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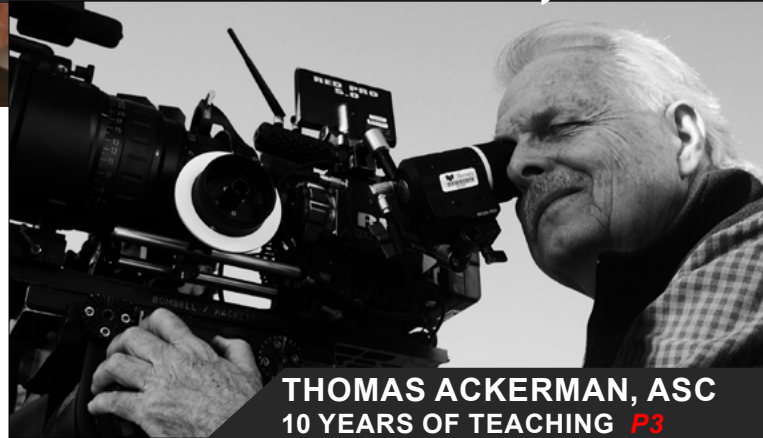
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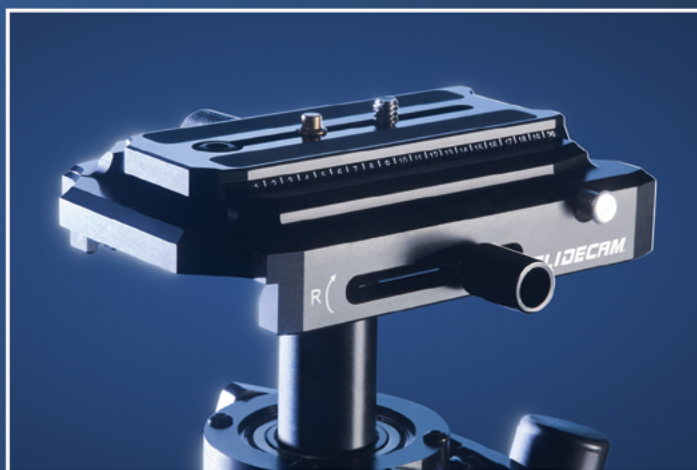
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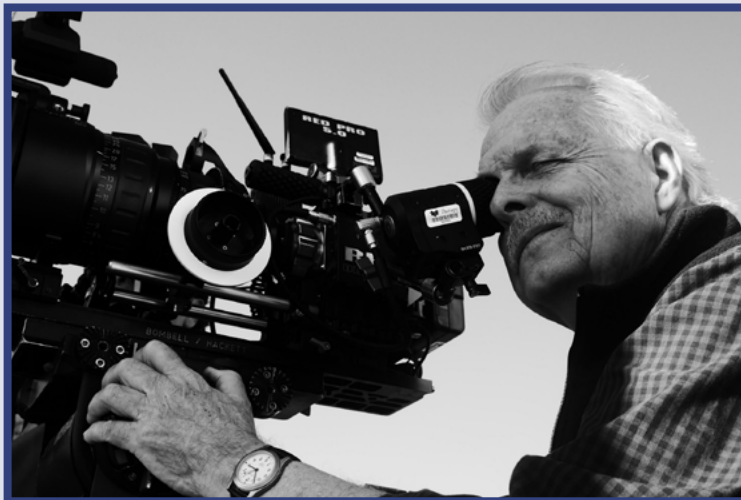
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Observations on 10 Years of Teaching

Includes a short list of things for the cinematographers to carry in their kit.

By Thomas Ackerman, ASC



Driving Interstate 40 to North Carolina in August of 2008 was a stupefying experience, 2,528 miles of tedium as I rarely left the main road. Without the distraction of touristy side trips, there was more than enough time to consider the consequences of my recent decision to teach. Having flirted with academia for a couple of years, mostly "safe haven" events like guest screenings and occasional lectures, I had finally decided to get serious.

In July, Jordan Kerner, who had recently become Dean of Filmmaking at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, alerted me to an opening on the school's cinematography faculty. I subsequently met with the Search Committee via teleconference from the production office of "Mardi Gras", a Screen Gems comedy I was shooting in New Orleans. It went well, and days later they made an offer which I accepted immediately. Forgoing what would have been an unsurprising (and prudent) inspection trip to the campus, I left for California as soon as we wrapped and started packing. My reasoning was simple. If UNCSA met Jordan Kerner's standards, it must surely be a good bet. I had shot "George of the Jungle" and "Snow Dogs" for Jordan and found his integrity beyond reproach.

There was plenty of time to think on the long drive to Winston Salem. I was feeling good about life in general. Even the prospect of spending most of the 10-month school year away from home wasn't daunting. My family was used to long location stays, although, it must be said, with the added perks that accompany location work. They attended the American School in

Rome for a semester. Vancouver became a second home, and there were the two wonderful summers we spent in Chicago shooting movies for John Hughes. London became home for several weeks when I was directing a special venue film that would be the opening attraction at Volkswagen's Autostadt. It was all very nice, but overall there was a tremendous amount of time we as a family would never recover.

This is a factoid I like to bestow on my 4th year students as they approach graduation. Have a talk with your significant other, or if there's no one who fits that description, sit *yourself* down and think about what a career in the motion picture trade means. The interruptions to your life will be significant, probably in direct proportion to your success. This is not a job for the timid, the insecure, or those averse to living out of a suitcase. Or who relish the idea of schlepping out to LAX Sunday night to catch the last flight to Vancouver, having spent roughly 28 hours at home.

If there was a clincher mandating the decision to teach, a smoking gun that closed the deal with never a second thought, it was the fact that I had just completed two teen comedies with plot lines as follows:

Comedy #1 - Two high school football stars eschew summer practice for a chance to attend - wait for it - CHEER CAMP so they can hit on girls.

Comedy #2 - Three college friends drive down to New Orleans for Mardi Gras, hoping to - you'll never guess - MEET GIRLS and, well, just act crazy. One of them meets Carmen Miranda,

and although he's a feckless loser, we believe for roughly 30 seconds that she is attracted to him.

It must be said that I have worked on my share of comedies. Some were average films, some were interesting, and a few turned out exceptionally well. All presented a range of photographic challenge, sometimes out of proportion to their supposedly lightweight narrative. Anyone who thinks it was easy to shoot "Beetlejuice", "Jumanji", or the great road trip movie, "Rat Race," is making an assumption that there's a "one size fits all" look that fits everything in the comedic genre equally well.

For example, shooting the live action original of "Frankenweenie" for Tim Burton was a journey into the vision of a true artist. This 28-minute live action short, intended to accompany one of Disney's animated features, was a body blow to the studio. They totally didn't get it. Its hybrid genre was a shock to the system. What kind of movie was this kid making??? During two weeks of prep and three weeks of production, I had a chance to put Tim's quirky way of seeing the world on film. That project got things going. I "moved up" in the Union (Local 659) to Director of Photography. And rarely looked back. My crew and I, most of us Hollywood newcomers, took an unexpectedly positive step to bigger things.

Students today graduate into a different world. In some ways it is better than the late 70's / early 80's when my friends and I came to town. True, there was an energetic indie market, but it was small in comparison to the major studios who were still adjusting to the impact of television. There were three major

networks and PBS. Period. The movie studios and unions were closed to newcomers. In short, my friends and I had made a grave mistake in coming to Hollywood. Fortunately, we didn't know that when our impossible plans were hatched in Kansas, Iowa, and other outlying provinces where people should know better. When I got out of the Air Force, I had no particular expertise other than shooting training films on electronic warfare, sentry dog veterinary training [be sure to see, without fail, the classic "Sentry Dog Support in Sea" (Southeast Asia)]. Its numeric ID is **TF 6105**. Seriously, don't miss this extraordinary film. It will establish a drastic low water mark for cinematography. And it's all mine. Even though shot in a war zone, with the restrictions that would imply, the project verified that I had no possible future in film.

Then came my first lucky break, shooting for Charles Guggenheim. Winner of 4 Oscars and nominated for 12 Academy Awards, Charles was a tireless taskmaster who was intolerant of anything but hard work and pictures that meant something. By then a lover of cinema verité, Charles insisted on shooting life as it was - but depicting it artfully. This we did with two or three 1 K open face quartz lights. It was often impossible, and although not as excruciating as revisiting one of my Air Force movies, I see so many things now that could have been done better.

*Continued on
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Publisher and Editor

Kim Edward Welch
https://networking.studentfilmmakers.com/profile/Kim_Welch

Editor-in-Chief

Jody Michelle Solis
<https://networking.studentfilmmakers.com/profile/jodymichelle>

Contributing Writers

Thomas Ackerman, ASC, Jack Anderson, David Appleby, John Badham, Christopher Ball, CSC, Karl Bardosh, Kristen Baum, Jeremiah Baumbach, Al Caudullo, Michael Corbett, William Donaruma, Pamela Douglas, Scott Essman, Carl Filoreto, Jon Firestone, Fred Ginsburg, CAS, Ph.D., MBKS, Dean Goldberg, Charles Haine, John Hart, Jared Isham, David Kaminski, Michael Karp, SOC, Carole Kirschner, John Klein, David Landau, Neil Landau, Daniel LeBlanc, Matt Lott, Monty Hayes McMillan, M. David Mullen, ASC, Steve Myers, Gleb Osatinski, Snehal Patel, Howard A. Phillips, Ryan Pickett, Theresa Meeker Pickett, Patrick Reis, Gabriel Garcia Rosa, Peter John Ross, Dr. Linda Seger, Sherri Sheridan, Michael Skolnik, Pamela Jaye Smith, Scott Spears, Shane Stanley, Peter Stein, ASC, Mike Valentine, BSC, Saro Varjabedian, William F. Vartorella, Ph.D., C.B.C., Bart Weiss, David Worth, Dean Yamada

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StudentFilmmakers Magazine Announces Must-Visit Booths @ 2019 NAB Show, Las Vegas



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A CONVERSATION WITH TOM HOUGHTON, ASC



Tom Houghton, ASC shares his insights and talks about working on the set of CBS Studio's "Elementary."

Interview conducted by Jody Michelle Solis

Tom Houghton, ASC is an Emmy nominated director of photography ("Rescue Me," 2008), whose body of work includes the episodic television series, "American Horror Story: Coven," starring Angela Bassett, Jessica Lang and Kathy Bates, "Love Monkey," starring Tom Cavanagh, "Canterbury's Law," starring Julianna Margulies, and "30 Rock," starring Tina Fey and Alec Baldwin. His feature film work includes "They Came Together," starring Amy Poehler and Paul Rudd and directed by David Wain, and "Finding Amanda," written and directed by "Rescue Me" co-creator Peter Tolan and starring Matthew Broderick, Brittany Snow, Maura Tierney and Steve Coogan. Houghton's other DP feature work includes "Fire Down Below" starring Steven Seagal, Marg Helgenberger, Stephen Lange,

Kris Kristofferson and Harry Dean Stanton, directed by Félix Enríquez Alcalá; "The Cookout," starring Danny Glover, Meagan Good, Jenifer Lewis, JaRule and Queen Latifah; and "State Property 2," directed by Damon Dash, starring Beanie Siegel, Young Gunz, Freeway and Noreaga. Houghton's second unit and F/X unit DP work includes "Spider-Man," "Spider-Man 2," "Godsend," starring Robert De Niro, "STAY," "Stuart Little 2," "Deeds," and "Path to War," directed by John Frankenheimer. Houghton has photographed a number of independent features and shorts including "By Courier," directed by Peter Riegert, which was nominated for an Academy Award®, and "Jazz Night," directed by Wallis Nicita, starring Beverly D'Angelo and John Heard, which was presented as part of Lifetime Television's Third Annual Women's Film Festival.

In this exclusive Q&A with StudentFilmmakers Magazine, Tom Houghton, ASC shares his insights and talks about working on the set of CBS Studio's "Elementary."

STUDENTFILMMAKERS MAGAZINE: What do you enjoy the most about your work?

TOM HOUGHTON, ASC: I enjoy being with good, hardworking creative people. I also enjoy the process of breaking down a script and figuring out how to execute and light/shoot a scene. The planning you do in prep and with the crew is very important for bigger complicated scenes.

STUDENTFILMMAKERS MAGAZINE: How do you see technology affecting workflows?

TOM HOUGHTON, ASC: Technology is always changing. Film stocks and lights change, and these days with digital, the cameras are varied as can be. Now LED lights are changing some of our approaches to lighting, but good dramatic lighting will always be good lighting.

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Pictured above: Tom Houghton, ASC. "American Horror Story-Coven" stage.

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STUDENTFILMMAKERS MAGAZINE:
What do you like about lighting "Elementary"?

TOM HOUGHTON, ASC:

We have a beautiful brownstone set which is based on a real building in Harlem: In the story, Sherlock and Watson - Lucy Liu and Jonny Lee Miller - live in this older brownstone in Harlem. Coincidentally, I also live in a Harlem brownstone. It's a well-made set and it has evolved over the seasons to be more friendly to shooting: Now walls can open up and go away, and lights can float in and out, which means it can be set up faster than real locations, which are often cumbersome, tricky, or delicate. I also enjoy having the opportunity to watch a rehearsal, since it's the actor's rehearsal, which indicates to me the best way to light a scene. Right after we have a marking rehearsal, then it's my turn to work out a lighting and camera plan to shoot what the director had in mind. At that point, it goes rather quickly, since we've been there before. Still, every scene is different, so while you may approach it with similar ideas, the blocking will change how you choreograph the lights and camera. The other part of doing a TV show is the schedule, and you don't have the time or the ability or the privilege of going back another day if the weather's not right. You have to carefully plan how you're going to prepare a location with lights and rigging; I have the good fortune to have a great rigging crew. We plan the basic rigging and basic lights, which will be set up before I get there on the day of the shoot. It's something you don't get on some projects, but we're able to do it since it creates efficiency on the shoot days. Also, with technology like LED lights we're finding ways to use them cleverly and subtly, putting them places that we couldn't put larger lights before.

STUDENTFILMMAKERS MAGAZINE:
Can you tell us about the cameras that you're shooting with and your camera workflow?

TOM HOUGHTON, ASC:

We use Alexas, basically zoom lenses, a variety of Angenieux zoom lenses and the occasional prime lens. The workflow is on cards, it's 2k, and it goes out for dailies, to post, and then I come back and do a color correction review from New York with our colorist, Tony D'Amore, who is at Encore Hollywood.

STUDENTFILMMAKERS MAGAZINE: Additional thoughts about "Elementary"?

TOM HOUGHTON, ASC:

Well, it's interesting to just take every day as a fresh start. My idea is to keep things as simple as possible, because the more stuff you mess with, the longer it takes. Too much embroidery can get you into trouble. You have to realize that shots are being cut together, and the idea is to use the best parts of the shots, if that's in agreement with the director and the editor. Hopefully, you're all on the same page. So, I discuss the meat of the shot and the moves with the director, and I might say, let's concentrate on this because we know there will be coverage. We tend not to overshoot: This show is not cutty, so we don't do a lot of coverage. We get the essential coverage, and we move on. Our viewers like to watch the actors act.

STUDENTFILMMAKERS MAGAZINE:
If you could share your insights or a piece of advice with aspiring filmmakers around the world, what would it be?

TOM HOUGHTON, ASC:

I would say, shoot as much as you can, and pick your best material to show people, since you only get one chance to make a first impression.



You also can't make excuses for something that was out of your control because that becomes a negative force in a presentation.

It's simple to make a reel of pretty shots, but I would strive to cut dialogue scenes together because people need to see your storytelling ability. So, as soon as you can get some story and dialogue onto your reel do it. You'll get a good response to it.

Pictured: Tom Houghton, ASC on the set of "Elementary". Photos by Elizabeth Fisher.

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The Master Scene Method

With an example using the short sci-fi film, "Skimmers".

By John Klein

Shot on the Red Epic, "Skimmers" is a short sci-fi film about the black market that emerges for selling fresh water during a catastrophic drought. Pictured: DP Greg Boris, 1st AC Andrea Kinnerk, sound mixer Adam Carl, and actors James Dolbeare and Greg Hardigan. Photos by John Klein.

One of the most common ways of shooting a scene is what's called the master scene method. The basic premise is that the first thing you'll shoot of a scene is usually a wide shot – the "master shot" – that encompasses all the dialogue and action in the sequence, and then go in for "coverage" – how we refer to two-shots, close-ups, inserts, and other pieces of the sequence. The idea is that, even if you ran out of time on the day, you've at least started with a shot that covers the whole scene, and thus you'll have a movie at the end of the day.

The practice is very commonly used in television, especially in scenes with multiple characters where a character may only have a couple of lines in a long scene, and thus their coverage could be a very brief close-up with a reaction shot and their delivered lines while the bulk of the coverage is devoted to the main characters. A good example of this would be this scene from a short sci-fi film I directed called Skimmers:

In this, you can basically see how the whole scene could be edited for rhythm and pace, but the bulk of the scene's important beats can be witnessed from the master shot and close-ups, and the rest is really just gravy on the storytelling pie. When shooting this scene, we shot the master shot first, then each shot of Derron (in the chair) on the same axis, going in progressively closer, then the two-shot, then the close-ups of Asher and West on the other side, then the inserts last since we had covered the rest of the scene. And as we only had a few hours to shoot the entire 4.5-page scene, we only got one or two takes of every shot, so we had to make them count!



