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Photo credit: John Klein.

Behind the scenes of the making of *Static Space*, a short film directed and produced by John Klein and Kate Black-Spence.



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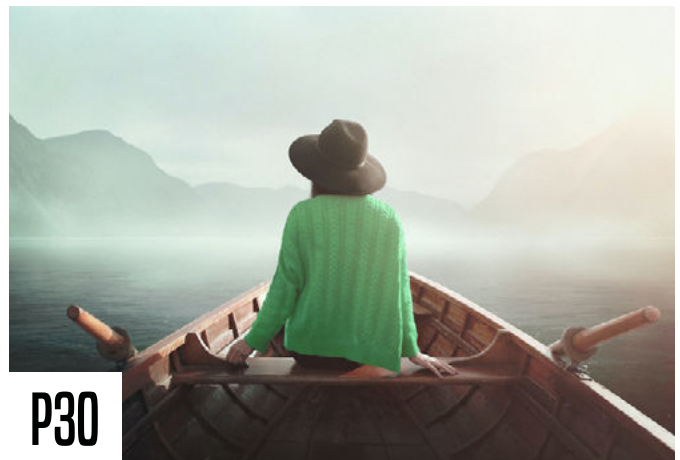
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StudentFilmmakers

# Create a New Reality *to Enhance the Fantasy* in Your Story

## Simplicity and Magic in Filmmaking

By Michael Goi, ASC, ISC

I've always been fascinated with magic. From the time I helped form the Magic Club in high school to my first experiments in doing stop motion animation with my Regular 8 film camera, I was obsessed with how to make the audience believe what I was showing them.

For my feature film, *Megan Is Missing*, that meant using the audience's expectation of what looked "real" as a way of getting them to be emotionally involved in the story. On *American Horror Story*, it meant pushing the envelope in cinematic extremities to the point that, even if the audience knew what they were watching couldn't possibly be real, we were so committed to the vision that it took on its own reality.

The fact that an audience wants to believe what they are seeing is the foundation of magic and filmmaking. We exploit that desire to believe as directors, cinematographers, and editors. But it requires being an artist who is first willing to think beyond what you yourself see and believe. If you cannot think beyond what your eyes are telling you is real, how can you transport your viewer to the Mars in your mind?

Technology in this industry is constantly on a quest to make the images we see more real and lifelike. But is that what we really want? Consider that the films of Ray Harryhausen like *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad* or *Jason and the Argonauts* still have the power to unleash the imagination of viewers in an age of ultra-high definition visual effects. It's not the technology that makes things real. It's the imagination.

Simplicity is the key to our power as filmmakers. Finding the simplest solution to telling the story is what creates astonishing images which resonate with truth. We see it in great movies all the time.

*Continued On Page 8...*



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...Continued From Page 6

The shots of the plane speeding through the air and breaking the sound barrier in *The Right Stuff* was a model plane that the crew launched with a slingshot, and Caleb Deschanel, ASC had the operator try to follow it with a handheld camera; Mario Bava creating an entire alien planet for *Planet of the Vampires* by using some dry ice fog and only two rocks which he shot in forced perspective; and the seaside created inside the studio for *Cannery Row* using waving plastic. For that film, cinematographer Sven Nykvist, ASC asked production designer Richard MacDonald if he was sure the water effect would work, and MacDonald said, "Don't worry, I've done this before." When they saw the dailies, MacDonald told Nykvist excitedly, "Sven! It actually works!" Nykvist asked why he was so surprised that it worked since he had done it before, and MacDonald confessed that he had *never* done it before.

On the show I am currently executive producing, directing and shooting for Netflix, *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, much of the show is shot on the largest virtual production stage in the world. The visual effects artists working on the volume images are the top in their field, and the reality that they can achieve is truly astounding. But I felt it was important to keep an element of unreality to make the results more *organic*. And so, for the very first shot on the first day of filming, which was a shot of a boat with two passengers getting swept into a massive ice cave on a wave of water and crashing into an ice shelf, I added a bit of magic: the ice cave walls were in virtual production, the ice shelf was a practical set piece, and the wave of water was a four-foot trough placed in the foreground of the camera with a split diopter filter in front of the lens. Two special effects technicians dumped buckets of water into the trough as grips and stunt riggers pulled the boat on cables across the floor. The resulting image combined the elements of different specialties to create a new reality that enhanced the fantasy of what was happening. In an early production meeting, I proposed doing the shot this way with the assurance that I had done it before. I had never done it before. It just seemed like it would work in theory. And it seemed like it would be fun.



This is a photograph of my assistant Tanya Lim in my ZigZag Magic Cabinet. The ZigZag is one of the foundations of magic. It can be performed anywhere, surrounded by people, and the principle of the illusion is the basis for countless other illusions. And yet it continues to be mystifying a hundred years after it was first performed. That's because the concept is remarkably simple, and the human mind wants to find a complicated answer to what its mind sees but cannot comprehend. I'm hoping that you find your path to simplicity in your movies, because that's where you'll find the magic. ■





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*“CCF is hands-on in the sense that you’re making a lot of work and crewing on a lot of shoots. But it’s hands-off in that it gives you the freedom to choose the path you want. In this process, I’ve gained the confidence to see a project through from start to finish.”* — Ashwin Raghu, CCF 2022

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# Shooting Film Style with Two Cameras

By David Landau

**The biggest challenge for any production is usually time. Can the crew get all the shots needed and wanted in the limited time allocated on the production schedule? Several factors work against this, such as location availability, weather, the movement of the sun and actors' schedules.**

While shooting with multiple cameras has always been the norm in creating content for broadcast, today shooting with more than one camera has become more the norm for all forms of production. Movies, long form TV and streaming content productions have discovered that the costs of having a second camera, operator and AC are offset by the time saved in set-ups, the more coverage completed and the less strain on the actors which directly translates into more consistent and better performances.



