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The #1 Educational Resource for Film and Video Makers

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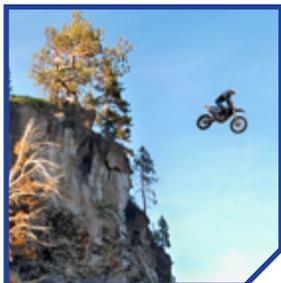


# LIGHTING OUTSIDE THE BOX

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# MOTIVATING YOUR LIGHT

Here's How...

By Scott Spears

So, you arrive on set and look around at the space asking yourself, "Where do I start?" The answer to this question is what is motivating the light in the scene. Using motivated sources is the best way to go because the light makes sense to the audience and the world of the film. As a cinematographer, nothing takes me out of a scene than wondering where the heck a light source is coming from because it's an unmotivated source. If an actor is in an elevator and they have a blazing backlight on them, that makes no sense to me and destroys the reality of the scene. Use a source that makes sense in the space and fits the mood of the scene.

Does your set, be it a set in a studio or an actual place, have windows or even a large window and the scene takes place during the day? Boom, you have your main source, the window. Now you will have to decide if you're going to depend on the natural light of the sun or you're going to have place a large light outside. If the scene is a long one, you

will probably have to go for the big light as the sun will move and change over time. Once you have your main source established, then you can work on the fill light. If you set has white walls, you can bounce light.

If your scene takes place at night in a restaurant, what kind of motivated light sources would you find there. Now this is when you can work with the art director or set dresser and add some small lamps or candles in the middle of the table. You can use the table lamps as a motivated source. You may have to put a more powerful bulb in the lamp to help get a little more illumination from it. Perhaps there is a chandelier on the ceiling which you can use to motivate a backlight for a character at the table or it can cast a pattern on the wall behind them.

Maybe you're shooting in a bar which gives you all kinds of fun sources. Neon beer signs with red in them can allow you to have red backlight on a character. A jukebox can add an underlight for one of your characters who's standing near it. I love putting a small LED light on the bar, just out of frame to give the characters some fill that could be coming from work lights in the actual bar.

As a cinematographer, you should always be paying attention as your move around the world and where ever you go, you should be taking notes or even pictures with your phone when you

see real world lighting that you can use later in life. I was eating in a restaurant I've saw a ray of light hit a menu being held by a woman and put the most beautiful light on the woman. It's true motivated source which I could recreate with a fresnel light on my next shoot.

One final note, you don't have to be true to the real set and in that, I mean if you won't see the whole room and you really want to add some source that doesn't exist, you can add it, again as long as it makes sense in the real world but you have to work out the shots and blocking for the whole scene so that you won't end up showing a space where the light you used for that one shot in the sequence and suddenly there's place that the light could have come from. If you want a window light and there isn't one there but after talking with the director about the coverage on the scene and you learn that you'll never see one of the walls, you can add one to your world and create the effect with a hunk of foam core with a window shape cut in it and fresnel to cast its shadow.

I'm a huge fan of motivated lighting and use it all the time on the films I shoot. It drives me crazy when I see what a cinematographer thought was cool lighting effect that is totally unmotivated. It pulls me out of the story and as a cinematographer, you never want to do that so look your set and use it make your lighting fit the world of your film.

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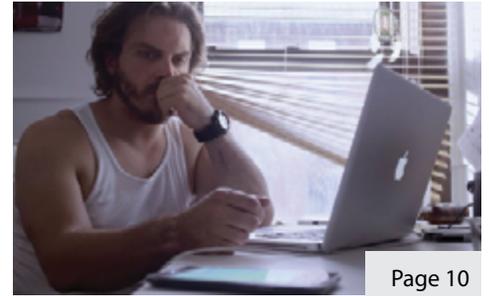
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Now Let's Think  
Outside the Box

# IS THERE LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL?

By William Donaruma

It depends on the tunnel and how it plays in the story. We can get caught up in motivated light sources within a scene. *Where is the window or practical light source? What time of day is it? Should it be hard or soft light?* I know I can be a slave to naturalism when I have to teach concepts of lighting, so students can look at a space and figure out how and why to place a light for a scene. At a recent ASC (American Society of Cinematographers) Master Class held at the ASC Clubhouse in Hollywood, CA, we were schooled in how to think outside of that box. Shelly Johnson, ASC (“Captain America”, “Greyhound”) said he isn’t a slave to naturalism and motivated light versus what is right for the scene and its emotion. I asked the question when reviewing a scene in “Captain America” between Steve Rogers and Peggy Carter amidst a bombed building at night. There is a cool blue exterior and a mysterious source of warm light that cascades upon our heroes in an intimate moment. True to the story and the emotion of the moment, the light envelopes the characters to fit the story at that moment when we need to feel their connection.

On the flip side of this is the avant-garde of Vittorio Storaro, ASC with quickly moving sunlight conveying passion and unrealistic color shifts for mood in “The Conformist”. Oliver Bokelberg, ASC (“The Station Agent”, “Scandal”) strives for an authenticity to images, which find the truth in a scene and in the story. For his work, he approaches the attitude of a scene and the motivation of the camera, light and actor movement.

Paintings, such as Vermeer, Hopper and Wyeth, are an inspiration for naturalism and motivated light, but in varying color palettes and contrast. In this case, the darker side of characters towards the camera is more dramatic and emotionally impactful versus the broad lighting strokes required in comedy.

The same can be said when you need to shoot the simple interview set up.





*What is the subject of the conversation? Where is the setting?* I have done a number of set-ups on the subject of data science in various locations, which can lend to blue and green light from multiple sources versus the emotional context of poverty and loss, which require less attention to the scene and natural palette that conveys the story of those involved. The story of the subject rules your tactics, whether it is fiction or non-fiction. As Shelly Johnson put it, "The image doesn't need to be perfect, it needs to be right for the story."

**So, is there light at the end of the tunnel?** *Why is there wet down inside the tunnel at the end of "Back to the Future Part II"? How does Roger Deakins find light on Daniel Craig in the tunnel in "Skyfall"? What kind of tunnel is it?* Yes, there can be light or no light or time travel light, as long as it serves the story and the emotion you need to convey.



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# KEEP "HISS" OUT OF YOUR AUDIO

## 4 Things You Can Do

By Dave Willard

We've all been there: you got what you thought was the perfect take, but after sitting down to watch or edit the video you realize there's this awful, incessant hissing noise that's ruining everything! This was probably followed by some feelings of distress as you weighed the cost and benefits of redoing everything or keeping it as it is.

There are many types of noise that can plague an audio track, but hiss is probably the most commonly encountered in videography and filmmaking. Here we'll discuss some things you can do to avoid getting hiss in your audio, and one way to mitigate it after-the-fact. But first, let's define our terms.



### Use A Microphone With A Gain Boost

The best way to combat a noisy microphone preamp is to feed it a signal with plenty of gain. The idea here is to avoid adding gain using the camera's preamp (i.e. leaving the volume setting low), which would add noise, and boosting the microphone signal by another, less noisy means.

When it comes to external microphones for your camera, there are many options available today, but most of them don't offer any kind of gain adjustment. Azden's **SMX-30** and **SMX-15** microphones are examples of some of the few microphones on the market that have a gain control switch that allows you to add 20 dB of clean gain to the microphone signal before it is sent to the camera.

Essentially, these microphones have built into them the high-quality gain circuitry that your camera is lacking. In addition to the 20 dB gain boost, there are settings for nominal gain (no boost) and a 10 dB reduction. These settings would have applications for moderately loud and very loud sound environments, respectively.



### What Is Hiss Noise?

Hiss is a broadband noise that spans the entire audible spectrum but with more intensity in the high frequencies. From a technical standpoint, this would be similar to the sound of blue noise. The cause of hiss noise is the electronic components themselves, referred to as inherent or self-noise. The level of a circuit's inherent noise is called a noise floor, expressed in decibels (dB).

All audio circuits generate some amount of noise; it's the inevitable result of the heat energy that moving electrons create. The ultimate level of noise depends on the quality of the components and the design

of the circuitry. This is why, in general, more expensive audio gear, which typically uses higher quality components and better designs, has a lower noise floor.

Since lower quality audio components have the most potential to create noise, it makes sense to look for the weakest link in the audio signal chain when trying to prevent hiss. Unfortunately for filmmakers, that weakest link is often the camera's audio input (or microphone preamp).

It's sad but true; even if you spend a few thousand dollars on what is in fact a really nice camera, the reality is most of what you're paying for goes towards all the things that make the camera's images and video look good, not sound good. This is particularly the case with DSLR and mirrorless cameras that have a 3.5 mm microphone input jack.

So, what is a filmmaker to do? Here are some tips to keep annoying hiss noise out of your audio tracks.



## Turn Off Auto Gain Control On Your Camera

Auto gain control (AGC) is a feature commonly found on today's video capable cameras, but many people aren't even aware of it. Basically, AGC is an audio compressor which acts to regulate the perceived volume of recorded audio by turning up the gain when sounds are quiet and turning it down when things get loud.

This can be useful to even-out the disparity between loud and soft sounds, but still has its drawbacks. One being that when the AGC turns up the audio level during a quiet section of video, it increases everything, including the level of the preamp's inherent noise, making it even more audible. The resulting effect is often heard as a whooshing sound as the noise becomes amplified in quiet audio segments. This doesn't just affect the inherent noise in a low quality preamp, but also the ambient noise from the surrounding environment.

Turning off the AGC setting on your camera is a good idea if you want to avoid unwanted noise. Unfortunately, for some camera models, turning off AGC is not an available option. You'll want to check your camera's manual to know if your camera has AGC and how to control it, and consider this feature when researching your next camera purchase.

## If You Adapt An XLR Mic To A Mini-Plug Input, Do It Right

So, you have an XLR microphone and you want to plug it into your camera with a 3.5 mm input. Just get an adapter, right? Well, if you don't want hiss in your audio, not so fast.



There are a few things to consider when searching for a solution to adapting XLR to mini-plug. One: the cable needs to be wired correctly as you are adapting from a balanced audio connection to an unbalanced one. Two: the length of the unbalanced section of cable should be relatively short as you are losing the noise rejection capabilities of a balanced connection. Three: the ideal adapter will also use an impedance matching transformer to help compensate for any lost gain as a result of the changeover.

Even if you get the proper adapter cable, you may notice that you have to turn up your camera's volume significantly, and because of this your noise floor is high. That's because XLR microphones in general are designed with the expectation that they're going to be plugged into a microphone input that is of a higher quality than what most DSLR or mirrorless cameras can provide.

An even better solution, but obviously more expensive, is to forgo the adapter cable and use an audio mixer with XLR inputs. The Azden **FMX-DSLR** is one such mixer you could use for this purpose. The big advantage as far as noise is concerned is you'll get higher quality XLR inputs, each with a variable gain stage (a.k.a. volume knobs). This allows you to add the proper amount of gain for you XLR microphone without adding a bunch more noise to the signal.



## What Can Be Done About Noise After The Fact?

These are all good tips for prevention, you might say, but what can be done about hiss noise that's already in your videos? Fortunately, today there are myriad software solutions you could use to remove noise.

Professional video editing software such as Adobe Premiere and Final Cut Pro have noise reduction options built in. Chances are, if you are already using these editing programs you know about the noise reduction capability. If not, these are viable solutions but are on the more expensive side.

So, how about a solution for the budget conscious? Luckily there are a few free options out there. Apple's popular iMovie app has a very easy-to-use noise reduction adjustment that works reasonably well. You can find it tucked away in the audio equalizer setting.

If you're using a video editor without a noise reduction effect, you can always use the free audio editing software, Audacity. Doing so would require that you export your audio track as a separate audio file and then import the adjusted audio file back into your video editor. This is a little more work but still beats letting hiss noise ruin your cinematic masterpiece.

It's worth noting that any noise reduction software is not a panacea. Generally, the more aggressive you are with noise removal, the more you start to add artifacts to the sound that distort it. So, when applying noise reduction, you'll always have to strike that balance between improving the audio and making it worse. That's why it's important to try to get the best sound possible from the get-go, because post-production solutions are never just as good.

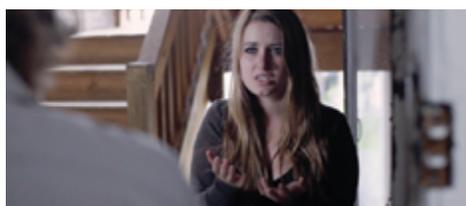
# "BREATHING THROUGH TREES"

Limitation breeds emotional creativity on this short film shot on the Sony A7S.

By John Klein

**For most filmmakers,** low budgets and minimalist storytelling are a way of life. Limitation breeds creativity, wearing multiple hats, and so on. With rare exception, though, I'm typically afforded at least one or two crew members on the camera and lighting side to make things go more smoothly and to enhance the collaborative process. So, on *Breathing Through Trees*, where I was my own focus puller, camera operator, and gaffer, it made for a uniquely sparse experience...and a strangely liberating and dynamic one.