Frame grabs and stills:
 "Skimmers" Master Shot
 "Skimmers" Two Shot
 "Skimmers" Medium Shot I
 "Skimmers" Medium Shot II
 "Skimmers" MCU West
 "Skimmers" Close-up I
 "Skimmers" Close-up II
 "Skimmers" Insert I
 "Skimmers" Insert II

The great thing about this is that it's not just something that's useful on narrative sets, but in documentary and promotional work as well. Typically, when I'm shooting b-roll on a video to drop in during an interview edit, I'll structure the way I shoot that b-roll very much like a traditional scene. Say it's a family eating dinner. I'll grab a wide shot, then make sure to grab close-ups of each person at the table – always taking care to obey rules of continuity like the 180-degree rule and the 20% rule, which keeps the possibility of jump cuts to a minimum – and inserts of their plates, maybe a shot of the dog sitting on the floor, or any artsy shots of reflections or framings within frames like doors or windows.

With b-roll, it's not imperative that the actions match with each take, so all you're really doing is giving the editor tools to construct a sort of scene that will match a sound bite from the interview and giving it a more cinematic flair.

It's certainly not the only way to shoot a scene, and there are times when it can feel rote, like putting together a puzzle you've already made several times before. But for capturing the best takes of performances, for ensuring that you've got the scene covered, and for enabling your editor to cut for rhythm and tone (and foul-ups!) rather than hoping that one really worked, the master scene method – both in narrative and in documentary film – can be a great tool.

Watch the Short Sci-Fi Film, "Skimmers"

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A CONVERSATION WITH JAMES CHRESSANTHIS, ASC, GSC

*Pictured: James Chressanthis, ASC, GSC behind the camera on Oprah Winfrey's Greenleaf.
Camera: Red Weapon Helium 8K, Cooke i5 lenses.*

Interview conducted by Jody Michelle Solis

James Chressanthis, ASC, GSC, is a filmmaker who has earned a diverse range of over fifty credits since the early 1990s, including studio motion pictures, independent features, television movies episodic drama series and documentaries. His cinematography has been nominated for an Emmy® twice: "Four Minutes", Roger Bannister's quest to break the four-minute mile barrier and the acclaimed mini-series, "Life with Judy Garland: Me and My Shadows". He also shot critical additional 1st Unit photography on the Oscar®-winning, "Chicago". He directed the feature documentary "No Subtitles Necessary: Laszlo & Vilmos" which premiered at Cannes and earned him a third Emmy nomination. Other notable credits include thriller "Urban Legend", the controversial mini-series, "The Reagans", "3: The Dale Earnhardt Story", "The Music Man", "Eloise at the Plaza" and "Eloise at Christmastime" with Julie Andrews, "Judas Kiss" and "Brian's Song". Recent credits include Oprah Winfrey's "Greenleaf", "GONE" with Chris Noth and "The Family" with Joan Allen. He is currently preparing a Chinese language thriller set in Thailand, "The Fourth Lane."

StudentFilmmakers Magazine catches up with James Chressanthis, ASC, GSC for an exclusive Q&A as he's working on a new feature project

in Thailand. Chressanthis shares with us his insights and talks about filmmaking in Thailand. He also shares his thoughts on evolving technologies and new distribution channels.

STUDENTFILMMAKERS MAGAZINE:

Can you tell us about your current project that you're working on right now?

JAMES CHRESSANTHIS,

ASC, GSC: It's interesting, it's a Chinese language feature set in Thailand which has become a major production center in Asia because the country possesses such high-quality filmmakers. I've worked here before on a miniseries of Jules Verne's "Mysterious Island" with Patrick Stewart and Kyle MacLachlan. I actually recommended the production company, Living Films ("The Hangover"), and I love working with the crews here.

STUDENTFILMMAKERS MAGAZINE:

What are some of your insights and advice for new filmmakers navigating things like shooting in a foreign country, for example?

JAMES CHRESSANTHIS,

ASC, GSC: I think they will find that filmmakers are very similar everywhere. We speak a common language, it's called cinema.

So, everyone has the same basic visual grammar. It's very interesting, even though you're talking to people who speak a different language and come from a different culture, we have the movies in common. And so, you can communicate in terms of images and shots and other movies, of course.

I think you have to be more patient. Since you are communicating to people whose first language is not English, you're actually more thoughtful about your words. And movies are made with words. If you're doing a film by yourself, a documentary, you're communicating internally. But as a cinematographer on a dramatic movie set, you have to communicate to ten, twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty different people, so words in any language are very important.

Economy and accuracy of expression is very critical. Most film crews around the world, speak a little bit of English, movie English. So, when I work in Thailand, I will be able to speak a simple hybrid of Thai and English when I'm directing camera or lighting on the set. It's fun because my verbal mistakes are memorable for everyone and the crew corrects my grammar!

They say, "Action," and, "Cut". When I was in Thailand twelve years ago, I heard the A. D. talking over the radio in Thai, and at the end of his communication to all of his people, he said, "Abby Singer up."

The Abby Singer was up, the next to last shot, and I told him that I had known Abby Singer and talked with him in Hollywood, and he jumped back on the radio and told the whole crew, who were all astonished and delighted to know this was a real person who had invented the term.

STUDENTFILMMAKERS MAGAZINE:

In relation to the importance of communication and working on sets where people might speak different languages or multiple languages, how important is previsualization and the use of storyboards?

JAMES CHRESSANTHIS,

ASC, GSC: Well, previsualization and storyboards are not the same thing. You can previsualize by doing shot lists and sketching, and you can go all the way to doing detailed hand-made storyboards or use Previz programs. It's whatever's appropriate for that particular story, that particular movie, the particular scene, and the particular people involved. Some directors love working with storyboards, others like to work with shot lists. Personally, I'm agnostic, I do whatever the director would like. I do recommend storyboards in complicated action or stunt scenes, and in difficult visual effects sequences. Other kinds of storyboards are more conceptual, more about the look of the movie rather than specific shot sequences; think H.R. Giger's original concept art for Ridley Scott's "Alien."

We tend not to storyboard a simple dramatic scene between two actors. But what I will suggest, while we're prepping, is that we previsualize it. I ask the director, "What are you thinking about in this scene?" "What's your staging?" She says, "Well, we'll stage it on this part of the room here." "Great, but can we not walk all the way into that corner because there's nothing very visual back there, or here is a better angle by the window", etc., There could be a hundred reasons for modifying the shot. It's a lengthy, detailed collaboration in prep continuing into the shooting.

Now the actors come on set, and of course they have ideas, and they may do something that is completely different than what the director or cinematographer envisioned. And you adjust to it. You watch the rehearsal. So, everything you're doing in prep is just a blueprint. When you're actually building the scene with the actors, you think, "That doesn't work, we're going to change what camera is doing." You may see a completely new composition, camera movement or change your lighting, inspired by the actors.



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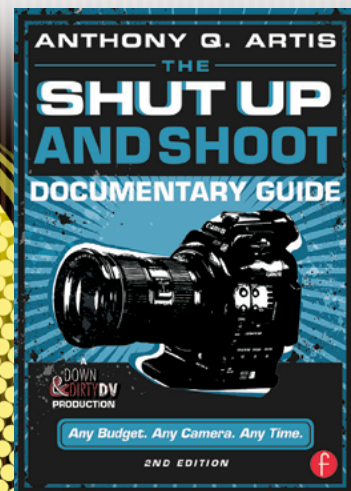
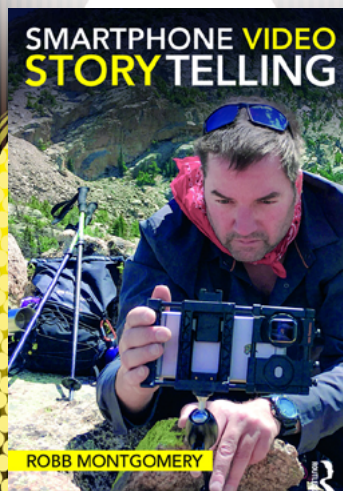
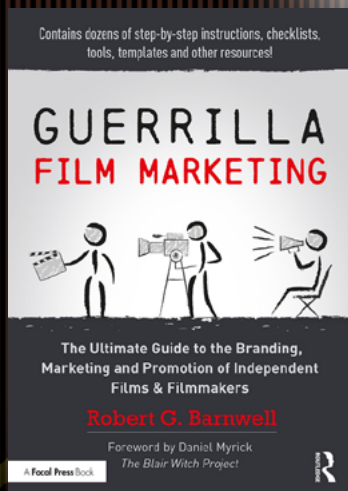
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Some people think storyboards are just making pictures of what you're going to photograph. That is a simplistic idea. It's a broader idea of creating what's in your mind's eye, what the sequence is going to be, emotionally, and you have many ways of accomplishing that, not just strictly storyboards. In a movie you're not just making pictures of actors and things. You are photographing the subtext of the story. What is the story about? What is the point of the scene? What is the emotional balance of the scene? What's the goal of the characters in the scene? Whose scene is it? Or within the scene, does the power and the dynamics of who's controlling the scene or pushing the scene or driving the scene – does that change? These are all questions that affect choices for use of the camera which you and the director should discuss and previsualize.

As I said earlier storyboards and Previz programs can be a useful starting point for developing the style of the film or individual sequences. When I did the film, "Four Minutes," which was about Roger Bannister breaking the four-minute mile, we had seven races that spanned his running career and a big training sequence. So, eight different running sequences. We did storyboard all those sequences in detail. As we worked with the storyboard artist, I would do some crude sketching, and Charles Beeson, the director, would do some sketches. The storyboard artist had much better skills than us, and we'd refine the style of each running sequence. The first one was rough and tumble, because Roger was a freshman, he was being bumped around by other runners and pushed around. It was not an elegant race and he didn't do well. Then, as he progressed, the style and movement of the camera changed and became more sophisticated and

added more nuances. And then, after all his effort and work for years, when he came to the final race, where he breaks the four-minute mile record. We storyboarded every shot of that race that was in the movie. We noted all the long shots, big production shots (to see how many extras we needed), closeups of every character inside the race or watching it, details of Roger and the other runners, the pack, feet, legs, arms, faces, POV's and slow motion shots, his foot touching the finish line.

We printed those storyboards on big sheets of paper and fixed them to 4 x 8-foot sheets of foam core, and we stood those up at the back of the stadium on C stands. The camera operators – on that big day, we had multiple cameras, seven cameras rolling on that last day. With a big, red Sharpie, we marked the storyboards for each camera operator. A, B, C, D, etc. Here are the shots you have to accomplish and why. What's happening in that shot. And then, the camera operators had the instructions that when you don't have that shot – he's running around the track four times – then, here's your plan B secondary shots. You get a shot of the official holding the stopwatch. You go over and get the family watching from the stands, other characters watching and reacting and so forth. And then, when the runners come around again, here's your primary shot. That's where the storyboards are really helpful. It's an action sequence. The operators can see what they have to get. On the storyboards, it even suggested what focal length of lens to use – this is a 50mm or a 200, this is a 400mm. So that's a very practical way to use the boards. We had to be efficient because real actors and runners can only do so many takes before exhaustion set in.

But then again, in developing the storyboards, we developed the emotional story of Roger breaking the four-minute mile. So, it's not just a technical exercise of what the shots are in the sequences.



STUDENTFILMMAKERS MAGAZINE: What are some other differences between filming in the States versus Thailand, and the differences in film industries?

JAMES CHRESSANTHIS, ASC, GSC: Not a lot of difference. I would take my Thai crew, the top Thai production designers, the top key grips, gaffers, camera assistants, camera operators – they could work in the United States at our level, the top ones. There are some international class filmmakers here. It's the same in the United States, not everyone is international class, right? There's a hierarchy. But the reason Thailand is a production center in Asia is they've developed a very, very, high expertise. Remember, Western companies, European and American filmmakers have been going there for a very long time. "The Deer Hunter" – Thailand, "The Killing Fields" – Thailand, "Good Morning, Vietnam" with Robin Williams – Thailand. Many Vietnam war films – Thailand. I think Sylvester Stallone and his Rambo films and many action films – Thailand. So, those films developed the infrastructure of people there.

The assistant director I work with here was Vilmos Zsigmond's translator on "The Deer Hunter" and he became the top A. D. in Thailand. My A camera operator, he was my camera assistant years ago and now he's a top DP-Operator – he'll be working with me. He worked on "Good Morning, Vietnam" as a camera assistant. So, you learn a lot. We teach each other. A cinematographer goes to another country, you teach the local talent your tricks, and also, you learn from how they do things. I learned a lot from my Thai gaffer and my Thai key grip when I was here last time.

There are not really any great differences in how we do it. The Thai, in terms of camera, use more of an American style DP, and the DP is the director of photography not the English style, where it's an operator

and a lighting cameraman. In the American approach the director of photography is really in charge of all the photography, every aspect and supervises his operators and assists his crew in service of the director's vision.

The reason the Chinese production company is producing this movie in Thailand is the lack of enough top cinema talent in China. China is over a billion people, and they have great filmmakers, but they have a very thin the level of top feature filmmakers. Obviously, they have very, top people, but they don't have the depth of the country of Thailand which is kind of surprising. The company I'm working with here got a call today from another Chinese company looking to produce a feature film in Thailand. I asked the Chinese producers about this. They are wonderful by the way, young and energetic, I realize they are learning from myself and from the Thai crew and the Thai producers. Another thing about the Thai crews is they are bigger twice as many grips and electricians and extra camera assistants. There is a cultural difference, I would say a Buddhist influence, that puts emphasis on sharing the workload and not wearing people out because there is too much to do.

Something we take for granted here in the States is the methodology of how we run a set and how we plan a production – how we prepare, how we organize the script, how we schedule it and break it down. Those are things that have been developed over a hundred years, and those are really important skills, and it works. The reason America is still the top filmmaking country in the world is we've developed these methodologies of how to make a film. It's very interesting. So, my advice to young filmmakers in the United States or anywhere is, look how professionals do it. Don't try to completely reinvent the wheel. Keep your invention to your stories and how you visualize and tell stories. But in terms of production methods, production management, and how you organize a production, look at how it's been done professionally for a hundred years and what works.

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The technologies change, but really, the work on a film set, for me hasn't changed in thirty years. We still do it the same way. We may do certain parts of it quicker, and other parts of it maybe even slower, because of digital. Essentially, the process of writing, preparing, and breaking down a script and doing pre-production hasn't changed.

STUDENTFILMMAKERS MAGAZINE:

How do you see new and evolving technologies affecting and changing workflows?

JAMES CHRESSANTHIS,

ASC, GSC: I think we shoot even faster today. There's a misconception that film is slower than digital. They're very similar. Certain digital productions are slower because they shoot too much. Because you have the ability to do endless long takes. That actually slows down production, not speed it up. Shooting 'too many' takes too long can wear people out. So, there's disadvantages to digital.

I find that digital productions that are successful are shot in the same way that film productions have been shot. I think what's helpful is that it's really nice – you shoot a 4K show and you can see a fantastic monitor with a very beautiful rendition of your work.

You know how I save time? When I shot film, we had to watch dailies. We had to check and make sure you had what you had. So, I tend not to look at dailies in such detail anymore. I look at dailies very briefly and especially I look at daily full resolution stills.

Because I've seen it on set all day, I don't need to sit there for hours again at night.

However, I will review dailies if I need to match something, or a sequence is incomplete, and we need to look how something was done. And that technology of having access to your dailies on a retina display iPad that I use is really a pleasure. Also looking at editorial cuts or online assemblies of the cut at very high quality to prepare for color correction is helpful.

I have a new program that I'm using for the first time called Scriptation for script supervisors, but anyone can use it. I can take a PDF of my script, and on the iPad, I can write on it, I can draw on it, import photos, location stills. I can add pages, and I can add storyboards. And it preserves and transfers my notes into the next version of the script. It's paperless, of course. So, all the things we used to do on paper – the notebook would become very big and cumbersome with all this reference material and pictures and what not – we can now paste files into the script digitally. I'm able to use this all connected to the cloud.

I was riding in a van in Thailand, and importing from the cloud into my script pictures I had taken on my iPhone. We had a script meeting that night after the scout at dinner. We're in a primitive place up by the Cambodian border in the middle of nowhere at the end of the earth eating wonderful food. It's raining, and we are under a big thatched pavilion, but it has wi-fi & internet. I'm sitting there with the director and producer, the designer,

and as we're going through the script, I spun the iPad around to show the director the sequence with the storyboard photos I shot on locations that afternoon. And I imported them directly into the script from my iPhone.

Obviously, the 'cameras' get better and better and better. That's important. I've shot two 8k cameras, the Panavision DXL and the RED HELIUM, and I've really fallen in love with large format shooting, and it's very, very, exciting what we're able to do.

STUDENTFILMMAKERS MAGAZINE:

What are your thoughts on distribution channels like Netflix and Amazon?