But, shooting with cameras at opposing angles, as is the norm in sit-coms and soap operas, can greatly compromise the lighting and hinder camera moves and framing in dramatic production. Most dramatic content is shot “film style”, which means lighting, propping, actor blocking and camera framing are all composed to favor a single camera angle. This allows the shot to be more dynamic and cinematic in framing and lighting and allows the camera to move and adjust its framing more freely during a take.

The reason behind shooting with two cameras film style isn't to have two shots to cut back and forth between, as it is in TV, but rather to get twice as much coverage with different angle framing. There are methods to effectively utilize two or more cameras at the same time without losing artistic lighting and cinematic imagery desired, if one employs a few simple approaches.

Often the first choice, for artistic reasons, of working with two cameras at the same time is to set the cameras side by side, shooting on the same angle. Arranging the cameras in this manner allows them to both share the same lighting and background art direction. In the above picture, Camera A is on a clean close-up, while Camera B is on the over-the-shoulder shot.

In this arrangement, the actors' lines get covered in two angles, giving the editor more to work with later and allowing the actors to do fewer takes. It also saves time, by eliminating another set-up. But there are some simple concerns that need to be considered.

First, make sure both camera shots share the same screen direction. This is perhaps the most important rule to keep in mind when working with two or more cameras. Both cameras need to be on the same side of the 180-degree line.

The 180-degree rule is a guide for maintaining screen direction and subject eyelines. If there are two or more subjects in the frame, in order to maintain eyeline and screen direction and not to confuse the viewer, an imaginary line is drawn through the noses of the two subjects.

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Once the first camera position is decided, all other placements of cameras or even the repositioning of a single camera, need to remain on the same side of the imaginary line.

The goal is to make sure that in all shots, no matter how close or wide, the subject on the left is always looking to the right and the subject on the right is always looking to the left. If a camera crosses the 180-degree line, the subject on the right will appear on frame to be looking to the right instead of the left. Viewers may think someone new has entered the scene, or that they are looking off at something else. This will momentarily take the viewer out of the story while they try to figure out what they are looking at.

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In the scene being shot in the picture above, both cameras are on the left side of the female actress. Thus, both shots have the male actor, the subject of the shot, looking to camera right. When the cameras switch sides and shoot her coverage, the close-up and the over-the-shoulder of the actress, the cameras will be set up side by side to the actors right. When shooting this method, most directors prefer to have the actors run through all the dialog before reversing the camera set-ups. This way, all the lines of each actor are captured in both OTS and clean CU, as well as capturing reaction shots.

A second thing to consider is to make sure both camera shots share the same “location” in the background. Arranging cameras side by side will often assure that the backgrounds of the two shots are somewhat matching in exposure, contrast and color. But as the cameras are moved further apart, to say, have one camera capturing a medium two shot while the other gets an OTS, what is seen in the background of each camera shot will be different. A little care needs to be taken by adjusting the backgrounds so that one isn't so different in brightness and color from the other, so that when the shots are cut into the final scene, they don't look like they are not in the same location.

Third, position your cameras so that when they pan or tilt to adjust their shot while shooting, they do not bump into each other or see any of the other cameras in each other's framing. While this may sound obvious, it can come back to bite you when one actor decides to shift their weight and lean to one side, and the camera getting their OTS now has to pan to keep them well-framed. Suddenly, the two cameras see each other's matte boxes or lenses in the side of the frame.

Also, plan for enough room for the camera operators and camera assistants to do their job without bumping into each other. The poor AC can get squeezed out between the two cameras or one camera can accidentally see the arm or shoulder of the AC for the other camera. So, making sure everyone knows where they can stand and how far they can move is important to determine before cameras roll. More than once, an AC has had to duck to get out of a camera shot.

There is a lot more to consider when shooting “film style” with two or more cameras at the same time, but this is a basic first step to help you get more done, in less time and with more good takes. ■



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# MAKING (RADIO) WAVES

## One Location

By John Klein

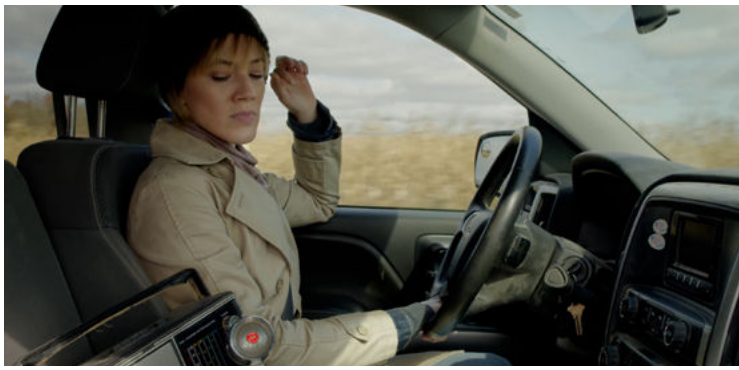
**How do you tell a story about a romantic connection between two people who have never met in person... and can only talk on the radio?**

*Static Space*, which I happily co-directed and co-produced with writer and lead actress Kate Black-Spence, is about Jamie (played by Kate), a young woodworker living in rural Indiana struggling to figure out her place and identity. One night, she inadvertently stumbles across a frequency on her ham radio and makes contact with astronaut Noa (Mariah Copeland), currently orbiting Earth. Through their conversations, the two are presented with an unexpected opportunity to find meaningful connection, even while worlds apart.