I met writer-director Stephen Takashima in a rather strange way: he messaged me randomly on Vimeo after seeing my reel and asked if I'd like to grab a cup of coffee sometime and chat about filmmaking in Chicago. Probably as close to a blind date as I'll ever have, I suppose! As we



talked, we found we had pretty similar sensibilities and work ethics, and in the late spring of 2016 he sent me this short film script about an amateur pornographer (Cole Simon) who has a crisis of conscience during an interview with a prospective actress (Jillian Warden) after learning his high

school sweetheart (Sofie Puchley) is engaged to her new boyfriend.

One of the perks of the film's production, logistically, was that – with the exception of a couple lightning-quick flashbacks – the entire screenplay was set in one location: a messy apartment. You'd

think that would be a pretty easy get! But we only secured the location mere days before production began, thanks to the magic of AirBNB, and upon arriving we realized just how tight the space actually was. Two rooms – a kitchen/ dining room and a living room/bedroom, plus a super-tiny bathroom. On the fourth floor. (Having a small crew was never more vital.)

Luckily, the apartment rested on an odd corner of the building where one window of the apartment could see the other one. This allowed me to put a 1.2k HMI in the living room and shine it into the kitchen at the main table where the bulk of the dialogue would take place. The rest of my lighting package consisted of two battery-powered Westcott 1x1 LED pads, which lasted the entire 14-hour day on one charge and were invaluable. I placed one above the kitchen cabinets and bounced it off the ceiling for general toner, dimming up and down depending on the ambient light already coming in, and placed another (somewhat counterintuitively) on the ground behind our lead actress Jillian, so it would feel like sunlight streaming in from the window that hit the ground and bounced up.

And...that was it! The flashbacks took place mostly outside and relied on hyper-shallow depth of field, so lighting wasn't necessary, and the only other flashback – set in a tiny bedroom – involved a china ball with a 100W bulb and a fun little 25W stained-glass party bulb that I moved around for different effects. But the minimalist lighting meant I could move around and find shots and engage with the story in a more immediate way.

We shot on Stephen's Sony A7S, running out to an Atomos recorder and opting to shoot ProRes 422 at straight 1080p rather than 4K for ease, storage space, and speed. The full-frame sensor of the A7S meant that on my Zeiss Distagons, we'd be needing all the help we could get softening the image, and to that end

we also used a super-old set of Canon FD-mount primes, as well as a Lensbaby 2.0, for the flashbacks, to give them the sensation of a dream coming back to you in waves. In color grading we pushed the cool hues and contrast of the present to butt heads with the gentler colors and tones of the past.

But in both cases, we always tried to stay as close to our actors as possible. (The tight space wouldn't allow us to do much else!) Cole and Jillian basically met for the first time that day, and Stephen cultivated a wonderfully comfortable atmosphere for both of them to rehearse and block scenes – an essential thing when you've got nine pages of script on the docket! And the handheld style we chose meant I could follow them whenever they changed things up; the cinematography became somewhat organic, in a kind of Malick-Lubeski way, as we searched for little macro-photography elements (eyes, hands, a Polaroid picture, the faucet) and slowly pushed in and out with the camera on odd moments. If Jillian would move this way, I would dance past her to follow Cole, or if that didn't work, we'd stay with her on the next take and I'd circle around to a tight profile of her face.

Every single part of the production – from Casey Autey's terrifically thoughtful production design work to the



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performances to Stephen's direction to, yes, all the limitations of a low budget – conspired to craft this ten-minute film. Write what you have access to, use the gear at your disposal, and find ways to visually tell the story. Creatively, the two days I spent on Breathing Through Trees were a look into a new world of emotive cinematography for me, and I wouldn't have found that without these limitations.

---

"Breathing Through Trees" screened at the Chicago International Film Festival in 2017 and premiered online through Vimeo in May of 2018. Stephen and John collaborated again on the short film Civil, which is currently making festival rounds. <https://vimeo.com/271148521>

**Pictured:** Photos and behind-the-scenes from the movie, "Breathing Through Trees." Courtesy of the author.

# COLLABORATE LIKE A PRO

## 6 Helpful Tips

By Daniel LeBlanc

**C**ollaborating is one of the hardest things to do effectively. Here are a few thoughts you might want to consider when deciding to collaborate with someone.

### 1 Respect

Collaborating in the creative world is a very difficult thing to do as most everything is subjective and there usually is not a right or wrong answer. Finding someone to work with that you respect creatively will make it easier to accept when something doesn't go your way. Working with someone who you don't feel is at your level or above will make it hard to give up on your brilliant ideas. Let's face it, we all love what we do.

### 2 Don't Work with a Doormat

While this will make it easy for you to get things to go your way, it defeats the purpose of collaborating. You want someone who will push you to be better and bring great ideas that are different from your own.

### 3 Find Someone Who Isn't Your Twin

Finding a collaborator who brings a different skill set than you do is very important. This will make your project much better than it would be otherwise. This will also help to keep your relationship from falling off the rails.

### 4 Giving Up Some Control

A very hard thing to do for most creative people. It can also be very liberating and help you grow as a person in all aspects of your life. Really.

This is also key to keeping your partnership working. Both sides need to feel like their opinions are valued in order to stay interested and give their best.

### 5 Pulling the Plug

When people talk about collaborating together, it is much like dating. Everyone is on their best behavior and saying all the right things.

Don't be afraid to change your mind if you feel that things are just not going to work out. Often times, even when a person knows that things are not working, they will see things through to the end. This will occasionally be the right choice, but usually you end up with a mediocre result that no one cares about. This translates into a huge waste of time for both sides.

### 6 Is It a Collaboration?

Make sure that you understand what the relationship is. Did you bring the person into the project? Did they bring you into it? Is it 50-50 with regards to finances and creative? Sometimes a situation may appear to be a collaboration but is only that in name.

### To Sum Up

Collaboration is a great thing if it is a good fit. You will learn a lot from working with other talented people. As you become older and possibly more successful, it can sometimes become harder to find good collaborators as you may become set in your ways and less willing to compromise.

I would say that learning to (sometimes) let go of your ideas and your ego will help tremendously.

I hope you experience many happy collaborations.

#### Websites:

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

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

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# HOW TO BE YOUR OWN ART DIRECTOR

## Pro Tips on How To 'Do It Yourself'

By John Hart

**FGD:** foreground  
**MD:** middle ground  
**BKD:** background  
**EX:** exterior

### Pre-viz / VISUALS

Essential to capturing just a bit of that old Hollywood 'gloss'.

Keep your 'sets' as **simple** as possible, especially, since your 'set-ups' usually consist of available 'on location' areas, like tables chairs, benches, etc.

First, move or get rid of anything **extraneous** that you do not absolutely need in your shot.

Remember you are working on an almost non-existent budget, so just being aware of a **basic design set-up** is doubly important.

**Don't over-accessorize**, as the Interior Designers say, by placing too many 'bibelots' in the scene.



*Example: A restaurant scene could consist of a simple brick background with one large painting (an abstract — **not too busy**) directly behind the table. A cheap checkered table cloth and one candle in the center. Two chairs and two actors.*

With the over-the-shoulder shots (OTS) just keep the backgrounds dark, i.e. unlit.

We are talking here about ways to **maximize the 'look'** of your mise-en-scene, (the area where your action is staged).

If shooting OUTSIDE/ON LOCATION, make sure that your **background** isn't too busy (like flashing neon lights) that would distract from your actors in the FGD.

Make sure that those trees in the background **frame your actors** and that their branches don't look like their springing from the center of your leading lady's head.

If, however, the neon lights are part of the motivation/plot line, that's another story.

Spend some time **FRAMING** your shots. It's a question of **Placement**.

Make good use of available architectural elements in the FGD or BKD, if only takes a little location scouting, just make sure that they are simple, but **dynamically designed**.



Since you are dealing with 3D SPACE, keep in mind at all times the FOREGROUND, THE MIDDLE GROUND, and the BACKGROUND - everything that will be seen in the SHOT - the spacial areas **surrounding**:

- the actors and the camera,
- the actors themselves
- and what is seen **behind** the actors.

All three of the above elements must work together to impart a **constructed whole**.

BACKGROUNDS or FGDs or MDs should contain design elements that point to or indicate the actors in the **mise-en-scene**.

In the following shot the strong curve of the highway above points to the advancing figure.



In the shot here, the two actors moving away from the camera are framed by the strong vertical support to the right of the frame. The two arches in bridge itself repeats the form of the two figures.



Again, a touch of red helps to indicate a center of interest in your shot.

Being aware of these three basic compositional factors and being conscious of the **three receding planes** will add to the **3D spatial images** that you are capturing on film.

Frame the **FGD** area with, for instance, a cluster of flowers, leaves of an overhanging tree or even some quiet people to enhance and draw attention to your actors.

In the **BKD**, place actors in front of or next to or seen through an impressive

rectangular doorway, an arch, or an oval piece of a Henry Moore-like type of sculpture will give the scene a **professional 'set-up'**.

Adding **depth** to your scenes says that you are in the 'pro' area of expertise.

**TIP:** Keep **one-point perspective** in mind. Use of this visual tool can add depth to both your interior or exterior shots.

**EX.** Two or more actors walking down a long corridor that recedes behind them, crossing a busy intersection (with the green light) while the receding planes of the street move behind with the action itself almost accompany the actors' movement.

Ferretti, as Production Designer for Martin Scorsese on "Gangs of New York", "The Age of the Innocence" and "The Aviator", among others, once said,

***"Keep in mind always:  
Atmosphere and Mood."***

Illustrations from **Art of the Storyboard**, and Recent Photographs.

# More Joy of X WORKING WITH COLOR IN FCP 10.4

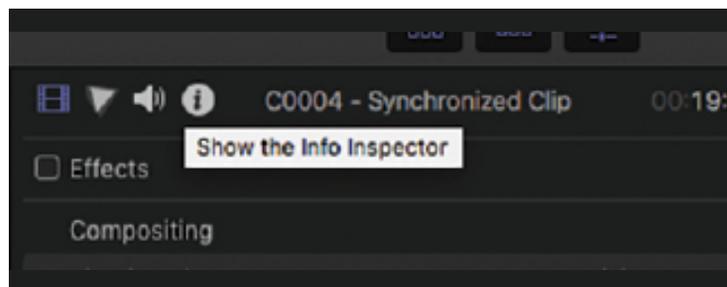
## LUTs and Curves

*By Bart Weiss*

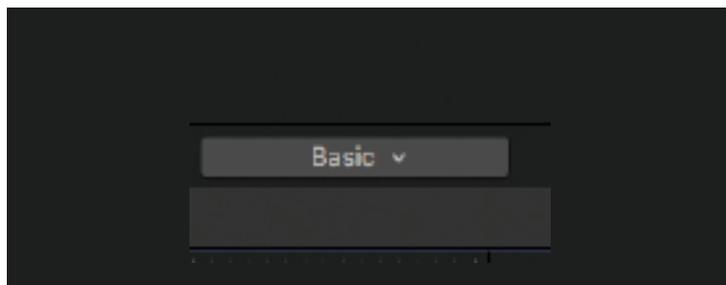
The last major release of X brought some substantial changes working with color. The most important part was including LUT's into the editing without the need of plugins. So, a LUT is a look up table that is really code to expand the dynamic range of materials show with a camera system that uses some form of log. I am sure there is a better explanation but that will get you what you need. If you are looking at video shot with a good camera and it looks flat you need to apply a LUT. There had been different work arounds but now, like most things with X it is very easy. Here is a timeline in X.



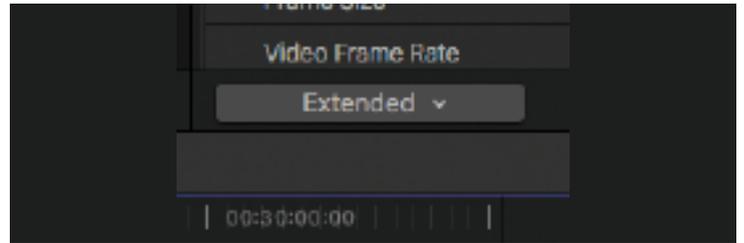
You go to the inspector and click on that circle with the "i".



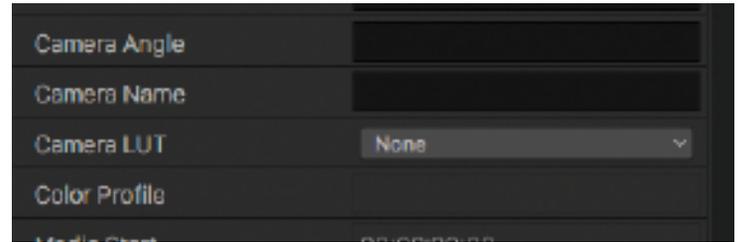
Go to basic at the bottom of the inspector.



Change it to extended.

