their character's present. Only by making yourself fully aware and cognizant can you anticipate what your audience needs, moment to

moment. According to the prevailing mood, your camera movement rhythms can be quick or slow but err on the side of minimalism unless the situation demands otherwise. Practice by finding situations to shoot and screening your coverage for critical partners.

By now you can see that cinema became a great force by learning to reproduce the flow of human consciousness. The handheld camera operator, who necessarily combines the roles of cinematographer, director and editor, comes closest to deploying everything that influences a film's authorial 'voice'. It's a rare skill.

**Michael Rabiger** began in the cutting rooms of England's Pinewood and Shepperton Studios, became an editor and BBC director of documentaries, and then specialized for many years in the US as a production and aesthetics educator. He has directed or edited more than 35 films, was a founding faculty member and then Chair of the Film/Video Department at Columbia College Chicago, won the International Documentary Association's Scholarship and Preservation Award, and was also awarded the Genius/Career Achievement Award by the Chicago International Documentary Festival. He is author of the book, *Developing Story Ideas*; and co-authored, *Directing the Documentary*, with Courtney Hermann, and *Film Techniques and Aesthetics*, with Mick Hurbis-Cherrier.



# The Typical Clichè of Producers Confusing Comics and Storyboard

By Giuseppe Cristiano

The first time I was asked to do a storyboard, I had no idea what it was about.

It was the eighties, I was living in Italy, and when I arrived to the appointment at the agency that had called me, I felt like I had entered a neighbourhood print shop, especially when compared to the avant-garde studios I would work with many years later.

I didn't have any experience, but I thought I could get by with some illustrations anyway.

At the time, I was drawing comics for a few publishers and that made me feel equal to the task. What a great lightness.

The truth is that it was a disastrous experience, because I turned in work that was literally useless.

Many years and thousands of experiences have passed since that day. My consideration of a similarity between storyboard and comics changed on that occasion, obviously two different worlds all together and still, from time to time, I have to explain it to producers and workers I still meet today.

Considering the storyboard as a comic book is certainly one of the most common mistakes because it leads to structuring the narrative in a completely wrong way. Another one, probably the worst, is thinking that it is enough to know how to draw. That leads producers to look for the artist in all the wrong places. However, they get all comfortable seeing beautifully

drawn frames, but does a storyboard artist ever get the time to work on details and fine inking?

Let me tell you, it's a rush, often a race against time. Especially with advertising. The most common and typical situation is that production calls up an artist to book a meeting, let's say on a Monday, and the job should be ready for a PM on Thursday. On Monday, the meeting starts getting pushed forward because scripts are not ready. Suddenly, we arrived on Wednesday, where the artist tries to buy some time, but the deadline never changed. At that point, the artist fears the worst, as the hours get shorter. It's not that someone would ever imagine that there won't be enough time. It doesn't matter, the artist will fix it. And the artist is left with a bunch of hours



and probably an early delivery on the following day.

What people can't ever learn is that drawing takes time. In our times there is the belief that perhaps the computer helps with the job and makes it faster somehow. It does, to a certain extent, most artists don't use scanners anymore, and using reference pictures make the work go quicker. But still, *for each frame*, the execution time – from rough sketch to final polished image – can be between 15 to 20 minutes. So a board with 20 to 30 frames is approximately 5 to 10 hours. And that is an optimistic estimation. Then, of course, there are the experienced artists who have their solutions up their sleeves, but you can't always count on that factor.

Like I said, there is no time to look back at the pictures and think of how to embellish them somehow. At the end of the day, the other difference between storyboard and comics is that nobody is going to see the work a storyboard artist has made except the few people in the crew, and then it's gone.

**One of the most important skills for an artist is mastering time**, to be in control despite the circumstances, and

*always deliver*, no matter what. And to achieve that, one can have *a range of styles* according to the deadlines.

By the way, 5 hours sometimes is a real luxury. Once I had 70 frames to do within the hour. That's less than a minute per frame.

**Giuseppe Cristiano** is an Italian illustrator and storyboard artist who has worked all over the world for more than twenty years. He collaborates with many advertising agencies, but his experience also includes films, animation and games. With his storyboards, he has participated in music video production for Radiohead, Madonna, Roxette and many others with pioneering directors like Jonas Åkerlund and Johan Renck. He has worked with prestigious DPs such as Hoyte van Hoytema, ASC, FSE, NSC. He worked on the TV series, "CSI: NY" and "Six Feet Under" and videogames such as Cyberpunk 2077, Mad Max and The Walking Dead. Since opening a storyboard school in Stockholm in 1998, Giuseppe has published ten manuals in English, Chinese, French, German, Italian and Swedish.





Directing the actress.

# Chasing the Muse

By Lloyd Walton

The first time I was seriously asked what I wanted to be when I grew up was on a local television show, called, "Kiddies on Camera." On my day for the show, I was impressed with another local hero. It was Bert Luciani, the cameraman. Bert was kind and friendly to this nine-year-old. He held me up to the massive television camera and let me look through the eyepiece. I saw things in a whole new light. I could see into people's faces. When the host finally lay the big question on me, "What would you like to be when you grow up, Lloyd?" I looked straight into the lens and said, "I am going to be a cameraman."

Everyone needs a teacher who influences their life in a meaningful way, and I have had many including my animation teacher, Hans Kohlund, at the Ontario College of Art. To hammer home a point, Hans would fall to the floor, roll over in a somersault, kick his legs in the air, then spring back to his feet, continuing the lecture with his cigarette perched on his lips, dangling a gravity-defying two-inch ash. A magician always uses diversion. Our eyes were focused on the diversion while our minds absorbed his message. The week after I graduated from OCA, I sold my animated film, "Peace and Quiet," to the CBC. I also met a fast-talking film distributor, a young Ivan



The first camera that caught my muse.

Reitman with feet on his desk, offered to take “Peace and Quiet” for theatrical distribution. I delivered a print to him. I never heard from him again, other than he made blockbuster films in Hollywood like “Stripes” and “Ghostbusters.” I was on my way. I was an animator!

Animation at the time, I sadly found out, was out of vogue in the advertising industry.

The secret to a successful career is to find something you love to do and get someone to pay you to do it. Ontario Provincial Parks were expanding in size, and the number of visitors was increasing dramatically. I was hired on a two-month contract to produce automated slide shows for the outdoor amphitheatres in the parks. I was in for a ride and I knew it; that is, if I could stay longer than two months.

Mixing my photography with good scripts, working in recording studios with actors and announcers, choosing the music and directing the mix, I was experimenting with a new medium. A lot of it was timing. I learned that I could manipulate the mood of the audience by carefully directing the performance of a narrator, selecting unusual but effective music, and mixing effects in an audio choreography. I could make people laugh, then swell with pride, then come to tears. It was a different type of cinematic language, with slide projectors.

There’s nothing like the face of an actor who, when sitting down in the recording studio to do a voice-over project for the government, discovers intelligently crafted words to play with. My slide films began to win multiple awards in the United States. My small department of two, produced about a dozen or so inexpensive animated slide films transferred to 16-mm film before I was able to convince management to allow me to shoot an actual live-action film.

Being checked out on the first day of shooting.



Adding glamour to nature.

To learn the nuances of shooting live action, I spent a week at the National Film Board headquarters in Montreal, meeting with experts in every aspect of movie production. They were generous with their advice and candid in their impressions of their workplace. Although the grass was not necessarily greener in Montreal, I was still star-struck. Two key pieces of advice stood out. “Put everything you’ve got into your project. Otherwise, it’s only a film.” And, “If it’s worth doing, it’s worth doing with enthusiasm and joy.”

After making a couple of comedies for the government, “Natural Journey,” and its sequel, “S\*N\*O\*W,” allowed me to push the tourism film genre further by injecting subliminally layered story lines in simple-yet-complex-as-you-want-to-make-it stories about an attractive woman moving farther and farther from the city, seeking something. Occasionally danger also lurked. To reach a floundering shipwreck on moving ice on Georgian Bay, we had to carefully dance over floating ice pans. It was also my chance to introduce ancient pictograph and petroglyph images in a respectful way.

The official academic and government position about these sacred places at the time stated,

*“At some point in the distant past, the carvers ceased coming to the site and their images faded as knowledge of the site faded from mankind’s consciousness.”*

Inside, I knew that this was not true and set out on a sixteen-year odyssey to find a shaman who could read them. Many walls would be thrown up in front of me. I would be sent down box canyons, stonewalled, stalled, and stymied. As my will got stronger, I learned that with walls, you could walk around them, climb over them, or, when the magic is with you, walk right through them. Part of my teachings would be how to talk to wild animals.

## CINEMATOGRAPHY



Walking across loose ice to the shipwreck.



The enigmatic petroglyphs.

On my first day shooting a movie about moose, I came across a cow moose sitting in the grass, dappled in the warm light of a sunny June afternoon. I put down the gear I was carrying, smiled, and said, “Hello, I’m Lloyd. I’m making a movie called, ‘Of Moose and Man.’ You look so beautiful sitting there. I will just set up this low tripod called Baby Legs, mount the camera, and begin.” When I told her how beautiful she looked in the dappled light, she batted her long brown eyelashes at me. I was on my knees panning left then right and zooming in and out until I felt that I had her covered. I opened my arms and said, “Thank you, sweetheart. I’m going to make you a star.”

She awkwardly got up on her feet. I turned the camera back on. She walked slowly towards me, bent down, kissed the lens, then turned her head and slowly walked away. I think she went ahead to pass the word on to a few others, “This guy is OK. He has some contraption that won’t hurt you.”

I attached the longer tripod legs as I approached a pond where a bull moose was swimming towards me. I kept the camera rolling as he slowly got out of the water and circled me to check me out. Canoeing in Algonquin Park it was as if, through some secret language, the moose had spread the word that it was Lloyd’s last shooting day for his film.

“Hey gang, it’s your last chance to star.”

Mom-moose played with their kids. I filmed one female that looked like she was dangling a cigarette out of her mouth. Behind me, directly over my shoulder, I heard a loud “snort.” I slowly turned my head and looked up at a big black bull moose standing hip-deep in the water and breathing down my neck. A gentle puff of wind blew my canoe in a sideways motion, creating a tracking shot with the bow of the canoe and Bullwinkle moving in unison. Spread out over

a year, it was only nine days of filming, but I had captured the yearly life-cycle of moose, and the body changes they go through in each season. With camera I have been unarmed face to face with moose, caribou, polar bear, black bear, bison, lions, tigers, elk and a very scary black panther.

Getting closer to the intimacies of nature, Northern skies kept calling. Older doors began to open. My odyssey in the search of ancient wisdom and knowledge would bring rewards and consequences unforeseen and revelatory. The resulting film, “The Teaching Rocks” is still being shown around the world thirty-four years later. I was blessed to have a career where I had creative control over my projects and was as able to live out all the dreams of my childhood and adult life. The secret was a code, which I adopted as a kid. I called it the Code of the Trail. ***Chasing the Muse: Canada*** tells how it all came to be.

*Lloyd Walton is a multi-award-winning, Canadian director and cinematographer. As a painter, he has had five solo gallery shows. He is also a prolific writer. His historiography, CHASING THE MUSE: CANADA is available on Amazon, Kindle, chapters Indigo and Barnes and Noble. His films have been translated into French, Dutch, German, Japanese, Ojibway, Cree, Oji-Cree, Inuktitut, and Russian.*

# How to Learn Filmmaking

By Peter Markham

Teachers of filmmaking might usefully take the time to look through social media groups for young filmmakers. The questions asked reveal much about the preconceptions of the aspiring director, or cinematographer, or indeed anyone who wants to set off on the path toward making movies.

*What camera should I use for my first film? What camera mount do I need for such and such shot? How many scenes should I have in a short film? How long do I need to rehearse a 5-page script? Which of this, which of that? How much or how many should I have?*

The preponderance of questions regarding equipment, the misconception that story is about math not myth, the misperception that everything must be done in the same manner each time around, and the craving for certainty, for hard and fast rules betray a fundamental lack of understanding as to what creative filmmaking actually is — but then, the term itself is perhaps too catch-all. The machinery of production, its processes, its panoply of hardware you can see and touch, and practices you do, while of course important — *how else could the manufacture of a film happen* — are not the story, the characters, the language of the moving image, the emotions that the pictures on the screen evoke in an audience. *These* are what filmmaking is about. So, you have a camera, whether it's an Alexa or an iPhone, you have a location, and you have actors. Unless you have a story however, and filmmakers -- director, cinematographer, production designer, editor, and yes, producer *who each understand what the story is and how it works*, and unless you had a screenwriter to write it — maybe the director, maybe not — you have nothing.

Agreed that cinematographers need to know about cameras and equipment, about the physics of light and the technicalities of lighting, but they are not simply technicians, they are storytellers. (At their best they are also visionaries — not literally, which is obvious, but visionaries in the true figurative sense.) They don't just point the camera at the action. They work with the director on the choice of camera placement, movement, and lensing that will best serve a chosen approach to telling the story. The most important questions to ask, the first questions, from the Director and DP should not be about models of camera but what **modes of "camera"** are to be used. I've invented some terms, to which you might like to give some thought: the **observing camera**, the **active camera**, the **passive camera**, the **participating camera**, the **dynamic camera**, even the **ecstatic camera**, (think Scorsese), the **concealing and revealing cameras**. Other types of "camera" are of course the **motivated and**



**unmotivated cameras**, the **visible and invisible cameras**. What the camera does in relation to what happens is not a given — there are endless approaches to consider. Best to work through the aesthetics before you decide on make and model of the hardware.