In an era of social media and Zoom calls, that question had an obvious relevance to us. Kate initially sent me a full-length stage play called *Static Space* which she had adapted from Geonn Cannon's novel, *Can You Hear Me*, and when I read it over the summer of 2020, it struck a real cinematic chord with me, both because of its rich sincerity in showcasing characters who yearn for connection and intimacy, and because it simply COULD be made at all. We're artists; we can't not be making things!

Thus, we discussed adapting it further into a short film. With *Static Space*, we could accomplish a lot with a little: the two main characters are (almost) never in the same location, the crew could be kept insanely small, with a single yet spacious location capable of providing plenty of interesting visual elements.





As with any indie film, tons of logistical elements had to be figured out right off the bat. Given the rural setting, would we have to stay on location instead of going home every night from set? How would we audition actresses for Noa, and how would we handle Noa's voice on the radio while on set? How could we afford all of this while working on the typical micro budget for a short film?

And perhaps most importantly, how would we make the cinematic end of it interesting and dynamic? The film takes place almost entirely in Jamie's barn, and we only see her side of the conversation, meaning Noa is simply a voice to react to. How could we as storytellers keep the audience engaged emotionally with this love story when our point of view would be so limited?

Auditions wound up being relatively straightforward: a limited casting call, conducted entirely on Zoom. Mariah was our first audition, and she had a tremendous gravity to her voice that belied a light sincerity. It was an incredibly easy casting choice! And the brief role of Mrs. Gunderson brought us to Laurie Empen, who also suggested an unorthodox location: Timber Lake Playhouse in Mount Carroll, Illinois.

The rest of our crew consisted of myself and William Donaruma as co-cinematographers, production designer Maggie O'Brien, gaffer Luciana Salinas, sound mixer Matt Collera, CCO Jennifer Aparicio, and our craft/catering superstar Dustin Spence.

The last two in particular, along with the generosity of Timber Lake and artistic director Paul Stancato, made the entire engine of the film run safely. Timber Lake had everything: a small office and cafeteria space and vacant cabins for the crew to stay in – so we could stay on site for four days – as well as a barn location next to a small house, and a scene shop that could supply most of our props and woodworking equipment. Dustin and Kate handled all our dietary needs, and care packs with things like water, oatmeal, utensils, and other random items were distributed to each cabin. (We also had a LOT of bratwurst for lunch!)

It sounded like a lot, but for a weekend shoot plus our day of prep, this was all able to fit into our small budget, and everyone on the cast and crew knew what to expect and was up for the challenge!

*Continued On Next Page...*







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Maggie in particular was able to source a vast array of woodworking tools from Timber Lake and furniture items from all different places, as well as a great radio setup.

And so, we shot *Static Space* over three long days in October of 2020 on a combination of the Red Epic-W and a beta version of the Komodo, with b-roll filled in later courtesy of a DJI Mavic Mini drone, a Panasonic GH5, and a Sony A7Sii. We aimed to keep production values as high as possible using camera movement, including car mounts and our trusty Dana Dolly package.

Most of this gear – plus all our lighting – we already owned or had easy access to, luckily.

But more than anything, we made sure not to get lost in all those technical elements and focus on the emotions of the story and of Jamie's point of view. Matt devised a stellar system wherein Mariah – who was not on set – could record her own audio while Zooming into set, and Kate could have her voice in her ear (and mine) via earpieces, giving us both clean audio on both ends and a real dynamic conversation happening between two actresses, instead of a reader in the room simply giving lines one at a time. Visually, while we had a fair amount of camera movement, we dwelled on Kate's face constantly, allowing her emotional states to play out in longer close-up takes and slow push-ins.







Alexa Borden and Connor Cook's score in particular also did a tremendous job fleshing out those emotions, as we crafted themes for both Jamie and Noa that would eventually intertwine with one another as they start to fall in love. We knew, because we wanted to let moments linger and allow for time to let Jamie and Noa's relationship grow, the film would turn out longer than a typical short as a result, and those spaces could fill up with that score. With the help of our editor Ali Klingler, the final cut wound up being about 28 minutes long, and we wouldn't cut a beat from it.

We're all so proud of how *Static Space* has turned out, and that it's already found an audience at festivals this year (over thirty so far!) with more still to come. Throughout this time we're living in, we've all felt the way Jamie and Noa feel, yearned for that kind of connection in the midst of isolation.

And it's important to tell inclusive stories that feature diverse casts and crews, now more than ever.

This was our way of finding a creative purpose in the chaos of the past couple of years, and hopefully viewers will see and empathize with that in the finished film. ■

***Static Space*** is currently touring the festival circuit around the world, having played at *The Melbourne Queer Film Festival*, the *Cleveland International Film Festival*, and the *Bentonville Film Festival*, to name just a few. You can follow us on various social media channels @staticspacethefilm or #staticspacethefilm, and hear more about the film via writer/co-director **Kate Black-Spence's** website at [www.kateblackspence.com](http://www.kateblackspence.com).