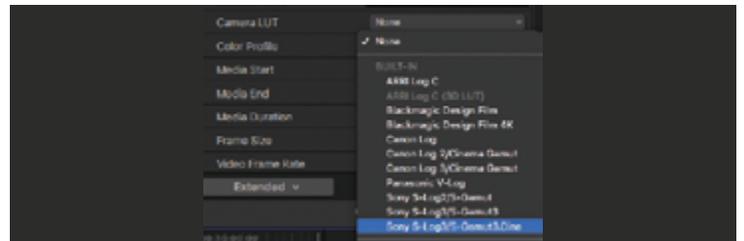


Then look for camera LUT.



Click on NONE and drag it down to the log you used.

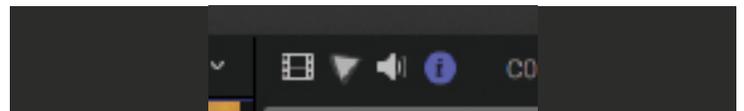
In this case, it is a Sony Log 3 Gamut Cine.



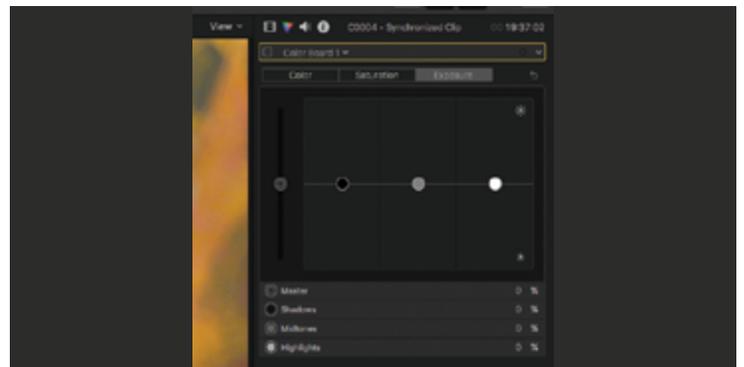
And then enjoy your picture looking, well, very dynamic.



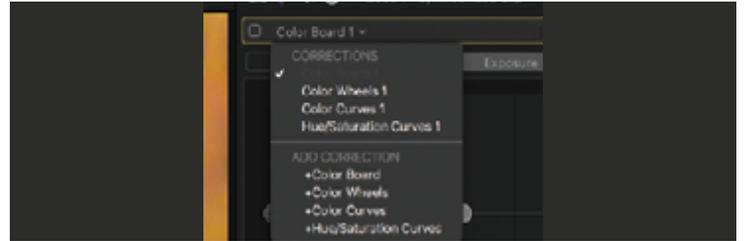
Another new tool to grade the color of your films are curves. Hit that little triangle.



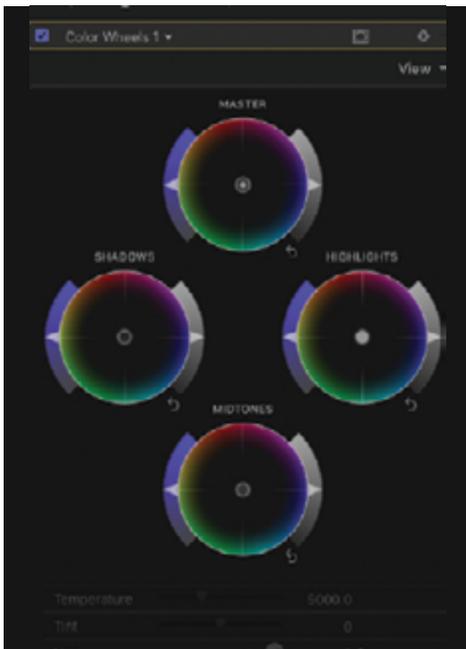
And it turns color and bring up the old color board.



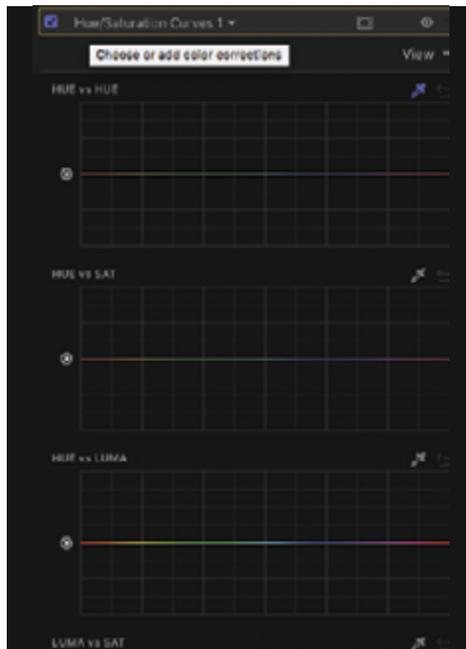
Click on that down arrow next to color where you have a choice of curves wheels and Hue/Sat curves.



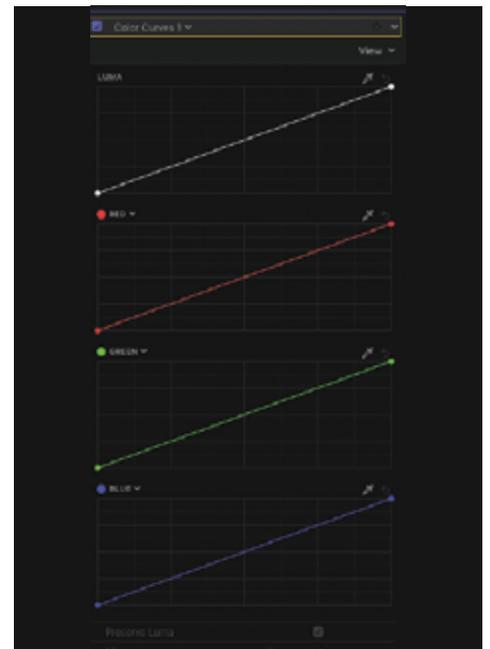
The wheels look like this and work very close to the color board did.



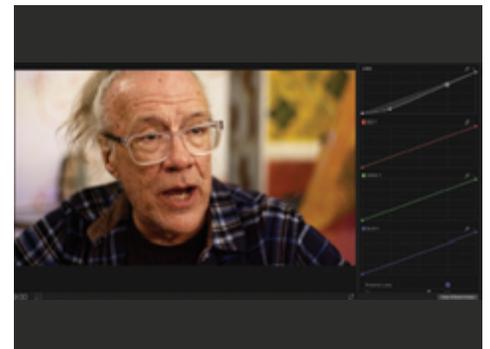
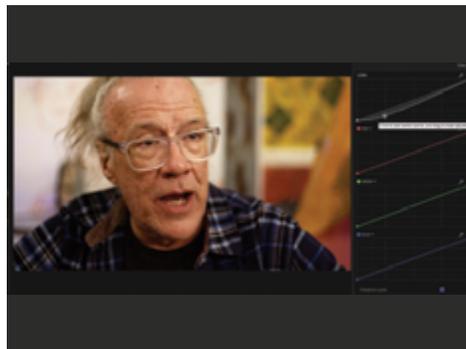
The Hue/Sat curves look like this and this need a completely new story on this.



But check out the color curves.



Just by working the Luma (the first curve) you can expand the contrast by pulling down the shadows and bringing up the highlights.



So, there you go. This is just the beginning but this will really help your work pop.

More joy. Have fun.

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# GETTING TO

# “YES!”

## Tips on Raising Independent Capital

*By Shane Stanley*

There are different ways to raise capital for your movie and sometimes the easiest place to get it is where you'd least expect it - from people with deep pockets interested in dabbling in the motion picture industry. In my new book, "What You Don't Learn in Film School: A Complete Guide to (Independent) Filmmaking I dedicate a whole chapter to not only raising private equity, but how to conduct yourself when it comes time to pitch. In film school they make sure to cover the basics like creative writing, camera, editing and budgeting - at least they're supposed to - but I am yet to find one institution that has an effective course in presenting a project to potential investors. A lot of your success on raising money will be based on preexisting relationships, connections you make through life, and good luck, but once you get into the room, there are some basic dos and don'ts that are rarely covered in the lecture halls. Here are just a few tips from my book that I think you'll find helpful that come from my thirty-plus years of trial and error.

If someone is really in the position to write a check to finance a film, they're probably pretty savvy. Trust me, they have been pitched everything from financing movies, to opening night clubs, starting clothing lines and molding widgets by someone a lot slicker and more qualified than you. Investors know they hold the key to unlocking the door to the dreams that can change your life, so go deep in thought when creating a presentation because you're pitching them on a fantasy (smoke and mirrors), not real estate or something they can look, touch or feel at the moment.

I always advise new filmmakers to play in an arena they're not only passionate about but also comfortable in. As you find your legs I think it's wise to have all the bases covered of your chosen genre, which will aid when executing creative discussions with your filmmaking team and onscreen talent, but more so when pitching your project to potential investors. They'll appreciate your expertise on the subject and sense the passion you possess as the gibberish naturally rolls off your tongue. Remember, when you pitch an investor to finance a film, you're selling something different. You're selling the

magic and the sizzle of Hollywood and most importantly, you're selling yourself along with the upside (or fallacy) of what their investment might return.

What to put in your film finance package is key. I don't think you need too much weight in the room. A simple proposal can include a summary about your film, your bio, and a distribution plan including similar films and how they did in the marketplace. You might want to bring a hard copy of your script so they can see it in person, but offer to email it to them later if they'd prefer. It's also a great excuse for a follow-up unless they've already read your script before the meeting. I don't recommend putting pictures of famous actors you'll never get in your proposal. You laugh. I can't tell you how many times I've seen Matthew McConaughey or Jennifer Lawrence's mug in presentations for films that cost under \$2M. It's ridiculous and just sets you up for failure and ultimately their disappointment. An investor might ask, "Who do you see starring in the picture?" That answer can be met with, "I'd like to spread the cast budget over three or four well-known actors to better the odds of our film's success in the world-wide marketplace. Almost like an ensemble." Trust me, they'll appreciate that. And notice I used the words, "our film" in there. It's the little things in your pitch that will help give you a snowball's chance in Hell to getting that elusive 'yes'.

People with real money are presented opportunity all the time and you have to think on your feet and always be prepared for an audible. Know your presentation backward and forward and never be afraid to say, "I don't know" when asked something you don't know the answer to. One of the best business relationships I ever had was launched on, "I don't know," my answer to a question they asked in our first meeting. Those three words told them the truth; I didn't know and I had the confidence to admit it. I capped it with "I will find out for you," which gave the investor a sense of security I wasn't going to create some line just to appease him right then and there. It also gave me another great excuse to reach out the next day and get him the answer he was looking for, ultimately allowing me to get him on the phone quickly and close the deal.

Think outside the box and keep things in the 'real world' when giving investors comparables. I've used films with little fanfare in my presentations like *Lovely and Amazing* or *Like Crazy*; films that cost little to produce and turned respectable profits that are more realistic to obtain. Dig deeper than the obvious when listing comps and return on investment potential. Trust me, they'll sniff through the hype immediately. Imagine if you were pitched a real estate investment. You'd feel hustled if you heard about the investor who put in \$250k and flipped it for \$3 million a year later. But a story about the person who invested \$250k and turned it into \$750k seems more realistic. Base hits and doubles make sense to investors and they'll be more apt to develop a sense of trust with you early on as opposed to if you used pictures like *Paranormal Activity* or *Juno* as your comps. Those films had more money than you think with major studios behind their release. It's important to always under promise, so you have a chance to one day over deliver. If your investor turns a profit and makes their money back plus 25-30%, that's an attractive return. But if they are anticipating making back five times their

money because you said they could, they will only be disappointed when things fall short. Always keep things in perspective so that even modest returns can be seen as a victory.

So what's the appropriate amount of time to give an investor to respond once you've presented your project? I believe the best way to help avoid this uncomfortable (and painstaking) process can be addressed upon closing your meeting. When wrapping up kindly ask, "When do you think you might get back to me with a decision?" This does two things. First, it subconsciously puts some justifiable accountability on them and second; it gives you a timetable as to when you can expect to hear something and if not, you have reason to reach out. Remember, you never want a potential investor to feel rushed or pressured. And you certainly never want to come off sour if they pass. Several investors who have turned me down have circled back and funded my projects. Why? I think largely because of the respect I showed them when they said no. Rejection is hard and if you burn a bridge, rebuilding it is much harder if even possible at all. Take rejection gracefully. If it feels right, ask them why they elected to pass if they don't offer their reason. But most importantly, thank them for taking the time to listen to your presentation and consider backing your project. Make sure to let them know you hope to keep the door open for the future. I bet 9 out of 10 times they will welcome you to make another presentation down the road.