My alum Ari Aster said: "I had a professor at AFI named Peter Markham, who I really loved, and he said that filmmaking at its best is really mischief-making. That really stayed with me. That is exactly how I feel." (Toronto Sun, June 2018.)

See? It's not about gear, or set procedure, or about knowing the ropes of production, or thinking as everyone else thinks. **It's story and its tricks**, storytelling through the moving image — an ever-shifting, cunning language — and emotion up on the screen and in the hearts and guts of the audience that matter. More social media posts exploring filmmaking in this true sense, please!

**Peter Markham** is a creative consultant, teacher, author, and former directing head at the American Film Institute Conservatory. His alumni, award winners at major festivals, have notable careers in Film and TV. Prior to teaching, he was a director in the UK, and worked with filmmakers including Anthony Minghella and Martin Scorsese. He is author of the book, *What's the Story? The Director Meets Their Screenplay: An Essential Guide for Directors and Writer-Directors*.



# The Winning Script

## 3 Important Fundamentals

By Alan C. Hueth

I love to win. My youngster up to 20-ish years was full of sports competitions. It included baseball, basketball, and football. But football was my favorite sport. I played ten years--starting in Pop Warner football in third grade and continuing into college. The sportsmanship and brotherhood of football were great. But I hated to lose. *Why?* Because of the hard work and sacrifices that were involved in the previous weeks or months before the loss. And I knew that the next week of practices were going to be challenging.

Fortunately, I was never on a losing team in football. And during those years, I was on three championship teams. Those victories required excelling in the fundamentals. The fundamentals of football include the *physical*, the *mental*, and the *emotional*. The physical includes strength and speed. The mental includes the knowledge of how to block and tackle, run, throw, and catch. And the emotional includes self-control. This means “not getting angry and out-of-control” to the point of making penalties. The degree to which I mastered these fundamentals was the degree to which I and my team-mates won.

In the same way, a winning script has three fundamental characteristics.

**First, the script is written in a way** that makes it easy for the production crew and actors to be successful. The script is written in a professional format, and the dialogue/narration

and scenic descriptions are clear and invite creativity and confidence for all involved.

**Second, the script is emotionally engaging** from the first to last scene. Every scene includes content that reveals characters’ values, traits, and behaviors that move the story forward through clear character beats and plot points.

**And thirdly**, a winning high school, college, or professional script is **a script that makes the film so good that people want to see it** in the theatre, on TV, and/or get the film into a film festival or multiple film festivals.

**Alan C. Hueth** is an Emeritus Professor of Communication Studies at Point Loma Nazarene University (PLNU). He has worked as a consultant, writer, producer, director, editor, and shooter on over 300 contract, cablecast, and broadcast programs. He is the winner of two Telly’s, a Broadcast Education Association award, and several cable television awards. Hueth’s PLNU scriptwriting students have written scripts for 26 films and TV shows in 52 student and professional festivals and won 20 awards in a thirteen-year span. Key concepts on how to master the fundamentals leading to ‘winning scripts’ are detailed in Alan’s book, *Scriptwriting for Film, Television, and New Media*.



# Rewriting Your TV Pilot

## *From First Draft to Second Draft*

By Martie Cook



You've finished the first draft of your television pilot. And you're feeling pretty good. Chances are you can't wait to get those pages off of your computer and into the hands of someone who can take the work from script to screen. A word of caution: Before you send your script to anyone, you want to make sure it's as good as it can possibly be. The truth is perfection is rarely (if ever) achieved in a first draft. Most professional writers will tell you that a big part of writing is *rewriting*. With this in mind, it's time to roll up your sleeves and do another pass. Here are some things to consider as you start your second draft:

### **Spend Lots of Time on Character Relationships**

This is the main reason viewers watch. So, don't just write a bunch of quirky characters. Make sure you're crystal clear on how each character feels about all of the other characters. *What binds them together? What tears them apart? What flaws does each character have, and how do those flaws affect the other characters?*

### **Too Many Characters Can be Problematic**

It's better to have a script with six well-defined characters than a script with fifteen characters who are less defined and therefore blend together. If your pilot has a lot of characters, see if you can chop a few or maybe even combine some of them.

### **Avoid Chitter-Chatter**

Characters should come to life through story. So, introduce your characters in motion. Delete any dialogue that stops your story dead in its tracks so the characters can ramble on about

something that has nothing to do with anything.

### **Conflict is King**

Think of each scene as a mini-argument. Conflict occurs when characters approach a subject with opposing points of view. Scenes where everything is hunky-dory generally lack conflict, and therefore come off as horribly dull.

### **Character Voices Must be Consistent**

One way to achieve this is to go through your entire script reading each character's dialogue separately as if it were a monologue. If a character uses proper English in some places and slang in other places, you need to make some changes.

### **Dialogue Shouldn't be Interchangeable**

If there are lines in your script that could be assigned to more than one character, your dialogue needs to be tweaked so that each character's voice is distinct.

### **Weave in Backstory**

As characters are introduced, their personal histories must become quickly clear. But backstory should be seamless. Sprinkle it in throughout your script rather than in one big dump.

### **Each Scene Should Build to the Next**

If Scene 3 and Scene 6 can be swapped, it's a red flag that your story is off. As each scene unfolds, the tension, stakes and conflicts should go up a notch.

### **Write Crisp and Concise**

Delete extraneous words. For example, "Joe goes over to the couch and sits down." Lose the words "over" and

"sits". Cutting unnecessary words will make your script read better. It will also free up space, leaving more room for character and story.

### **Your Pilot Script Should Be Your Blueprint**

Ideally, it should mirror the series in terms of style, tone, and storytelling. So, if you don't envision the series being told with flashbacks and voiceovers, don't use flashbacks and voiceovers in your pilot.

Once you've gone through your script and made changes, you may be wondering, *what happens next?* If you guessed that it's time to do yet another draft, you're exactly right. But if you've paid attention to the advice above, you should be in decent shape. With a little bit of luck, your third draft will be just a few tweaks.

**Martie Cook** has over three decades as a respected writer and producer of television and film. She has worked for all four major networks and PBS, as well as for Warner Bros., 20th Century Fox, Columbia Pictures and Universal Studios. Cook currently teaches television writing at Emerson College in Boston where she is the Director of the BFA in Comedic Arts and the Founding Director of Emerson's Center for Comedic Art's. The third edition of her critically acclaimed book, *Write to TV: Out of Your Head and Onto the Screen*, was published in August 2020, by Focal Press.



# How an Editor Should Cut an Actor's Performance

By Dustin Morrow

When I'm cutting the work of actors, here's what I'm looking at.

- (1.) **Eyes** (which are, after all, the windows to the soul).
- (2.) **Voice control** (the tonality, rhythms in their speech, pauses and timing).
- (3.) **Hand movements and gesturing** (which are great for continuity cutting because they often provide a little bit of kineticism in otherwise static frames).
- (4.) **Body language** (perfect for reading subtext into a character's motivations and intentions).
- (5.) **Listening and responses to other actors in the scene** (as any good actor will tell you, "*Acting is reacting.*").

I list the eyes first because that's the thing I'm most interested in. The eyes may be the greatest resource an actor has to offer an editor. Filmmakers go to great lengths to keep

actors' eyes in the frame - losing the actors' eyes - moving them offscreen, even for a moment - can subconsciously break the audience's connection to the character. Look at animated films, and how large and expressive the characters' eyes are, for evidence of how important the eyes are to understanding how characters are feeling.

Sometimes in my students' films, if two characters are having dinner, they'll be constantly staring soulfully into each others' eyes regardless of the narrative content of the scene. This is dramatically false 99% of the time. The next time you're out to eat, observe just how often, and when, people make eye contact and hold it. Usually, it's to assess the effect of something they have said - that is, to read a reaction; to put pressure on the other person; or to observe from the person's expression what kind of effect he or she is attempting to return. Editors must use the characters' eye contact carefully when cutting, to emphasize certain passages of the dialogue and the connections between the characters.

Actors are listeners, and the audience wants to see them listen. Another issue that often surfaces in student films is the staccato pattern of cutting where the editor uses the ends of lines of dialogue to dictate cuts (what we might call “Dagnet” cutting, after the old TV series). Editors need to allow conversations to breathe, as they naturally do in real life. The next time you find yourself observing a conversation, or overhearing one, listen for the gaps. For an actor’s performance to feel real, we need to believe that they are coming up with what they say just before they say it, and so we need to see that process happen. Cut a scene too tight, and it feels like they’re reciting lines.

If an editor cuts dialogue too tight, they might also make the characters seem impatient, or freakishly intelligent and witty. Of course, this can be a choice – look at *His Girl Friday* and other classic screwball comedies, and how quickly they respond to each other. It can be fun, but it’s stylized and doesn’t sound natural. For dialogue to sound natural, it needs to sound loose and spontaneous.

Here’s the thing to remember: speech can be a motivator and an anticipatory element. You often don’t know when someone is going to speak – in the natural flow of a conversation, you often turn to look at them right

after they begin speaking. That can be replicated in editing by cutting to a character after they begin their line of dialogue. And sometimes, when you are in a conversation, you can anticipate when someone is about to speak. We replicate that by cutting to a character just before they begin to speak (what we call a “sound advance” or an “overlap cut”). And remember that what someone’s saying is only interesting in that someone else is affected by it. So, we use reaction shots. We want to see what the dialogue spoken by one character means to the other characters in the scene.

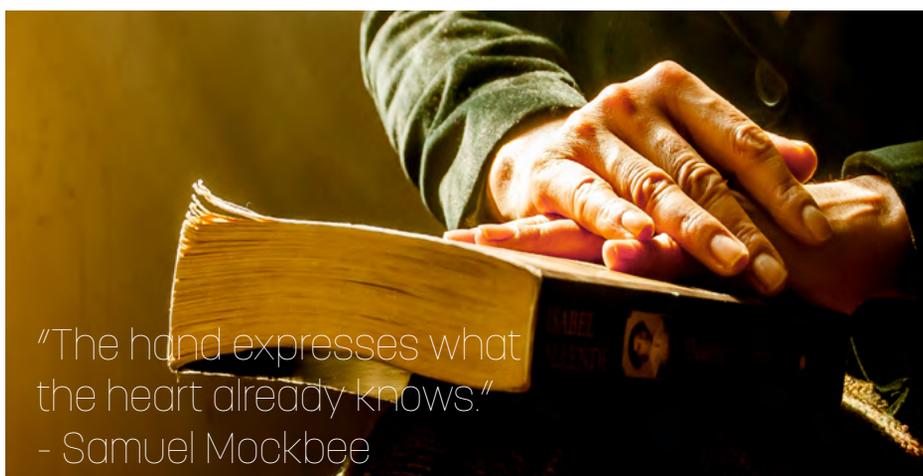
Actors and editors are one of the oddest partnerships in film. An editor can wreck or salvage an actor’s performance. Similarly, an actor can give an editor a variety of choices and room to experiment, or give them nothing to play with at all. Actors often never meet the editors who cut their work, and have a limited awareness of what editors do, but an editor can carefully, intricately construct an actor’s performance from a mountain of material, in a way that makes them a key player in the final performance. I’ve had actors say to me something to the effect of, “I see you used the second take in that one scene, I liked what I did there, too.” But I really used only the beginning of take 7, then the middle of take 4, the end of take 9, with a couple reaction shots from takes 5 and 3 to fill



it out. I’ve created what’s perceived by the audience (and often by the actor) as one continuous performance that is all the work of the actor. Perhaps when actors win Oscars, editors should go up to the stage with them and receive little half-size Oscars for their role in building the performance.

Just kidding, actors. Just kidding.

**Dustin Morrow** is an Emmy-winning filmmaker, bestselling author, and media artist. His work frequently explores the relationship between music and the moving image; intersections of traditional cinema and emerging media; the actor-director relationship; and genre filmmaking. He is currently a tenured Associate Professor in the School of Film at Portland State University in Oregon. He previously taught at Temple University in Philadelphia, Monmouth College in Illinois, and the University of Iowa in Iowa City. He has also led film education programs in Dublin, London, and New York City. He is the founding Director of the Portland Music Video Festival, and he has received grants for his work totaling more than half a million dollars. Learn more about his work at [www.dustinmorrow.com](http://www.dustinmorrow.com).



“The hand expresses what the heart already knows.”  
– Samuel Mockbee



# How to Set Up Your Edit Workstation

By Shane Stanley

When I prepare to edit my films there's a great deal of excitement, but it's also met with some opposition. *Why?* Because it means I'll be isolated in a small, dark room for several months while addressing everything that didn't go 'as planned' during production. Shaping countless hours of footage into a smooth-running and entertaining motion picture can be grueling and flat out overwhelming, but I have found a few ways to make this process less painstaking *and* even pleasant.