JAMES CHRESSANTHIS,

ASC, GSC: I love the competition. I'm still really surprised that the old networks are still stodgy in their creative choices, and they seem to be ceding most of the creative, innovative material to Netflix and Amazon, etc. The only bone I have to pick with Netflix, well two bones. One, as an independent filmmaker, Netflix are kind of the anti-Christ. Because you may have an independent documentary, they put it on Netflix for a few months, and then, they take it off. They run advertising about your film without showing it. Netflix's marketing, and especially what they're paying indie filmmakers, is really appalling. Some things never change in Hollywood!

But the other thing with Netflix is that they have had this stupid policy that everything they acquire had to be 4K or if it was not 4K, they paid less for the movie or program. The ARRI Alexa was 3.2 and 3.4K, not quite 4K. But, the camera itself technically was better than the RED, better than the Sony, better than the so-called 4K cameras because ARRI had more latitude, better color rendition, and a more organic pleasing representation of faces. All you had to do was see it blown up on the screen, and you could see that camera is better. But, Netflix banned the Alexa. And really, it's caused a lot of havoc because some lawyers used that number. We carry in our pockets 4K phone cameras. So according to their logic, your 4K phone is better than an ARRI Alexa. And that really caused a lot of upset. We had to jump through hoops, change formats, change to camera systems we didn't want to shoot. That's a kind of autocratic, corporate short-sightedness.

In spring 2016 at the ASC, we had a meeting of the International Cinematography Summit, that brought in the creative executives that run Amazon. They were very interesting. We asked that same question. Do have a format rule, that you have to shoot 4K or shoot this or shoot that? And you know what they said?

"We don't want to decide that. The filmmakers should decide that. You can shoot on anything you want. If your film's in Super 8 or 16mm or videotape, or you want to shoot it on phones, that's up to you. It's up to the creators to create, not a lawyer to tell you what to do."

So that's been the burn – Netflix has got to change that. The ARRI Alexa Mini camera which shoots up to 3.4K is a fantastic camera. The Oscar winning "Blade Runner 2049" was shot on that camera. But it's not good enough for Netflix. It's maddening.

On the other side, the money they're injecting into content creation – Netflix, Amazon, Hulu, YouTube, now Apple— Apple's going to become a gigantic player. They're building that big studio down there on Jefferson Blvd. There's a new studio in LA, it's a huge place. I imagine it's going to be a state-of-the-art virtual studio. I think that's very, very healthy development.

STUDENTFILMMAKERS MAGAZINE:

If you could give one more special piece of advice for aspiring filmmakers around the world, what would it be?

JAMES CHRESSANTHIS,

ASC, GSC: Gee, I don't know, that's a toughie. About a hundred different things.

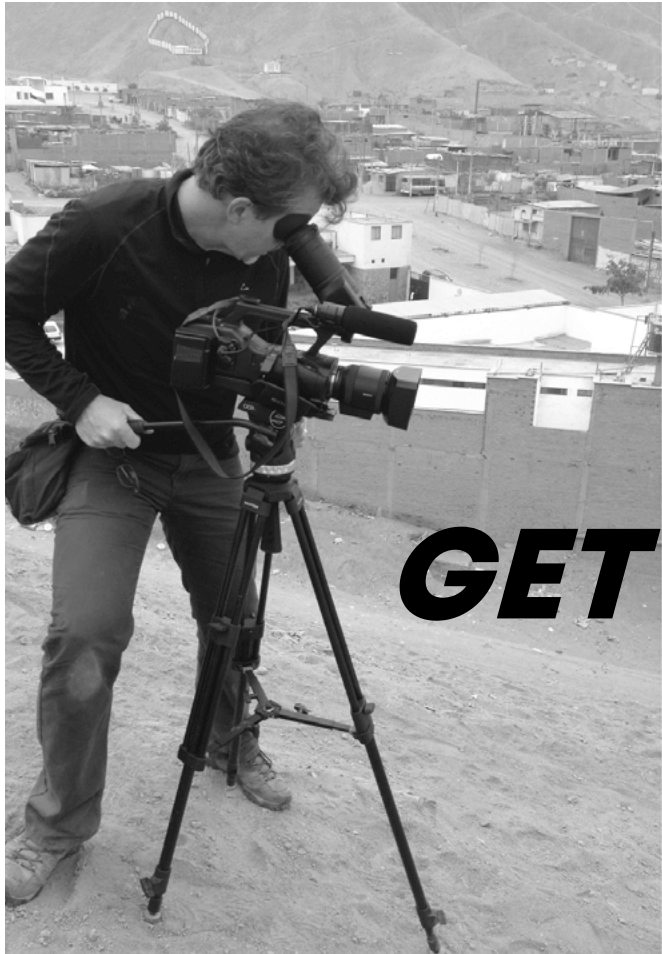
I'll pass on what Alan Pakula, the great director of "All the President's Men" and "Sophie's Choice" said: "Change your shoes and socks at lunch, because you're on your feet all day and you're going to get tired." And he also said, "Try and take a nap."

But all kidding aside, we are really lucky to work in film. When things are tough, I often say to the crew: "You know, they pay us to do this, don't tell anyone."

So, it is a real gift and as you become accomplished, keep your eye on the prize. Don't forget why you're making films. The films you make come out of your life, your life experiences. You shouldn't be making films about film. You should be making films that derive from what you have lived. I think that's an important thing and its part of the greater gift of bringing entertainment and insight to people. All people need stories, people need inspiration, people need to learn about how other people live and how other people deal with conflict and challenges. I think we're very lucky to be doing this. So even when things are tough or you're unemployed or something – this is really beautiful work to do.

Pictured above: James Chressanthis, ASC, GSC in his studio, Topanga Canyon, California. When not shooting movies and television, James creates and exhibits mixed media photographic works.

Documentary Filmmaking



GET CLOSE

By Rustin Thompson

There is a kind of meditative awareness that takes over when I'm shooting close to my subjects, much like that of the skier or climber who focuses only on the physical elements right in front of them. The subject or character guides my eye, and my eye communicates with my hands, which then manage the camera's iris, shutter speed, zoom, and audio level. I'm always dealing with matters of exposure and composition and focus, but also with how my subject is responding to my presence. I'm deeply aware of them as a human being, and truly grateful they've allowed me to be this close to them so I can bring their story to a viewer, to make a connection.

This is the "juice" of documentary filmmaking, this closeness to your fellow human, which dissolves borders of class, race, and language, at least temporarily. I don't want to suggest this breaking down of barriers is permanent. You probably won't become longtime friends with your subjects, nor will the divides of class and race magically melt away forever, but for the brief time of your shoot you will be communicating almost nonverbally. The experience can be profound. Getting close has become my way of looking at the world, my philosophy of visual thinking.

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Before shooting my first independent documentary during the WTO protests, I was nonpolitical and disengaged with current events. I knew the basics of what was going on in the world, but I never went beyond the superficial, never investigated the nuances. But just one week in the streets, within a few feet of protesters and police, talking to them or capturing fly-on-the-wall sound, and then studying the issues in the evening, trying to catch up with what so many of these idealistic demonstrators already knew, changed me forever. Getting close to their passion ignited my curiosity. It taught me a new way of engaging with the world. It made me want to make films, both docs and short films for non-profit organizations.

Making these films introduces us to people who often come from different countries, circumstances, or lifestyles. They may be struggling with poverty or homelessness; they may be survivors of violence or learning to adjust to a change in their health; they may be targets of discrimination or exploitation. Often, they are activists and humanitarians rebelling against the label of victim, in turn forcing us to reevaluate our own privileges. Even after 20 years of doing this work, I am thankful for and honored by the opportunity to get close to their lives, if just for an hour or two.

Students and friends have asked me many times which I enjoy most, shooting or editing. I always think the answer will be editing, because that is where you turn raw material into stories, where the real creative process begins. But I think the two processes are linked. I'm energized by the characters I meet while shooting, by the reciprocal nature of our brief intimacy, by realizing that even though this situation is not new for me, it is quite possibly very new for them. This knowledge impels me to be alert and conscientious. The visuals acquire an innate energy, a role in the sequences I will construct later in editing. In that way, shooting and editing for me are inseparable.

To get physically close, the first thing I do is get rid of obstacles in my way. I ditch the lights, the light stands, the flags, the reflectors, the slate, the boom microphone, the additional viewing monitor, the extension cords, the soundperson, the director (you are the director!), the unpaid intern, and, if I truly don't need it, the tripod. I attach everything I need to the camera, or carry extra gear in a waistbelt or knapsack. This helps me to get intimate, dynamic footage, and greatly reduces the expenses and logistical hassles other crews or video-production studios often feel they need. I can work alone and still capture exciting images and quality sound.

Get Close: Lean Team Documentary Filmmaking by Rustin Thompson.
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...Continued from Page 3

This brings us to the "what if" scenario that was sure to confront me in lining up film work after my Air Force discharge. The most likely choice would have been shooting fire department training films for Film Communicators in North Hollywood. It's not a bad offer and was, in fact, much better than shooting TV news in Cedar Rapids.

Fortunately, my good friend and fellow Air Force project officer Peter Vogt had recently become Production Manager at Guggenheim Productions. He arranged an interview with Charles, leading to my being hired as Assistant Production Manager. With a Bachelor of Arts degree, the recently discharged Air Force captain embraced duties which included packing equipment cases in the company's creepy sub-basement to making coffee runs and projecting dailies. Only Peter Vogt was aware of my desire to shoot.

It was Jim Signorelli, a New York cameraman who eventually directed the Saturday Night Live spoof movies, who handed me a 16 mm Bell and Howell on one of Guggenheim's political shoots - coverage of Ted Kennedy marching in Boston's Saint Patrick's Day parade. Shooting what we would now call "B Roll," I obsessively managed the 2.8 minutes of film I had been given. Dailies, modest as they were, met with approval and my foot was now firmly in the door.

After a 24-year-old, wanna-be cinematographer took that teeny baby step long ago, good stuff happened. I have been fortunate. However, the rest of this piece is about you, not me. It arises from an experience I have had with regularity during the spring semester. A soon-to-graduate, 4th year cinematographer schedules a meeting to talk - not about technique but their future. It's a perfectly reasonable question that, in fact, is addressed continually in the UNCSA curriculum. In many ways, our students graduate with a number of hardcore skills. They are informed, trained, and pragmatic in ways that - at their age - I was not.

Their apprehension is not a bad thing. In class, I occasionally remind them that on the biggest production, equipped with virtually all the stuff any shooter needs to make their images happen, there can be a moment of doubt. A little tinge of concern. Yet a moment of actual worry here and there is entirely warranted. What filmmaker should be oblivious to the money and resources

placed at their disposal? My own technique is to fight the qualms with self-assurance. "I've been here before and it's always worked out. By the way, if you were hiring somebody to do this job, you'd hire yourself." Blatant self-promotion? Yes, and nothing you'd want to share with others. But it works.

Now a very short list of things for the cinematographers to carry in their kit, if not included already:

1 Do not make unreasonable demands of the sensor on your camera. No question, they are profoundly advanced, with tonality and latitude that were unheard of when I started shooting movies. At that time, using a light meter was for many of us somewhat of a fetish. Nobody wanted to hear two dreaded words from the lab - "thin negative." There was no remedy, no digital workflow magic that could possibly resurrect badly underexposed film. However, the fact remains that underexposure is still a bad thing that can potentially wreak havoc with your pictures. Here's a practice I adopted long ago, learned from fellow Directors of Photography whose gutsy, dark work I admired. Consider your chip to at least one stop SLOWER than its "normal" rating. ISO 800 becomes 400. You can then print the image down in post. If the scene is made up of predominantly dark tonal values, with nothing at the high end of the scale to protect, you can be a bit more aggressive. Maybe expose 2 stops hotter. The resulting values will be wonderfully rich, with noise a non-event.

2 Insist on carefully blocking the actors BEFORE you light the set. Rehearse them with a Director's Viewfinder, mark their positions, use stand-ins to rehearse and light. Many of you have been trained in this process but when you're out in the world, your counterparts may not know or respect this vital step. Failure to make it happen is ALWAYS a time-sucking mistake.

3 The Director of Photography and Assistant Director need to become best friends, if only temporarily, who are joined at the hip from the first day of prep until the show wraps. Both of you will be shooting the same schedule, with the same requirements. So, each must understand the other's turf. It should not be a struggle and with mutual respect, it won't be.

4 Re: working on a low budget project. **If the money is bad, the project has to be good.**

Low or no budget doesn't have to sabotage quality. However, it doesn't take much to steer an otherwise well-meaning production straight to Bad Dream City. Be wary of dubious claims and insincerity in your first meetings.

5 Giving yourself away. Have you ever interviewed for a small feature or music video where they expect you to throw your camera package into the deal...for free??? Followed by a ridiculous pay rate for you and your crew. Never give anything away.

That's the list for now.

Expose correctly but dream wildly. Treat actors as artists, who need camera rehearsals to make sure everybody's on the same page. Cinematographers and AD's need to forge an unbreakable alliance. Work ultra low-budget with your eyes wide open. Never give away your time and equipment.

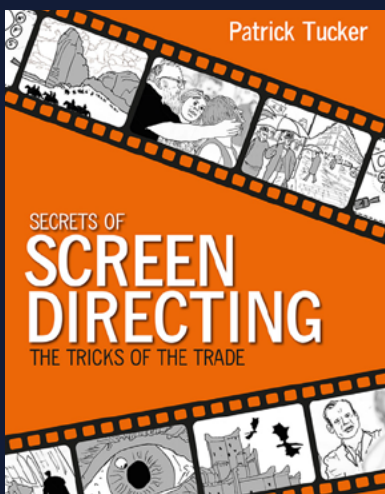
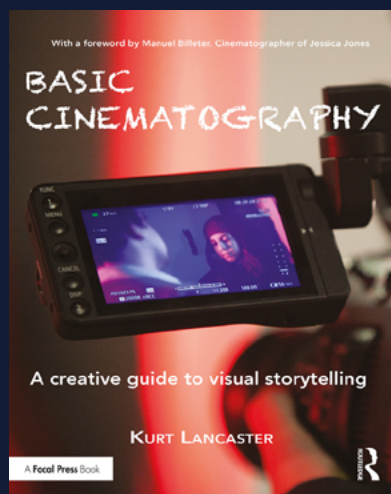
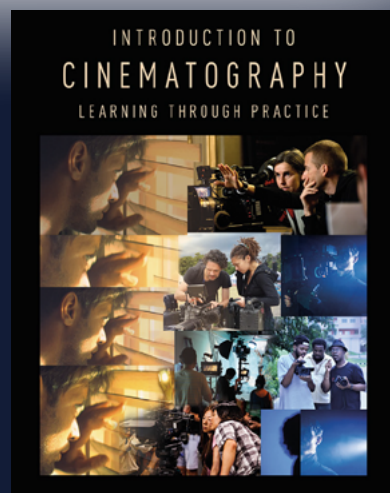
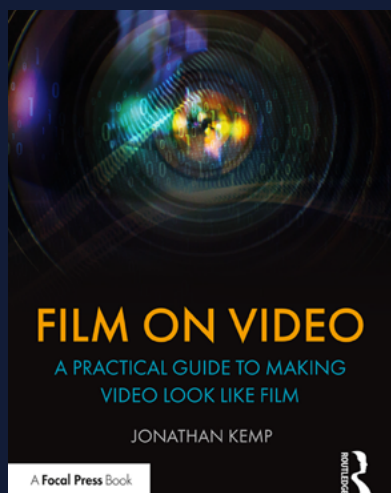
As mentioned earlier, I grew up in Iowa and made it to the movies. I still do the work I love. There's been a lot of good luck, and many people who mentored me along the way. Without their support, it would have been a much harder road to travel.

As we start a New Year, I wish all of you happy trails.



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Never Stop Learning

Why You Need to Learn to Drone

8 Things Drones Can Do for Your Film and 17 Drone Tips for Beginners

By Sherri Sheridan

Every film can now benefit from having some cool drone POV footage. Those really expensive, breathtaking establishing opening shots in feature films that used to be shot using helicopters can now be included in your low budget student films. Almost every film you see now has some drone footage. Many films use a drone shot at the opening of every new location or scene.



Show us something new from above. This beach looks better from a drone angle flying through the blowing trees.

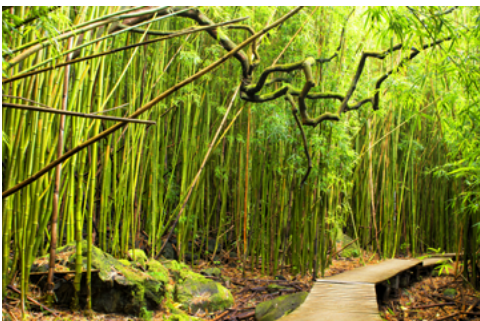
8 Things Drones Can Do for Your Film

#1 Open up the film world by flying over it showing miles of terrain.

#2 Add another POV to scenes to show distance. A character could be walking through the snow with a broken leg and the drone could be used to show how far they have traveled or still need to go.

#3 Make your film feel expensive. Aerial shots make the viewer feel like they want to keep watching since these shots look expensive and professional. Most people decide in the first few seconds if they like your film and drone footage can help.

#4 Fly through POVs. Your camera could fly through a window into a room or other tight holes or spaces. This is a unique new type of wow shot that places the viewer in the scene.



Flying through this bamboo forest with a drone will eliminate the need for expensive dollies or tracks. The tall trees create a tunnel effect.

#5 Action shots for following characters during chase scenes. A drone following a car chase or character running from above is more exciting than on the ground.