After all, people pass for so many different reasons and I promise you, I'd wear out the keys on my computer writing half of them. You never know what makes people pull the trigger on things, but life is a long time and people's circumstances and minds are always changing. On the flipside, people will do business with you because they like you and feel a sense of comfort in how you conduct yourself. I once had an investor reject me after asking for a

couple of weeks to consider a proposal. After I thanked him for his consideration and explained I respectfully understood his decision, he did a 180 right there on the phone and agreed to finance the project, as he only wanted to test my personality by giving me a false no. He explained how he often does that when he invests in people and makes a final decision based on their response to rejection. I found it to be a little quirky, but to each is own.

You have to learn to be well versed in what the opposition is thinking. Any Army General or sports coach will tell you that's key to a successful battle plan. There have been countless articles written to help save potential investors from getting hosed by bad investments and scams surrounding the entertainment business, especially after people like Joseph Medawar have done so much damage. Business managers and C.P.A.s strongly discourage their clients from investing in film and stay employed by guiding them to keep their money where it's safe and sound. Pitching to investors is its own kind of game. Not a deceptive game, but the slightest wrong move can turn them off entirely. You have to be smooth, calculated and debonair, all while taking your time and not looking at all desperate. If an investor is led to think they're the only option you have, they will quickly gain the upper hand, but at the same time they need to feel like they're the only person you know with money. To say you're tap dancing on landmines and walking the razor's edge when courting a potential investor is a severe understatement.

For more insight on how to prepare your pitch and get more invaluable tips to raising capital and producing your independent film, please visit [www.whatyoudontlearninfilmschool.com](http://www.whatyoudontlearninfilmschool.com).

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# SCREENING IN A MOVIE THEATER INDEPENDENTLY

## Get Your Movie Seen

*By Peter John Ross*

There is something special about watching a movie in a theater setting. Most people still see movies on the big screen, so the goal of many aspiring moviemakers is to get their movie seen in the same way. Since those of us in the trenches of indie film don't have the distribution, we can rent a theater and present our movies ourselves, or we can setup a digital projector at any public place and sell tickets. This is called **FOUR WALLING**.

I took my first feature film on a 10 city tour of theatrical screenings, culminating in a sold out show in New York. With digital projection becoming more and more commonplace in movie theaters, it takes less effort (and rental costs) than 10 years ago. More and more filmmakers are able to display their works because the reliance on 35mm film prints has vanished.

### THE THEATRICAL EXPERIENCE

Whether you are screening your own film festival of shorts or just featuring your own movie, the goal is to re-create or at least meet the expectations people have of going to see a movie. Making sure that the picture and sound are as good as they can be creates the fundamentals behind a gratifying screening experience, but there are many other subtle details. You want the audience to be lost in the story unfolding in the flickering images on the screen, not distracted by odd sounds, focus issues, or anything that can easily go wrong if you don't prepare. The highest of highs comes from an audience getting into your movie, but it can be equally demoralizing if you can hear and feel people squirming in their seats from distraction or technical errors in presentation.

This is one of the most significant and often overlooked parts of making a movie. Sitting in a dark room with a bunch of strangers watching the moving pictures tell a story is why most people make movies. The intangible feeling a group gives in reaction to a movie cannot be truly defined. In most cases, you can learn innumerable things about

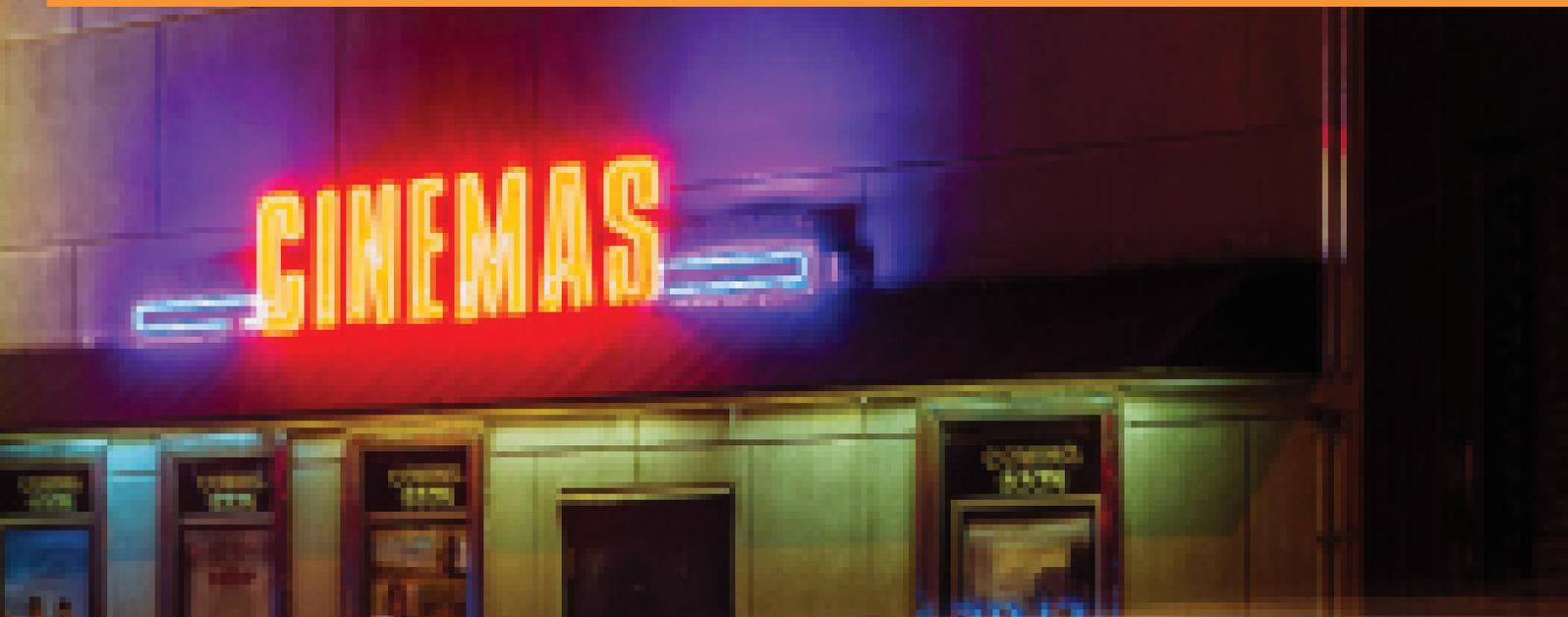
spacing, performance, and unintentional reactions. The magnification of the image alone creates a significantly different reaction to the movie the creators worked with on a computer or even a moviola. The term "larger than life" carries with it more significance on the psyche of the audience than people realize.

### ORGANIZATION

Strength in numbers. Even if you're playing your own feature or short, maybe get 1-2 other things from other people to play with it. Combining casts & crews and their friends and families tends to fill seats. Make sure that if you are the one organizing a screening that you impress upon people to do their part to get people to show up. Having them let people know via emails, phone calls, and a press release is essential to maximizing the potential.

### VENUE SELECTION

Booking a movie theater. A movie theater already has a well oiled machine that's been functioning in the current multiplex format for 30+ years. They have a contract with the film distributors to show each movie a certain number of times a day. Cancelling one of those shows is not always an option, especially the



fewer screens with digital projection already set up. Also, it is a hassle for them to change the showtimes for one single day of the week with all the newspapers, websites, and listings that are normally the same exact times every day. Make sure you try to get your screening listed in the showtimes for that week. This is one of the best free forms of advertisement you can get.

Rates of a theater rental can be anywhere from free to hundreds of dollars for a two hour slot. Rare though it is, some theaters will split the box office for no upfront fees. It is very possible to negotiate a free screen, but you have to make a presentation and prepare a solid business plan as to why the theater can expect to sell more popcorn and beverages during your time than the latest comic book with an A-List actor. It's a hard sell, but it can be done. Usually the "second run" or "dollar theaters" and the independently run theaters are easier to negotiate with. They have less red tape to worry about than the giant corporate run theaters. Regardless, movie theaters make their money from selling food and drinks. They already make very little money from direct ticket sales, but that doesn't change the fact that more people will want to see a blockbuster.

Sometimes are easier to get than others. Trying to book a screen on a Friday or Saturday night will cost you more money because they tend to sell more tickets to regular movies at those times. Sunday late afternoon and Thursday nights are much slower and therefore the rentals are cheaper. You, as an indie filmmaker have less competition on those times too. As with all things, you can work your own accounting for cost versus return with the preferable show times.

The business plan for a successful screening of a truly independent, local film relies on marketing and self promotion. If you have the entire cast and crew, plus their friends and family attend, that guarantees a certain number of ticket sales or seats filled, but that's not enough. You have to interest the general public. A business plan will need to include ways of getting the word out to people to see the movie.

### Important Notes:

- **Try to make sure the theater has a microphone for the theater you are in. This will be important later. Part of the charm and difference of indie screenings is the interaction of the filmmakers**

**with the audience. Having a Microphone makes that easier after the screening.**

- **Making sure someone is arranged to lower the house lights and raise them at the end of the movie is essential. You may have to have someone do this on your team, or pay the theater extra for their projectionist to be more hands on and timely. Remember your screening is a break from their routines and considered a nuisance.**
- **Location, parking, and the overall quality of the theater will affect attendance. Keep these things in mind when pricing the rental.**

### FORMAT

Make sure to consult with the theater on the format they require. Since almost every theater is now doing digital projection, there are options for which CODECS, the software that allows the computer files to playback video. Some projectors only have the ability to play DCP, Digital Cinema Projection files encoded specifically for that theater's systems. You might not be able to simply export to that format depending on your editing software, so

it might be a costly experience getting a file that works at the movie theater. Other projectors play H.264, MPEG2, or other media file formats.

True digital cinema DLP projection is better than the already setup pre-show projectors the theaters use. On another note, to elongate the lifespan of the bulbs, the pre-show projectors are set to the lowest brightness and contrast settings, as well as the volume being lowered and not as easily changed for a one time screening. Try not to allow the theater to use their pre-show projector or settings for your movie.

Make sure to test things THOROUGHLY long before the show. Setup a time to test a significant portion of your movie(s) before the screening itself. Make sure everything looks and sounds right before you show it to a paying audience. You can never recover from a poor first impression. More on this below.

### Important Notes:

- **Aspect ratio and how the projector is set up or can be setup will affect decisions. Many digital projectors can present a 16x9 aspect ratio, others will only show a 4:3 aspect. Knowing this ahead of time will shape many decisions when created a show tape or DVD. Most projectors that can do 16:9 actually “letterbox” the image within its full frame anyways. You might have to pull the curtains in on either side of the screen to compensate for a projectors screen size.**
- **Try to get the make and model number of any projector you will be using. You can research online info on connections and compatibilities.**

## PROMOTION

A formal press release is essential to the media even being aware of your movie screening. If you aren't telling them your movie is playing, who is? They tend to need at least 3 weeks lead time to get a story done, so send the press release early. Also, the local “arts” papers are more conducive to writing about local arts, but never let that stop you from sending to the local big newspapers and suburban rags too. Leave no stone unturned. The secret to getting a story is the follow up. Send an email or make a phone call a week later to make sure someone got the press release and ask if they are doing a story on it or if you can answer any questions for them right then.

Another marketing hook to attempt is a celebrity host. Getting a local DJ or TV personality to introduce the movie has many benefits. Most of these people have fans who keep up with their public appearances, plus it helps legitimize the screening as an “event” or having significance in the eyes of press, not to mention potential customers in the public. This doesn't even take into account that a DJ might be more inclined to promote your screening on the air if they are going to be there.

PRE-SHOW can be a valuable ad-space if you do get an audience. Putting up a slide or making a pre-show file/DVD of material offers an advertising opportunity or it can simply be entertainment. Audiences are becoming more and more experienced with pre-show video content, so meeting that expectation can help set the tone for the show itself.

Contacting local radio stations, offering ticket giveaways, etc. are all good ideas, and take weeks to setup. This can lead to mentions on the air and creating the all important “buzz”.



Getting in touch with local film commissions, film groups, websites, etc. can all help to get people to attend the screenings. Creating awareness and interest in your screening means doing the research and contacting anyone who might take an interest in seeing the movie. Niche marketing means targeting the audience for your movie. If it's about bowling, then get a hold of bowling leagues or bowling alleys and try to figure out a way to get the word out to people who have an interest in your movie.

Posters at the theater weeks in advance can help. Again, emulating the big Hollywood machine will make your movie more appealing. Real poster one sheets are 27”x40” and that's what they need to be to fit in their poster cases. Putting the screening date and time on the poster will help keep those details in front of people frequenting the venue.



## SPONSORS

For film festivals and even some feature film screenings, getting sponsors becomes a viable option. Approaching relevant businesses to pay a nominal fee for advertising can't hurt, especially in trade for promoting the screening. Getting "in kind services" can be a powerful trade in lieu of cash. A local arts paper might trade some ad space for sponsorship to get their logo on a poster or in the flyers. The movie theater itself might lower their price if they get their logo in the print ads and other promotions. The key is creating value for their sponsorship. What do they get for sponsoring? What's in it for them? Create value by making a multi-platform promotion where they can get exposure while giving your screening some light.