View the film's trailer here:

<https://vimeo.com/629720925>.





# Thoughtful Use of Compression

By Justin Matley

**You've edited your audio to precision. You've EQ'd it to meticulous consistency. Now what?**

When it comes to many audio sources, from post-centric voiceover and dialog to musical instruments like bass guitar and drums, and (almost) everything in-between, you'll likely turn to some form of **compression**. From something as mild as evening out a voiceover or bass player's overly dynamic tendencies (performance, not personality), to heavily affecting (or constructively destroying) an overdub for dramatic color or texture, it's a tool that's as versatile as it is confusing.

*Let's first diagnose its use.*

Compression, by definition, flattens the dynamics of a sound. Some would say it "evens" things out, and this is mostly true. Depending on how it's used, it will do both things – either to benefit or detriment.

While its benefits seem obvious, used incorrectly or too aggressively can turn nearly inaudible issues into very audible intrusions. Without getting into nitty gritty number crunching, understanding some of the basic functions of a compressor will go a long way in helping you accomplish your sonic goals with compression, and minimizing the sonic calamities.



## Threshold and Ratio

The two primary determining factors of your compressor's efficacy are the threshold and ratio. Threshold determines the level in dBFS (full scale where 0 db is the maximum) at which compression occurs. This is the point at which you've decided the audio needs to be affected. Whatever level you set (somewhere in the negatives), anything at that and above will be compressed. Anything below is unaffected.

Ratio is a number based on a linear representation of the compressor's tendencies. The higher the number "x" in relation to 1 (the constant), the harder the compressor compresses. Starting low, say 1.5:1, is best. The higher you go, the more artificial your sound will become; this may or may not be your desired effect. Assuming the audio you're dealing with was not compressed on input (when recorded), you may find values around 3 or 4:1 useful, particularly when working with dialogue or voiceover.

## Attack and Release

*Attack and release* adjust how the compressor reacts to the incoming audio signal. It decides how and when that entryway into compression reacts. Attack is how the compressor hits the signal, and release obviously determines how it lets it go. Sticking to slower values here generally sounds much more natural, while going too high can create digital artifacts (unnatural digital noises). Starting below 50 ms on the attack, and around 150 ms on the release, are good starting points. Sometimes compressors, especially plugins, will have automatic attack and release functions. It won't hurt to give these a shot if you're in a pinch

## Output Gain

Lastly, because your compressor functions in reducing overall sound levels, you can use the output gain as a means to boost the overall signal level that leaves your compressor. Sometimes this is called makeup gain because it is "making up" levels lost during compression.

## Watch the Meter

Keep an eye on the meter. Compression that reduces those higher dynamics by 3-4 dB is generally a safe place to play. Much more than that and you'll need to be more careful as some of those very subtle audio elements you'd rather keep subtle, can be exaggerated.

Ultimately, you may go into higher values when mix time is an issue (and you're using compression partially for efficiency), or you are trying to create a particular effect. Either way, know your purpose.

While compressors have a variety of applications, come in hardware and software formats, and can make or destroy your audio in whatever way you choose to use them, they all have one common task: reducing dynamic range by compressing, or limiting the range of, the higher dynamics. The considerate, sometimes subtle, use of them can really salvage a recording or performance (and ultimately, your mix), when it may have seemed destined for the trash bin. ■





# ADR

By David Appleby

Audiences are generally more tolerant of poor images than of poor sound. Students working on location often have problems with the audio but don't take the time to improve it in post. If you read the credits of a feature film, you'll notice the number of people involved in creating the soundtrack after principal photography has been completed. These include foley artists and editors, dialog editors, sound effects editors, and what I'll be addressing here, the *ADR mixer*.

## What is ADR?

ADR stands for Automated Dialogue Replacement, although it is far from automated. After the picture has been cut and for whatever reason dialogue recorded during production must be replaced, actors, engineers and a director (oftentimes not the film's director) come together in a sound studio to *re-record* the dialogue that was captured on set.

In the old analog/film days, this was called, *looping*, because the scene on film was spliced into a loop so it could be projected repeatedly on screen as the actor tried to precisely match their lines.

## When is ADR Required?

- ▶ To eliminate unwanted background noise.
- ▶ To eliminate mic noise such as wind or clothing rustle.
- ▶ To improve low level or unintelligible dialogue.
- ▶ To improve a performance.
- ▶ To add lines not originally in the script.
- ▶ To replace words not suitable for a network television broadcast.
- ▶ To replace an actor's voice altogether, using a different actor.



## Set-Up

- ▶ Place 1K beeps in front of each cue for playback. These are traditionally 3 beeps, and the cue starts on an imaginary fourth beep.
- ▶ Number each clip that you'll be replacing for identification purposes.
- ▶ Set up mic(s). This is often a lav and a boom, or two booms at different distances, recorded on separate tracks with no EQ or compression.

## The Session

- ▶ Watch the entire scene to give the actor context.
- ▶ Let the actor view and listen to a cue as many times as they need to get comfortable with the inflections and rhythm of the original performance.
- ▶ When they're ready, mute the production audio. (There are times, however, that the actor will want the original audio left on their headset.)
- ▶ Announce the cue and take number for the editor and record the first take.
- ▶ Repeat until the actor and director are satisfied.
- ▶ Repeat all steps until all cues are complete.