The most important thing is your **project setup**. How you organize the footage and miscellaneous files are key

so you're not wasting precious time (or brain space) searching for clips. When shooting, not always will things be slated properly and even worse, the more we run-and-gun, the more scattered and unorganized footage can become. Take the time before you begin cutting to get organized and put everything where you can access it quickly, so once you're in the groove, you're not being hindered by spinning your wheels unnecessarily. Assembling a ninety-minute feature is a huge task, but if you set up the project correctly, it is so much easier.

Another crucial element is your **work environment**. I get many of

you don't have a traditional edit bay or offices, and that's okay. I prefer to edit from my home office, which when I'm not in post-production, doubles as storage for equipment and used as a traditional home office. But when it's time to edit, clear everything you can out and create as much open and breathable space as possible. Don't load your workstation with crap that will distract you or worse, paperwork from other pressing responsibilities – especially monthly bills. They will hinder your creativity and cause

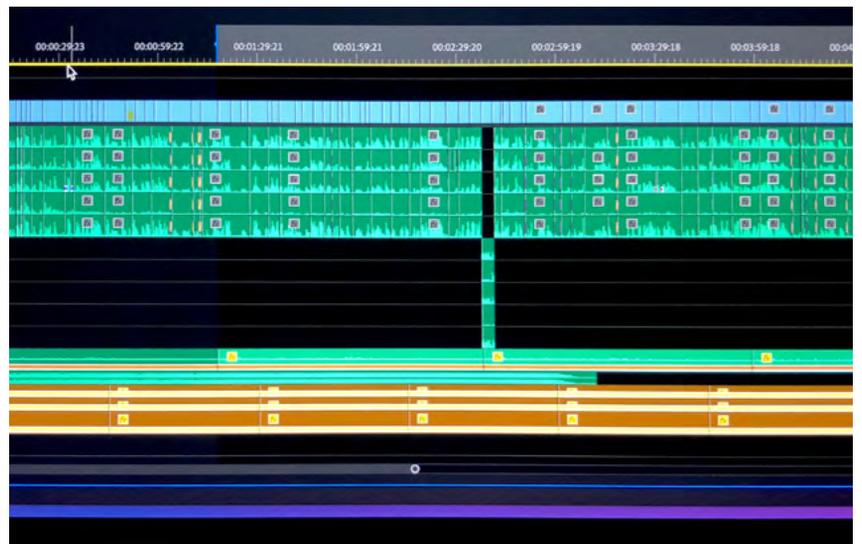
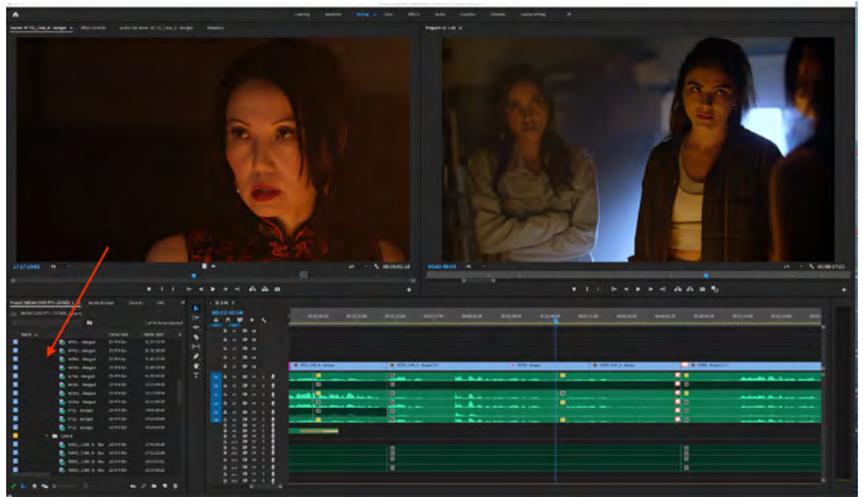


unnecessary pressure without even realizing it. You can't be creative when you're feeling claustrophobic. The only things you should have in sight are a copy of the screenplay, any script notes, a shooting schedule to cross reference footage if you're having trouble finding it, and a scratch pad for making notes. Keep your phone out of eyeline, and I challenge you to turn off the audible alerts. You're a filmmaker now, and this is your career path. Social media and constant interruptions that won't help you achieve your goals can wait.

**Ambiance is key.** Personally, I like a blacked-out room with warm, soft light accompanied by some calming candles, and free from any outside noise. You need to be *in* the moment, and if you don't live alone, it's imperative the people you live with understand and respect the creative process. When I cut, I often lose track of time. Several hours can pass without realizing it, so it's important to set reminders to get up and stretch your legs, (you can check your texts messages then), stay well hydrated and remember to break mid-way through the day to eat well. Don't forget – *garbage in, garbage out*, and if you don't eat or worse, you fill your body with junk, the results will show in your work.

Until next time...

Multi Emmy Award-winning filmmaker and author **Shane Stanley** has enjoyed a career spanning almost five decades, which includes acting, editing, producing, writing and directing. With a #1 box office hit under his belt and several top-rated television shows to his credit, teaching the next generation of filmmakers how to have a long and prosperous future in the entertainment industry is what he finds most rewarding and considers his most essential work. To read Shane's latest book, please visit [www.whatyoudontlearninfilmschool.com](http://www.whatyoudontlearninfilmschool.com).



# The Auto Track Selector in Resolve

By Bart Weiss



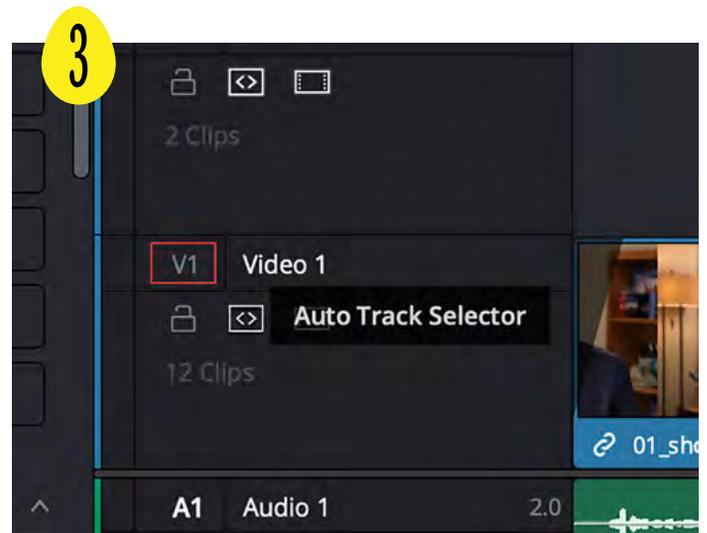
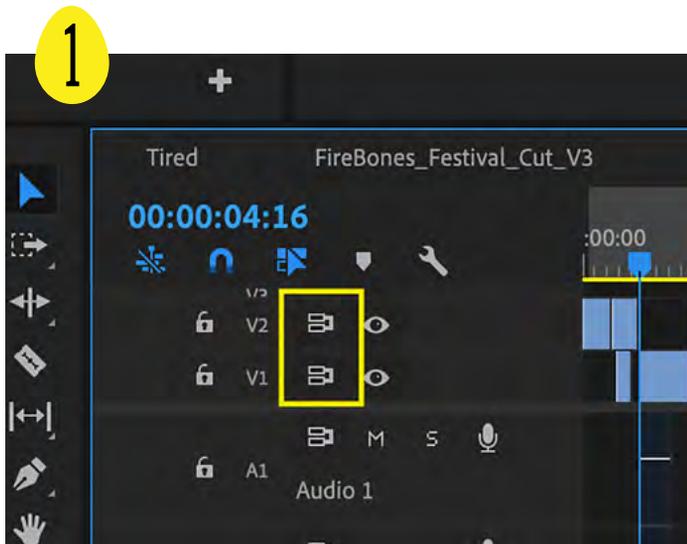
For those of you coming to Resolve from Premiere, what I am about to tell you is nothing new. In Premiere, it is called, *Toggle Sync Lock*. I come to Resolve through decades of the Final Cut universe, from Version 1 to the shift to X. In FCP X, there are no tracks, so there is no need for the auto track selector/sync lock, as the magnetic timeline takes care of that.

In Premiere, the Toggle Sync Lock looks like, well, two tracks that are linked together (See Screenshot 1). In Resolve,

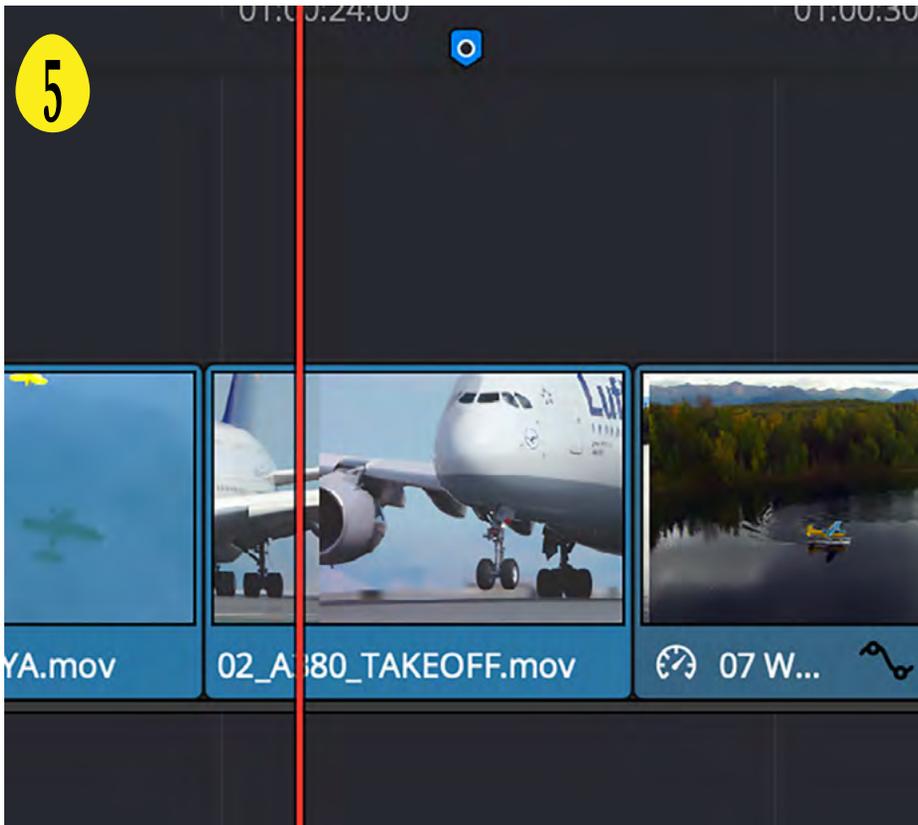
it is in the same place, but it looks like a rectangle with arrow brackets back-to-back (See Screenshot 3).

*So, what is it, and why do you need to know it?*

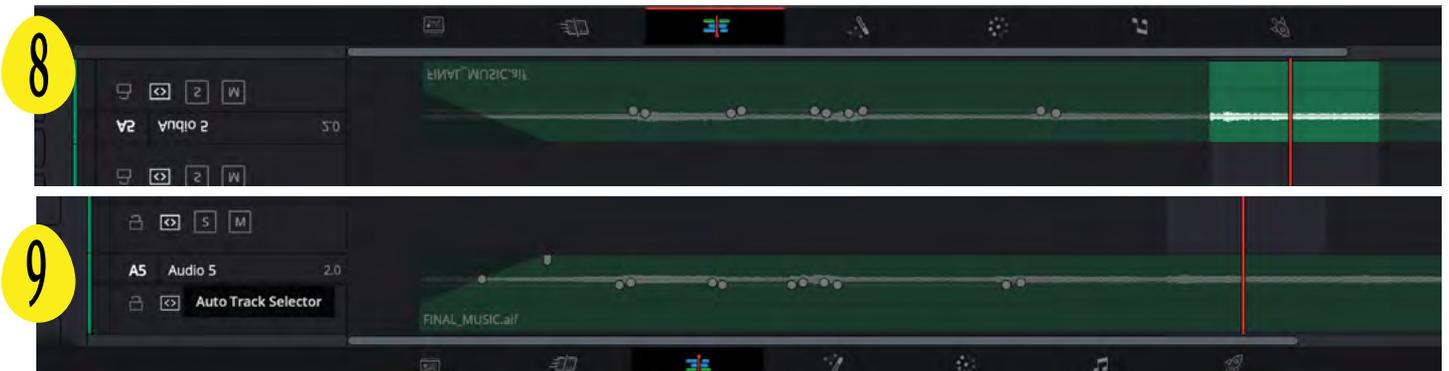
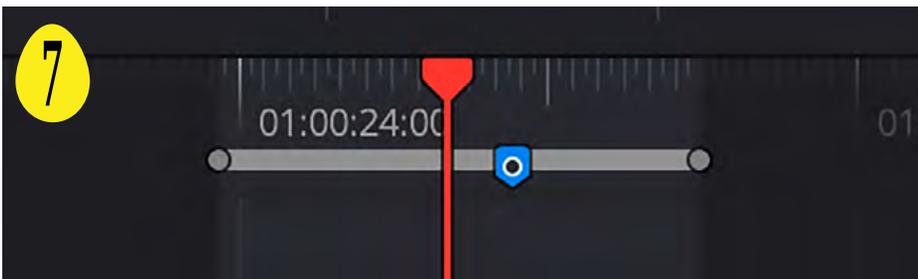
When you want to insert or cut a shot into a timeline and have other tracks in the timeline that you do NOT want to change, this is your button. (Yes, I know you can lock the track, but this is much better.)