Outside the box thinking can result in high returns. Example, a pizza shop might pay \$50 to advertise or give

\$100 in free pizza. Here's the sales pitch, you will put their logo on screen as a sponsor before the movie, add it to any print promos, like a folded flyer or program at the screening, add their logo and link to the movie's website, etc. Also, you can give them 100-1000 flyers or stickers promoting the screening to put on pizza boxes. Everyone wins. They aren't out much money, and you reach a broader audience that might not otherwise have heard of your screening.

The moment you stop promoting the screening is the same moment people stop hearing about it. Attendance is like a snowball you are trying to turn into an avalanche but you have to keep constantly pushing it down the hill until the lights go down and the movie starts.

If you plan all of these promotions and have them truly lined up, present that in your business plan to the theater manager during your proposal. It will show you are business minded and not simply another dreamer who thinks that making a movie will magically bring an audience without working at it. If you do more than one of these screenings and they do garner an audience, you create a track record and the prices can be negotiated lower since their money is made from the concession stand. By having a track record, you can prove that you follow through and everyone will make money.

## CREATING THE SHOW

Your movie may be complete and ready for screening, but the actual "show" needs similar care and attention to pacing and technical requirements. I have been to allegedly reputable film festivals where we here the VHS tapes being ejected or the DVD trays opening and closing between each movie and I found myself torn out of the frame of mind to get into a movie. So each movie suffered a several minute

frustration as I tried to get back into it, and in the case of shorts, they were over before I got to a place where I could even enjoy them. First off, you can create a single file or playlist that has the entire "show" on it to avoid this archaic and distracting program choice.

As a general practice, putting a few seconds of black at the head will give the lights a chance to go down and people to get into the mindset of voluntary suspension of disbelief required of most movies. Now, if you have sponsors or special thanks you can possibly put up a title card thanking them at the beginning. In some cases, using trailers for other local movies can not only create good will between Indie filmmakers, but possibly get their attendance and also further meet the expectation of the normal movie watching experience. It also gives stragglers a chance to get into the show from the concession stand or just plain late comers. Short form movies used to be a staple of the movie theaters in days long gone, but it can possibly help to pair short movies of similar genres before your feature to similar effect.

For those that have a short form, but still want to exhibit on the big screen, you still have opportunities. Making a show of a collection of short material as the feature itself can also yield many positive results. The combination of so many casts and crews and their respective audiences tends to make for a more crowded theater, nonetheless shares the burden of splitting the rental between several people.

I shan't say much about how someone else should order their movies, but I have found that jumping genres, especially from comedy to drama in such short form tends to prepare the audiences for a certain mindset and they may unintentionally react the wrong way against a filmmaker's intent based solely on the program order.

Be wary of how an audience rides the wave of one movie to the next. The pacing of the breaks between movies might seem short in your living room, but might feel like an eternity in the dark theater. It is my opinion that faster is better. The less time people have to twitch or lose focus, the more they will delve into the stories on screen.

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### Important Notes:

- **Make BACKUP PLANS of the show like having a laptop or media player at the screening. You never know what could go wrong, better to be prepared. In some cases, I bring a laptop, but have a DVD and DVD player present as a backup in case something goes wrong. Which is worse, having to stop for 5 minutes to pick up where you left off, or having to cancel entirely?**

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## TESTING

Once you have your format and venue have been chosen, make sure to arrange a time, more than 30 minutes minimum, to test the setup. Create something with standard elements to test with before you even try to put your movie in. Old school video guys will already get this, but using a standard focus chart to test the sharpness of the image, and color bars with tone to verify the projector and deck are properly connected always save confusion. Once you verify focus and color with sound, then try to examine several different scenes from your movie with various color and lighting, and even volume of music, dialogue, and silence in audio. This will show you how the theater will look and sound before the big show in the various levels. You don't want to find out at the screening that it is too loud or too quiet or doesn't look right with an audience watching.

If testing takes place a long time before the screening, it might be wise to take notes of any settings on the projector or sound system when everything has been adjusted to your liking. Anything can happen in the hours between the setup and testing and the actual screening.

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### Important Notes:

- **I cannot emphasize the importance of testing. You are showing your work to the public, and in most cases, other peoples work as well who worked on your project. You owe it to them to present it in the best way possible. Carelessness and blasé attitudes towards the screening will disrespect everyone, including the audience.**
- **Try to troubleshoot as much as you can before people begin to sit in the theater. There is a truth to the "man behind the curtain" illusionary aspects to a movie and how the audience views it if they see too much of the testing or problem solving, especially if you are showing clips from the movie to test.**

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## THE SCREENING

A universal truth is that few if any independent screenings will start on time. You always want to make sure everyone is in the theater and have their popcorn already. Try to account for that in the show times you pick. If you say it's a 7:00 show, it won't start until 7:10-7:15, unless you program the aforementioned shorts or trailers. The movie theater has to show another movie after yours, so if you intend to do a Q&A or anything, make sure you have time when you book the venue.

Since this is an independent screening, and not something an audience or moviemaker gets the opportunity to

do often, an introduction is essential. Your movie(s) don't have the benefit of multimillion dollar marketing campaigns or trailers saturating the market on primetime. Explaining ahead of the movie that this is a dark comedy prepares the viewers for what they are about to see. Not saying anything might create an environment where people are afraid to laugh at the right times and it deeply affects the experience.

Whether it is you or a local celebrity doing the introduction, be prepared. Have some idea of what you are going to say, even if it's on 3x5 cards.

I tend to sit near the back of the theater. You can count heads, see people talking to each other, hear things, and get a sense of what the audience is or isn't doing. It also puts you in the quickest route out of the theater if something goes wrong with picture or sound so you can either fix it or find someone at the theater who can.

Remember that Microphone you made sure the theater had? You need that to introduce a movie and possible do a Question and Answer session afterwards. Depending on the size of the theater, it can be very helpful or unnecessary, but it never hurts.

Always say "thank you." Getting the chance to screen your movie on the big screen doesn't happen every day, or you wouldn't be independently screening your movie. Expressing your gratitude to the people who helped make the movie and those who show up leaves a better impression.

It is an honor and a privilege to experience a movie in the theater with people. Respect the audience, even if they didn't react the way you wanted them to. Mastering the art of controlling an audience can only happen with practice and the more you do it, the better you will get at it.

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# "PLANET OF THE APES" 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

*By Scott Essman*

It burst off the screen, demanding your attention, creating a cinematic revolution in the process. Still, 50 years later, it is widely regarded as one of the all-time great works in science-fiction film. Indeed, Planet of the Apes, based on Pierre Boulle's 1963 novel, transformed into a screenplay by Rod Serling, and brought to the screen by 20th Century Fox, sparked a movement which lives on generations after debuting in 1968. At the time, Apes floored audiences with a multifaceted cinematic approach, but even movie stalwarts could not have predicted its four original sequels, a live-action television series, an animated series, a full line of action figures and playsets, massive merchandising opportunities, a ill-fated 2001 remake, and three 2010s prequels which raised the bar on performance-capture-based computer animation.

Unquestionably, many different disparate elements of the project needed to coalesce to bring us the magic of the first Apes film. By early 1964, Serling had begun to pen drafts of the screenplay, with contributions by Michael Wilson, while, in 1965, studio

chief Richard Zanuck, son of the longtime 20th Century Fox chairman Darryl Zanuck, began in earnest to produce the film, initiating test footage filmed in March of 1966. Makeup department head Ben Nye was tasked with creating the simian likenesses for the screen tests, and the project was greenlit in September of 1966 with producer Arthur P. Jacobs and Mort Abrams aboard, though the makeups would take a decidedly different direction. Few could have imagined then how the prosthetic ape makeups in the final film would spark a revolution in their realization of unique screen characters in movies.

Enter John Chambers, a prosthetics veteran who had found marked success with The List of Adrian Messenger in 1963, a project which struck Abrams and Zanuck as being groundbreaking in its prosthetic makeup likenesses. Critical to Chambers' achievements on Apes was the casting of appropriate actors. In 1996, Chambers explained how, in anticipation of the difficulties in transforming actors into apes, a key production decision

was made. "We cast actors with brown eyes to give them a similar look to actual chimpanzees and gorillas," he said. "We also sought actors with flat noses to fit into the muzzle of the ape appliances. Some were picked at random and their noses were too large. We found that we needed physical actors, and they were usually among ethnic groups."

To execute the project, Chambers began in full during January of 1967 with a key artist at his side. Tom Burman, whose father Ellis was a pioneering artist in the use of prosthetic materials, including a mask-making venture, was stationed at 20th Century Fox as a union apprentice when major pre-production on Apes kicked off. "Tommy, it's you and me!" Burman recalled Chambers exclaiming about the budding project. "He holds up the script: 'I am going to win the Academy Award.' I knew that there was something special about it."

For almost five months, Chambers and Burman worked on the many formidable tasks presented to them on Apes, including cleaning up the makeup laboratory at 20th



Century Fox to prepare for the enormity of the project; it would be the biggest prosthetics film in cinema history to that point. "I knew how to work with foam latex as a propmaker," Burman said. "Chambers needed somebody who had an understanding of lab work. John could be really tough on you. Being a Marine, I knew how to follow orders. I picked up his methods very quickly — I became a son for him."

While both leading and supporting actors were lifecasted, and ape makeups were being sculpted and realized in foam latex, locations were being secured and sets were being constructed. With opening scenes shot in Lake Powell, Utah and different locations in Arizona comprising much of Apes' exteriors, the all-encompassing 'Ape City' scenes were filmed at the 20th Century Fox Ranch in Malibu Creek State Park, a location in Calabasas, California—then the ending sequences were filmed in Zuma Beach, California, west of Malibu. All interiors were subsequently filmed on stages at 20th Century Fox's main lot on Pico Boulevard in western Los Angeles.

On the lot, Chambers and Burman were training young artists who Chambers specifically sought out. "He didn't want seasoned makeup artists adding their own touches," Burman stated of his mentor. "He wanted uniformity; paint-by-numbers. The younger guys were so green, so new. They had no idea what they were thrown into."

Certainly, Chambers' makeup design concepts for Planet of the Apes was unprecedented and forever changed movie history. For the principal actors, the chimps and orangutans wore 'T'-shaped, three-piece, appliance makeups which included a brow piece, upper lip, and lower lip; gorillas were a two-piece makeup. The principals' appliances were removed at the end of a day's shooting with an alcohol acetone solution that cut the glue and washed out the rubber without damaging it. Chambers' experimentation led to a foam rubber that allowed the actors' skin to breathe comfortably.

Forced to pioneer many production techniques to meet the demands of such a large scale makeup show, Chambers, who

passed in 2001, claimed, "we innovated everything." The most influential of his landmark practices was the advent of pre-painting the ape appliances. "That had never been done before," Chambers revealed, "and I was having trouble finding people capable of working in my system. Every individual thought he was a fabulous artist, which was great, but I couldn't afford to have Da Vinci and Michelangelo; I had to have uniform makeups, so I knew that we had to take it out of their hands."

To streamline production, Chambers also set up an assembly line technique to create the dozens of slip-rubber shell background masks that would be used in master shots. "When we airbrushed with spray guns to paint the masks," he pointed out, "we found that one artist could do the work of 20. For appliances, after the foam rubber pieces came out of the mold, we put them on a vacuum-form support, then airbrushed them by lining them up and painting them one by one. At that point, the appliances were ready to be fit onto the actors' faces using a special spirit gum to attach them."

Chambers' pioneering mode of production was a great success. Nonetheless, he chuckled, "we still had some artists who wanted to put their touch in there when they applied." Though information is regularly divulged in present-day interviews, in the 1960s, makeup departments were secretive places with locked doors and little sharing of techniques among artists. But Chambers fought to change that culture on *Apes* and other projects of his at the time.

In the first five months of 1967, the 20th Century Fox makeup department was turned into 'Ape School' where nascent artists created the three main makeups on the over and over again: chimpanzees, orangutans, and gorillas. The late Larry Abbott had been Charlton Heston's hair stylist and joined the team. Famed artist Ken Chase (who created the realistic age makeups in *Back to the Future*) worked in a beauty shop before joining Chambers' group, then ended up creating the Dr. Zaius makeup for Maurice Evans on a daily basis. Other young artists included the late John Inzerella, Leo Lotito, and Maurice Stein, who just passed in the winter of 2018. *Apes'* costumes were delivered in perfect symbiosis to the makeups by designer Morton Haack. The unforgettable wigs were created by the late Josephine Turner, who genuinely lodged a storied career in wigmaking.

Chambers remembers that Turner, "was marvelous, very savvy. She ventilated the hair onto a fine mesh flesh-colored base. We created a pattern that allowed her to design separate hairpieces for our makeups. One was a wig, and there was a piece for each of the side burns that came down under the jaw." Chambers' team put Turner's hairpieces onto the actors each shooting day after the ape makeups had first been applied.