#6 Impossible tight shots. You could fly through a three-foot-wide pipe, cave or tunnel if you tape an LED light onto your drone. This creates a sense of claustrophobia for the viewer and cannot be done with older film cameras.

#7 Flying POV for dream sequences or falling shots. This helps the viewer feel they are in the movie and everyone loves flying shots.

#8 Wow shots of stunning locations. You need to find the most beautiful spot first then imagine which POV is going to look best. Sunset and sunrise are still your best bet for awesome lighting.

17 Beginner Drone Tips

#1 Do not fly your drone over any people, cars or expensive stuff. Drones crash and can cause damage. This is especially important when you are learning.

#2 FAA regulations say you cannot go above 400 feet from where you are standing. Go up on top of a mountain, hill or building to get really high shots.

#3 You cannot fly your drone within 5 miles of an airport. Stay below the tree line to be safe.

#4 Avoid windy areas. Flying a drone in strong wind is like trying to roller skate on an icy lake. Some of the heavier more expensive drones handle wind better but it is still a gamble and harder to control.

#5 Do a search to see where the best place to fly drones is in your area. Look for YouTube drone footage to get ideas on how and where to shoot. US Federal National Parks do not allow drones, but you could fly right next to one if you know where to go. Research the drone laws in our state or area since they change often.

#6 Do not get your drone wet unless it is waterproof when flying low over water. This seems obvious but even spray from waves, fog or light rain can ruin your equipment.

#7 Learn to fly on a cheap drone (under \$100) to get the hang of flying one with the controls. These will be harder to control than the more expensive ones. The footage is mostly useless but will teach you how to go up and down and make the drone point the camera to where you want.

#8 Motion stabilizing gimbal. You will need one of these below your camera on your more expensive drones to eliminate the shaky drone flying motion. Most of the newer drone cameras have a motion stabilizer too which will help, but you will need both to shoot smooth footage.

#9 Drone GPS flight patterns. You want a smart drone that can fly around points of interests or fly in a perfect circle. You can program in flight paths using a GPS app for the more expensive drones. The drone will go into automatic mode, but you need to keep an eye on it unless it has collision detection.

#10 Register your drone with the FAA's new Unmanned Aircraft Registration system.

#11 Practice makes perfect. Flying a drone takes lots of practice. The more you do it, the better you will get. Review your footage each night to see what is working and what is not.

#12 Read the drone manual. Every drone is different. The more expensive the drone, the more complicated the instructions.

#13 Plan flight path before flying. You also have to think about where to point the camera and what to shoot.

#14 Turn throttle to zero if you are about to crash. Panic may set in, so practice doing this before you take off. Watching your drone fly into something or crash is not fun.

#15 Learn to fly drone inside a large room or in an open field. Make sure nothing in the area can be damaged.



No one is on this beach, so it is safe to fly my drone. This unique POV shows us the waves from a new angle for a stunning WOW shot. Most landscape shots look better without people anyhow.

#16 Carry spare parts and repair kit. You may break a propeller or run out of batteries fast on the perfect day. Duct tape and Krazy Glue can be useful in a tight spot if you crash and break parts.

#17 Drone Shooting View Screen. Once you get good at flying your drone, you will want to work on composing great wow shots. You cannot do this unless you can see in real time what you are shooting while flying the drone. Some drones have controls with view screens on them, but many use a mobile phone app to show you what the drone is shooting while flying. Are you cutting off the tops of the trees or is your subject just out of range? You may also see something cool in the screen POV you could not imagine on the ground and want to follow. Flying the drone blind is very hit or miss. A head cam with a view screen is also a good choice, but you need to be able to keep an eye on the drone while it is flying too.

Flying drones takes lots of practice and patience but is worth the time to make your films look more professional.

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10 Benefits of Networking:

Reasons You Should Network and Be Consistent

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- **MEET** influential people for work and partnership.
- **CREATE** a Profile Page and promote your new projects for funding and support.
- **BLOG** and share your expertise and build credibility by helping others.
- **PROMOTE** your events and shows with the events features.
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- **FIND** crew and talent.
- **CULTIVATE** Relationships.
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Filmmaker as Magician

One of the Greatest Jobs on Earth

By David K. Irving

I think cinema, movies, and magic have always been closely associated. The very earliest people who made film were magicians.
~Francis Ford Coppola

The lights go down. Excitement and anticipation fill the air. Images begin to dance across the silver screen. A little laughter, a few tears. And the house lights come up. The person primarily responsible for this cinematic journey is the film's director. It is possibly one of the greatest jobs on earth.

Directing is a multi-faceted job. Its description varies from show to show. Certain essentials such as script, cast, crew and budget determine success and failure. By mastering the practical and physical elements of production, while manipulating the psychological landscape, directors improve their chances for success.

There is no better way to learn about film directing than by actually doing it. Books and manuals can serve as a guide. Other films and videos can act as inspiration; and talking about and critiquing films and videos can trigger ideas. However, the two best teachers are failure and success. Experiencing the process of putting a project together, building work muscles, and understanding the craft and discipline of the process are ultimately the best ways to develop your skills. To pick the right card out of the deck every time takes practice.

A beginner must master the craft of film directing while at the same time exploring and learning about all facets of life, especially those associated with storytelling and human behavior. Veteran director Elia Kazan, in a speech made at Wesleyan University in 1973, stated, "a director must be like a white hunter, construction gang foreman, psychoanalyst, hypnotist, poet, baseball outfielder, bazaar trader, animal trainer, great host and jewel thief." In short, a magician.



Every time I go to a movie, it's magic, no matter what the movie's about.
~Steven Spielberg

4 Actor Pet Peeves About Auditions

And How to Fix Them!

by Tamar Kummel

I've been an actor [throat clearing] of a number of years. I started by doing theater in New York City, and then, started doing more film work in New York City and Los Angeles. I had so many poorly run auditions, it prompted me to write the book, "How to Run Auditions" (available everywhere).

If you want the BEST actors (And, why wouldn't you?), then you have to run the best auditions. Because otherwise, no one will want to work for you! So, here are 4 no-no's to avoid and some quick fixes:

1 Having a Terrible Reader/Audition Partner.

A great reader knows the scene well and isn't trying to compete with the actor auditioning. You want the reader to give just enough to help the actor. Not push the actor in any

direction. If they push, you'll have every auditionee sound exactly the same. Or you'll have frustrated actors that are pushing back and aren't spontaneous. Neither of which you want.

I had an audition once where they said they wanted me to improvise a scene with one of them. That person had clearly never done improvisation a day in their life. They proceeded to tell me the entire scene to do, how to do it, and what to say. That's not improvisation. That's me re-writing your audition scene for you, and I don't appreciate it! If you decide to have an actor improvise, be really clear on what you're trying to accomplish (seeing if the person can roll with punches, has a good sense of humor, a sense of the character, plays well with others, etc.), and please have an experienced person doing the scene with the actor.

2 The Audition is at an Apartment or Weird Space.

Please people. In these times of #metoo and more, have a professional space, with a desk, with quiet. No hotels. No apartments. Audition studios can be very noisy and crowded, and if you have a quiet, thoughtful piece that requires an emotional response from your actors, you must create a safe space for them.

3 Waiting Until the Very Last Minute to Give Them Their Scenes.

Say you have to perform a piece in front of an audience. Do you want to be handed a script five minutes before? Or do you want time to learn it, digest it, think about it, come up with fun bits or back story? Well, the audition is our performance. Only one person gets the job. So, don't stress us out! Get us the sides as far

in advance as possible. Otherwise, you will have actors that are either really great at doing cold reads, or actors that appear to not be able to act at all. You want the actors that are prepared and are already thinking about your project. So, give them a chance to prepare!

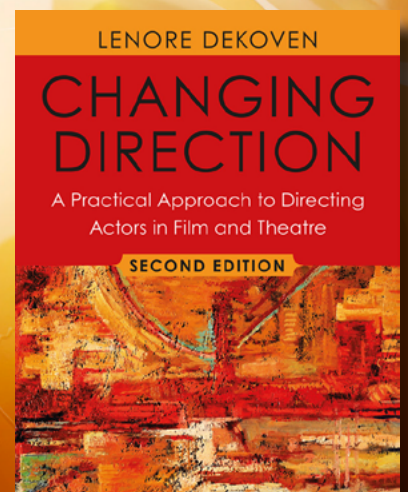
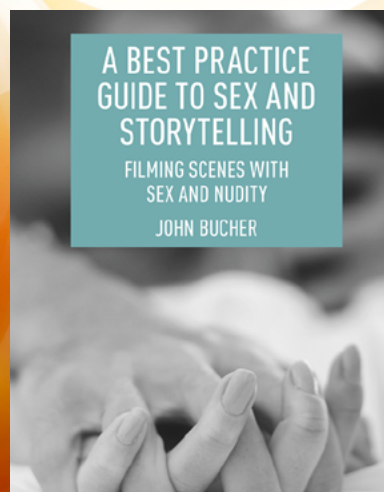
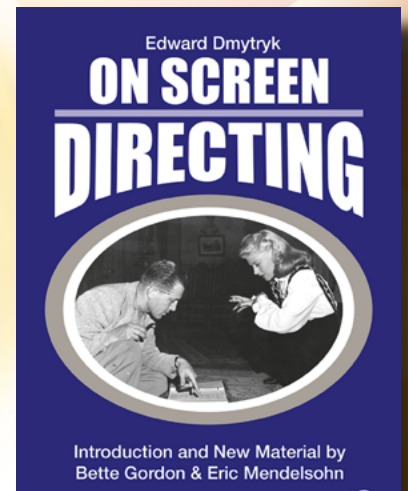
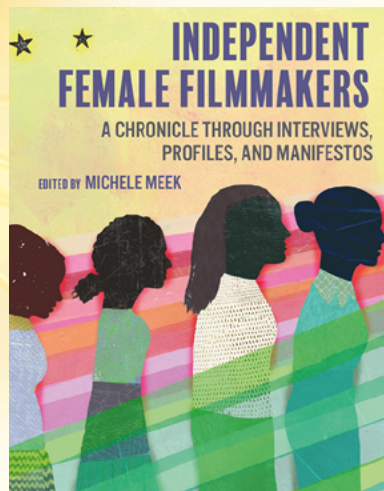
4 Not Knowing Your Timeline.

This is basic stuff. How can you audition actors if you don't know when the shoot is, when the rehearsals or performance are, when callbacks are? Put ALL the dates in the ad. Don't waste your time seeing people that won't be available when your production is. And please don't waste our time either.

Now go get yourself the best actors!

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Never Stop Learning

Ask for What You Want

A "Walking Dead" Story

By Mark Simon

I recently moved to Atlanta to take advantage of all the great productions in Georgia. I always set goals for myself, and one of my goals was to storyboard on "The Walking Dead".

Luckily, I have worked in the industry a very long time, over 30 years. I now have over 4,500 production credits. But I still ask for help from people I've worked with.

I knew one person on "The Walking Dead", director of photography, Stephen Campbell. He and I had worked on dozens of projects together over the last 20+ years. I called Steve prior to moving to Atlanta and asked him to introduce me to one of the producers of The Walking Dead. I just needed an intro.

Steve suggested we wait until the series started pre-production early last Spring. Once the production offices opened up, I planned a trip to Atlanta to both look for home and to, hopefully, meet with producers.

Steve spoke with series executive producer, Tom Luse, about me and forwarded Tom's contact info to me. I immediately reached out to Tom to set up a face-to-face meeting. I spoke with Tom briefly on the phone, explained my background and the benefits of working with me and told him the days I would be in town, and we set up a time to meet.

When I arrived in town, I drove directly to the studio in Senoia, south of Atlanta, and arrived 15 minutes early. When I sat with Tom, I explained my process of digital storyboarding and showed him examples of my work and how my Storyboard Pro software allowed me to offer more to productions.

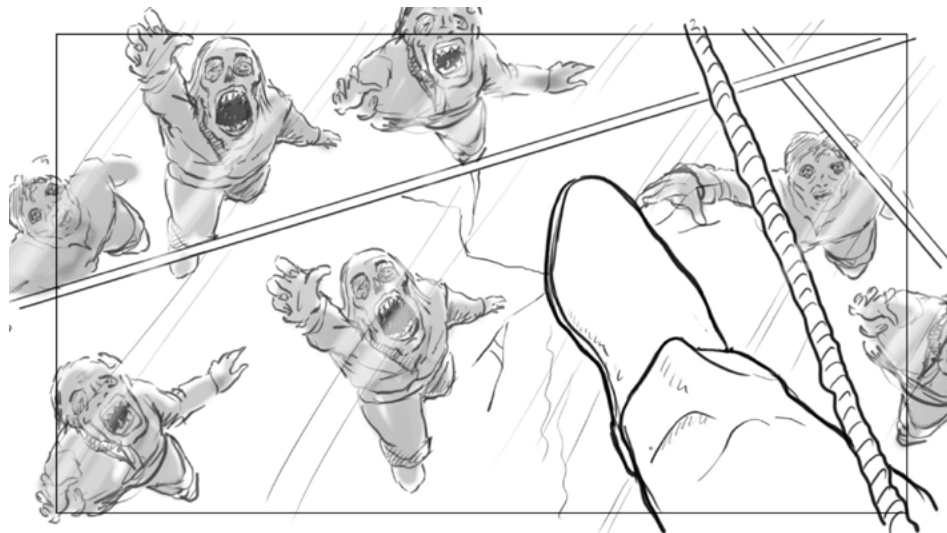
Tom explained that they were not quite ready to hire a story artist but liked what I showed him. He asked me to check back with him in two weeks. The way he asked me to call back in two weeks sounded like a test. I've done the same thing at my studio with applicants to see if they can follow through.

Exactly two weeks later I called Tom. He thanked me for calling and told me that one of the other producers would be in touch to start on the show. Later that day I got a call from another producer and was officially hired. I had passed the test.

I started storyboarding "The Walking Dead" before I finished my move to Atlanta. I'm also the first storyboard artist to storyboard an entire season of the show. Plus, I provided the directors with animatics, video storyboards, as I worked. That helped them to better build the story.

There are a few morals to this story. One, be willing to ask for help. Two, meeting people face-to-face is always best. And three, when you are asked to do something, follow through.

I am proud to have worked on the biggest show on cable. Now I need a new goal.



Pictured: Storyboards from "The Walking Dead," Season 9 Premiere, Episode 901. Courtesy of the author.

Pre-Production Stage of Film Scoring

A Glimpse into the Process

By Steve Myers

In the beginning... there was pre-production.

Scoring music to picture has changed radically over the past few decades. With the advent of digital platforms, it is no longer necessary to wait for picture lock to start the process. With the ease of digital editing, both in film and audio, there can be a very natural back and forth between director and composer as cues are edited. However, this may also lead to endless "tweaking" of a scene resulting in greater costs on the music side. Not to worry, there are a few things I like to get worked out at the very beginning of the process. Most importantly, I'll make it clear that I'll be using digital instruments until picture lock. At that point we can decide what kind of live players we'll need for the final and what the budget can tolerate.

The process usually goes like this: Initial creative meeting between director and composer, back and forth as new edits are created, picture lock.

Before the initial creative meeting, I'll usually ask for any reference of something the director has seen or heard that gives them some kind of inspiration. It doesn't have to be something related to the current project, just anything that inspires and gives me a glimpse into their creative side.

Then, I'll ask them what they are trying to accomplish with their film. For instance, *"It's a piece shot documentary style that should leave the audience uncomfortable at the end"*. Or, *"It's a slice of life piece full of conflict and eventually tugs at the heart"*. These descriptions are over-arching and subject to change, but they give me a place to start.

After the initial meeting, I'll put together a palette of instrumental sounds, and write/record several short pieces to see how they work and feel. Then, I'll have the director in for another short meeting and we'll have a playback session. This gives us both an opportunity for feedback. Once we agree that we are in the ballpark, I'll wait for the first edit to arrive. Since they will probably shoot the scenes out of sequence, I will be counting on the director to give me an idea where everything fits into the final edit.

Of course, this is only *my* working procedure, but it seems to be pretty effective at clearing up problems at the beginning of the process, and hopefully gives each of us some room to move on the budget.

How to Choose a Composer for Your Project

What do you want the music to do for your film?

by Kristen Baum

Finding a composer is often one of the last items on the filmmakers list. So how do you do choose a composer for your project? Here are two things to consider when making your selection.

What to Look for in a Composer

You may love the film music of John Williams or Danny Elfman or even have a favorite game composer, but the question to ask yourself is *what do you want a composer to add to your project?* While a big orchestral score can be impressive, it may not be the right choice for your story. Basically, score for your project needs to emotionally fit the story.

When you're choosing a composer, listen to their music, but don't let the thought that their music doesn't perfectly fit your movie rule them out. Instead, listen for their ability to compose, to evoke an emotion in their music. If they have that ability, you can feel confident putting them on a short list to explore them as a collaborator for your project.

What You Want Music to Do

Knowing what you want *music* to do for your film will help you find a composer that's a good fit for your project. Composers serve story. So, having a concept of what you want the score to do to support your story is key.

Some things to consider: Do you want music to function in the background, blending in and not drawing attention to itself while providing emotional subtext for the audience? Maybe you want the score to be bold, melodic and in the foreground, to have a melody people can hum that will connect them to the story or a specific character in it. Or you might want the score to set the tone of the film.