## POST-PRODUCTION



So, in the timeline below, I want to cut out a shot and not cut out the music on Track 5. (See Screenshot 5). In this case, the director wants this a bit shorter and hates the takeoff shot. Maybe she does not like Lufthansa, for example. (See Screenshot 6.) The first step is to put the cursor over the shot, and hit the X key, which will select the shot. Notice the grey line on the top indicates you are selecting this shot, (See Screenshot 7), but also note that the picture, the sound effect that we carefully synced to the plane, and the music are all selected. What we want to do is to select only the picture and the sound effect. All I have to do is hit that *Auto Track Select* button on track. (See Screenshot 8). When I hit that (See Screenshot 9), you can see that the music track is not selected.

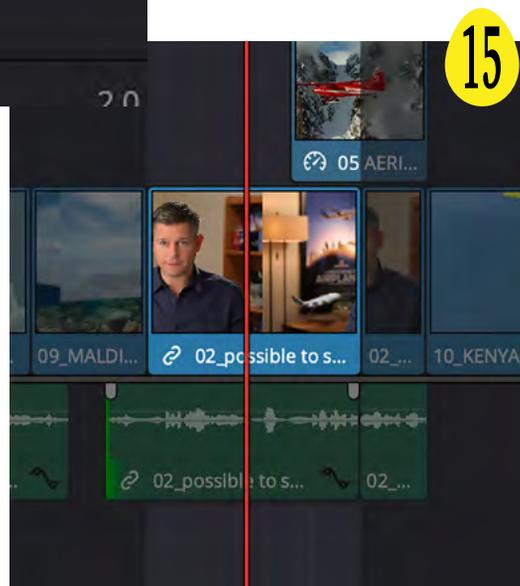
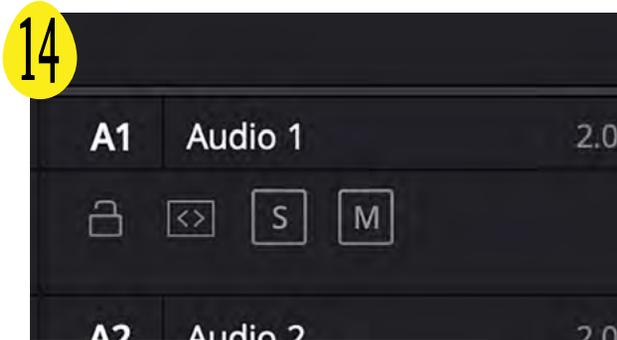
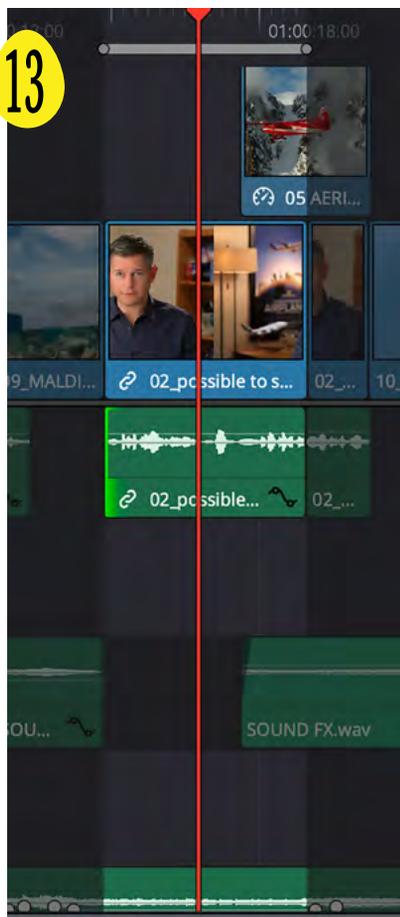
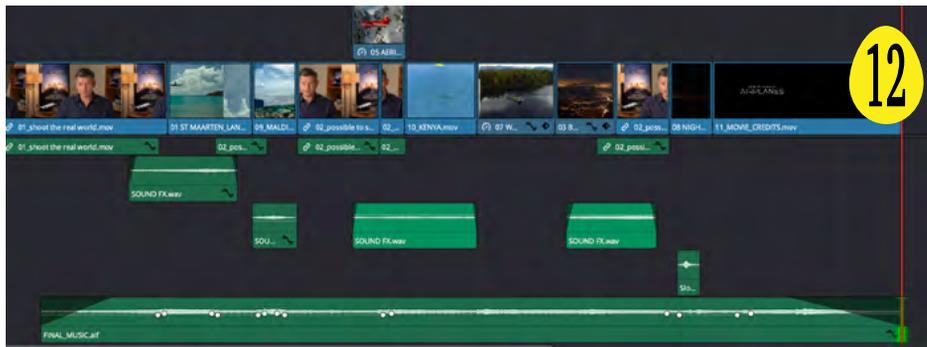
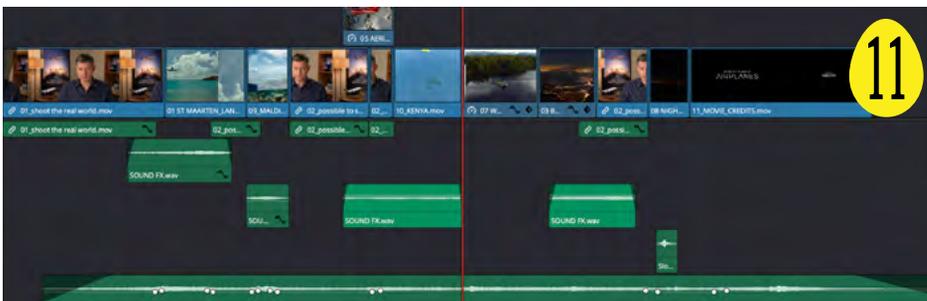
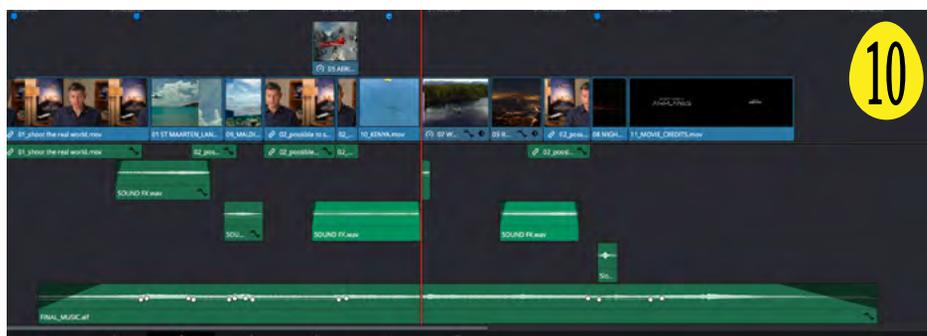


## POST-PRODUCTION

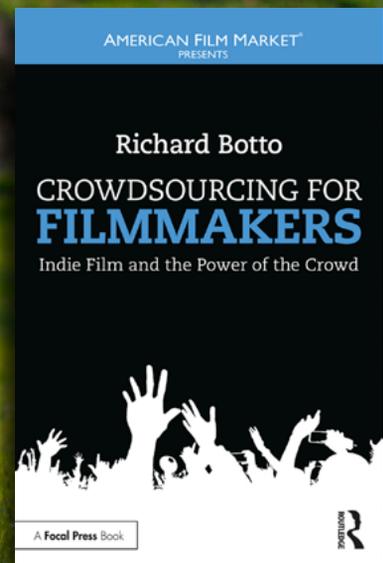
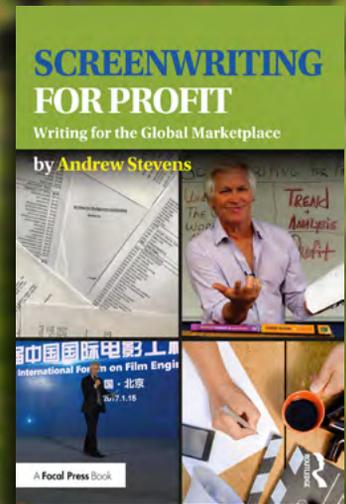
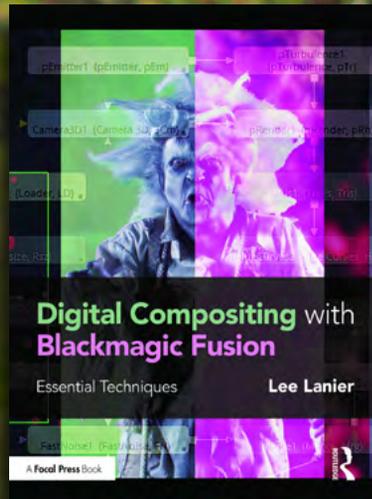
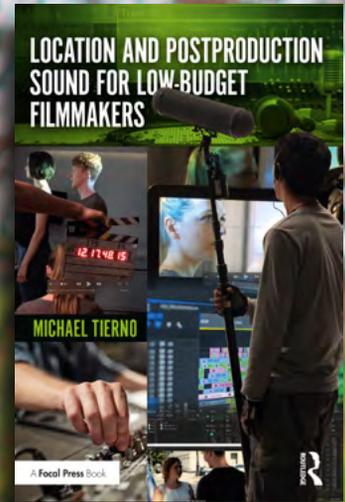
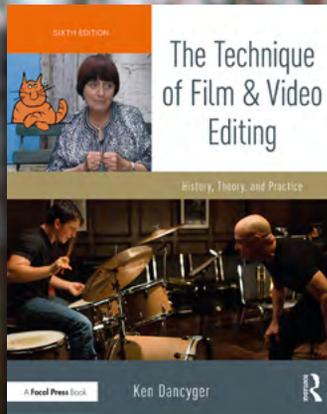
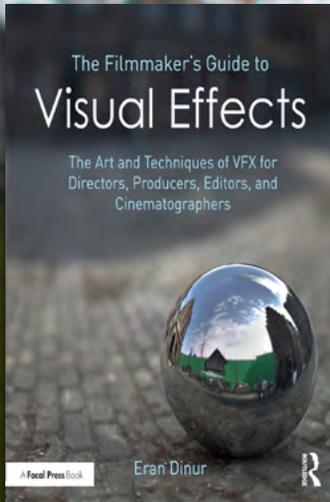
Now you can hit *Shift, Backspace* to ripple delete the plane and SFX, leaving the music untouched (See Screenshot 10). Looks good, except you will need to get rid of that extra bit of the soundtrack, (See Screenshot 11).

You will also need to trim music that is not too long. But that is easy. (See Screenshot 12.)

You can also use the Auto Track Selector to perform J and L cuts. On the possible to shot .MOV file, I can use X to select the shot (See Screenshot 13), unclick Audio 1, which is the audio that I want to pull up, and click the Auto Track Selector (See Screenshot 14). It is not highlighted, and you can see that Audio Track 1 is darkened. I can pull up the track a few frames to get that J cut sound. (See Screenshot 15). Once you get used to it, you can do this without even thinking.



**Bart Weiss** is an award-winning filmmaker, educator and director/founder of the Dallas Video Fest and produces “Frame of Mind” on KERA TV. He was President of AIVF and was a video columnist for *The Dallas Morning News*, and *United Features Syndicate*. Bart received an MFA in Film Directing from Columbia University. [www.videofest.org](http://www.videofest.org)



Hunting for Hidden Gold  
@ studentfilmmakersstore.com

# Don't Work Too Cheap

*We Don't Do This as a Hobby!*

By Fred Ginsburg, CAS, Ph.D.

As an educator and former Hollywood sound mixer, I really wish that universities would devote less time teaching calculus and more time explaining how to balance a checkbook! Students dedicate themselves to learning the aesthetics and technology of filmmaking, including production budgeting – yet they fail miserably when it comes to basic home economics.

Back in the late seventies, when I was just a mere tadpole breaking into the industry – my starting wage for location mixing was \$325/day, plus overtime, plus another few hundred per day for recording equipment. In those days, my mentors were commanding considerably higher.

Considering that I considered it a good month if I worked 2 to 3 days per week, or 10+ days per month, as a freelance sound mixer – that was barely enough for a bachelor to make ends meet.

Today's dollar goes only a fraction of the distance yet beginning salaries have barely increased. Students and new mixers are still being offered, and accepting, gigs that only pay \$500 per day.

And that is supposed to be for an OMB (one person band), *including* an equipment package!

The equipment package alone is often worth more than the entire rate. Figure a state-of-the-art multi-track timecode recorder, companion mixing board (fader controller), four to eight premium quality radio mics, a few condenser shotgun mics, boom poles, cables, and a plethora of miscellaneous items. To rent (or make the finance payments) on even a minimal package would be hundreds of dollars.

Subtract that from \$500 per day, and what remains is less than you would make bussing tables at the new minimum wage of \$15/hour.