Through the process, Burman, in his mid-20s, followed Chambers lead. "Because I was very diverse, I had inklings how to do things and adjusted to John's methods," Burman said, "adjusting rubber, making molds, making teeth. I worked seven-days-a-week and made \$90 a week. I worked 18 hours a day—I had a lot of responsibility."

When the film started shooting in mid-spring of 1967, Burman's job was to make sure that all of the makeup artists had what they needed for the entire day. "Everything was laid out like paint-by-numbers: an appliance, a back-up appliance, a vacuum form that the appliance would sit on, a base-coat, a highlight, and a shadow," Burman detailed. "They also had a hackle to lay their hair in, with the hair and wool all mixed and ready to go. Their hairpieces were laid out, and they had the appropriate flat spirit gum that wouldn't shine. Because of Chambers' detailed organization, it wasn't as hectic as it sounded."

The proportions of the film, by any standard, were enormous: there were often as many as 60 make-up artists and more than 40 hairdressers working every day; most of these craftspeople handed out masks, made sure that they fit, then colored around the actors' eyes so that their flesh was not exposed. On select shooting days, there were 160 extras with background masks on.

From May 21 until August 10 of 1967, *Apes* was shot on William J. Creber and Jack Martin Smith's, iconic, unforgettable sets, mesmerizing eventual audiences with their collective vision of Ape City, the haunting scarecrow figures, the mysterious beachside cave, and all interior ape dwellings. Moreover, Leon Shamroy provided stellar cinematography under the direction of Franklin J. Schaffner, who used all of his cinematic tools to realize the complete experience of the film. Schaffner was unafraid to shoot his ape actors in closeup, use a zoom lens to frame the action, and take misanthropic Charlton Heston's point-of-view in an extensive chase scene. Heston, as Taylor, still resonates in his first spoken words in *Ape City*: "Take your stinking paws off of me, you damned dirty ape!"

When production wrapped, Chambers and Burman took down the project in the makeup department while Hugh S. Fowler edited together the many elements photographed on set with key effects shots, including one of the most unforgettable ending images in movie history. Jerry Goldsmith provided the unconventional, groundbreaking, avant-garde score, a renowned achievement. *Apes* was released

on April 3, 1968 and stunned viewers with its complex humanistic message, its convincing characters, and its shocking conclusion. Though no formal Academy Awards category existed for makeup in 1968, Chambers received an honorary Oscar for *Apes*, one of only two ever given — the other being *The Seven Faces of Dr. Lao*, which went to MGM makeup department head William Tuttle.

In the ensuing several years, 20th Century Fox produced four *Apes* sequels. Of those films, which kept Chambers' original designs intact, he said, "I was there for three of the sequels, assembling the molds and getting appliances ready, but Werner Keppler supervised makeups in all four sequels." Though his makeup concepts were used for the *Apes* television series, Chambers was not involved. Tom Burman worked on the first two sequels, including the first, *Beneath the Planet of the Apes*, then started work on *Escape From the Planet of the Apes*, before moving onto other things. For a time in the 1970s, Chambers and Burman had an independent prosthetic makeup business together before Burman proceeded on his own with numerous triumphs, including *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1978), *Cat People*, *Captain EO*, *Scrooged*, *Nip/Tuck*, and many more, often in partnership with his longtime wife, Bari Dreiband-Burman.

For the 50th anniversary of 1968's original *Apes*, Burman proactively assembled and produced a documentary about the creation and impact of the film; 34 interviews have been conducted to date, including John Landis, Howard Berger, and Rick Baker. The film, *Making Apes—The Artists Who Changed Film*, directed by William Conlin, is now starting an Indiegogo campaign for completion funds, with a full celebratory guest panel taking place at the Monsterpalooza convention in April, 2018. In totality, Burman was reflective about his landmark work on *Apes* and its overall importance in cinema history. "I think that it was a whole new experience for people back then," Burman stated. "It was one of those things: producers, writers, and directors changed the way they thought about film. It still holds up after 50 years."

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# 20 TYPES OF CLIFFHANGERS

Scene Cliffhangers To Keep Them Watching

By Sherri Sheridan

Cliffhangers are visual and emotional mousetraps. How do make viewers worry about what will happen next and want to keep watching? Leave everything hanging with uncertainty in dangerous situations. Modern films often have cliffhangers every scene and they are used heavily in TV series when cutting between multiple characters.

Each scene is going to have its own beginning, middle and climax ending. Another thing scenes often do is end each section with a cliffhanger. Some of these surprises are bigger than others. The idea is to get the audience to worry about that character in the back of their minds while watching the next part of the story unfold.

How do you create a scene cliffhanger? Look at the cause and effect between scenes first. What scene is coming up next for this character? What is the most dangerous or uncertain situation you can leave them in between scenes? How can you cut the scene mid climax?

Cliffhangers are a combination of high stakes, danger, twists, conflict, scene reversals, unknowns and shocks. Focus on having the characters accomplish the scene goals first, then have their exit be the cliffhanger, with another bump of surprise. Or cut in the middle of the action.

Build the tension of the scene to a breaking point then cut to the next one.

Start the next scene in the middle of a hot mess then leave those characters in danger too. Use different types of cliffhangers to keep them from feeling repetitive. Ask yourself what types of situations you had to wait to find out about and use those ideas.

## 1. Leave Character in Danger

**Mid Climax.** The movie, "Cliffhanger," literally got its name from leaving characters hanging off a cliff. What new ways could you leave the characters in danger at the end of each scene? Look at location and genre elements.



*What new looking cliffhangers can you create that fit your story?*

## 2. Show Character Thinking

**About A Choice.** Maybe she is sitting on park bench thinking about whether or not to get on a plane after meeting an old lover. Does she get on the plane? Do not show the outcome of the big choice.

## 3. Shocking Information

**Revealed.** A character could be told someone is alive who they thought was dead at the end of a scene. Or maybe that the plot goal object is a fake.

## 4. Character Finds Something.

Do not show what the character does with information or object. Reveal that information later in a shocking way. He finds a key and at the very end a door is blocking an exit that the key fits.



*Show a character finding something precious at the end of a scene.*

**5. Dead Monster Is Still Alive.** Have the bad guy pop up and attack at the end of a scene when we think he is dead or gone.

**6. Visual Big Twist.** Do not show everything. If an accident happens make it look like the characters are dead but in the next scene they are found alive. Or there could be an explosion at the end of the scene and we do not know who lived or died.

**7. End Scene with A Big Twist.** Someone dies suddenly or an accident happens.

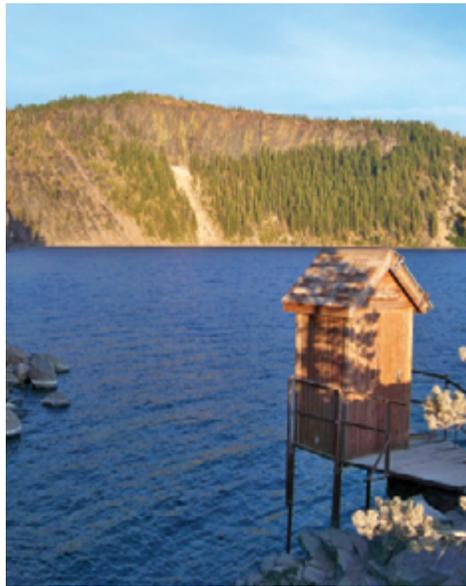


*What happens next after this UFO shows up? I do not know but I want to find out. Cliffhangers should be WOW shots that look good.*

**8. Emotional Squeeze.** Place character in impossible situations then have some crazy thing happen that saves them at the last minute. Do not save them all the way. Leave a little danger and uncertainty at the end of each scene.

**9. Walks into Great Danger.** Do not show what happens next until the scene ten pages away. They could be

walking toward an enemy for a sword fight. Or show two groups of battle ships that are closing in on each other.



*Setup characters being chased by mountain men running out of food. They come upon this shack. Cut as character walks up to shack as we wonder if occupants are friend or foe.*

**10. It's A Trap!** Show character calling someone asking them to do something. At the end of the scene show another character pointing a gun to their head while on the telephone. This tells us a trap is being set and makes us worry.

**11. Character Runs Out of Money, Gas or Air.** Leave character in perilous situation where they have run out of some really important need. Make it life threatening if they do not get this thing right away. No water or gas in the middle of a hot desert.

**12. Character Does Worst Possible Thing.** Have someone take action that results in a terrible situation. Stupid character throws last of drinking water on camping fire. Leave the scene after the smart character sums up the imminent danger.

**13. We Can't Hear You.** Have the character whisper something important into another character's ear that the viewer cannot hear. The reaction of the listener will provide a clue as to what was said.

**14. Surprise Character Saves Day.** Have a supporting character pop up at the last moment and shoot the bad guys. Leave the scene in the middle of a battle.

**15. No Way Out.** Show the character surrounded by the enemy with no escape possible.

**16. We Got You.** How can you show the character being captured at the end of the scene by security, police, aliens, enemy or secret trap?

**17. Death Moment.** Character gets bit by a cobra and is dying. Ticking clock type of death moment. Some miracle happens that saves them four scenes later.

**18. Conversational Cliffhangers.** Cut to another scene in the middle of a heated argument or big question. "Did you kill him?" Let us hear the answer later.

**19. Waiting for Information.** Show characters finding out about a big accident but not knowing if their family survived.

**20. Partner Double Crosses Character at Key Moment.** Betrayal by supporting characters.

See if you can end each scene with a visual cliffhanger. Use different ideas since you can only do the same thing once or it gets boring.

# QUEEN SUGAR: BETWEEN TWO RIGHTS?

A look into excellent storytelling

By Neil Landau

The decisions we make define who we are. Extenuating circumstances, intentional and unintentional ripple effects inform every choice we make. Our decisions define us in terms of our moral compasses and the lines we don't cross—or say we would never cross—in the complexity of life. As the great playwright, screenwriter and director David Mamet said, "That's the whole question of drama: How does one make a moral decision? And further, that a moral decision is not the choice between wrong and right—that's easy—but between two wrongs."

Ava DuVernay and Oprah Winfrey's *Queen Sugar* just debuted its third season on Winfrey's OWN network. The show's commitment to female directors remains outstanding—after DuVernay's pilot and second episode, every episode has consistently been directed by a woman. The storytelling is

always strong: If we go back to the very beginning of the series, we see how the characters' initial decisions carry ripple effects that underpin the story in the current episodes.

In the pilot, protagonist Charley Bordelon (Dawn-Lyen Gardner) is having a great day. She leads a blissful life with basketball superstar Davis West (Timon Kyle Durrett) and their son Micah (Nicholas L. Ashe) in Los Angeles. Their home is the stuff of dreams: one of those glass-fronted apartments with a hillside view over the city (complete with an indoor waterfall). Charley makes good use of her MBA as Davis' manager, and has a sense of style to rival Olivia Pope.

Although things seem too good to be true, the outcome is, as in all the best pilots, inevitable though not predictable. Based on UCLA alumna Natalie Baszile's debut novel of the same name, *Queen Sugar* consistently feels "like an elevated way of telling stories."

That same day, Charley happens to have a chat with her ageing daddy who's living in St Josephine, LA—the other LA, Louisiana. St Jo is a parish of lush, enduring sugar plantations. Charley's Pop Ernest, unbeknownst to the family, is working a janitor job and pleads with her to come home and help with the farm. He's under pressure, it appears, though we know none of the ugly backstory at this stage.

But Charley has just heard about other pressing matters. Davis' teammates have been accused by an unnamed woman of rape and assault in a hotel room. The accused are not just Davis' team, they're his friends and so is Charley with their wives.

Both choices, although neither is easy to deal with, are "rights" for Charley. #1 is Help your Pop, who we hear she clearly loves from the way they speak on the phone. Familial responsibility is always important, sometimes the most important thing in our lives. But it's just less urgent, and in Charley's case inconveniently across the continent. We get the impression that she will eventually help—the show's title is *Queen Sugar* after all—but it is not her priority.

Choice #2 is to help your husband—helping his team is also helping him; the team is the player and the player is the team. If the scandal brews, that could be devastating for everyone if not handled properly. Everything that Charley and Davis have worked to build will crumble in a day; scandalous news is contagious in the media, and Davis' status as an ageing player is precarious. After Charley decides to remain in LA to help defuse the scandal, she spins the situation so that it seems to be just another misconstrued party night and a cheap shot at fame by a gold digger, and Davis is not involved anyway.

We don't blame Charley for making this decision, we actually empathize. How many of us put off our parents' requests for help and visits—perhaps not on a sugar plantation but for tech support, household repairs and errands?

It's devastating when Charley realizes she has made the wrong decision. It's not only too late to change her mind, it's far worse that anything she could have expected. Davis has been cheating on Charley and was with his team at the hotel—and although he didn't assault the woman, his friends/teammates did. We learn in later episodes about the extent of his involvement, which is terrible. Charley confronts him in a memorable showdown on the middle of the basketball court—mid NBA game.