## What You'll Need

- ▶ Multi-track recording software, allowing you to play back one track while recording on another. This makes things easier, but playback on one device and recording on a second can work as well.
- ▶ An assortment of lav and boom mics can help you to match the production audio while maintaining clarity.
- ▶ A high-quality speaker monitor system.
- ▶ Screens for the actor, director and engineer to view.

## Guerilla Style

With the equipment available to you, you can do a good job by using a quiet laptop computer in a quiet environment, the same mic you used in production and two pairs of headphones. You sit in the same room with the actor, and they simply look over your shoulder at the visuals.

## Cleaning Up

After cutting in the new audio, you can cut and paste words, syllables, and pauses – a frame here, a few frames there – to further tighten up lip sync. *Room tone*, recorded during production, will provide a sense of place and mask the gaps. ■



# 10 Things

## Student Filmmakers Need to Know

### *About Rights, Licensing, Fair Use, and Public Domain*

By Sheila Curran Bernard and Kenn Rabin

#### How to avoid problems that could prevent you from posting your work publicly online or entering festivals—including student film festivals.

With copyrighted audio, visual, and print materials readily available to download or copy, students often just take what they want and incorporate it into class media projects. For works that won't be shared beyond the classroom, this doesn't pose any real problems. Presentation of this work beyond the classroom, however, such as in a public online forum or as part of a film festival, requires that students secure permission for their use of these materials.

While acknowledging that issues of rights and licensing are often very complex, we're offering a list of 10 basic items to consider as you embark on media projects.

**No. 1: Knowing the material's provenance is key.** Randomly pulling archival images and footage off the web is a big mistake. It's important that you learn how to determine the original source of the material and the circumstances of its creation, and then follow through to see where the material is archived and who holds the rights. Even if you don't yet clear the rights, you should know what steps would be involved should you later want to license the material and get a clean, high-resolution copy. It's also important that you verify that the identity of the material is accurate. It's not uncommon, especially on the web, for material to be mislabeled and/or misidentified, purportedly showing one thing when it actually shows something very different. It's also not uncommon for the rights information to be inaccurate, such as copyrighted material being falsely identified as public domain.



## **No. 2: Most of what's on the web is not in the public domain.**

In the United States, materials are said to be in the public domain, freely available to anyone to use, if they were:

- never subject to copyright;
- never registered for copyright prior to January 1, 1978, when the Copyright Act of 1976 took effect (after which, actual copyright registration was not required, although it's still recommended; see [www.copyright.gov](http://www.copyright.gov));
- copyrighted but the copyright has expired. In 2022, anything published in the U.S. before 1926 is now in the public domain, and each year brings that cutoff date one year later. However, many other materials published before 1978 *may* be in the public domain if their copyright was never renewed: Only about 15% of copyrights prior to 1978 were ever renewed, but students need to confirm this status before using the material.

Most materials created by U.S. government agencies are in the public domain, although other restrictions may apply. Again, something is NOT in the public domain merely because it's on the web, ubiquitous, or iconic.

**No. 3: Be organized with archival research.** From the start of a project on forward, you should develop a logging system to keep track of where each piece of material comes from. You'll need a record of URLs and any meta-data you can find on the websites from which you're drawing.

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*Photo by Victor Amenze,  
[www.amenzevictor.com](http://www.amenzevictor.com)*



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This includes captions and links for the material as well as any identifying information you can find on the individual or organization that posted the material. (In the case of stills and photos, doing a reverse image search using tools such as [www.Tineye.com](http://www.Tineye.com) can be helpful.)

Because the vast majority of content online (YouTube and elsewhere) is untraceable, it's best to start your search on sites built with trustworthy provenance information, such as the U.S. Library of Congress ([www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov)), the U.S. National Archives and Records and Administration ([www.archives.gov](http://www.archives.gov)), most government agencies, and most museums. Professional photography sites, such as iStock ([www.istockphoto.com](http://www.istockphoto.com)) and Getty Images ([www.gettyimages.com](http://www.gettyimages.com)), also have provenance. Some really interesting material can also be found at Internet Archive ([www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org)); some but not all of their material is in the public domain. (Look for the rights designation on the page of the item in which you're interested.)

Only a fragment of the larger agencies' holdings is online, but for student filmmakers, in-person access is unlikely to be an option. However, *local* archives, such as local libraries, university special collections, businesses, and historic societies and sites can be useful. You might also explore what audio or visual material your subjects' families, friends, and neighbors might have in attics or old albums. (You will likely still need a written agreement from them for the use of this material.)

**No. 4: When researching commercial sites, be aware that “royalty free” does not mean “free.”** Beware: royalty free just means that material is licensed for a flat fee, as opposed to the more common “rights managed” licensing, where the use of the material (where, for what time period, in what venue, etc.) is considered. In general, other than students in advanced film programs who perhaps have something of a budget, you probably don't want to deal with using material for which any kind of paid licensing is required.