Your ideas about score don't need to be solidified. Once you've formed some thoughts about overall direction, you'll be ready to speak with a composer to discern whether they are a good fit for your project.

Audio's Rightful Place

Know and Embrace Your Sound

By David Kaminski

As pros note, audio is 50% of your film, and when the dialogue cuts out, or cannot be heard, it's a sign your film will never make it to a festival or to distribution without a lot of time or money spent on ADR.

It's your duty to know and embrace your audio and to plan carefully how you will capture it. This takes practice and experience. The best audio will catch the attention of film reviewers, judges in festivals, and others in the industry.

Make sure that your team is familiar with wireless mic frequencies and their settings. It is a good idea to start using and testing the audio gear before the actors even start practicing their lines on camera. Sample recordings should be listened to not only with studio headphones but a full sound editing suite with a subwoofer, too, in case you have a low MHz sound like a subway, rumbling trucks, building furnaces, and other sounds in the background.

For wireless, avoid interference from local emergency services or walkie talkies in the vicinity of your film, and also beware of noisy clothing such as windbreakers and starched shirts. Practice with the clothing your actors will use for the film, as this will give you the best chance of learning what you need to know before filming.

Shotgun mics can be used from below, just out of frame, or from above the actor's head. Take the time to notice that every different position will give you more or less crispness of the words (fricatives like "f" and "th"), more sound from the chest, etc. The color of the sound will inform your film, so choose what it is that you want, and how you want your actors portrayed. Different brands of mics will even provide different timbre. Do not expect your "directional" shotgun to eliminate the sounds that you hope it will. While you may not hear the sounds while you are practicing or filming, your sound editor will hear everything you have missed. So again, do a full test with an audio suite before you proceed to film a single scene.

Excellent audio will keep your audience fully immersed in the narrative or documentary you are creating, and it will earn you the accolades you deserve for the hard work, too.

ANAMORPHIC LENSES

A Primer

by John Klein

One of the main reasons?
Anamorphic lenses.

These specialty lenses are often out of reach of even moderately-budgeted films, but so much of our time as cinematographers and indie filmmakers can be spent trying to emulate the look of them. So, what's so special about them?

Originally, anamorphic lenses were crafted, alongside such developments as Cinemascope and 3D, as a means to combat the rise of television through achieving wider aspect ratios on 35mm film without sacrificing resolution. Originally, films were typically shot in the Academy ratio (1.37:1), and if you wanted to get a widescreen aspect ratio, you would have to crop out the footage at the top and bottom. Anamorphic lenses solved this problem by essentially squeezing the footage horizontally using a cylindrical front lens element and an ovalar back element, so a wider image could still fit entirely into the boxy 35mm gate. Then the film was projected back out through a similar anamorphic lens to stretch it back out for viewing in a theater.

Still with us? Good.

Nowadays, because of 4K, the ease of cropping images digitally, and because most digital sensors are natively 16:9, anamorphic lenses are less necessary in terms of maintaining image quality. Instead, we crave them because of their LOOK: those streaking horizontal flares (made famous by the cinematography in the films of JJ Abrams and Zack Snyder), the ovalar bokeh, the distortions and softness on faces and in the fringes of the image, and so on. Put simply, it feels epic, and expensive, in a way standard spherical lenses simply can't duplicate.

As cameras and lenses have gotten significantly cheaper, we've been waiting for anamorphic lenses to follow suit, but aside from SLR Magic's three-set of anamorphic prime lenses (which will still set you back a cool \$8,500, they're hard to come by easily. Still, if your budget allows for it, it's important to discuss some considerations for what cinematographers should expect when working with anamorphic lenses for the first time.

For reference, I've included comparison stills from simple tests we did for Geoffrey Smeltzer's short film titled MTA: Mass Teleportation Authority, using the Zeiss Compact Primes and the SLR Magic Anamorphic lenses on a Canon C300 Mark II, and color graded with Davinci Resolve.

In the micro-budget world, we're always endeavoring to craft a more cinematic look for our films. We'll crop the footage to a wider aspect ratio, go for lenses and sensors that offer shallower depth of field, add fake optical flares in post-production... and yet, we still feel like we're lacking that certain je ne sais quoi.

First, what camera or film format are you using? There's an aspect ratio difference between the 16x9 sensor of a Canon C300 and the 4x3 sensor of an Arri Alexa or a Panasonic GH5, and that affects what anamorphic lens you should use. On a 16x9 sensor, you'll want to use 1.33x anamorphic lenses to get that 2.39:1 footage, and on a 4x3 sensor, 2x lenses are your jam. (This means that the lens will squeeze the image either by a factor of 1.33 times, as seen in the stills, or even double it.)



However, this will also affect the way you think about focal lengths. We're used to a 50mm lens as a pretty solid portrait lens, but a 50mm 2x anamorphic lens will actually resemble a 25mm spherical lens, as you can see from the comparison. Anamorphic lenses, due to the squeeze, are much wider overall; part of the reason they became popular was their ability to capture sweeping vistas in full on an otherwise boxy film format.

This contributes to the thing we all know and love about anamorphic lenses: distortion. That softness on faces, that hyper-shallow depth of field, that fringing and vignetting around the edges, those wild flares... they're all part of the unique look, but some will have it more than others, and for some filmmakers going in expecting a cleaner look, you may be surprised that shooting wide open in 4K on an anamorphic lens results in a nearly unusable image due to the extreme distortion. *Killing Them Softly* features a prime example of this in a shot of Brad Pitt walking by a series of cascading fireworks. It's an amazing shot that also illustrates what can be expected of these lenses, for better or worse. Luckily, several programs including *Davinci Resolve* have distortion correction that is pretty stellar.

Lighting needs are probably the second biggest killer for low-budget films striving for anamorphic. Whereas some spherical lenses can open up to an $f/1.3$ or even lower, anamorphic lenses typically only open up to an $f/2.8$ and may not be sharp enough until you're at an $f/4$ or even $f/5.6$. That means you'll either have to boost your ISO to a noisier place, or up your lighting firepower and budget considerably. (For record, these anamorphic stills were all shot at an $f/5.6$.)

At the end of the day, you get what you pay for with these lenses, both in terms of optical quality and logistics. SLR Magic anamorphic lenses are accessible and give you those flares and bokeh, but their excessive breathing, distortion, and construction can make them challenging to use in the field. Because that lens gear is also on the front of the lens, using any sort of matte box isn't really possible either, so internal or screw-on filtration is a must. You may find more expensive lenses to have a friendlier disposition.

Unsqueezed 1.33x 70mm SLR Magic anamorphic



Zeiss CP.2 50mm Spherical (cropped to 2.39:1)



Uncorrected barrel distortion



Corrected distortion in Resolve 35mm



Unsqueezed 1.33x 50mm SLR Magic anamorphic



Zeiss CP.2 50mm Spherical (cropped to 2.39:1)



Focusing with anamorphic lenses presents two issues: the lenses usually breathe when pulling focus (*A Quiet Place* offers several examples of this in the opening sequence), and it's very hard to get close focus on a subject. Most anamorphic lenses can't focus closer than a few feet, meaning lens choice for close-ups becomes paramount.

So, as always, is it worth it? The creative and budgetary choice lies with you. I've found myself trying to emulate the look of anamorphics on spherical lenses, especially those flares, to no avail. Sometimes, you just need to bite the golden bullet.



SHOOTING PLANS & SHOT LISTS FOR DIFFERENT SUBJECTS

14 WAYS to Capture the Perfect Waves

By Sherri Sheridan

Have you ever returned home from a day of shooting and looked through your footage to find you have 308 shots of the same thing and nothing to really edit together? Even if you will be shooting on the fly, you need a plan and a shot list for how to approach each setting, subject or event. What key moments do you want to capture that you think will happen?

How do you shoot the perfect waves? The more you go out to film waves the more you will learn about what makes a wow wave shot.

If you are doing a wedding, you will make sure and get a shot of the bride and groom saying their vows, relatives wishing them well, cutting the cake, dancing drunks and the happy couple driving away with cans tied to the bumper. If you are shooting a narrative script, you usually have a shot list marked off from the screenplay for each scene. If you are shooting a car commercial, you have storyboards for every well thought out stunning visual marketing second. The more you shoot a subject the better you get at getting wow shots. Why? Because you learn valuable information each time you shoot with both triumphs and failures. You need to make mental notes when looking at your dailies to see what works and what does not.

How to Shoot the Perfect Waves

Below are some of my tips on how to shoot waves after much trial and error. As you read through this list you will notice that every subject requires this much well thought out detail.

1. TWILIGHT LIGHTING. Sunrise and sunset are the best times to shot waves and many other outdoor locations. The colors in the sky are at their most brilliant during this brief



time and this air screen area is one third of your shot. If the sky does not look good the shot will not be good. You also have to find a beach where the best shot composition has the sun setting or rising in the middle of the screen. The sun moves each day so you will need to plan ahead or ask the locals where to go.

2. SECRET ISLAND LOCATION. The island of Kauai in Hawaii has the best-looking waves in the US. Why? The waves crash bigger on this island since they are the first in the chain and are located in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. A

local told me this was the case and I find it to be true. The beaches and plants look more tropical paradise than on the mainland. Certain beaches on the island look better at different times of the day and year. Waves in California and Florida do not look as good as the waves in Kauai. Even the waves on Maui or the other islands do not look as good. Knowing the right locations to shoot your subject is key.

3. PERFECT SUNNY WEATHER ANGLE. A main goal when shooting waves is to get the sparkly sunshine coming through the face of the



Notice the angle you need to shoot to get the sun coming through the light blue parts.

wave as it breaks. The problem is the sun may blind your camera in between waves if you are shooting straight into the light. This means you need to find your angle where you can still see the light shining through, but the bright sun does not blow your shot out.

4. BIG WAVES. Sixty-foot waves are way more fun to watch than two-foot waves. Even a six-foot wave looks better than a two-foot wave.

5. WATER COLOR. Some days the water looks more green, blue or brown depending on the weather and runoff. You need light green or blue water to see the sun sparkling behind. You also need fluffy white foam too not dirty yellow.

6. PERFECT WAVE SOUNDTRACK. No tourists talking in the background or children yelling. Wave footage without sound does not work the same. You also need some soothing background noises like birds chirping to give the shot some emotional aloha atmosphere. You cannot add or edit the soundtrack in post since the waves make a big crash each time they hit the shore. If the soundtrack does not match exactly the wave shot will look off. Sound is half of many nature shots.

7. LITTLE PUFFY CLOUDS. The shape of the clouds in the sky will determine a third of your composition in a basic wave long shot. If the clouds are like lines that day your footage will feel wrong. If there is a double rainbow behind your waves, then you could get a really rare, wave "wow" shot. Or, you could add the rainbows in post if you are really good at compositing layers and special effects.

8. SAND COLOR. Black and beige sandy beaches do not look as good as powdered sugar white ones since you lose the foreground contrast with the dark water coming in. White sand beaches look softer and feel more soothing to the viewer.

9. WAVES GET BORING. You can only watch the same sets of waves break for a few minutes before you start to get bored. Now you need some drone aerial shots flying over the natural coastline without any houses. Maybe some underwater shots in a coral reef to break up the waves? Different angles on various beaches around the world with contrasting landscapes?

10. TRIPOD. No shaky wave shots. This is a professional production. Too many moving or jerky camera shots ruin the tranquility of the wave motion.

11. WATERPROOF CAMERA. The best shots of waves are when you are in the water. How can you shoot down a wave tunnel from the shore?

12. HEADCAM FOR SURFING BIG WAVES. If you are going to make a brilliant wave movie you will need to crawl around inside one. Remember the bigger the wave the better the footage.

13. WISH LIST WATERFALLS WITH RAINBOWS. If you can find a beach that has a waterfall cove and get the waterfall rainbows in the same shot as your waves it will get you many extra filmmaking points. Capturing these types of moments is equivalent to hunting unicorns. What shots would you love to have that you need to research or plan to get? I call

these rare shots wish list and think of how I could fake one using digital effects. You still need to plan the shot with the effects on top before you shoot anything.

14. VISUAL TIMING LUCK. If some dolphins leap out of your waves perfectly silhouetted by the sunset rays you will have a wow shot if the camera is set up and running. Maybe a whale breaches in the middle of your sunrise shot. Digital footage is cheap to shoot, so leave your camera running when you know certain critters are leaping around to catch the magic.

Do you see how hard it is to shoot a great ocean wave shot? Even if you never shoot a wave in your life, I want you to think about all the little things listed above that need to line up for a perfect wave shot. Every subject you shoot needs this type of study. You basically need to live in Kauai, on a perfect private beach, with great waves to get the best shots each day, when all the variables line up.

What are your favorite subjects to shoot and what does your next shot list look like? What have you learned from filming something repeatedly that will determine what shots you look for next time?

From the new book coming soon, "Filmmaking Script to Screen" by Sherri Sheridan.

FLEXIBILITY

IN A COMMERCIAL SHOOT



Nancy directing the stylist/model in posing.



You can see the Ellinchrome strobe set up into the Lastolite background, reflected in the mirror

Photos courtesy of Hudson Grey.

By Nancy Rauch Yachnes

As commercial photographers, we were tasked with helping to launch Hudson Grey, a new line of upscale eyewear. Great. We'll hire models and shoot in our studio. Not so fast. The client wanted us to use stylists at a local salon for models. Their interesting hairstyles and tats fit in well with Hudson Grey's trendy look. Ok, so we'll bring the stylists to our studio. Not happening. They are only available to work at the salon, and before opening hours, to boot.

Luminez salon is in Merrick, LI, and we're in Brooklyn, NY. And this was back in March when snow (remember that?) was a constant threat. So, we packed up our gear and stayed in a local motel so that we could safely be on site before 8:00 a.m. The hotel (a national chain) was a dirty dump. My bad for not reading reviews. (Anyone who wants the name, ask me personally).

As you might have guessed, the lovely salon is not exactly set up for a photo shoot... They were understanding, though, when we had to move their enormous manicure stations to make room to get the shots we needed with a 300mm lens. We were trying to focus (!) on the eyewear, so we were looking to shoot on a minimalist background. To achieve that, we used our

Lastolite illuminated white background. Sometimes there's a piece of equipment that we just love, and the Lastolite is one of them! Not only does it provide a clean, white background, but it also acts as a giant soft box, emanating a beautiful back light that elegantly wraps around the models.

Front light? We used a 22-inch white beauty dish with an Alien Bee strobe, placed (as close to 45 degrees as was possible, given the space) to the right and above of the subjects. For some of the shots, we switched to a 28-inch octobox. And back to the subjects... Remember, they weren't models. Beautiful women, yes, but with no experience in front of a camera lens. Thanks to our intensive posing training over the past couple of years, (thank you, Roberto Valenzuela!), we were able to direct our newfound "models" appropriately. We directed them not only how to stand and where to stand, but also where to fix their gaze, and how much to open their eyes. Placing their hands was tricky as well. How to best reveal their tats without putting emphasis on their hands.

Since the salon was opening at 10, we only had about an hour-and-a-half to actually shoot (in commercial terms, like a minute-and-a-half). Luminez graciously allowed us to run a little overtime, so we ended up with spectators who had aluminum foil in their hair! We never did get to see how those ladies' coifs' turned out, but we were very happy with our eyewear shots. You can see a lot of them on the client's website, HudsonGreyEyewear.com. We also shot the individual frames (on a white product table) at a different time.

Regrets? There is no such thing as a perfect shoot. We always push ourselves to expand our craft... Had we had more time, more space, and more budget, who knows?

GEAR

Camera

- Canon 5Diii

Lenses

- Canon zoom lens
70-300 5.6 L series
- Canon ultrasonic
24-70 2.8 L series

Lighting

- Lastolite illuminated 7-foot background, lit by two Ellinchrom BX500 Ri
- Front light: Alien Bee 360 watts. Modifiers: 22" white beauty dish, & 28" octobox.

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MUSIC TO MY EARS

DO WHAT YOU LOVE AND LOVE WHAT YOU DO

By Shane Stanley

I owe much of my career to music videos. When I was younger, I wanted to be a rock star and even toured our great nation as a drummer in bands who opened for acts like Stone Temple Pilots, The Black Crowes and Lenny Kravitz. But as I grew older and needed to think about my future, dreams of becoming a rock star were replaced by those of becoming a filmmaker. I know, I know, that's a classic case of jumping out of the frying pan into the fire. I'll admit, I never wanted to direct, let alone shoot camera - I didn't have the desire, and frankly, didn't want to make myself a target of criticism. Producing, editing and writing were enough for me until Bret Michaels asked if I'd shoot some footage for his first single as a solo artist during Poison's hiatus. The footage we shot looked good, so we went to The Panavision Stages and added his performance to the video. Upon its release, the song Raine became a hit single - and so did our music video that got a lot of coveted airtime and yours truly decided to put the all-encompassing filmmaker hat on once and for all.