Meanwhile Charley's beloved daddy, in a heartbreaking conclusion to the pilot, has a severe stroke and dies shortly before she and son Micah get to the hospital.

We thoroughly empathize with Charley, as deep down we know we would have made the same choice based on what we thought were two "rights." We can only imagine the extent of her pain as she loses everything: her father, her husband, possibly her career. Charley's next decision sets in motion the whole series: "I'm sorry, Daddy. I'll fix it," she vows to her late Pop, as she stands in his field outside the family home.

The story in the pilot presents a clever twist on the "between two wrongs" expression—here, it's "between two rights." I look forward to seeing where the third season takes us. Long may the show continue its elevated storytelling.

<sup>1</sup>Boris Kachka, "David Mamet's Election Season," *New York Magazine*, January 10, 2008, <http://nymag.com/arts/theater/features/42753>.

<sup>2</sup>Diane Gordon, "Oprah Winfrey, Ava DuVernay, 'Queen Sugar' Cast Recap Season 2 During After-Show," *Variety.com*, November 8, 2017, <http://variety.com/2017/scene/vpage/oprah-winfrey-ava-duvernay-queen-sugar-season-2-after-show-1202610057>.



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rig. Every feature, function and size in the Cineluxe collection was carefully developed to meet the demands of working filmmakers.

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# LOVE OF ADVENTURE

## A Kind of Love for All Kinds of Stories

*By Pamela Jaye Smith & Monty Hayes McMillan*

There's a type of love that scales mountains, moves rivers, and changes worlds. This sort of love often breaks up families, ruins careers, and ends in destitution and death.

Yet it keeps luring people into its web, offering the chance of rewards beyond compare in emotional satisfaction, lifelong relationships, and worldly riches. This love is the Love of Adventure.

Since the first hominids dropped down from the trees to explore the savannahs, we humans have distinguished ourselves by a desire to know what's around the corner, "over the hills and far away", and even beyond the stars.

### The Defining Myth

The Odyssey – one of the most popular adventure stories ever. The saga tells of the Greek warrior Odysseus' ten year journey back home to Ithaca from the fall of Troy. Read Homer's entire Iliad and Odyssey to get lots of ideas for stories you can write dealing with these same issues but with your own unique twist.

### Exemplar Movie

Raiders of the Lost Ark

### Mythic Meaning

Given that every human begins as a single fertilized cell and then expands and grows and becomes more complex, there is a deep evolutionary drive to expand and grow. It is how we are created in the first place. Anthropologically, we human primates managed to get our knuckles off the ground some aeons ago and now we are trying to grab the stars.

The search for new resources often compels primitive tribes to explore new lands looking for fresh water, flora, and fauna. Thank goodness for the survival of the species that almost every group has a few members driven to explore the wilds. Once the new frontiers are conquered, civilizing forces start moving in. Lots of American Westerns are about this

very process: the drive to find new resources for the "tribe" and the tribe moving in and settling down, changing the system where loose but often quite honourable 'cowboy law' had once ruled.

There is a sense of aloneness and sometimes alienation in the soul of an adventurer because others cannot truly understand them if they are not adventurers themselves.

### Symbols

**The Gear** - pickax and pitons, the pith helmet, the wetsuit, the parachute, etc.

**The Leap** - launching one's self out into the void is a huge act of faith and adventure. When Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid leap off the cliff and into that South American river it takes them away from their old lives and into their new ones.

**The Map or a Globe** - shows us the contested territory and how difficult your character's quest will be. The map is a bigger representation of what you see of your environment and often those who are not on the adventure live it vicariously through the map. And in pirate movies "X" marks the spot.

## Key Element – The Shining Moment

Include scenes where your adventurous character acquires the right gear and using it signals the start of the adventure. In *Avatar*, Jake Sully mounts the dragon and begins his adventure with the Na'vi. In many stories the dragon, the horse, the aircraft, the automobile are vehicles to carry the protagonist into other territories or alternate universes.

Show them going through gateways into a new world – be it leaping off a cliff, going through a doorway, jumping out of an airplane, crossing a border, entering a different environment.

## Cinematic Techniques

The wide environmental shot. Thelma and Louise driving across the US. The airplane in the sky. The man riding the dragon. The ship tossed on the vast sea. Give us the human in the midst of that which embodies the adventure.

The close tight shot of putting on the uniform, picking up the tools. Taking on the mission.

Exploring the Environment. The extreme wide shot in Lawrence of

Arabia where Lawrence is riding through the desert, stopping at the oasis, and then Sharif rides in from the distance up to him. The wide shots intercut with close on individuals (guitar man, Mad Max, the child-bearers) in the mad rush to freedom and the mad pursuit to stop them in *Mad Max: Fury Road*.

The Leap. Stepping into the unknown. Jumping out of the airplane. Diving into the ocean. Kirk falling down from the starship to planet Vulcan.

Start close in on the heroine, zoom out to the whole area affected by her actions. Reverse that.

Jerky camera moves and quick cuts do not necessarily say 'love of adventure'. First you must capture our attention and align us with the heroine's desires. In his exhilarating sports photography, Warren Miller shows us the majesty of the environment and how humans relate to it. He gives us close-ups of the individuals and their personal perspective on what they do. He engages us with their emotions. Do check him out.

Sustained coverage of the huge monstrous processes of nature unfolding before our eyes sucks us into the experience much more

effectively than jerky cuts can ever do. The rising tsunami, the encroaching forest fire, the erupting volcano – all deserve long holding shots that make you want to break away and run. It isn't about the character's action so much as it is about the overwhelming environment where the love of adventure takes place.

The love of adventure might well be described as gravity desiring to collect us in its embrace.

## Conclusion

Love of adventure takes us to other places, opens our minds, moves our hearts.

A story about the Love of Adventure should inspire us to dust off our passports, pack up our pith helmets, and set out for the vast unknown.

Seeing new things, or seeing old things in new ways, is essential for story-tellers.

As most of the surface of the earth becomes accessible via on-the-ground travel or Google Earth, the sense of adventure that started humans out on our great migrations tens of thousands of years ago will always draw us to the extremes, the new ones being off-planet, underground, and beneath the surface of the seas.

**"Space... the Final Frontier. These are the voyages of the starship Enterprise.**

**Her ongoing mission: to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life forms**

**and new civilizations, to boldly go where no one has gone before."**

Star Trek

# HUMOROUSLY SAID

## A Look Into "Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl"

By David Landau

Ted Elliot & Terry Rossio's screenplay for the hit film, "Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl," crosses genres and challenges convention. Most people wouldn't think a pirate, adventure, romantic comedy, supernatural horror film would work, much less attempt writing one. One of the things that stood out for me about their screenplay was how they utilized humor within the writing style of the script to establish the tone and allow the reader to experience the enjoyable ride they wanted the film to become. The screenplay I read was an early draft and several changes were made before the final shooting script, but in a way, it is the earliest draft that is the most important - as it is the first one that people read.

Beginning on page one, the writers use clever word play to describe their characters. "JOSHAMEE GIBBS, who was born old," and "NORRINGTON, a dashing young man, Royal Navy to the core," demonstrates a flare for using words to convey images and character with fast off the cuff comments. Elliot and Rossio draw the reader into the movie they see in their head with this style through out the script.

Phrases such as, "He polishes the toes of his boots on the back of his calves, but it doesn't help," (9) and, "He has no choice - - - and it pisses him off," (20) paint character and action with the humorous touch the writers want to establish as the tone of their story.

"Elizabeth stands on the stairs. Granted, the dress may be painful to wear, but holy smokes!" (10) In the actual movie, the dress is nothing exceptional. But Elliot and Rossio are writing for two audiences - the movie viewing audience second, the script reader first. By using humorous asides and off hand remarks, the writers make the script a page turner - a fun read and thus a fun movie in the mind of the reader.

Writing for the reader rather than the end movie viewer is not a new or unusual concept within screenwriting, but Elliot and Rossio go further out on a limb than most books or screenwriting seminars would ever recommend. They don't introduce the stories true antagonist, the mutinous captain of the Black Pearl, until page 44 and they do it with "Despite

the bright colors of clothing, definitely not a man you'd want to meet in a dark alley - - or anywhere, for that matter". The writers could have just written, "A dangerous pirate" and be done with it. But they didn't. Through out the screenplay Elliot and Rossio took the risk of adding "unnecessary" words and sentences, most often cute ones, to help convey the over all fun tone of the piece.

*We follow Elizabeth amid foam and bubbles as she PLUNGES down though the water. Blue and clear, with streaks of sunlight cutting down: bright coral and tropical fish, and a lovely young woman in a silk dress... if it weren't for the mortal danger, the scene could be described as gorgeous. (103)*

Screenwriting books and seminars always hammer in "less is more" and "save it for your novel" when criticizing a writer who doesn't make each sentence as succinct as possible. Adhering too close to this process risks the loss of the writer's personal style. While that may be fine for a shooting script, it won't help the initial story get sold. Hollywood readers are literally inundated with hundreds of scripts to read. A dry fast read will not leave as lasting a memory in this poor over worked readers mind as much as a longer, but much more fun read. A script that is fun to read is fun to recommend and succeeds better in delivering the mental images of what the writer wishes his story to look like on the screen. This is what Elliot & Rossio achieved so well in their screenplay for "Pirates of the Caribbean". You can do it too.



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## STUDENTFILMMAKERS

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2018, Vol. 13, No. 2 US\$9.95

### The Art of Location Scouting

PAGE 8



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MICROPHONE WINDSCREENS P14

AUDIO

The Science of

### THE SCIENCE OF MICROPHONE WINDSCREENS

Wind Protection for Your Microphones

By Matthew Lott

#### What are Windscreens?

Capturing professional audio outdoors can be very tricky and requires not only the right knowledge, but the right tools to help you get the job done. Outdoor audio capture will almost always see the utilization of some sort of wind protection for your microphones. There are many factors at play, and these can include the actual environment (nature of

protection for your microphone is the best way to combat unintelligible audio. Any high-end visuals caught with the best cameras on the market will be almost unwatchable if the sound is bad.

#### The Science of Wind Noise

Wind noise can be a nightmare to anyone recording audio outdoors.

or faux-fur in various combinations) to create a "chamber" of sorts, with the microphone capsule suspended and protected in the middle. These materials make up much of what we see available today to protect your audio from the forces of nature.

Any time a pressure change occurs, air will move from a high-pressure area to a low-pressure area. In an indoor setting, small air pressure changes

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# FILMMAKERS GLOBAL NETWORKING COMMUNITY ONLINE

## COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

### Zoran Dragelj

#### Can you tell us about your body of work?

**Zoran Dragelj:** As an independent filmmaker/auteur for over 20 years I've been fortunate to work on both film and video productions of various sizes and lengths (from feature films to episodic content to short films and videos). Also, I worked on many different genres, which include everything from comedy to drama, documentary to music videos and commercials.

With a *mélange* of talent and skills: visual artist, music video director, and film director, I remain dedicated to the world of independent motion pictures and media arts.

In the media arts field, I'm known for my experimental or video art films and video which is unique in its interdisciplinary nature; for the use of recording and editing devices and computer code to create a composition of moving pictures and sound. It is a new cultural language – the convergence between “old-school” analog recording techniques and new digital media, in my practice used to investigate subjects inspired by modern

life, as evident in my recent works like in *Information Overload*.

Also, I am pondering how our culture of digital and social sharing has narrowed the gap between “creators” and “patrons.” With widely available creation tools like Final Cut Pro X, Photoshop, and “democratic” means for distribution online via YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook, we're now simultaneously makers and consumers of a never-before seen amount of content.

My artistic films and videos are archived with Europeana, the European Union's virtual library for the preservation of cultural heritage and as well with GAMA (Gateway to Archives of Media Art) network and TransMediale (Berlin) is archiving my films and videos for their permanent collection.



#### What are your current projects?

**Zoran Dragelj:** Just last week I got back from Costa Rica where I was filming a documentary for almost two weeks. It was an amazing experience filming at various locations which included high elevation coffee plantations, small quaint towns and the breathtaking jungle. In late February, I directed and executive produced “Friends Like These”, a feature length drama/comedy filmed on location on Bowen Island and Vancouver, Canada co-written by Josh Romyn and David L. Quinn and starring Jill Zavazal, Kiran Madahar and Matreya Scarrwener. The feature was lensed by talented Bryn McCashin and is currently in post production stage led by an award-winning editor Fred Thorsen. In a few weeks we'll have our rough cut ready.

Besides those two full-length projects, I am pre-planning a music video shoot for Kives (aka Michael D. McIvor) in mid-June and working on a homage video for Aleksandar F. Stasenکو art show in Europe later in September. As well I have two projects (“Karma”, a web series and a feature film, “Beyond the Veil”) that I am producing for my writer / director collaborator friend of many years, Victoria Larimore based in Los Angeles. Not to forget my good friend Rick Sam's comedy pilot episode called “3 is a Crowd”.