**No. 5: Claims of “fair use” must be supportable.** In the United States, the concept of “fair use” is a First Amendment-based exception to copyright that allows makers to draw upon others' materials under certain conditions. It is NOT the case, as commonly believed, that fair use applies if a project is educational, or non-commercial, or for public television, or if only X seconds of the material are used. A “fair use” is decided on a case-by-case basis, considering four basic tests:

- the purpose and character of the new work;
- the nature of the copyrighted work;
- how much of that copyrighted work is used (in proportion to its entirety),
- to what extent the new use affects the market potential for the copyright holder.

Professional media makers claiming “fair use” of some materials in their project must get a letter from a qualified attorney supporting their claim, which is then presented to insurers who provide the “errors and omissions” liability insurance that distributors generally require. Excellent information about fair use and more can be found at the websites of Stanford University libraries ([fairuse.stanford.edu](http://fairuse.stanford.edu)) and American University's Center for Media and Social Impact ([cmsimpact.org](http://cmsimpact.org)).





**No. 6: History is not generic.** Documentary students and those creating dramatic projects that rely on real-world verisimilitude should seek out materials of the specific event or people being documented. Do the research necessary to understand the lens (often quite biased) through which these materials were produced, by whom and for what purpose. Consider what you, as media makers in 2022, might want to do to adjust for and make transparent that lens. Here again, too, the labeling of content should be verified, to ensure that it's been accurately identified.

It is considered unethical to fake historical materials, including footage, photographs, and audio, unless the artifice is made transparent to audiences.

**No. 7: Rules for documentary and drama are different.** That *Top Gun* poster on the wall of your main character's bedroom? Their Yankees cap? The shirt featuring Kanye West? If the film is a drama—meaning that it's fiction or fictionalized—that room is considered a film set, and any copyrighted or trademarked material on set or in costuming has to be licensed or be removed. This includes scenes that take place outdoors, if signs and billboards are shown.

Note that this is NOT the case with verité-style documentary work. In 2009, American University's Center for Media and Social Impact worked with professionals throughout the industry to author a "Documentary Filmmakers' Statement of Best Practices in Fair Use" (available through their website), which describes the four tests of fair use in practice. "Incidental capture" of copyrighted or trademarked materials was agreed to be a fair use, not least because to ask a character to change or stand elsewhere meant interfering with the real life being filmed.

**No. 8: Get signed releases.** There are three main types of releases that filmmakers need to secure. An *appearance* release should be signed by anyone who appears in the finished project; a *materials* release or license agreement should be signed by anyone who is licensing or even donating visuals (print documents, photographs, footage, etc.); and a *location* release or permit to film is needed from a person with authority to permit your use of private property, or in some cases even public property.

**No. 9: Consider commercially recorded music as out of reach.** In general, students should not use commercially recorded music, which is governed by a complex system of rights involving the creators of a song, its performers, and its publishers. Unless the album is in the public domain or the use of a small portion of a song is for a purpose that is clearly a fair use, avoid it. Even hiring someone to "cover" a commercially recorded song is trouble because there are still synchronization rights to be cleared. The simplest soundtrack for student filmmakers is original music created and performed specifically for your project.

**No. 10: When in doubt, leave it out or consult a lawyer.** None of what's included above is intended as legal advice, as we are not lawyers. Not all of the work involved in using third-party materials is tricky, but it often can be, and caution is warranted. ■

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# Naturalistic Dialogue

By Loren-Paul Caplin

Replicating normal, everyday conversation is not what makes strong scripted dialogue. Real conversations are typically boring, off-point, and if efficient in some respects, not particularly entertaining, nor should it be.

In real life, we communicate for all sorts of reasons, and most of the reasons aren't absolutely necessary. They often serve simple, human, and emotional needs.

Try to not communicate for an afternoon at home if you live with others and notice how essential communication is. So much of our talking to one another comes from our habit of interacting and sharing. We don't want to feel lonely.

What we say and talk about is fairly pointless in terms of the narratives of our lives. "How are you?" ... "What's going on?" ... "Look at this," etc.

Our scripted stories are also not simply slices of uneventful living. They are heightened, hopefully interesting, and they aspire to be compelling.

Still, there are aspects of real life and real conversations that we can use toward consciously creating certain effects. When we speak of *naturalistic dialogue*, we are specifically thinking about the tics, rhythms, cadences, and other precise sonic aspects of how people actually speak. This also includes how those elements can be conveyed on the page, and to what effect.

We will also look at how understanding the themes and underlying ideas of your scripts can guide you to a host of various word and language usages in your dialogue.



Finally, the problems of exposition plague many writers. *How do you get what you consider essential information to an audience or other characters while sounding natural?*

## Naturalistic Dialogue

When we think about ultra-real sounding characters, who comes to mind? Joe Swanberg's characters in his anthology series, *Easy?* The characters in *The Before Trilogy?*

Larry David's characters on the television sitcom, *Curb Your Enthusiasm?* The vast majority of *Curb Your Enthusiasm's* dialogue is invented and spoken spontaneously and improvisationally. It is not scripted.

In a certain respect, conversations without verbal tics, the *ums* and the *ahs*, might be the equivalent of scripted drama without the humdrum, realistically boring parts.

Or, like when you watch a nature documentary on leopards, it's nearly impossible to viscerally convey the vast majority of the time that leopards just lie around without it being mind-numbingly boring. What we see is the tiny amount of action in their lives, when they hunt or mate. These are active, visual events. But what about the rest of the time? What about the *ums* and *ahs* that make up and take up a lot of the time and space of realistic conversation?