Even if, somehow, the equipment package was paid for separately by the producer – \$500 per day for 10 days per month does not add up to very much money to live on. These days, even \$50,000 per year is considered poverty level. \$1500 per week is still only \$75,000 per year, which does not go very far when one-bedroom apartments are close to \$2000 (or more) in most major cities. Add your car payments, insurance, internet, phone... and you are back to living in your folks' basement.



Don't forget taxes. Your gross salary is going to be reduced by 25% to 40% for federal, state, social security, and local taxes. If your payment includes equipment rental – included with your day rate or as separate billing, then

local sales taxes might or might not apply, depending on local regulations. Better ask your tax expert!

It gets worse. Students have convinced themselves that working for low wages is the way to build up their names and break into this highly competitive industry. Work hard, work cheap – so that better gigs may come your way.

Or maybe they won't.

When you sell yourself short and scrimp on equipment and personnel (OMB means no boom operator), the quality of the product that you can deliver will suffer. Your reputation will go down the gutter.

You need high quality equipment; even more so when it is a low budget production with poorly designed sets, noisy locations, and inexperienced actors. A boom person allows you to concentrate on live mixing the multitude of wireless

mics, overhead boom mics, and planted mics. When you try to function as an OMB, you cannot boom and mix simultaneously. So, you end up “setting and forgetting” your record tracks, leaving the sorting out for post-production.

However, editors do not have the time to mixdown your ISO tracks until the final stages of post-production. Instead, they will sync dailies and create their rough cuts by playing all of your recorded tracks at the same time; and it will sound pretty bad due to phasing and overlaps.

No fear... There is always ADR to fix things. Editors usually have too many other things to do than take the time to meticulously assess all of the ISO tracks and, essentially, re-create a proper production mix. Marking the cue sheets for required ADR is routinely more expedient (at least for the busy editor).

So, here you are, a physically exhausted and overworked OMB, underpaid, but laboring under the premise that if you worked hard enough and cheap enough – producers will reward you for your efforts by re-hiring you “after the pilot gets sold, and we have a real budget for the next one.” But will they?

More often than not, the sad reality is that the bigger budget show will go to a “real mixer,” someone with proven experience who charges a whole lot more, brings a boom person or two, a more capable equipment package – and can deliver usable soundtracks!

You delivered usable tracks, didn’t you? Sure, you did, but no one heard them enough to appreciate them, because all they heard in the edit bay was a confusing medley of *all* your tracks played back at the same time. You did not mix; you merely recorded.

If you are going to succeed in this field, the first rule is that you have to always deliver a usable production mix along with your individual ISO tracks. To do that, you need top of the line equipment (either owned or rented), and a good boom person (along with maybe even a Utility Sound Tech).

Quote a daily rate that is not an insult to your years of education, training, and experience. Budget realistically to cover the costs of your equipment rental or paying off creditors for the gear you have purchased.

In case you are wondering, union scale for a Hollywood grade production mixer is around \$75 to \$80 per hour for the first 8 hours, and 1.5 that amount for overtime. Minimum call (in other words, a basic day) consists of 9 hours (8 normal + 1 overtime). Equipment is billed

separately at market value (what most rental houses would charge you).

As a newbie, you will not be able to command that kind of salary, but don’t work for peanuts. Act professional, be professional, and expect to be valued as a professional.

**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.



**Persist** – don’t take no for an answer. If you’re happy to sit at your desk and not take any risk, you’ll be sitting at your desk for the next 20 years.  
–David Rubenstein

# Basic Audio Tips for Location Sound Recording

By Michael Tierno

Film sound is one half the picture and most of your headaches.

You're about to venture into making a film, and you've spent a lot of time writing a script, casting, finding locations, rehearsing, designing sets, finding props, maybe even dealing with Screen Actors Guild. Maybe you've thought a lot about sound, and maybe you haven't. Maybe you figure you can just plug a microphone into a camera and pick it up passively, as long as it sounds good to your headphones.

Well, I'm here to tell you it's a little more involved with all that, but before we even go there, **here is the most important thing** about achieving excellent sound in your film: *your attitude about it*. You have to strive to make it excellent before you even get started. You have to care about it, plan for it, nurture it, provide for it. If you have a skilled sound crew, great. If you don't, there are things to do to oversee the process as a filmmaker to maximize what you do have.

**1. Decide if you're going to shoot single or double system.** Single system means you plug a microphone or mixer into the camera and record sound on the clip. Best sync ever. Hard to monitor. You'll need to set up an external monitor if you don't want your sound mixer with their grubby hands all over the camera. And you might think the DP can watch levels and listen but it's splitting their focus. But if you shoot single system without a mixer be prepared to adjust sound for every shot. That's right, every shot. Sometimes multiple takes of the same shot will deliver the exact same results of dialogue quality, but you won't know unless you monitor it. An actor might inadvertently turn away from a microphone during one shot that you might miss if you're not monitoring.



**2. If you are using an external microphone like a shotgun that needs phantom power,** make sure

your external mixer has phantom power. Most location dialogue microphones require phantom power and sound warmer for dialogue, but you'll have to know where you're powering them from. And many video cameras have phantom power using "pre-amps" to power microphones, but not all preamps are created equal. Test out recording with different configurations to see what sounds best.

**3. If you go double system,** make sure you are recording sound on the camera cleanly. This is called "reference audio." Here is where you might want to auto-level on the camera, so your reference audio is usable.

**4. If you must go double system,** test your recorder to know its strengths and weakness. All recorders have a little "noise floor," and you should try and stay away from it, but you'll have to test to know where that is.

**5. Make sure you're well-prepared when it comes to batteries.** And don't use rechargeable batteries for location recording. They are unreliable. Budget for disposal batteries.

**6. Test your locations for recording quality** ideally with your actors if you can. DPs shoot tons of test footage on planned location. Why not test sound quality.

**7. Test record your actors** before you shoot and listen back to their voices. Because guess what, some

actors will surprise you and have stronger voices recorded then they let onto and the opposite. Certain actors will eat words, and you'll not hear it in rehearsals. Better to go in prepared.

**8. Off load your sound** the night you come home from the shoot and back it up.

**9. Try not to erase** your sound card until your shoot is finished.

**10. Have a method of breaking down** your sound gear and storing it with a checklist.

**11. Practice recording location dialogue** with actors and record their dialogue "on axis" meaning the barrel of the microphone is pointed at their mouths and is optimized to record a strong clean signal no matter what the shot.

**12. Record clean dialogue without other sounds** that ruin the dialogue like planes, traffic, footsteps, doors, body sounds, etc. You can always replace a word or two.

**13. Speaking of which, sometimes, if you need a line or two of wild sound,** record it without picture rolling...You'd be surprised what you can make work.

**14. Lastly, if you're working with a sound recordist,** get their input the way you'll get it from the DP. Make sure their recording needs are met.

**15. Don't be afraid to tell an actor** to speak up a little if need be. We all want natural performances, but if an actor talks too low, it might make editing the scene hard.

**Michael Tierno** is an award-winning director of feature films. He's formerly a Hollywood story analyst and is a professor of Film Production at East Carolina University. He is also the author of several books on filmmaking including *Location and PostProduction Sound for Low-Budget Filmmakers* (Routledge, 2020) and *Aristotle's Poetics for Screenwriters* (Hyperion, 2002). He lives in North Carolina and New York with his wife Judy.



**10-YEAR WARRANTY**  
**on AZDEN Products**  
Student Filmmakers is  
an Azden Authorized Dealer  
[studentfilmmakersstore.com](http://studentfilmmakersstore.com)

# The Filmic Narrative

By Tony Stark



*What is a filmic narrative?* It's one concept on which you need to quickly get a firm grasp if you're taking your first steps in the world of documentary filmmaking. The answer might sound simple: *it's a story told in sound and pictures, isn't it?* And while that is correct, when it comes to the nitty-gritty of actually making a film, it's a concept that's easily misunderstood – especially if, like most of us, you are used to telling stories on paper using words. That's what we're taught to do at school and at university, but over the years this training induces a verbal bias that can compromise our ability to make engaging films. Hanging a film structure on the backbone of a pre-written script is a common mistake that first-time documentary filmmakers make – but writing the words and then filming images to illustrate them is not documentary filmmaking. It's illustrating a lecture, and it doesn't result in a watchable film however talented you are at writing and directing. The good news is that you can avoid this by wholeheartedly embracing the filmic narrative but doing so necessitates a reassessment of the primacy of words: they are no longer 'top dog'. They fulfill a different storytelling function in a long-form factual film.

Documentary works by engaging your audience's emotions to draw them into a film and keep them watching. That's achieved by the way you weave together the characters and the stories they tell with the sequences you shoot, and any archive and stills, to illustrate the narrative: these form the spine of your filmic narrative – not the words that you write. Marching out on location to illustrate a written script prevents you from structuring your film to convey emotion – because you are placing your film editor into a verbal straight-jacket, forced to drive the cut where your pre-scripted commentary dictates, irrespective of the strength and quality of your film sequences and interviews. This approach only engages a viewer's intellect. And it makes for dull films. But if you give your editor the creative freedom to cut the most engaging narrative out of the film sequences and interviews you've shot, you can begin to craft an emotionally engaging film. This is a process of discovery – involving trial and error – and it frequently results in a significantly different way of telling your story than you may

have at first conceived. Not a different story, of course, just a different approach to telling it.

Think of the distinction between a master chef and a novice given the same ingredients to bake a cake. What makes the difference between the mouth-wateringly moist and tasty delight baked by our master chef – and the dry, crumbly and bland offering cooked by our novice? Well, it's the balance of ingredients of course! The master chef knows just how much of each ingredient will produce the perfect gateau. The novice bumbles along putting in too much butter or too much flour – making a tasteless and forgettable pastry.

And it's the same with filmmaking: it's the balance of specially shot video, stills, archive, actuality, interviews and (in documentaries that use narration) the commentaries you write that makes the difference between a film that grabs its viewers' emotions, enticing them into the story and keeping them watching to the end – and one that sends them to sleep. The words you write are secondary: they are simply the glue that sticks the sequences together – their sole function is to guide viewers from one sequence to the next. If you try and make your narration drive the film, you'll lose your viewer. That's why your commentary writing has to be one of the last things you do in the edit – only finalised once your film structure is agreed.

A close bedfellow of the filmic narrative is the *linear narrative*. Stories written for papers, magazines or the internet don't have to be linear in approach. There's room for digression into issues that are not vital for an understanding of the story, but which contextualise and deepen a reader's understanding – a history perhaps, a scientific explanation, a personal biography, etc. These can be hived off into text boxes laid out alongside the main story and digested at any point by a reader. But documentary films are linear structures – they take you in an unremittingly straight line: Point A leads directly to Point B; Point B to C, and so on. You are on a narrative highway, and there's no room for detours to look at issues that might be interesting in themselves, but which are not intimately linked to the core

story. If you depart from this principle, you are highly likely to lose your audience's attention - and if you can't keep your audience watching from moment to moment, you've failed as a filmmaker. Readers of an article can always go back and re-read a section they didn't quite grasp, and then move on to read further. But viewers of a documentary don't have this luxury: if you lose their attention, the story progresses without them. But surely you can always rewind and watch it again, you might ask? Of course - that's true. But why would someone who finds a film unengaging and difficult to understand at first view, take the trouble to have a second go? Your task is to make a film so watchable that your viewer has no need for rewinds. And you won't be able to do that if you meander to your filmic destination, heading off down a path that ends in a narrative cul-de-sac with no real idea how to get back to the main story. So: anything that you wish to convey in a film - context, history, personal biography, must conform to the 'A to B to C' principle. This allows you to gently guide your viewers stage by stage to the film's destination - and if you've done this well, they'll still be watching at the end, sad to see the credits roll.

**Tony Stark** is a documentary filmmaker, executive producer and former BBC commissioner with a 30-year career making high profile documentary films and series for broadcast television, specializing in investigative filmmaking. His films have been shown on the BBC, Channel Four, ITV, Al Jazeera, American PBS channels and many European TV channels. His programmes have been nominated for several industry awards: a BAFTA, the Foreign Press Association Media Awards, the Association for International Broadcasting and the San Francisco International Film Festival. He is author of the book, *The Insiders' Guide to Factual Filmmaking*. For more information go to [moonstonefilms.co.uk](http://moonstonefilms.co.uk).



"Life only has narrative when we frame it and edit it and call it certain things."  
- Peter Landesman

# Tricks for Working with Troubled Green Screen

By Lee Lanier



Working with green screen is a common task when it comes to VFX compositing. Yet, many times you are handed a shot where the green screen is quite poor. This is not only the case with student or independent productions but may also be true for \$100,000,000 blockbusters. Sometimes, production limitations do not allow for a careful green screen preparation, especially when shooting on location. So, what pitfalls may you encounter with such shots? Here are a few common problems:

**(1.) Irregularly lit screen** with wrinkles and/or shadows.

**(2.) Objects overlapping the screen**, such as light equipment and/or tracking tape marks.

**(3.) Subject too close to the screen**, so there is heavy green spill (reflected green light).

**(4.) Reflective elements on the subject** that show the green or greenish clothing, labels, and the like.

What can be done about such problems when it comes to compositing? Well, there are a number of steps you can take to make your life a little easier:

**(1.) Create a *garbage or outside* mask around the subject** to reduce the amount of green you're trying to remove. This also allows you to remove unwanted objects such as rigging or tracking marks.