In 2017, I associate produced an independent Canadian feature film,

"Dark Harvest" starring Cheech Marin along with James Hutson (who was the writer/director/producer/talent), Tygh Runyan, AC Peterson, and Hugh Dillon. "Dark Harvest" screened at 7 major international film festival garnering 11 top festival awards. Soon after, "Dark Harvest" secured both US and Canadian distribution. Over the years I worked on several award-winning European co-productions as well.

Also, I'm a long-time member and a New Media Director at International Press Academy and Satellite Awards in Los Angeles. I also served a two-term at Emily Carr University of Art and Design as an Alumni Senator. For the last 3 years, I taught film theory and directing at Canadian Film and Television Institute and I'm as a director at Intersections Media Opportunities for Youth at Society in Vancouver.

<https://www.imdb.com/name/nm1389179>  
<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt8195404>  
<https://www.facebook.com/friendslikethesefilm/>

**Can you describe your indie filmmaking process?**

**Zoran Dragelj:** Being an indie filmmaker, I've been tuning my filmmaking process by trying to be well organized for every new production that I work on. This is mostly due to necessity to have everything ready with limited resources available. Also, my process heavily relies on collaboration and deals you can secure in order to make that project happen.

Creatively and artistically through a variety of filmic techniques and unique treatments and approaches to subject matter, I have tried to formulate a delicate balance between appearances of things versus the hidden emotional reality in everyday life.

**Can you share with us an indie filmmaking-related "Challenge and Solution"?**

**Zoran Dragelj:** As an indie filmmaker I'm constantly finding "challenge and



*Willy Irawan (sound), Josh Romyn (co-writer/cast), David L. Quinn (co-writer/cast), Kiran Madahar (cast), Bryn McCashin (DoP), Jill Zavazal (cast) and Zoran Dragelj (director, executive producer).*



*Zoran Dragelj (associate producer), A.C. Peterson (cast), and James Hutson (writer/director/producer/cast).*

solution" as an integral part of any production I take part in. You are basically on your feet most of the time, MacGyver style looking to resolve any sort of issue that may arise. No matter if it is in the studio or on location you always gotta be prepared to some extent. As you can't foresee what may go awry, so you gotta be ready for pretty much everything. At times there are no set rules how you can resolve a challenge. The challenge to an indie filmmaking can be anything from funding, securing locations and talent to postproduction and distribution. During my recent feature film production, we had a challenge of securing a location on Bowen Island. Through some carefully searching and talking with few colleagues we were able to secure an amazing location that perfectly fitted our

aesthetics needs. Also, we were offered to book it through an online location booking site (an owners suggestion since she like the project and was willing to help out) so we saved on location insurance.

**If you could share your Top 3 Tips related to indie filmmaking or working with film projects and inspired by trial-and-error and your own discoveries through working on projects what would they be?**

**Zoran Dragelj:** My Top 3 Tips...

Hmm... Well, there are several tips that I stick with, but the first tip is that you, as an independent filmmaker, are constantly open to learning new skills. You can learn any bit of information or a skill from another peer or simply from your previous mistakes. Also, being receptive and listening is another great tip and a key at times. All these leads and can be tied to collaboration on many levels.

I'll give you an example. So, during the filming of "Friends Like These", a feature I directed, and executive produced, earlier this year and currently in post production, I was able to employ all of those Top 3 Tips on so many different occasions.

We filmed the whole 76-page feature film on Red Scarlet camera on location (on Bowen Island) in 6 days. We scheduled it for 8 to 9 days, but on the second last day of filming we were caught in a snow flurry and had to make up for those remaining scenes on our last day after we returned back to Vancouver Mainland. We shot on an average 13 pages a day during 14-hour days. The key here was willing to listen to our amazing crew and cast, seeing what works for each and every one and what doesn't and how we can work around it. For sure it was an impressive experience that I will apply to my future independent projects.

# STUDENT FILMMAKER, WITH THE EMPHASIS ON “STUDENT”

## Important Details to Check Out Before You Choose a College

*By Fred Ginsburg, CAS, Ph.D.*

Most of the time, contributing authors such as myself focus on aspects of filmmaking and share technical knowledge with you, Hollywood's next generation. But this article addresses the “student” side of academic life; in other words,

### FILM SCHOOL.

As I write this, the Spring 2018 semester has just ended; and many of my current or former students walked proudly down the aisles, diplomas in hand, at my university's commencement ceremony. That made me want to reflect on what advice I might have for our incoming crop of aspiring filmmakers, newly enrolled and about to embark on a long and demanding academic journey towards a degree in Cinema, Television, or Multi-Media.

Before you choose a college, there are a few important details to check out. Everyone assumes that a production degree from a (well publicized) film school will land you a Hollywood career. Not necessarily true.

All of the “big” film schools publish recruiting brochures highlighting several recent grads who have done exceptionally well in the biz. What they fail to mention are the hundreds of recent grads who have not done quite so well (to put it mildly). Don't be misled by the rare accomplishments of a few; find out how well the majority of graduates have been able to find relevant employment in the industry.

Do not be awed at first glimpse by the size and scope of the facilities and equipment inventory. Yes, the “big” schools have a lot more cameras and edit bays than the smaller university programs. However, that does not always equate to students having easier access to them. Large departments generally DO have more toys; but they also have a very large student population that need to access them. So being able to “checkout” a professional production package or “book time” in the post production

rooms may not be that easy! Do your homework and ask a lot of questions.

Some of the smaller departments might not offer the gross quantity of equipment, but be ready to do some math and compare tuition rates (especially in-state) versus the cost of renting or purchasing your own gear or software. For example, a few of the more famous colleges here in California charge upwards of \$67,000 per year tuition. In four years, that is \$268k. Some of the state schools run under \$7000 per year, or \$28k. That is a difference of \$240,000 over four years! How much would it cost you to rent a camera package a few times (with student discounts), and to purchase your own computer along with copies of a couple software packages, such as AVID Media Composer, Pro Tools, etc. (also available at discounted rates for students)? Yeah, with \$240,000 to work with, I would definitely not feel like I was missing out on the fun toys that only SOME of the students get to play with at some film schools.

Ask about the degree options. Some colleges offer B.A. (Bachelor of Arts)

*Continued on Page 44...*

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The new broadcast lighting line from Light & Motion called the Stella Pro Family represents the most powerful, compact rugged lights available for imaging professionals.



**STELLA PRO 5000** is a new concept in professional lighting, designed to handle any environment while delivering beautiful cinema quality light. The completely waterproof design has a built-in Li-ion rechargeable battery that runs for 90 minutes on full power, and allows the lights to run cord free for up to 12 hours. Stella Pro's smooth, even, 120-degree beam can be easily shaped and modified to provide a light that renders colors beautifully with consistent, reliable, regulated output. With a wide range of mounting options, lighting modifiers, and portable power, you can do things not possible with

conventional lights. Durability, as with any Light & Motion product, is a given: Stella Pro is waterproof to a depth of 100 meters and can withstand repeated 1-meter drops on concrete and are compatible with a wide range of light modifiers and mounting systems from C-stand, pistol grip to bar mounts.



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Stella Pro 5000,  
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The ultra-compact **STELLA 1000** bests any professional light in its class boasting 1000 certified lumens. Weighing 277 grams (just over 0.5 lb), Stella's minimal weight is at home on DSLRs as well as professional ENG rigs. The integrated rechargeable Li-ion battery provides ultimate cord-free flexibility and delivers 90 minutes of run-time on full power. Plug-in the external power supply or D-Tap cord for extended performance. The C.O.B. LED delivers an even cinema grade light that is flicker free for ultra high-definition imagery. With a wide range of mounting options, on-board lighting modifier, and portable power, Stella can handle any shooting situation in the harshest environment. It is certified waterproof to a depth of 100 meters and able to withstand repeated 1 meter drops on concrete.

For additional information, visit:  
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...Continued from Page 42

or B.S. (Bachelor of Science) degrees; and some even offer B.F.A. (Bachelor of Fine Arts). The different degrees may have similar academic requirements, or may be more lenient in terms of the number of production courses you can apply toward the degree versus mandatory general education credits.

I realize, as an Adjunct "Professor" (technically I do not hold the academic rank of full-time, tenured Professor – even though I do have a PhD in my field), that I should not be cynical of general EDU courses and be more open minded towards developing "critical thinking" by taking a lot of liberal arts type stuff. That does make a lot of sense if you want to be a contestant on Jeopardy or teach high school. I have earned multiple degrees in Film Production, but I have also spent most of my life as a working filmmaker. I can tell you that in the real world, what you KNOW is a lot more important than what is on your transcript. An Emmy and being accepted as an active member into the Cinema Audio Society (the CAS after my name) has advanced my career far more than my doctorate (except in the teaching world).

Try to learn as much as possible about the hands-on aspects of Film Production during your college years. No one out there really cares about your being able to write long term papers about "academic" subjects such as mathematical cinematic influences, ethical fish history, polar ice cap diversity, or the comparison of early Russian cinematic tripods versus volcanic lava flows.

Concentrate instead, as much as possible, on: storytelling, pre-production, production, and post production. Cinematography, sound, editing, producing, design, script writing. The stuff that makes you a well-rounded and technically proficient potential employee!



*Photo of author during university commencement ceremony.*



*Photo of film students during student film production.*

When you do have to take courses outside of your major, think in terms of finding relevant subject matter. To Direct, you should take at least one acting course over in the Theatre Dept. Cinematographers, learn more about Photography and Photoshop. As an Editor, take some music appreciation classes. Computer Sciences... absolutely. You care going to be working on computers, so learn how to network, build, and repair them. Writers should go heavy with Psychology

and Sociology in order to learn about personality and social traits.

Don't forget the mundane subject areas, such as Accounting. I truly doubt that you will ever use Calculus and Trig as a filmmaker, but keeping track of your finances and business expenses is essential. Contract Law and Entertainment Law is obviously quite useful.

Look though the college course catalog, and find subjects that will tie into your future career plans. Sure, there are a lot of "easy" or "fun" courses that you could sign up for to fill up your class menu – but why waste a good opportunity to learn something that will actually help you out in life.

One more bit of advice that I tell my film students. Filmmaking requires a dedication of your time (and finances). When you begin working on larger student productions – you will often find that it is necessary to miss classes a few days in a row in order to accommodate shooting schedules.

Although the instructors who teach production classes are generally very understanding, you may find that the professors who teach the standard "academic" courses are not so tolerant of absences and missed tests. Bring this situation up with them BEFORE you register for their classes, or at least during the first week of the semester so that you can drop/add if it comes down to that. You should also try to take as many General Ed. (or elective non-major) courses during your freshman and sophomore semesters, so that you have more time to devote to your advanced production classes during your junior and senior years.

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The Kupo Vision Arm is a precision crafted articulating arm is designed for holding field monitors or accessories. The two 1/4"-20 threads at either end are attached to ball joints that rotate 360 degrees, plus a cut-out in the sleeve surrounding the ball allows the thread to be bent 90 degrees. The central elbow rotates 360 degrees for infinite adjustability. In addition to the included hot shoe adapter, a 3/8"-1/4" barrel adapter allows you to connect two things of different thread sizes.

### SPECIFICATIONS:

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Weight:	0.65 lbs (0.29 kg)
Maximum Load:	11 lbs (5 kg)

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Closed Length:	15.75 in (40.01 cm)
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Maximum Load:	3.3 lbs (1.49 kg)
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Sections:	4
Leveling Leg:	No
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## Kupo Sandbags

The "Silent Grip"

A sand bag is a what's known as a "Silent Grip" because it does its job efficiently without any complaints. Sand bags are necessary safety items. They prevent light stands from tipping over. They provide a down and dirty place to support a camera and also act as counterweights for booms. If you have people, especially children in your studio, a sand bag can prevent them from knocking down an expensive lighting fixture or worse causing injury to themselves or others.

### 13.2 lbs (6kg) Velcro Refillable Sandbag

Catalog # KG083011

### 22.4 lbs (10.2 kg) Velcro Refillable Sandbag

Catalog # KG083411

### 35 lbs (15kg) Velcro Refillable Sandbag

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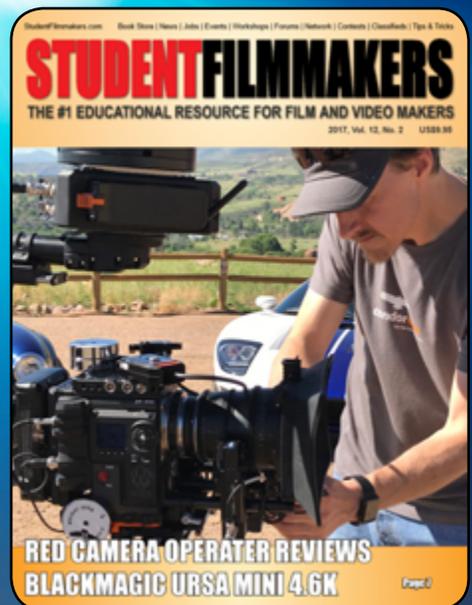
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