Whether you strive for dialogue that sounds absolutely pitch-perfect or not, it should still be purposeful, not boring, and should not take up unnecessary real estate.

It's a known trick among journalists, that if they perfectly replicate their interview subjects word-for-word, they can spin it so they appear awkward and stupid.

The main purpose of replicating exact aspects of language on the page would be to better articulate a character's personality, and to give actors those precise idiosyncratic mannerisms of speech to help them create singular characters.

Woody Allen has nearly pioneered the path of literally writing out dialogue in a naturalistic way, with all the verbal tics included. In doing so, he's able to conjure the nuanced neurosis of his characters.

**Read (and listen to) this excerpt, from the film, *Annie Hall* (1977):**

ANNIE  
Alvy, I ...

ALVY  
What-what-what-what's the matter?

ANNIE  
I-you know, I don't wanna.

ALVY  
(Overlapping Annie, reacting)  
What-what-I don't ...  
It's not natural!  
We're sleeping in a bed together.  
You know, it's been a long time.

ANNIE  
I know, well, it's just  
that-you know, I mean, I-I-I-I  
gotta sing tomorrow night, so  
I have to rest my voice.

**Or this excerpt from Noah Baumbach's film, *Marriage Story* (2019):**

NICOLE  
I want a...I don't know, I'm trying  
to say this as undramatically  
as possible. I want an ENTIRELY  
different kind of life.

**Or this from TV series, *Girls* (2012), written by Lena Dunham:**

HANNAH  
No, now. I need you to read them  
now. Because... I feel like I've  
been hiding something from you.  
(pause)  
I don't want to freak you out,  
but...  
(pause)  
I think I may be the voice of my  
generation.  
(pause)  
At least a voice. A strong voice.

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# 4 Quick Reminders and Tips

- #1 Let **Commas, Capitalizing, Question Marks, Exclamation Points, (Pauses), Em-dashes** and **Ellipsis** help you finely articulate singular, precisely mannered dialogue and sounds and verbal tics. Examples: *sllurrring, stu-stut-stuttering, lithping, or mumberbling*. And in the process, you can convey the nuanced, complex manners that your characters' minds work.
- #2 **Real people** pause, interrupt, stutter, speak in fragments, say random things/thoughts, talk over each other, don't acknowledge, don't complete their sentences, repeat themselves, and wander off.
- #3 **Real language** is full of *ums, ahs, and whatshamacallits*, etc., as placeholders for gaps in thinking or lapses in memory.
- #4 **People sometimes say** the wrong word by accident or through a misunderstanding of its meaning. ■



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# Descript

By Bart Weiss

If you are doing interview-based documentary work on a podcast (that you actually edit), you spend a lot of time cutting down people talking. Back in the day, we would have these transcribed and create a literal paper edit, connecting a flow of talking to make a point. It was, of course, extraordinarily analog and slow.

There is a much better way to do this. It is called *Descript*.

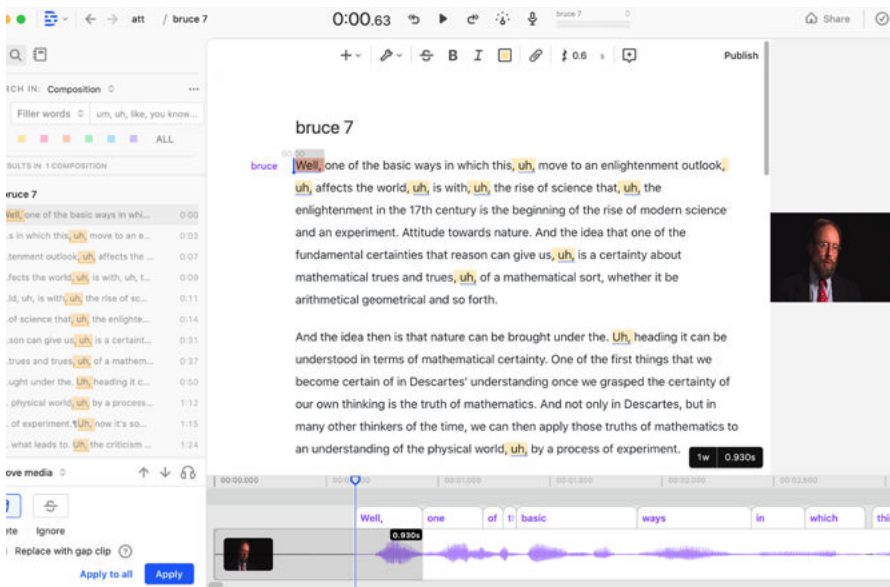
For anyone doing this kind of work, it is magical. This app transcribes the audio on your video file, and that is just the beginning. After it does the transcription, you can edit your video file by editing the text. Yes, just like editing a word document, you can cut and paste your media file by cutting and pasting TEXT.

Once you download the app ([www.descript.com](http://www.descript.com)), you can get a free account for three hours of free transcription. Watch out. It will get you hooked.

So, let's get started.

When you open the app, you begin a project, and then, you drop in a video or audio file. Once you drop your media file in, you put in the speaker's name, and the app goes to work and begins transcribing. Then, you get the transcript. You can see in the photo below, Bruce is in purple identified as the speaker and on the timeline.

The interface shows a picture of the file we are working with on the right, the timeline below, and some controls above.