**(2.) Create an *inside or core* mask** to restore the interiors of the subject (which otherwise might wind up with transparent holes). Many chroma key tools or *keyers*, designed to remove green screen, support such masks.

**(3.) Examine the alpha channel** as you adjust your keyer. You can't really tell the quality of your keyed footage unless you look at this channel, which determines what part of the frame is opaque, semi-transparent, or transparent.

There are many compositing software packages you can use and many keyers to boot. Nevertheless, let's take a look at one common workflow: **using the Keylight plug-in effect inside Adobe After Effects**. Here's an example green screen shot (Figure 1). It suffers from irregular lighting, wrinkles, tracking marks, and heavy green spill in the singer's blonde hair.

The first step, after setting up a composition, is to draw an inner and outer mask using the Pen tool (Figure 2). Because our singer is moving, the masks require some rough animation (that is, rotoscoping). The masks only need to be loosely drawn but should not cut off any part of the singer or include the tracking marks.

Using Keylight, you can expand the Inside Mask and Outside Mask

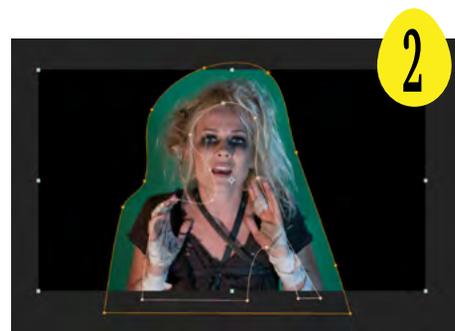
sections and set the Mask menus to the corresponding masks (Figure 3). Note that you will need to turn on the Invert checkbox for the Outside Mask within Keylight. Also, to make this work, you will need to set each mask to None in the layer's Masks section (Figure 4). In my example, the inner mask is Mask 1, and the outer mask is Mask 2.

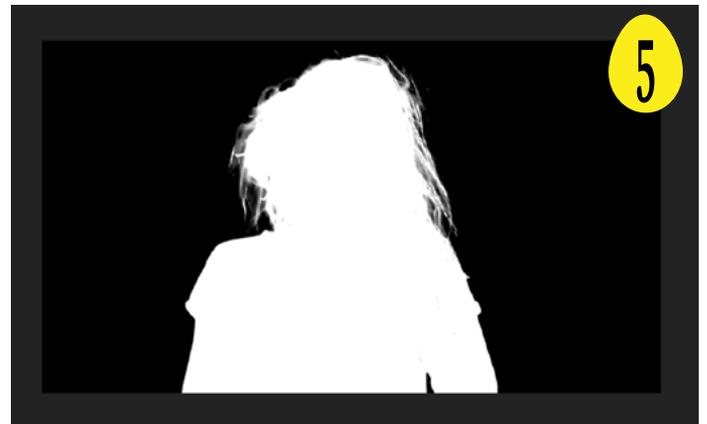
After you've completed the masking, you can set the other important Keylight options. Here is my preferred workflow:

**(1.) Set the Screen Colour.** Try to choose an average green color close to the subject. Try to avoid selecting green within shadows or dark areas of wrinkles.

**(2.) Switch the View menu to Combined Matte** so you can see the resulting alpha channel. Odds are there will be some gray in the foreground (the part that should be opaque) and gray in the background (the part that should be transparent).

**(3.) Expand the Screen Matte section.** Raise the Clip Black value until the background is black as can be



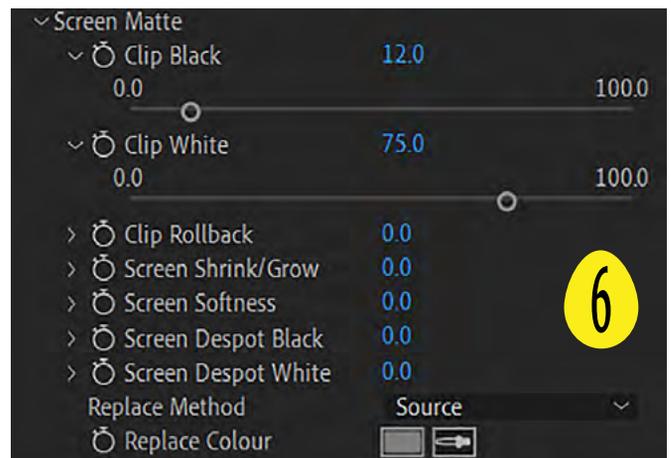


without eroding too far into the foreground. Lower the Clip White value until the foreground is white as can be without introducing gray into the background. The goal is to produce a pure white foreground and pure black background with some gray on the edges of the subject, like along the hair (Figure 5).

**(4.) Return the View menu to Final Result.** In the Screen Matte section, set the Replace Method to Source (Figure 6). This prevents Keylight from aggressively removing green spill from the footage, which often causes extra noise. If you need to remove green spill, use a separate effect. For example, add the Advanced Spill Suppressor effect and set its Method menu to Ultra.

That's basically it (Figure 7). Now, there are many other Keylight options you can adjust to improve the result; however, if you follow these basic steps, you will have a solid start. If you'd like to delve deeper into chroma key work and Keylight, there are many fine tutorials available (some of which are mine) at LinkedIn Learning, Lowepost.com, and similar sites. Good luck!

**Lee Lanier** has worked as a professional animator and VFX artist for over 25 years, having spent time at Walt Disney Studios and DreamWorks. He's also written a dozen books on the topic and has recorded video tutorials for various companies that have generated close to 1 million views. You can see his work at [beezlebugbit.com](http://beezlebugbit.com) and [lee-lanier-paints.com](http://lee-lanier-paints.com).



# How to Plan for a 360-Degree Movie Marketing Campaign

By Dr. Rajeev Kamineni



Let us commence by reading the experience of a senior producer in designing movie posters and how these posters not only helped in creating awareness and buzz for the movies he produced but helped him survive for 50 years in the industry.

“Though I am the producer of the movie, designing posters and conceiving the marketing campaign is my passion. As a marketing tool, the movie poster is especially important for me. In my earlier days as producer, the posters were posted on Thursday or Friday. The posters were so attractive, and it would cause a traffic jam. The posters I designed were so popular that people waited for the poster design from me and fans waited for it and onlookers stopped and stared at it causing a traffic jam. I flooded the town with posters. My posters were new, they conveyed a dialogue or a story. The poster itself conveyed a story. There might not be a relevant connection between the scene, poster, and the movie but curiosity was aroused. For every movie or situation, I came up with different concepts and posters. It was path breaking. No one did it before, and I was the pioneer in doing it for the first time. Audience curiosity was aroused, and every show was sold out. I marketed my next movie so well, that it was sold out and in just one area and I recovered my entire investment.

I was marketing and changing the perception of the audience and creating curiosity and awareness thereby boosting the box office collections. Every movie was a hit, and a super hit. At that time one main protagonist was moving up from negative villain roles to hero roles. I watched the still photography shots, and I was fascinated with these photos. There was one still photo where he is holding a King Cobra in his hand and he was patting it. In another still, he was showing anger by holding a gun in one hand and a lamb

in another hand to contrast between rough and smooth. I was mesmerized with these photos. I took a bold decision to install a giant hoarding, with such captivating designs, that was the largest and biggest anyone ever saw. No other leading stars until that point in time had 40 feet hoarding. Due to the aggressive marketing campaign, there was a massive buzz and for every show that was sold out, there was a crowd of almost three times the venue capacity that was going back disappointed with no tickets. That is the power of marketing.”

Sharing this producer’s experience leads us into some simple tips about how to plan for a comprehensive movie marketing campaign during the production, pre-release, release, and post-release phases of a movie.

- (1.) **Launch of merchandise** tying up with major retailers.
- (2.) **Derive maximum mileage** from the co-branding partner’s marketing outlay and campaign.
- (3.) **Specific target group marketing** like kids under the age of 10 or senior citizens.
- (4.) **The social media campaign** goes into an overdrive during the pre-release and release phase. Social media is activated from Week 2 of the project commencement date, but maximum traction is generated closer to the release date. Social media includes Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and other popular outlets.
- (5.) **Hire specific Twitter influencers, bloggers** and other social media activists who command significant following so that the movie starts trending.

**(6.) The official 2-minute trailer** is released on YouTube. It is attached to other movies that are releasing during this time frame and it will be screened across the world.

**(7.) Shorter edited version of the trailer** is telecast in different TV channels as paid promotion.

**(8.) Posters and standee banners** are despatched to different locations so that there is a clear visual imagery for the audience.

**(9.) Print campaign commences**, with advertisements and write ups about the movie.

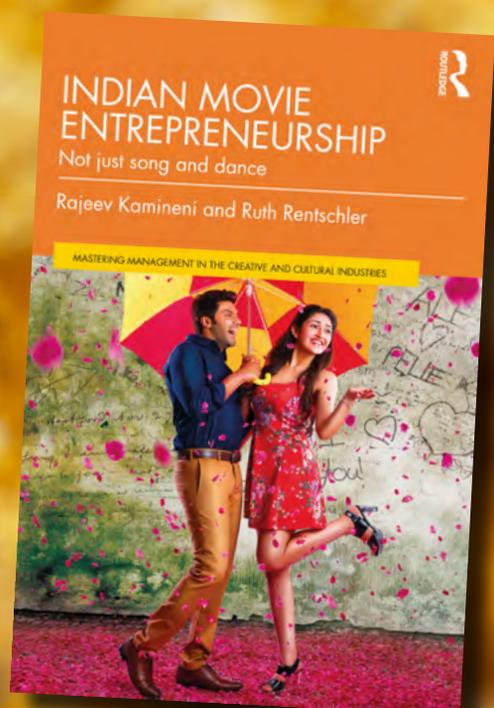
**(10.) The lead cast and crew are interviewed**, and their interviews are circulated in the print media as well as the online outlets.

**(11.) The lead cast and crew undertake a promotional tour** to major destinations to promote the movie through TV appearances, public space appearances, interviews and merchandise signing events.

While there might be other marketing activities, the above 11 points can serve as handy tips to get you started. Believe in yourself and make it happen. Mesmerize them!

**Rajeev Kamineni** started his working career in a bookstore almost three decades ago and then moved onto area sales manager, director, executive director, chief officer, lecturer and head of program positions. He is a multiple award-winning lecturer with lecturing stints in Australia, South Africa, Singapore, Japan, India and Dubai. Rajeev has a PhD in movie entrepreneurship and currently teaches entrepreneurship at University of South Australia. Apart from owning and operating businesses, Rajeev was actively involved in financing 35 movies and producing 14 movies in the Indian movie industry. With a lifelong passion for cinema, Rajeev has authored a book on Indian cinema published by Routledge, UK. He was also actively involved as an organizer and executive committee member of the Chennai International Film Festival (CIFF).

Learn how-to concepts and skills @ [studentfilmmakersstore.com](http://studentfilmmakersstore.com)



# KOVID KILLED KINO!

## *Compel Your Audience to Interact*

By Anthony Straeger

Okay, the spelling's wrong, but you get the sense of doom in the words. Over the last year, we have confronted an unprecedented crisis. We are witnessing a major shift in the history of film festivals and filmmaking. COVID-19 has seen the implementation of unprecedented restrictions on the entertainment industry. Surviving the uncertain political and financial situation will not get easier. Of this, we can be sure. We do not know how long the disruption will last and to what extent we will be able to 'go back to normal.' What we do know is that the pandemic will impact the industry for a long time. This means we must be clever, creative and calculating.

Film festivals are a lifeblood for independent filmmakers. They assist in the development and marketing of a filmmaker. They also are a source of inspiration and a means of gaining recognition and acclaim for your work. Many festivals rely on their audience to sustain them. Cinemas had to close their doors and due to the length of the lockdown, many are unlikely to open again.

The disruptions to the festival circuit have dealt a heavy blow to a filmmaker's marketing vitality. So, the options for film festivals are clear – postpone, cancel, or move online. So, you would be right in asking: *Is there any life left in film festivals?*

The answer is YES.

People who run festivals, like our Berlin Sci-fi Filmfest, are in the main

self-funded. No bail-out, no free lunch. They are festivals built on a love of a genre and manned by dedicated people who are not in it for the money.

Moving our cancelled festival films onto the internet was a no-brainer. Most people are practicing social distancing and quarantining. The result of streaming has become the 'staying home entertainment.' So, moving online shouldn't be too difficult... Right? *Wrong!*

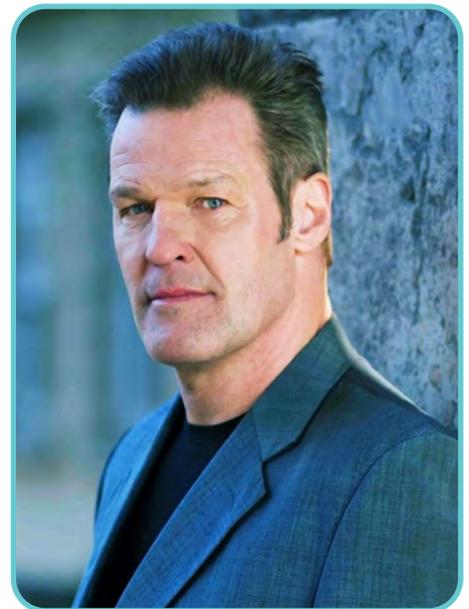
Everyone's business is trying to find a virtual solution. The amount of 'stuff' that we're bombarded with online is immense. So, in taking a festival online, there are several factors to consider.