I should mention at this point the music video business was quite grim. MTV and even VH1 were no longer making them a focal point on their networks and YouTube *wasn't* even yet on the radar, so labels were putting their resources into other forms of marketing to push their artists. In the early 2000's, I would get the occasional call from a record label to do a video, however, they weren't paying much of anything. In fact, a major label attached to one of the movie studios asked if I would re-shoot (as in completely re-do) a music video for the title track to one of their biggest film franchises and had the nerve after two creative meetings and getting the job they weren't paying a dime. Heck, I wasn't the guy who botched up the first video, (which had a budget of \$50,000) but work for free? I'll save that for another article

down the road...but the film went on to make over \$230M - domestic. Who's complaining?

Fortunately, music videos have made quite the comeback. But let's face it; unless you're working with artists such as Taylor Swift, Imagine Dragons or Drake, it's for the love of the craft, not the love of the cash that we do them. By and large low budget videos are the norm which have become tools to help drive up a band's social media presence, a tour or iTunes sales. I do in part blame that annoying (yet, brilliant) treadmill video by OK Go - as it really killed it for so many of us who made a living producing videos with budgets and proved that so often less is more by going viral way before going viral was even a thing. I mean we were doing videos for bands you've never heard of (or ever will) for \$25-50 grand and after that, \$1,500 became the standard.

Recently, I had the itch to do a music video. Blame the failed rock star in me but the heart wants what the heart wants. It had been almost a decade since my last torrid romp in videoville, (not including a concert I filmed for Cheap Trick in Chicago), but I really missed shooting a band with no restrictions, no rules and in that 'let's go kick some ass and blow the lid off it' type of way. You know, the kind of videos momma used to make? I got wind heavy metal heartthrobs Vixen was gearing up to release a live album with a few studio tracks and were heading out on tour to support it. I went into action, reached out to the band and said, "Let's do a video! Just show up to the designated venue and I'll handle the rest." Long story short, I couldn't be happier with the results. As you know from my previous blogs and what I drive home in



my book, "What You Don't Learn in Film School," it's about staying busy (or relevant) and doing what you love. Once I got the go-ahead from the band, their management and record label, I wrangled three great cameramen and we went to work capturing the band's sold-out show in Los Angeles.

A month later, Vixen's video for "You Ought To Know By Now" debuted and had over 50,000 hits in the first day of its release - and the numbers keep climbing. I cannot stress enough the importance of getting out, putting your skills and recourses to use. When you're done with that, go shoot something else and afterwards do it again, and so on and so on. Dream projects are great, but there's no reason not to be an active and busy filmmaker. And, if you're anything like me, you become passionate about every project you set your hand to and look at every gig as an audition or opportunity for the next. Oh, and speaking of that, a top management firm who reps over two dozen well-known bands saw the new video and reached out offering me to handle videos for their entire roster. Why? Because I got off my ass and generated content. It's as simple as that!

Thank you, Vixen, for your trust and here's to a summer of prosperity to us all!

Keep Rockin' and happy shooting!



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Photographers On the Move

A glimpse into the lifestyle of two travelling New York photographers.

By Nancy Rauch Yachnes

There are only two of us, but we service five different cities in two countries on a regular basis. It's not that we love to travel, (though we do), but we have close family quite spread out, and yes, we actually (usually) want to spend time with them! Working as photographers gives us flexibility, yes, but it does get hairy sometimes keeping the schedules straight.

At the end of December 2018, for example, we accepted a couple of portrait sessions, plus two events that needed coverage in Naples, Florida. Then, there was one consultation and one sales session scheduled for the following week in NYC. Our schedule often looks like that, except what happens with weather glitches? We were scheduled to fly out of Fort Myers, Florida, on a Thursday night. Along came tornado warnings in Florida and heavy storms predicted for New York. So yes, we did get "stuck" in Florida for a few more days, and thankfully, the NYC clients were open to rescheduling.

Most of the time, our unusual schedules go off without a hitch. We did, though, lay solid groundwork so that we can keep track of our appointments and of each other! We live through our calendars... Google, yes, but we also use 17 hats, which helps us to consolidate info about clients and auto generate invoices, in addition to tracking our schedules.

We also don't carry massive equipment on a regular basis. We keep double and triples of heavy or bulky items and leave them in relatives' closets. (There is such a thing as extra closet space outside of NYC). Tripods and light stands wait for us in our "regular" locations. Otherwise, we travel pretty lightly, and often avoid checking bags. Cameras, lenses, and strobes get packed into carry-ons.



If we need to stay overnight in our Florida locations, sometimes we stay with family, and other times we do actually stay in affordable hotels. We had previously come to rely on Priceline's [Booking.com](https://www.booking.com) site, where we believed we were getting the best hotel prices. We subsequently found out that we were actually OVER-paying on [Booking.com](https://www.booking.com) by more than 25%! We now book directly through the Hilton app, when possible.

Regarding post production, we carry laptops with (now tiny) terabyte external drives and rely on our Adobe suite subscription. When we (often) find ourselves in separate locations yet need to share files, we use OpenText (formerly Hightail, formerly YouSendIt).

An interesting byproduct of our frequent travel is meeting a lot of new people -- some of whom eventually become portrait clients and friends. Sometimes people come up to us to ask about our equipment (we often pack a 600mm lens). Other times, we meet families in airport lounges... We love talking to kids of all shapes and sizes (with parents' permission).

Working this way is not for the faint of heart... We've been known to run through airports to catch flights, and so far, in all the years we have been working this way, we have missed only one flight. (That doesn't count the time we were flying internationally and missed the deadline for bag check... We ended up dumping the suitcase with non-essential clothes in the airport, and just wrapped a few outfits around our lenses...). Wouldn't trade this lifestyle for anything.

FILM BUSINESS

Become an Influencer

Become an Influencer and Improve Your Personal Branding

6 Tips

By Tushar Unadkat

In today's competitive social media presence and an increasingly individualized society, it is vital to understand the importance of Personal Branding and its influence on your business development, whether you are an actor, art director, music composer, makeup artist, producer or any other part of the filmmaking industry.

Personal Branding is the ongoing process of creating a prescribed image or impression in the mind of others about yourself or your business identity.

Branding yourself means to develop a unique professional identity and coherent message that sets you apart from others either in your company or in your industry. I share a few valuable tips here that might help you in creating your own Personal Brand.

- [1] Be yourself while building your platform
- [2] Thoughtfully craft your Personal Brand persona
- [3] Generously share your expertise
- [4] Own your social media *handles* and space
- [5] Recognize your distinctiveness and your assets
- [6] Recognize your principles and set your priorities

Handle. In the online world, a handle is another word for a username. It can refer to the name you use in chat rooms, web forums, and social media services. Handles, on the other hand, are public usernames that can be used to identify people online.

Important ways to endorse your Personal Branding, includes to design and print business cards, attending industry events and exchange it.

Imagine how quickly any commercials on TV sell a product or service within 30 seconds. Similarly, working in the creative industry, it is equally necessary for us to have a consistent and concise 30-sec elevator pitch too. A quick engaging introduction that we use at networking events.

When you make any appointments, make sure your show up 15 minutes before time, listen, and build trust. After the meetings, remember to send a thank you note and follow up on any pending matters. It is also appreciated when we include related posts.

As an influencer make sure you have completed all your social media profiles and especially on LinkedIn. This action is directly relevant to Personal Branding that keeps you current in your chosen field, opens doors for you, and creates a lasting impression on clients. Regularly updating your profiles and website(s) with fresh content is a must, this develops loyalty and trust.

The Personal Brand you build is perhaps the single most important way you can stand out as an influencer, and the means by which people remember you.

Personal Branding often comprises the claim of one's name to various services or products. For an example, I share my various handles on social media:

- [1] Personal Website: www.tusharunadkat.com
- [2] Instagram: [instagram.com/tushar_unadkat](https://www.instagram.com/tushar_unadkat)
- [3] Twitter: www.twitter.com/tusharunadkat
- [4] Facebook: [facebook.com/TusharUnadkatOfficial](https://www.facebook.com/TusharUnadkatOfficial)
- [5] LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/tusharunadkat
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Please feel free to follow me and ask me any questions you may have, and I'll be happy to respond at my earliest convenience.



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Working with Influencers and Bloggers

To Promote Your Student Film

By Theresa Pickett

Everyone knows the power of social media, but as a student filmmaker, hiring a PR specialist can be expensive and unnecessary. Without significantly increasing the budget of the movie, influencers and bloggers can increase the reach of your movie to targeted audiences. As the owner of lifestyle and entertainment blog, "Theresa's Reviews", I am often asked to cover the release of movies, including Hollywood red carpet events for blockbuster movies, while I have also been on the other side reaching out to bloggers to promote independent films. I understand how both sides work and can offer some advice.

When to Begin Promoting

If you have an amazing idea and the enthusiasm to finish it, send out promotional materials as soon as you have them. The earlier you begin promoting, the better. Send posters and trailers, and announce the talent who you are excited to secure. Early promotion could even be a great way to get additional funding.

What Type of Content to Send

As an entertainment blogger, I have noticed that a couple types of content do well. First, exclusive interviews and screenings offer a behind the scenes perspective. Second, coloring sheets and free printables are simple to post and get good traffic if your movie is geared towards a younger audience.

Keep in mind that the easier something is to share, the more likely an influencer or blogger will post it. Send information ready to be shared as it is written with an included list of cast, filmmakers, a short synopsis, full treatment and high-res images. Include pre-written content for social media with the hashtag for the movie and tag your social media handles.

Earned Media or Sponsored?

Before sending anything, clarify your expectations with a contract if you have a sponsored agreement. Some bigger influencers and bloggers may be worth paying to receive promotion. Otherwise, just expect that any unsolicited mailings may not receive a review, but they may still be worth it because sending promotional materials out should net some type of gain.

Building a Relationship with Influencers and Bloggers

To be effective in getting coverage, choose influencers and bloggers who post about topics related to your film. Consider working with smaller influencers, new bloggers, or indie movie reviewers who are more willing to collaborate. Mail a package that includes the movie itself, special swag or inspiration for an activity.

Check out the YouTube Channel, "**The Sammie and Georgie Show**," a variety show for kids! They, too, have collaborated on movie reviews. Subscribe and say hi!

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-jy7HoHz2HcFkvZ6VIsWrg>

Whether your package includes a themed recipe or special t-shirt, putting the extra effort to make it an exclusive experience can result in more social shares and interesting articles about your movie.

For the premiere of your student film, invite bloggers and make it a special event for them, while still sticking to your budget. Finding inexpensive ways to offer photo opportunities that work well on social media can create more awareness about the release of your movie.

Getting your film out there to a bigger audience is just as important as the other parts of your film. You might not have the biggest budget for promotion but spending very little or even nothing at all can get more people aware of your film and eager to watch it.



Writing

So, as Shakespeare said,
"The play's the thing".

By Richard La Motte

There are maybe hundreds of books out on how to write: *Write well, write scripts, write short stories, write novels, story structure, story analysis, famous writers, genre writing, writing the horror movie ...* Wow.

Is writing really that tough? Maybe. Is there a way to simplify writing for film? Maybe. I want to remind you about two writers who wrote about the same time – 800 or so, B.C.E.

The first writer was Aristotle; the Greek Philosopher who said that the difference between a 'story' and a 'great story' was unified action showing cause and effect.

The second was the religious prophet, Zoroaster. He was the first person to postulate a cosmic scheme that included the belief in two gods. He wrote the Zend-Avesta, and his theory was simple. There was a 'Good God' (Ahura Mazda), and an Evil God, (Ahriman). These two cosmic powers fought for control of reality, and your soul. If you understood this, you would choose to join Ahura Mazda and goodness, because not to do so, would see you fall to the 'dark side'. Eventually reality would end in a climatic, 'end-time' battle with the forces of good prevailing.

Now, without too much trouble you might see: 'Star Wars', but you can also see a relationship to almost every film and novel ever written, including, 'The Wizard of Oz'.

A person or group against – another group, a force of nature, their own passions, a lie, a revelation, a Tyrant, dire circumstances, evil corporations, corrupt morality, physical handicap, racism, sexism, zombies... Pick your enemy. Combined with an act three denouement showcasing a successful 'end time struggle' results in a 'life affirming ending', when the protagonist, overcomes incredible obstacles to defeat the menace, ('Rocky' to 'Rambo', 'Jaws', and just about every other film).

(I remember talking about all this on the set where a 'happy ending' was considered a 'Hollywood ending', and a bitter or ambiguous ending was called a 'New York' ending, as in 'The Pawn Broker'.)

This story structure, when combined with the steps of the 'hero myth' as described by Joseph Campbell, give you a pretty good place to start thinking.

To organize the story elements, most people use the 'Three Act Structure' – simply put: Beginning – Middle – End.

(I know this is well known, but I'll summarize it anyway.)

The 'Beginning', Act #1, introduces the main characters and the 'field of action'. It, too, has three parts with the third part leading us into:

Act #2: 'Crisis', where the protagonist undergoes some adventure, or a series of difficulties (also in three parts) which are resolved in:

Act #3: 'Resolution', where we win, or maybe not.

The challenge now is to disguise this structure with good writing. To make the central characters and their battle genuine and recognizable to an audience, engendering empathy and concern. When the hero wins – we all win. That's what gets an audience on their feet, clapping, at the end.

There is another part. Deciding on your script, you have to choose, is filmmaking a hobby (and an expensive one at that), or is it a commercial venture?

If commercial (which means, its display is intended to garner sufficient monetary returns to allow you to continue as a filmmaker), then, before you start, you might want to look at: audience demographics, and national box-office returns. And you might want to organize a publicity campaign around 'trailers' and out-takes... but that's another story.

STUDENTFILMMAKERS MAGAZINE From Our Readers

Thank You For Writing To Us!

"Dear Jody and the whole team at *StudentFilmmakers Magazine*, **THANK YOU SO MUCH for an opportunity to be featured in your AMAZING Magazine.** THANK YOU – THANK YOU. If there is anything I can do for you, please do let me know."

~Zoran Dragelj, Editor/Producer/Director,
<https://www.imdb.com/name/nm1389179/>

"**StudentFilmmakers.com has advanced my knowledge as a cinematographer** through both their information-rich website and hands-on workshops in Manhattan, New York, with industry leaders and experts."

~Andy Levison, Steadicam Operator, California

"**Thank you very much for the quality magazine and web site!** It is, by far, the most awesome resource that I use, not only for my personal development, but also reference and encourage my students at Bowling Green State University to subscribe to. I read several magazines and web sites each month in video and film production. I can honestly say that *StudentFilmmakers* is by far my favorite publication and web site. The articles are insightful and very useful, the resource links are invaluable. I look at all the sponsored links and have made purchases from several of your sponsors that I had not visited prior to seeing them advertise on your web site. I regularly look at the classifieds and have successfully sold some of my equipment that I was not currently using. And, very importantly, I have found several people to network with. Excellent job! Thanks for all you do to make it the success that it is!"

~Jose A. Cardenas, SOC, IATSE Local 600, Bowling Green State University, Department of Telecommunications

"**StudentFilmmakers Magazine reaches far more than film schools.** The articles help people making movies of any age. So many professionals still learn and this magazine's insights cater to all the newest trends in filmmaking, lighting, and technology. When you have contributor's like John Badham who directed 'Saturday Night Fever' writing for *StudentFilmmakers*, it attracts filmmakers from every level. I've been subscribed for over 3 years."

~Peter John Ross, Independent Filmmaker, Sonnyboo.com

"I've only recently been introduced to StudentFilmmakers.com and the publication, and I must honestly say, **the website and magazine is a candy store full of goodies about filmmaking!** I've subscribed to various publications pertaining to my craft as filmmaker and editor, and find myself skipping over articles. But with this publication, I want to take in the entire issue. Not only is it cutting edge, it is highly enjoyable, which places it a huge step ahead of the others. Thanks, *StudentFilmmakers*, for such a great product!"

~Joe Andolina, Independent Filmmaker in collaboration with ThreeOneSeven Pictures

"Just renewing my subscription (Can't wait to see the cinema H2O article!) and wanted to pass along a couple of 'real world' observations about the magazine. **I get a lot of complimentary subscriptions to industry-related publications, but StudentFilmmakers is one I'm happy to actually pay for.** I've spent about 10 years working professionally in television production and I can tell you one thing for certain: We're ALL students. Every market has it's share of competition, and it's a perpetual learning curve to stay as many steps ahead of them as possible. Just being creative with your content isn't enough. Sometimes it's equally, or even more important to be creative with the processes and techniques you're using to achieve what's being asked of you. *StudentFilmmakers* has proven more than once to be a valuable resource for getting familiar with those processes and techniques, and discovering new ones. Many Thanks for a great publication."

~Jon Stephens, Producer/Editor, WTAP Creative Services

"**Love the depth and variety in StudentFilmmakers Magazine:** Good writing from knowledgeable people on interesting topics, great articles that fill the gaps in my production know-how. Looking forward to the next edition!"

~Scott Osborn, Writer/Producer/Director/Composer, Obelisk Group, Austin, TX

Hybrid Scores

The Quality of Sound, Choosing Sounds for Color, and Beyond Orchestral Instruments

by Kristen Baum

I frequently compose hybrid scores for the film projects I score. In several of my scores, I use sounds that aren't traditional instruments. There are a variety of reasons for hybrid scores. Sometimes a project's budget restrictions necessitate it. Other times, it can be chosen for the effect and what that will bring to the story.