1. The thing is we are never going to be the way it was. *BAD*
2. Movies are becoming more accessible and watchable on a tablet or phone. *GOOD*
3. Competition for your attention is huge. *BAD*
4. People like to consume at their own pace and under their control.

You can't adapt to the live festival-going experience. Seeing the audience reaction is transformative. But what you can do is compel your potential audiences to engage. Screening a bunch of mp4 or mov. files won't cut it.

### *What filmmakers can do?*

**1. Brush up on your introduction skills.** Directors and crew can make short (under 1 minute) introductions. They are useful for promotional aids



for the festival and give extra interest to the viewer. They work! Make sure you shoot in *landscape*, especially if you shoot on Smartphone. Our audience gave us some great feedback about introductions.

**2. Promotional material.** Adapt your poster and screen grabs to landscape 16:9. An extra tip: make sure the images are clear and the content easy to make out. Look at the composition hard and ask yourself this question... *'If it ends up a thumbnail or preview image, what can the viewer make out if it is 3cm x 2cm?'*

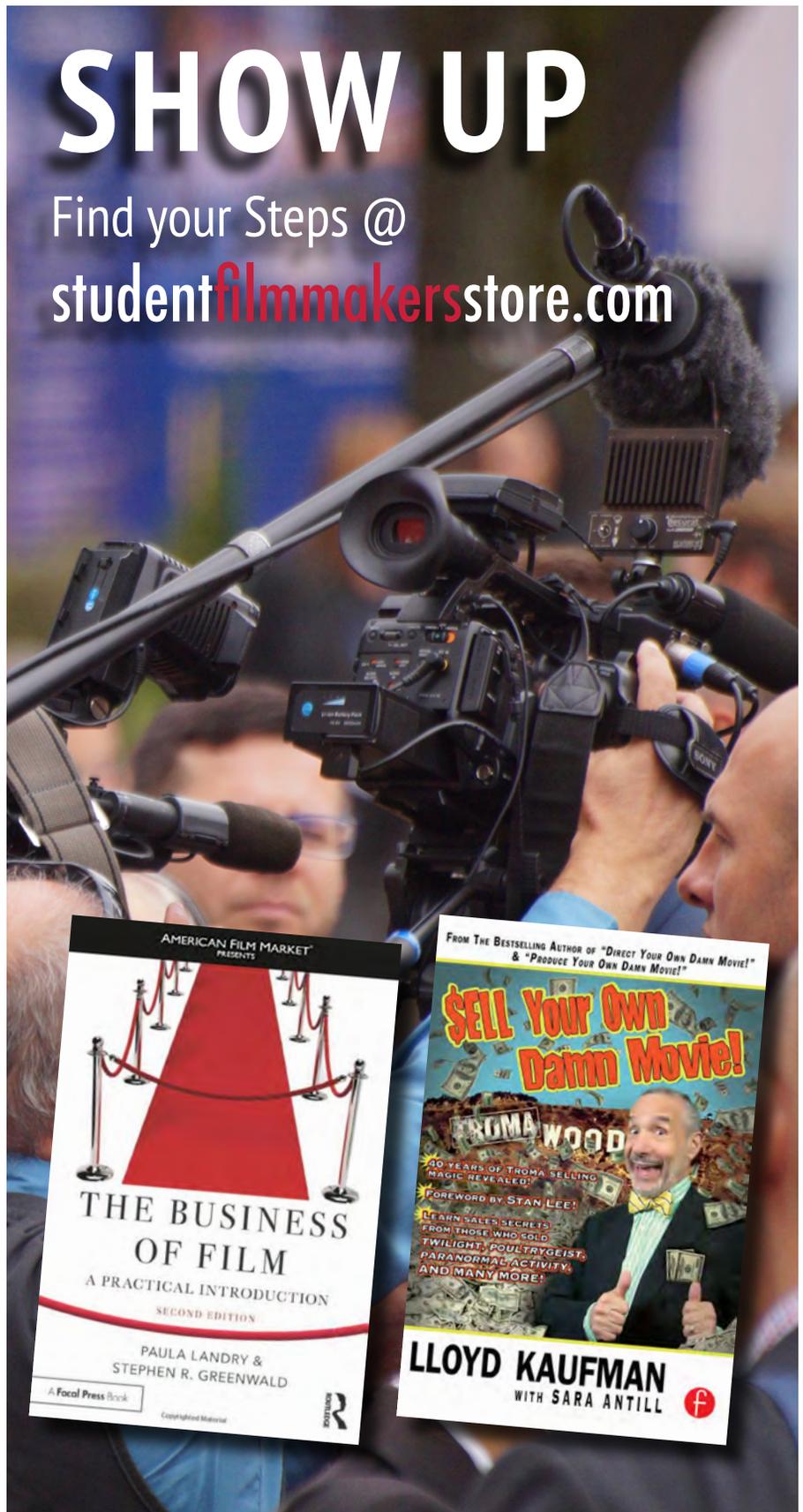
**3. Event Promotion.** You are in it. You are part of it. Use every outlet you have to let your friends, team and audiences know about it. If you are submitting your films to online festivals, then you should engage with

the festivals and your audience. *Network and connect* to the greatest degree possible.

**4. Meetups and Q&As.** Get involved and meet up with other filmmakers. Participate in Q&A's, screenings, and virtual watch parties. If a festival is not running a meet-up or virtual meet-up, find out why. We had some well-attended meetings, as well as one where I sat there on my own drinking and whistling to myself! It happens.

The internet may not be the one and only solution for building a community. However, now is your time to max it out. Also, it is necessary to work on building an event that includes both the audiences and filmmakers. This is something we have worked hard on and tried many angles to see how we can entice audiences to want to be part of something with heart, something special. For me, it is also important to be optimistic and help indie filmmakers find homes for their work.

Anthony Straeger's working career of over 30 years has been forged around his hobbies, from scriptwriting and filmmaking to event organizing and project management. Training as an actor has been a significant help with public speaking, moderating and presenting. Since becoming a Director at Berlin Sci-Fi Filmfest in 2017, filmmaking and film festivals are at the heart of Anthony's working life. The main thing he has learned by being a festival director is, "What You Don't Know Will Hurt You!" Thanks to the knowledge he has gained, his submissions success rate increased from 1 in 20 to 1 in 3. He is author of the book, *An Independent Filmmakers Guide to Preparing and Submitting to Film Festivals*.



# SHOW UP

Find your Steps @  
[studentfilmmakersstore.com](http://studentfilmmakersstore.com)

# Oscar & Emmy Winners are Teachers and Alums

## *Maine Media Workshops + College Expands International Reach with Online Programs*

Interview by Jody Michelle Solis

Wayne Beach is Faculty Chair of the Maine Media Film Program. He is also one of the pros who teach at the school. A screenwriter with a nearly three decade-long career, Wayne has seen his students go on to become writers, directors, producers and show-runners working at the top levels of film and TV. Wayne has written screenplays for Warner Bros., Twentieth Century Fox, Disney, Sony, and other studios and networks.

**StudentFilmmakers:** *Your school has an amazing history.*

**Wayne Beach:** Absolutely. At just one recent Oscar ceremony, Maine Media alums won Best Picture, Best Director, Best Screenplay, and Best Documentary Feature. Our alums include director Alejandro Iñárritu, who won back-to-back Oscars for *Birdman* and *The Revenant*, Michelle MacLaren, who directed *Breaking Bad* and *Game of Thrones*, and Laura Poitras, who won an Oscar for *CitizenFour*, her documentary about Edward Snowden. Our cinematography students have shot films like *Titanic*, *Wolf of Wall Street*, and *Brokeback Mountain*. Four decades ago, the world's first Steadicam classes happened here - taught by the inventor. That's the kind of place this is. Students get a real-world view of how to launch themselves and navigate the industry as professionals. While our students may have won Oscars and Emmys, so have our instructors. And we offer workshops for all levels - from beginners to pros, teens too.

**StudentFilmmakers:** *What are the key important benefits that have set your*



Wayne Beach, Faculty  
Chair, Film Program

*online curriculums apart from other online training and other film schools?*

**Wayne Beach:** Unlike other online classes that allow you to study with masters, ours are held in real time. These instructors know your name, your ambitions, and what level you're at. They meet you where you are. It's a very intimate and focused learning environment. Over the last few months our online students have studied with the directors of *Stranger Things*, *The Sopranos*, *Westworld*, and *Orange is the New Black*, the cinematographers of *Black Panther*, *A Star is Born*, *Game of Thrones*, *Black Swan*, and many others. J.J. Abrams even visited a class.

**StudentFilmmakers:** *How have your online programs evolved over the last 12 months that's important for students to know? How does Maine Media continue to provide students with its cutting-edge learning experience at home with online classes and workshops?*

**Wayne Beach:** Both online and on-campus, we offer an opportunity to engage with pros at close range in classes that are intimate and immersive. In adapting workshops to online models, we brainstormed with instructors and it led to a lot of innovation. In one of our first online directing classes one student, an accomplished writer-producer, wrote to say it was the best film class she ever had. Bear in mind she was saying that about an *online* directing class! When the pandemic hit, we even shipped equipment to students in our 30-week Certificate in Collaborative Filmmaking program. Within two weeks we had them collaborating remotely in making a documentary about the moment we were living through. Within a month we were offering an online intensive with some of the world's greatest cinematographers. Students at all levels were being connected in an international community that allowed them to interact, learn, and network.

**StudentFilmmakers:** *Do any of your accomplished alums come back to teach?*

**Wayne Beach:** Many. Rodrigo Prieto, who shot *The Irishman* and *The Wolf of Wall Street*, and Igor Martinović, who shot *House of Cards*, recently taught workshops for us. Even as they credit Maine Media with helping them become who they are, it's great they come back to pass it on. Luke Lorentzen is another. As a teen, Luke took a summer workshop with us which set him on the path to a career. His 2019 Sundance-winning documentary feature *Midnight Family* was shortlisted for an Oscar nomination. Last year Luke taught a four-week online documentary workshop for us and will be returning to teach later this year.

**StudentFilmmakers:** *What is the best thing that has risen up and flourished from expanding Maine Media Workshops + College's online programs?*

**Wayne Beach:** They've allowed so many new people to engage with Maine Media, and have allowed us to try new things. As some of our most accomplished alums are from Spanish-speaking countries, we started offering some online classes



Allen Coulter teaching Directing Master Class.  
Photo by Tor Rolf Johansen.



Bill Holshevnikoff teaching Location Lighting course.  
Photo by Owen Weaver.

in Spanish. Luis Zerón, an alum of our low-residency MFA program, is now a successful editor for shows on HBO and Netflix. He told us of a demand for well-trained editors who can cut Spanish-language series, so we asked him if he would teach an online editing class, *Editing the Series (Editando las Series)*. He's a great teacher and his students are now getting work in that marketplace. He's also starting to teach editing classes for us in English, including an upcoming series called *Editing for Genre*. Christopher Nelson, who cut *Lost* and *Mad Men*, will also be leading an upcoming workshop.

**StudentFilmmakers:** *Has the online platform inspired different formats?*

**Wayne Beach:** Definitely. While most of our on-campus and online classes are week-long or weekend, we're also doing online ones that are half-day, and others meet over several weeks. Some even provide the option of a continuing mentored experience with the instructor even after the workshop ends. Mentorship is also at the core of our low-residency MFA program. Students work on projects from where they live, consulting with mentors via Zoom or phone, then come to campus for MFA retreats twice a year.

**StudentFilmmakers:** *Looking ahead, what's coming up in the Spring and Summer?*

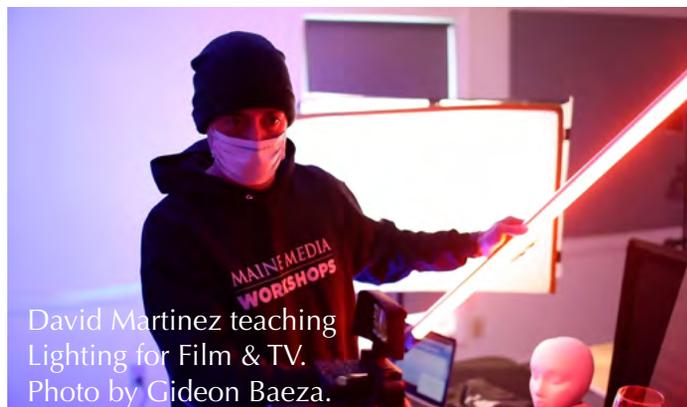
**Wayne Beach:** An eight-week online Film & TV Masters series starts April 22 with an amazing line-up. Instructors include writer/director Paul Schrader, the legendary screenwriter of classics like *Taxi Driver* and *Raging Bull*, cinematographer Alice Brooks who just shot Lin-Manuel Miranda's directorial debut, Lesli Linka Glatter, who's directed everything from *Twin Peaks*

to *The Walking Dead*, Natalie Kingston who's shot features and Billie Eilish's music videos, John Toll who shot *Braveheart*, Kristi Zea, production designer for classics like *Goodfellas* and *Silence of the Lambs*, and Chris Tellefsen who edited *A Quiet Place*. While some classes are a half-day or less, students will also spend a weekend with Steve Yedlin, who shot *Knives Out* and *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*. In addition to other incredible people, there will also be networking events for students. All via Zoom.