So, let me pull back the curtain a bit and share my thoughts. A hybrid score is one that combines elements—from live-recorded instruments to computer-generated/software sounds to elements recorded in the real world (field recordings/found sound).

I work in Logic on my MacPro and like most composers today, I own a variety of software libraries. These libraries range from orchestral instruments to atmospheric instruments to ethnic instruments and voices and things even farther afield. These could be specific instruments (like a theramin), or manipulated metallic sounds. The list goes on and on.

Film composers are expected to create mock-ups of cues they compose. As a result, a workhorse of a computer (loaded with RAM and with high CPU capabilities) and a cross-section of software instruments are must have tools.

But software instruments are available to anyone with the money to buy them. And some of the software instruments (libraries) sound iconic, recognizable. So the challenge becomes creating a score that doesn't have the same sound quality as everyone else's.

The Quality of Sound

Maybe you're wondering, with all of this software available, why even bother with the expense and recording live musicians? Maybe you've

heard the mock-up and think that sounds good enough. Here's the thing. A mock-up only approximates the sound of a live orchestra (or smaller ensemble). There are musical qualities a computer-generated mock-up is missing.

Expression. There is a quality that a living, breathing human brings to music and that is the quality of living, breathing-ness. A musician can infuse passion into a note, a breath or a phrase of music that is challenging to create using only a computer. My challenge in creating an entire score "in the box," one in which every one of the sounds is generated on the computer, is creating a feeling of aliveness in the music.

One reason for combining performances by musicians with computer-generated sounds and is that it can lend a quality of liveness to an otherwise completely in-the-box score. Why would that matter? In a word, breath. Breath gives the quality of aliveness, an added dimension, to a score that may otherwise sound flat or two-dimensional. A clarinetist friend of mine can play one sustained note and the way he plays it can move me to tears. None of my computer sounds can do that.

Choosing Sounds for Color

Choosing what tone colors to add is a storytelling decision for me. When I create a hybrid score because of budgetary restrictions, that limits me to a handful of live instruments. When that's the case, I consider each instrument and what quality it will lend to the score as a whole. Each instrument I choose will be unique and I will choose it for its tone quality and for the meaning it will lend to the story.

In another of my scores, the story centered around a couple deciding

whether they would have a baby together. So, after a discussion with the director about concept, I bought a bunch of baby-related noise makers. You know the kind. The kind your kid brother buys for your toddler just to torment you: popcorn poppers, rattles, jingle bell sticks, that annoying turtle-on-a-pull-string (or was it a dog?) that dings every time his feet go around. Yes! I chose to record every kid-related noisemaker I could get my hands on. Then, I used my recordings of those sounds as the percussion in the main title, which evoked a whimsical, childlike quality. The rest of the score evolved from there, and while the rest was more traditional—the melody, the accompaniment, the instruments I used, those noisemakers created the essence of the score.

I had a similar opportunity a couple of years later when a director asked me to score a fantasy film. A portion of the score would be a montage showing this apartment bursting with people all exploiting a mysterious blue object that showed up in this dude's living room and started spitting out door knobs. The director wanted something unorthodox for the score. That gave me permission to experiment. So I brought out my portable recorder and started sampling: doors opening, closing, squeaks, wine corks popping, trumpet valves clicking. Anything I could think of using in a way it wasn't designed to be used, I did. I even got out my broken-down accordion that I bought at a pawn shop in NoHo and recorded the squeaky-flappy-blurly note that sounds like a reed might be partway broken and not working right. I turned it into a percussive piece that honked and burped along with sections of melody and sections of everything+kitchen sink in between much smaller sections with fewer things thrown in. These scores are totally fun to do. BUT, I find I have to do one thing: find the organizing factor. What's the glue

that holds it all together? What creates the cohesiveness that says this is music and not just a sound guy's graveyard of discarded effects? That's where my musicality comes in.

Beyond Orchestral Instruments

In several of the scores I've composed, I use sounds that aren't traditional orchestral instruments. It's one technique in a composer's toolbox that can capture a mood or convey something that our ears process as different thereby sending a subtle message to our minds to start working. When our mind gets that kind of cue we start asking "What's up with that?" As we continue to watch, we listen for more clues until we're able to parse the meaning of the message.

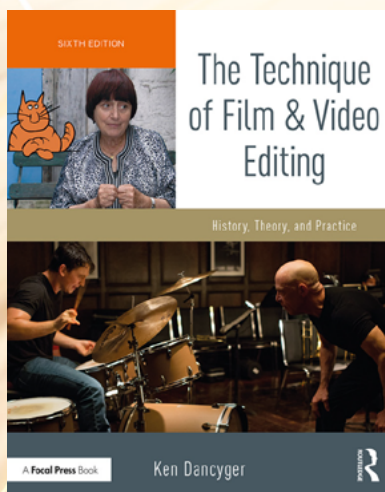
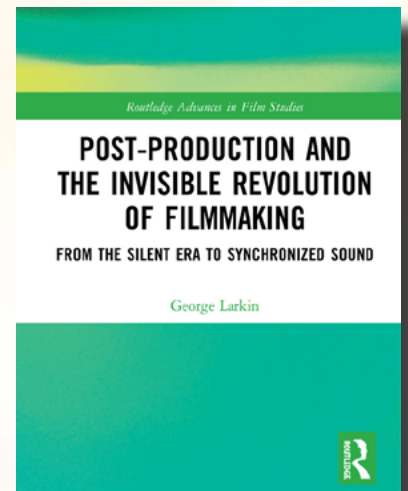
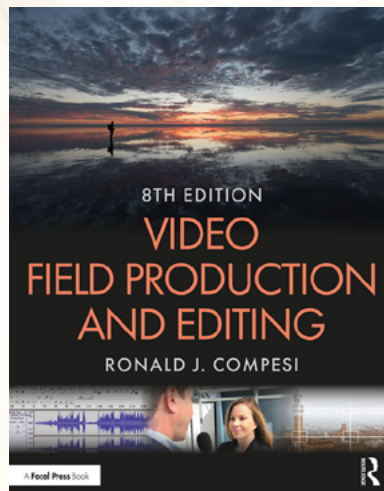
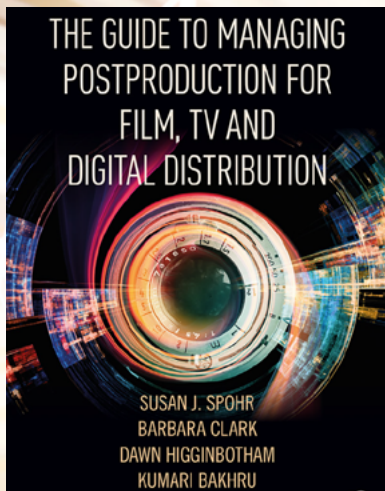
A prime example of using non-orchestra instruments as sonic clues in scores is found in Marvin Hamlisch's score for "The Informant," in which one of the instrument choices (a kazoo) gives the audience a consistent clue as to the reliability of one of the movie's characters. And another example that's farther afield, is the use of whale sounds in Christopher Young's score for *A Nightmare on Elm Street II: Freddy's Revenge*, in which the whale sound evokes a dream-like quality.

The things to consider when using a hybrid score, is to ask what's the purpose of this? What meaning does it lend to the storytelling? Because, when it comes to film scoring the most important thing to remember is that music is the servant of the story being told on screen.

And the instruments and sounds we choose are one part of the larger picture.

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Never Stop Learning

SAMPLE RATES

Audio recording and editing with Logic Pro

By Jason Gaines

With the rise of digital audio workstations, knowledge of audio sampling rates has become increasingly important for musicians and composers who produce digital media. Sampling audio is the process of capturing an analog signal as a digital signal. In other words, converting analog signals into digital signals. Sample rates correspond to the number of audio samples that are taken during one second of time. This process is necessary to edit and manipulate audio in a digital audio workstation. The two most common sample rates are 44.1 kHz (44,100 Hz) and 48 kHz (48,000 Hz), resulting in 44,100 or 48,000 samples per one second of time. When recording audio into your musical project you are converting the analog signal from the microphone or amplifier into a digital signal.

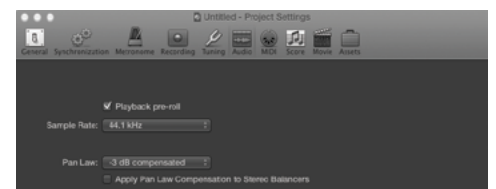
Film and television audio projects require the sample rate to be set at 48 kHz. This sample rate was chosen because of video frame rate (frames per second) requirements. Video editors have several frame rates to negotiate – NTSC (29.97 fps), PAL (25 fps), 24 fps and 30 fps. The 48 kHz delivers a consistent 22 kHz frequency response sample rate that is compatible with these frame rates. Audio projects that are destined for compact discs utilize a 44.1 kHz sample rate. This difference seems subtle enough, but can cause potentially disastrous results because there is a distinct tonal difference between audio that is recorded at 44.1 kHz and audio that is recorded at 48kHz. Many modern digital audio workstations will warn the end user if there are sample rate incompatibilities, but it is important to be cognizant of the current sample rate of a project.

Audio engineers will frequently record at higher sample rates to attempt to capture more audio information, resulting in an arguably more accurate depiction of the recorded audio. These higher sample rates are not chosen arbitrarily; they are directly proportional to the final sample rate destination. Audio projects that are destined for non-video playback are often recorded at 88.2 kHz or 176.4 kHz. These higher sample rates are chosen because they are multiples of 44.1

kHz and are symmetrically compatible, as a result. Audio projects that are destined for video and film can be recorded at higher sample rates such as 96 kHz and 192 kHz because they are symmetrically compatible with 48 kHz. When the projects are bounced, or exported to a playable audio file, they will be downsampled to the final 44.1 kHz or 48 kHz sample rate. The process of downsampling the audio project is known as dithering.

Changing Sample Rates in Logic Pro X

Within Logic Pro X, navigate to File > Project Settings > Audio. Choose the desired project sample rate from the audio settings pane.



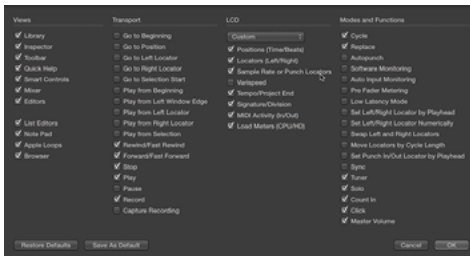
The sample rate is a project-based setting that Logic Pro X stores within the project template file rather than a global preference for the program. Instead of creating a global sample rate change for all projects, Logic Pro X will use the sample rate that is set on a per project basis. However, it should be noted that the default



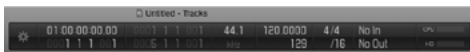
sample rate is 44.1 kHz. Sample rates for music and film projects should be set to 48 kHz or a sample rate that is directly proportional, such as 96 kHz or 192 kHz.

It is helpful to have the sample rate of a project displayed in the control bar along with time and playback controls.

Control-click (or right-click) anywhere on the control bar and choose customize Control bar and Display. Select Sample Rate or Punch Locators. The current project sample rate will be displayed in the control bar.



The project sample rate can also be changed from the control bar once "Sample Rate or Punch Locators" is enabled. This is helpful when you are working with film and video projects where the sample rate is required to be 48 kHz.



Displaying the sample rate in the control bar can prevent problems down the road because it is always clear which sample rate is being utilized in the audio project.

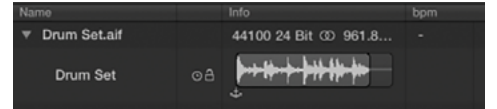
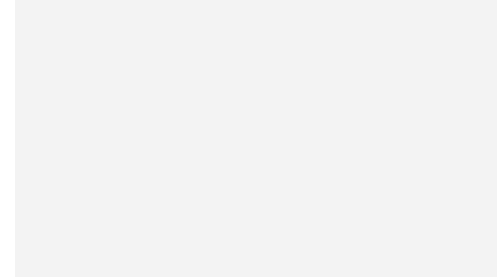
Resampling Audio Files

If audio was recorded at an incompatible sample rate, it can easily be resampled to utilize the proper sample rate. This will prevent needless rerecording of audio content for your musical project. It would be a shame to have to rerecord an impeccable performance.

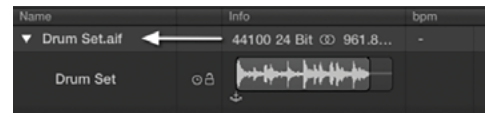
www.oup.com/us/composingformovingpictures

Download the project audio files from the companion website and unzip the project to the Desktop.

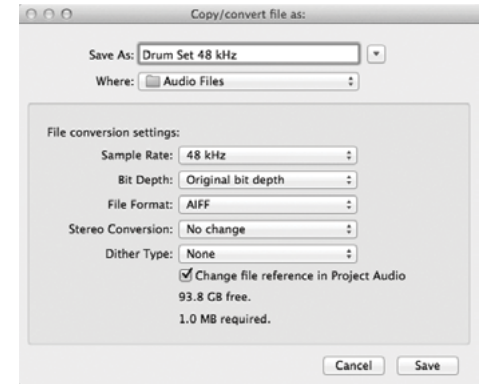
Navigate to the Project Audio Browser in the Browsers area. Notice that the sample rate of the audio file is 44.1 kHz. This sample rate is incompatible with the project sample rate of 48 kHz. This audio file will need to be resampled to 48 kHz.



Select Drum Set.aif audio file. Choose Audio File > Copy/Convert File(s).



Rename the file to "Drum Set 48 kHz.aif" and change the sample rate to 48 kHz, if needed.



Click Save. The audio file will now be resampled to 48 kHz and will be placed in the same position in the Tracks area. This audio file will now be compatible for playback in film and television projects.

From *Composing for Moving Pictures: The Essential Guide*, by Jason Gaines. Copyright © 2015 Oxford University Press.

FADE IN

Make Your Movie

By David Worth, MA

On today's seemingly endless 24/7 social media, there's an overabundance of information about the art and craft of filmmaking. Anyone who's made any type of a production from a short film to a web series, seems to be an instant authority on the subject of filmmaking. However, there only seems to be a handful of truly meaningful books or online sources, when it comes to really digging in and learning about the various arts and crafts necessary for film production. Namely: producing, directing, production management, production design, lighting, cinematography, sound, editing and the many phases of post-production. However, there seems to be over a hundred books on screenwriting! Why? Because writing a script can be an ineffable and nearly impossible task and nobody seems to have a direct or precise answer when it comes to actually defining or accomplishing this nearly impossible task.

Yes, there are hundreds, if not thousands, of precise answers when it comes to film production. The pre-production, production and post-production workflow is well documented and more or less written in stone. The producer has to oversee the entire production, especially making sure, that the money, distribution, cast and crew are in place. The director has to prepare every department, storyboard the script, rehearse the cast and always "make his day" and stay on schedule. The cinematographer has to oversee all the crew, equipment and lighting, making sure the multiple HD cameras all have the proper monitors, lenses, memory cards and personnel for capturing the entire production. The editor has to assess that there is enough coverage including inserts to make the scene work and make a compelling film. Etc... Etc... Etc...

However, when it comes to script writing, there seems to be very few precise answers but an awful lot of opinions... The protagonist and antagonist, the quest, the hero's journey, the turning point, the reversal, and a reversal on a reversal! As well as, a twist on a

twist, Act 1, Act 2, Act 3, Act 4, Act 5... Lots of ways to skin or indeed to "Save The Cat"! That could be because whatever works, works, and the formula for whatever works seem to be in a constant state of flux. Doesn't the abundance of books on the subject of script writing, re-writing and endlessly analyzing the screenplay writing process, point to the fact that if anyone actually had the answer about how to write a good script... *There would not be so many bad movies made from bad scripts!*

And then, the only constant in Hollywood might cease to be the sequel and the remake of yet another superhero movie or some long-forgotten comic book or TV series!

Basically, if you have a degree in writing or have written at least one successful script, you have the absolute authority to write a book about how to follow *your* example. Unfortunately, that does not seem to work; if it did, then, everyone who read your book and utilized your techniques, should write a successful script. But as we know, that does not happen!

Let's consider what actually goes into the writing, of the screenplay... After a prolonged period of research, self doubt, scribbling ideas on napkins and procrastination, the writer at long last sits before his keyboard and reluctantly types those ominous words: "FADE IN..."

What The F#@k Comes Next? Oh sure, there's the outline, the index cards, the notes, the rambling pocket tape recordings concerning "theme" and "structure". But precisely, exactly where and how to begin? Flashbacks? Voice-overs? A detailed pre-credit crawl or a cold open? Of course, we must have a grab-you-by-the-throat beginning, a meaningful and compelling middle and a slam-bang thrilling ending... But as Jean-Luc Godard has wisely stated, "... not necessarily in that order..."

Where, oh where, oh where to begin...

Until the writer has wrestled with these demons and answered all of the above, often unanswerable, questions: Guess what... *Nobody has a job!*

Especially not the writer, because they are usually writing the script

on spec! Not the producer, because they have not as yet been offered the pitch, the treatment or the first draft. Not the director, because they have not as yet been asked by the producer to read the property and come on board. Not the actors because they have not as yet been offered any of the parts. Not the cinematographer, production manager, assistant directors, wardrobe, make up, props, grips, electricians, teamsters, craft service... **Nobody has a job!**

So, not only is facing the blank page or computer screen *the hardest job in showbiz*, it is arguably the most important, since without the script, there is no film, there is no production, there is no project, there is no job, and no one goes to work. That old saying from the theater is still true today: "If it's not on the page, it's not on the stage!"

The writer makes it all happen! How, you may ask, can a person possibly shoulder all of that responsibility? He or she simply must be driven and have a calling from the gods of production in order to survive it! The writer exists **alone**. That's spelled and means: **ALONE!** Then, they must have the God-given talent to literally invent the literal out of the ethereal, they have to conger up the screenplay out of their wits and imagination, word by word, line by line, scene by scene, minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day, week by week, and often, month by month, and even, year by year!

Barely hanging on to reality with their bitten and bloody fingernails, escaping insanity and doom by the skin of their teeth. *This job is not for the faint of heart!* This is a Homeric, heroic and extraordinary undertaking! This is finding the strength to will the "impossible" into existence and make it entirely "possible," as well as, always having to be "compelling!" This is faith in the unknown carried to its most daring and absurd extreme! The hardest job in showbiz... *indeed!*

That being said... Now, let's look at all of this from an entirely different perspective. While it's always highly recommended to have the best of all possible script, penned by the likes of the next Paddy Chayefsky, Aaron Sorkin, David Mamet or Neil LaBute... Successful filmmaking in and of itself, can also be an ephemeral and imprecise art. Even a matter of simply luck and timing!

If not, then why do so many of our greatest and most gifted filmmakers pray and plead and prod every day of production for the unexpected, the happy accidents, or the magic of catching lightning in a bottle?

And while the theater is almost entirely dependent on a finished script, not so the cinema! There have been any number of highly successful groundbreaking films made from outlines, improvised or actually written during production: Huge productions like: "Intolerance", "Casablanca" and "Jaws" come to mind, not to mention the smaller independent films like: "Shadows", "Breathless", "A Man and A Woman", "The Blair Witch Project" and "Once".

How can this happen? Because cinema is cinema is cinema! As Elia Kazan has said, "Casting is 90 percent of the job!" That being the case... IF you have the right charismatic actors or non-actors, fresh faces or "names" on camera and your material is compelling... The audience cannot turn away, they will watch and be enthralled. The actor's subtext will fill in the spaces "between the lines," and you will have miraculously created a film, a movie, the cinema simply out of the ether of the ethereal.

If you also happen to be fortunate enough to have a moving and meaningful musical score, like "A Man and A Woman", or "Once", then you win the Academy Award for Best Foreign Film or Best Original Song. Check out both of those small independent films, and you will discover that they did exactly that!

So, the choices are yours...

- (A.) Write a very compelling script.
- (B.) Get a DSLR or simply your iPhone, some wireless mikes, a non-linear editing program, a team of like-minded creative and dedicated friends...
- (C.) Cast your cast, locate your locations, and make your movie!



The Movie That Every Film Student Has To See

Words and Sketches By John Hart

What film is that? It's "An American in Paris," MGM, 1951, starring Gene Kelly and directed by Vincente Minnelli. Note, "An American in Paris" is included in a DVD box set, "Magical Movies," 2014.

"A bold breathtaking and original love letter to the Great American Musical." *The London Telegraph*, 2014

Why choose this musical classic for study? Because here in this superb film is found (*what a discovery!*) every category the film student needs or wants to know about film technique.

With superb direction by Vincente Minnelli, the film displayed some of the best set designs in the history of film executed by Academy-Award winner, Preston Ames.

I strongly feel "American in Paris," garnering eight Academy Award nominations and winning six, is an obvious choice for a truly stunning, visual learning experience for the film student.

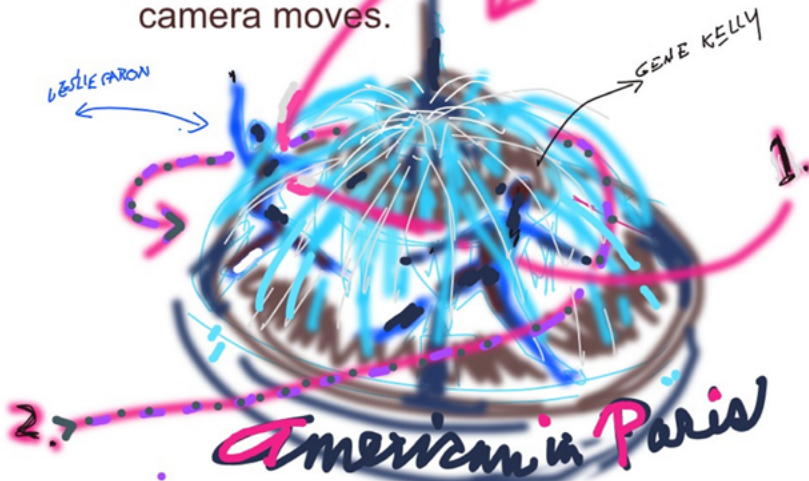
Ted Sennet in his, "Great Hollywood Movies," states, "Gene Kelly (Academy Award for choreography) and Leslie Caron (Kelly's dance discovery from Paris) dance in a Rousseau-like square in the unprecedented ballet (17 minutes) that closes the film..."

"Sets designed by Preston Ames and Irene Sharif and directed by Vincente Minnelli, the ballet was an unprecedented tour-de-force."

"It casts a glow that never fades after many viewings."

Academy Awards: Illustrations of Gene Kelly and Leslie Caron, integrating dancing/choreography with dynamic kinetic camera movements.

1. Camera Movement.
 2. Camera Movement.
- Sweeping, circular, dynamic camera moves.



Peripatetic camera movements, blending with dancers' choreographic movements often towards camera and receding from camera.

- Best Film
 Best Story and Screenplay, Alan J. Lerner
 Best Scoring, Johnny Green and Saul Chaplin
 Best Set Design, Cedric Gibbons, Preston Ames, Edwin B. Willis
 Best Costume Design, Orry-Kelly, Walter Plunkett, Irene Sharaff.
 Best Cinematography, Color, John Alton and Alfred Gilks (also photographed, John Ford's, "The Searchers").

Plus, one's eyes (*talk about eye candy!*) are inundated with Technicolor imagery/visuals at its peak!
 Film lighting design for the sets and the actors.
 Camera movement.
 Close-ups.



Study Abroad

Broaden your view of the world

By Bart Weiss

In most film schools, if you look around the hallways, there are notices about Study Abroad Programs. Some of these are done by your university, but there are many places that do these programs through companies that specialize in these. I have heard of programs from going to the Cannes film festival to studying in England to China, and everywhere in between. I have been wanting to develop a program to bring my students abroad, and at a screening, someone approached me and asked if I was interested in bringing my students to Cuba. I have been wanting to go to Cuba for years, and suggested going during the Havana Film Festival, which takes place as the Fall Semester ends. The Havana Film Fest is a major film festival of Latin America but has films from all over the world.

After lots of work, we made it happen.

I brought 11 people to spend a week there. The idea was to interview as many filmmakers and film people at the festival and to see as many films as we could (some had English subtitles). We enjoyed the Cuban films the most.

What we arranged was to work with the film school in Havana, and we had their films students and some teachers work with my students. For the first few days, the language barrier issues were a challenge, but we worked it out, and by then, we learned so much from each other.

Aside from the festival, we got to see and experience the culture and food, and we shot lots of footage. However, what was greater than the footage we shot -- was the experience. As filmmakers, we make work about the worlds we know. But if you don't travel, your sense of the world is limited. My students have a completely different sense of what their world and what film can be. So, the next time you see one of those notices on the bulletin board, stop and check it out. It just might change your life and change both the way you make and see cinema.





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SPOTLIGHT

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Thomas Ackerman, ASC

is best known to audiences for his motion pictures, including "Beetlejuice", "Jumanji", "Christmas Vacation", "Rat Race", and "Anchorman". Widely credited in commercials, music videos, and special venue productions, he is a member of the American Society of Cinematographers, the International Cinematographers Guild, the Directors Guild of America, and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Ackerman teaches at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts. Photo by Owen Roizman, ASC.



Sherri Sheridan

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



David Worth

has a resume of over forty feature films as a Cinematographer and Director and has worked with talents like: Clint Eastwood, Jean-Claude Van Damme, Shelly Winters, Roy Scheider, Dennis Hopper, Sondra Locke and Bruce Campbell. He has worked with indigenous crews from Hollywood to Hong Kong, Bangkok to Indonesia, Italy to Israel, South America to South Africa, Bulgaria to Romania and back again. For the last ten years, he has taught filmmaking at Chapman University, USC, UCLA and is currently at The Academy of Art University in San Francisco. His three textbooks include, "Milestones in Cinema: 50 Visionary Films & Filmmakers" and are all available at www.amazon.com. David's website is www.davidworthfilm.com.



Theresa Pickett

has been writing for websites and magazines since 2010 after being an actress, movie producer, and casting director in New York, Los Angeles, and Nashville since 2007. As the owner of lifestyle and entertainment blog Theresa's Reviews, she is brand ambassador to major lifestyle brands, and she has been featured on FOX News and more. IMDb: www.imdb.com/name/nm2811358 Theresa's Reviews: www.theresasreviews.com Facebook: [TherasasReviews](https://www.facebook.com/TherasasReviews) Instagram: [Theresa_Reviews](https://www.instagram.com/Theresa_Reviews) Twitter: [TherasasReviews](https://twitter.com/TherasasReviews) Pinterest: [Therasapickett1](https://www.pinterest.com/Therasapickett1)



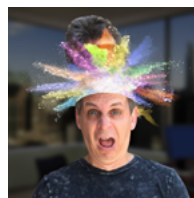
Shane Stanley

filmmaker and author of the popular new book, "What You Don't Learn In Film School" is a lifelong entertainment industry insider, who has worked in every aspect of the business, covering a multitude of movies, television shows and other successful projects. He has been a steady earner in film and television since he was in diapers with a career that started in front of the camera at 9 months old and grew into a life of a multi Emmy Award-winning filmmaker spanning over three decades. For more information, go to www.shanestanley.net Twitter: [@ShaneStanley](https://twitter.com/ShaneStanley) Instagram: [OfficialShaneStanley](https://www.instagram.com/OfficialShaneStanley) Facebook: [ShaneStanleyOfficial](https://www.facebook.com/ShaneStanleyOfficial)



Mark Simon

is owner of Storyboards & Animatics, Inc, author of the industry bible, "Storyboards: Motion in Art, 3rd Edition," as well as the best-selling artist reference book, "Facial Expressions." He also helped develop the Emmy-winning Storyboard Pro software and produces courses for LinkedIn Learning. For more information and media kit downloads: www.Storyboards-East.com storyboards-east.com/media-kits



Kristen Baum

is a Sundance Fellow and LA-based film composer. She works on a broad range of projects, frequently creating hybrid scores that incorporate computer-based sounds with live instruments. Her music is on [soundcloud.com/kristen-baum](https://www.soundcloud.com/kristen-baum), her website is kristenbaum.com, her film credits are at imdb.me/kristenbaum.



John Hart

is an adjunct instructor at NYU and teaches Film Intensives and Storyboard and Storyboard Seminars. He is the author of "The Art of the Storyboard, A Filmmaker's Introduction," (Taylor & Francis, 2nd Edition): Communicate your vision, tell your story and plan major scenes with simple, effective storyboarding techniques. Using sketches of shots from classic films, from silents to the present day, in his book, John leads you through the history and evolution of this craft to help you get to grips with translating your vision onto paper, from the rough sketch to the finished storyboard. More than 150 illustrations from the author's and other storyboard artists' work illuminate the text throughout to help you master the essential components of storyboarding, such as framing, placement of figures, and camera angles. John has 120 tutorials on YouTube at www.youtube.com/user/MyPinto21.



Nancy Rauch Yachnes

Executive Producer, Sparkling Photography, works together with husband Norman, and partner, Beto Ramos. They have been in business for ten years, producing wedding films (primarily in the Orthodox Jewish market), web commercials, cinematic biographies, as well as commercial and family-oriented still photography. Nancy was trained at SVA, is an Apple Certified Pro, and is VP and Treasurer of NYPV. She favors shooting with her Canon 5D Mark III.



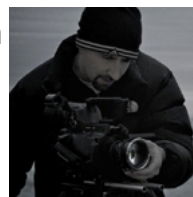
David K. Irving

is currently an Associate Professor and former Chair of the Film and Television program at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. David has directed six feature films and dozens of documentaries. David is the co-author of the award-winning textbook, "Producing and Directing the Short Film and Video."



John Klein

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



Steve Myers

brings over 30 years of combined experience in writing and producing music for film, video, albums, television, radio and live events. As a composer and engineer, Steve has worked on film and video projects for Anheuser Busch, McDonald's, McDonald's Beijing, Disney-Buena Vista, Ronald McDonald House Charities, United Airlines, PepsiCo, Taco Bell, John Deere, Volkswagen, Ford Motor Co., United Parcel Service, United States Post Office, Pfizer, Kraft Foods, Searle, Allstate, Abbott Labs and more. <https://texturetrax.com> <https://vimeo.com/56649715> Story <https://vimeo.com/14698802> Light



David Kaminski

teaches TV Production/Media at Clarkstown HS North in New City, NY about 25 miles north of New York City. His students have earned bronze and silver Telly Awards, CINE Golden Eagle Awards, and over 50 national awards for their work. Their films have screened more than 200 times in festivals across the country and internationally.



Richard La Motte's

filmography as a costume designer includes "Gods and Generals", "Goonies", "The Wind and the Lion", "Man Called Horse II", "Rambo III", "Island of Doctor Moreau", "Stolen Women", "Shaughnessy", "Geronimo", "Crazy Horse", "Tecumseh", "Broken Chain", "Army of One", "Hounds of Hell", "Stitches", "The Legend of Two Paths", "Hawken", and "Indians". For over 40 years, Richard has worked and traveled extensively with experience ranging from Producer, Director, and Writer to Technical Adviser, Costume Designer/Supervisor, and Production Designer. He is the author of the book, "Costume Design 101: The Business and Art of Creating Costumes for Film and Television."



Tamar Kummel

is an actress, writer, director, and producer in New York City and Los Angeles. She's easily found on IMDB, social media, and anywhere that serves food. She's usually wearing purple. More information on current projects, clips, resumes, and books on her websites. "Do or do not, there is no try." ~Yoda. Her current project is "FightingForAllergyFreeFood.com", which is a feature length documentary, and has 2 companion books, 1 is available now, "The Extended Interviews".
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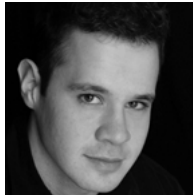
Rustin Thompson

is a writer and filmmaker who has made six feature length documentaries, beginning with "30 Frames A Second: The WTO in Seattle" (2000), which won several Best Documentary awards and was named one of the Top Ten films of the year by the American Library Association. He is a former CBS News cameraman and national Emmy award winner who, along with his wife and filmmaking partner Ann Hedreen, own White Noise Productions, where they've made more than 150 short documentaries for non-profits. He lives in Seattle.



Jason Gaines

is a New York City based trumpet player, composer, educator and author. His career spans studio recordings, Broadway productions and live performances with his own quintet, the Jason Gaines Group. In addition to his performance career, Jason has had a long career in education, teaching in various settings that span K-12, college, and adult education. He holds degrees from the Manhattan School of Music, New York University and Teachers College, Columbia University.



Bart Weiss

is an award-winning filmmaker, educator and director/founder of the Dallas VideoFest 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



Internationally celebrated, multiple award-winning media personality and art critique,

Tushar Unadkat

is CEO, Creative Director of MUKTA Advertising and Founder, Executive Director of Nouveau iDEA (New International Dimension in Entertainment & Arts). Tushar earned more than 30 film credits that includes working with Oscar-winning producers as well as India's National Award-winning directors. Currently, Tushar is in pre-production of a feature film based on Hindu mythology inviting investors to support his project.



STUDENTFILMMAKERS MAGAZINE From Our Readers

Thank You For Writing To Us!

"It would have been wonderful if I had a magazine such as the **StudentFilmmakers** magazine available to me when I first started dreaming about becoming a cinematographer. It would have helped greatly to open up and help me understand the world of filmmaking and how to become part of it."

~Andrew Laszlo, ASC

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~Ron Dexter, ASC

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~Jim McCullaugh, former publisher of *American Cinematographer* and former Executive Director of the *American Society of Cinematographers*

"**StudentFilmmakers.com** is a great resource for people working in video, as well as a very cool magazine. I would recommend you check them out."

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"**StudentFilmmakers Magazine** is a staple among all the media teachers and their classes in our 6 Sacramento Sierra Digital Arts Studio Partnership region. In addition to our email circulation to our membership, we always distribute it during our biannual all youth film festival events now in their 16th year. We believe that digital media arts is a 'stem cell' proficiency and digital literacy the 21st Century essential prerequisite every youth most command. Your publication is a vital demonstration of work force achievement, reinforcing youth career appetites and nourishment. We count on you heavily. Thank you for your brilliant work."

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"This magazine has been a great resource of useful and current information in my classroom. Hands-on production is a very important element in my class, but I also have the students reading articles from my **StudentFilmmakers** magazine... For me, this magazine is just as important in my classroom as the camera or any other piece of gear."

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