We are working toward reopening the campus for in-person workshops sometime this summer – the date will be announced shortly on our website. The campus is in a beautiful spot on the coast of Maine. But even when it reopens, we'll continue to offer online workshops too. People have embraced them so heartily, we can't quit them.

**StudentFilmmakers:** *Can you share some of your insights and inspirational words for students around the world in regard to technology, story, and staying strong?*

**Wayne Beach:** History shows us difficult times often lead to incredible art. Artists help us process emotions that are hard to express any other way. The portability and availability of the technology is helping to democratize opportunities to make almost anyone's visions real. Our iPhone Filmmaking classes have been a big hit, because people are realizing we are all carrying movie studios around in our pockets. Even pros like Steven Soderbergh are shooting movies and TV shows on an iPhone. As difficult as this time has been, expect it to be a very fertile time for creativity. We're going to see some amazing art come out of this time. Careers will be born. Get ready.



David Martinez teaching Lighting for Film & TV.  
Photo by Gideon Baeza.



Students at Maine Media Workshops + College.  
Photo by Tor Rolf Johansen.

# Why You Need to Always Be Creating

By Jared Isham

“Never stop creating. Become great at what you do.”

The idea is motivating and inspiring, yet more often than not – giving up only moments after the goal is declared is what inevitably happens. I’d wager that you are as guilty of this as I am. As filmmakers, we need to get in the habit of *always creating something*. As a photographer, *always take photographs*. As a cinematographer, *always shoot footage*. As a screenwriter, *always write*.

In theory, this isn’t that hard of a practice to get into. The concept is simple with very few steps. You are really just asked to do one thing: *create*.

## Then why do we so frequently stop?

It is like the new year’s resolutions we make to exercise, and by the time February comes around, most people have given up.

Let’s lean into this further. I was doing some back exercises the other day and quickly realized that one muscle was incredibly sore when I was done. This exercise revealed to me a weakness that I had and alerted me as to an area I should focus on when working out.

**This same thing goes towards writing.** I had the hardest time figuring out goals that actually produced

conflict. With the guidance of a writing instructor, I focused on practicing coming up with *conflict-driven goals*. I knew it was an area of struggle, so I would write 50 to 100 different conflict-driven goals every day to train that writing muscle to make it stronger. It worked, and I am much better at coming up with conflict-driven goals in my writing. The word of caution comes in the phrase and in the action: *never stop*. When you stop exercising a muscle, it becomes weak, and you start to lose more and more the strength you had worked to build up. How devastating is it, when you think to yourself, “I got this, I used to train for just this sort of thing,” and then, it doesn’t turn out the way you imagined?

Athletes spend years training to become the best. So do filmmakers. My friend was one of those overnight successes when his film came out and was a hit. It only took him a decade or more of training to have those skills to succeed.

So, the idea might be motivating, but the *practice* is challenging. Work through the struggles and let your *breakthroughs* be part of your motivation to continue. Never stop creating, always be training, and you will see your work improve. You will also feel your *muscles* that you use to *create* build up and get stronger and stronger.

**Jared Isham** (*Bounty*, 2009; *Turn Around Jake*, 2015) is an independent filmmaker and head of motion pictures at Stage Ham Entertainment. He also creates videos focused on helping filmmakers to make better films on a micro-budget.

[www.jaredisham.com](http://www.jaredisham.com)  
[www.stageham.com](http://www.stageham.com)





## Community Spotlight

# Karlina Veras Reid

[networking.studentfilmmakers.com/profile/karlina](https://networking.studentfilmmakers.com/profile/karlina)

went along in the writing and rewriting process, I realised it wasn't working. It was too much. The challenge here being, *who is the story really about?* The solution was to focus on one main character and tell the story through his eyes, let the audience discover the world from his perspective, instead of getting into all three characters at the same time. More times other than not, less is really more.

### 3 Screenwriting Tips

- (#1) **Make sure you write every day**, no matter what. Whether it's on your script, in a different genre, or simply diary entries, it's fundamental to keep the writing muscles working.
- (#2) **Read, read, read.** Read scripts, books, stories, poems, anything, but read. The best way to gain insight, inspiration, find ways to connect to yourself is through reading. Take it in. You can't give what you don't have.
- (#3) **Be willing to take feedback on your work.** However, always listen to your gut, your instinct. Be true to yourself and the idea to the best of your ability. Remember, everyone has an opinion, but only *you* know the story in its purest form. Only you know what it is you want to tell. Stay true to that.

Someone once said to me the following: *Write with an open mind and a humble heart.* To me, this is the base of what being a writer should look like. Be open. Be humble.

[www.karlinaveras.com](http://www.karlinaveras.com)

### Work and Current Projects

Besides writing for the screen, I also write a wide range of poetry and literary fiction in both English and Spanish. At the moment, I am working on a feature film, written both in English and Spanish. Think something like *Captain Phillips*, which I am on the final rewriting process before sending it off to producers. I also have another script which there is a producer already attached to it, and we are on the development stage of this project, which will be in Spanish and shot in the Dominican Republic. On the literary side, I am working on a poetry collection and on the revisions for the English version of my short story collection, *'Yun Yun (pa' la calor)*, which I am to release by the end of this year and/or early next year.

### Writing Challenge and Solution

There are so many to choose from. I guess one good example was when working on a particular script, I initially thought that the story was meant to be told through the eyes of all three main characters, that it was the story of all three. As I



## Community Spotlight

# Zina Melekki

[studentfilmmakers.com/forums/members/zina.26768/#about](https://studentfilmmakers.com/forums/members/zina.26768/#about)

### *Transform Scenes with Music and Connect People with Stories*

*StudentFilmmakers* takes five to chat with Zina Melekki, a music composer we have interacted and conversed with in the Filmmakers Forums Community online ([studentfilmmakers.com/forums](https://studentfilmmakers.com/forums)). Zina is a pianist and film composer originally from Cyprus and now based in London. She studied Music at the University of Surrey, specializing in classical piano and composition. During her career she has collaborated with cellists, pianists and singers, taking part in concerts, recordings, and competitions. Her music combines elements of classical and contemporary music and has been described as cinematic and sentimental with distinct melodies played by piano and strings. Recently, she has written music for animations screened at Aesthetica film festival, short films, art exhibits and music libraries for film and television such as Finger Music.

### **What are some of your thoughts on the relationship between music and moving images?**

**Zina Melekki:** Music can definitely transform a scene and help people connect with a story. No matter where you are from, or what language you speak, you will feel the same emotions as everyone, and that's how powerful

music can be. Moving images can also do the same to a piece, transform a piece and create a story in your head.

### **Do you compose mostly on piano? What is your creative process?**

**Zina Melekki:** I mostly compose on piano as it is my main instrument, but I also love strings. I normally use Cubase Pro for my recordings and sound libraries such as EastWest sounds and Spitfire Audio. My creative process varies. It really depends on what project I am working on. Most of the time, I will start playing something on the piano and build from there. Ideas can come from anywhere - nature, books, relationships - I always try to see everything as inspiration.

### **Can you share with us 3 Important Things you've learned while creating your favorite compositions?**

**Zina Melekki:** I've definitely learned to have patience. You might have a week

full of ideas, but the week after nothing at all, you just need to embrace every idea that comes along and go for it. Of course, good mixing and editing can transform a piece, creating a richer and professional sound. Lastly, you always need to think as a listener and ask yourself if what you have just created is something someone would love to listen to and can understand.

### **What are your new year goals for 2021 as a composer?**

**Zina Melekki:** I am currently working on two albums to be released this year and am excited to share them. I am looking forward to being part of more projects and meeting people, as well as becoming a better composer and musician.

[soundcloud.com/zina-melekki](https://soundcloud.com/zina-melekki)



## Community Spotlight

# Ndum Stanisla

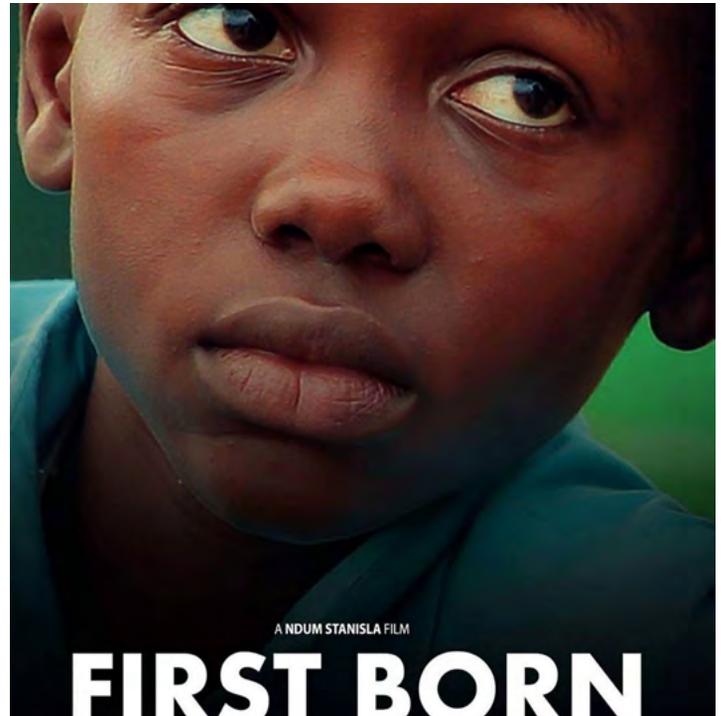
[networking.studentfilmmakers.com/profile/Stanisla](http://networking.studentfilmmakers.com/profile/Stanisla)

### Filmmaking Process

I'm a Cameroonian by nationality. I live and grew up in a society where filmmaking is still a daunting profession to adhere to. Still considered as a field of life where people divert to due to frustration. As such, filmmaking for me is still a great challenge. Considering the fact that to capture and change the mentality of the masses to accept filmmaking as an artistic source of capacity building and emancipation. In a 3rd World society where I find myself, financing a film project is very difficult. At times, practically impossible. In my experience, at the availability of a story (script), most of which I write myself, I will audition and cast individuals who are willing to offer their time and energy for free. Frequently, the characters I have worked with are those I picked as green and trained for the purpose I want them to play. As the producer, I prepare the various technical crew most essential. Because I work on a very low budget, some services are offered by colleagues, friends and family members for free. I go for smaller production gear and reserve the small cash for post-production. From editing to color grading and scoring, my table is set.

### 3 Film Production Tips

With the consolidation experience I have acquired, I will boldly share to the world that, **there is neither right nor comfortable time to produce a film.** Get the story on the board and start working on it. Don't wait for a comfortable time to start your production. **Secondly, you don't need a huge budget to get started.** I have succeeded in very low budget productions. Get a camera, assemble some friends and cast some family members, share the responsibilities amongst them. Shoot something and don't forget to add their names on the end credit lists for acknowledgment. **Lastly, be your first motivator.** Filmmaking is a very daunting process and requires time and energy plus finance. In all these, the most required fuel is passion. Don't go into a production with the expectation of making money. Money and fame are the by-products of your passion being exercised to fulfill a vision.



### "First Born"

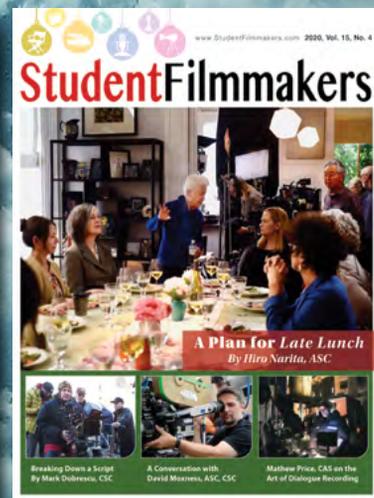
Transformers Network Studios  
 Writer/Producer: Ndum Stanisla  
 Production Asst: Nche Clovis  
 Sound/Boom: Kaleng Wilfred  
 Gaffer: Ralph O.Tambe  
 DP: Giscard Cedrick  
 Editor: Andoh Priestly  
 Scoring/Mixing: Track Zone Records  
 Script Supervisor: Gemnda Emmanuel  
 Director: Ndum Stanisla

Short Film, 27 minutes 28 seconds  
 Production Budget: 1,667 USD  
 Country of Origin: Cameroon  
 Country of Filming: Cameroon  
 Language: English  
 Shooting Format: Digital, 35mm Canon5D mk3  
 Aspect Ratio: 16:9  
 Film Color: Color

# Take Action!

Subscribe to the Best Educational Magazine in the Industry

Start a Career or Move it to the next Level @ **studentfilmmakersstore.com**



## Educating, Innovating and Inspiring

We select and showcase members from our Online Community, the Filmmakers Network, in our magazine. Join our Growing Community of Filmmakers <https://networking.studentfilmmakers.com>