Looking at the transcript, you can see many times when Bruce is saying, *uh*. Wouldn't it be nice to get rid of them? You can. But if you are doing video, that means you will need a cutaway or B-roll to cover it. If you are doing audio only, no prob.

By right-clicking on the *uh*, you can remove filler words. You can see the app has selected them as they are highlighted, and you can go through one at a time, ignoring or deleting each one, or delete them all. If you are editing the video, you can replace it with a *gap clip* to keep you in sync. In this case, it deleted 32 *ums* just like that.

To edit the video, just edit the text. If you want to edit in the timeline, you have traditional editing tools there as well – for example, if you want to cut out some dead space. Click on the range box and drag what you don't want, then delete.

You can also cut text and place it somewhere else. You can also tighten word gaps automatically.

You can make adjustments to speed and volume and add some very sophisticated sound effects to your file. For podcasting, I would recommend the studio sound, which can enhance the voice file. You also can record right into the timeline if need be.

The most controversial part of Descript is the overdub feature which I will do another column about.

Once you get to edit your text/video file, export it. You can see that you can export to text, subtitles, an audio file, video file, or gif, and that is fine. But you can also export to Adobe Premiere or Final Cut Pro, Pro Tools, and Adobe Audition. I'll select FCPX. You can export both the XML and the file or just the XML. I'll take both. You choose where to put it. Open FCP, and click on the project, and you have your cut of the dialogue with audio and picture, and you get a file with the text on it so you can see what your subject is saying. ■





# The Writer's Journey

By Dr. Alan C. Hueth

Writing is all about the journey, and there are *journeys* that writers must consider. The most important one is *The Viewers' Journey*. All professional scriptwriters want their viewers to be riveted to the screen. That requires that their viewers vicariously experience what the **story characters** are experiencing. This doesn't happen until the writer goes through *The Writer's Journey*, and there are roads that must be taken.

## Some Critical Concepts of The Writer's Journey

We'll call the first one, **Get an Idea**. Consider this. When you write a letter or an essay, you don't just sit down and start typing without any thoughts in mind. In the same way, professional script writers don't just start writing the script without any ideas about the characters and the story.

They go through a process of considering (in some scope and depth) the characters and the basic story.

*Who are the characters* -- including their appearances, traits, personalities, fears, conflicts, goals, and who do they like/love/hate in the story? Will the climax and resolution of the story be clear, believable, and satisfying to the viewer?

Clear answers for these questions can help make the actual script writing goals happen. And every scene must accomplish this through the revelations of the characters, their conflicts and character beats, and plot points *before* script writing begins.

So, *The Writer's Journey* is almost done. All you must do now is write a correctly formatted and professional-looking screenplay draft. You're done! Someone buys it!



They produce the film! Your name is on the credit roll's *Written by*, and you're famous!... **NOT**. Unfortunately, that's not the norm.

## The Script Doctoring Road

Most screenplays require editing. I've seen the words anywhere from *DRAFT 2* to *DRAFT 12* on the front pages of professional screenplays. *Why?* Because the organization leader or executive producer and/or producer and/or director – we'll just call him or her the *script owner* – oftentimes finds problems with the characters or the story. The script owner thinks it's not perfect enough for production – it's "*ill*" – as in "poor in quality," and not ready for production.

So, the script owner has options. They can ask you or someone else to rewrite it, or they can hire what's called a *script doctor*.

A script doctor is... "a writer or playwright hired by a film, television, or theatre production company to rewrite an existing script or improve specific aspects of it, including structure, characterization, dialogue, pacing, themes, and other elements." (Wikipedia)

I've doctored over 2,000 scripts for my projects, my students' scripts, and professional writers. *Why?* Because the babies (the words in the script) were *sick*. It's very easy for a script writer to fall in love with the words in their script.

And when that happens, editing can be very difficult. *Why?* Because the writer thinks the script is perfect already, and "*You better not touch it!*" Why does that happen? The problem is *pridefulness*... another story for another day.

So, how can this be done better and more efficiently? The best way is to do the *doctoring before* you write the first draft of the script or screenplay.

## The Pre-Script Doctoring Documents

The best approach to *doctoring* is writing some pre-script or screenplay documents. That includes some additional journeys that all writers should consider. They save lots of time in script and screenplay editing. They also make your first script or screenplay drafts better. And this pre-script doctoring is relevant to the professional world.

Producers and executives don't have the time to read scripts unless the script comes to them through an agent. However, a producer or executive will more likely be open to reading one of these documents than a script or screenplay. So, these pre-script documents can be used for pitching but also as story and script or screenplay development.

On the next page, you'll see a logline and a synopsis. These two examples below are the most important, and they will give you an idea of what's included and what they look like. There are two other pre-script or screenplay development documents: a *treatment* and a *step outline*.

**WARNING:** This homework does have a cost – especially to instructors. Instructors, if you assign this, you must read, provide feedback, and grade those other pre-development documents.

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## Pre-Script Document 1

Write a **logline**! Here's the logline that we have written (and was written) for *The Hunger Games* (2012).

*"In a future North America, where the rulers of Panem maintain control through an annual televised survival competition pitting young people from each of the districts against one another, sixteen-year-old Katniss's skill are put to the test when she voluntarily takes her younger sister's place."*

The logline includes the setting, the main character, the conflict, and the goal.

## Pre-Script Document 2

Ideally, write a **character sketch** for each main character(s).

## Pre-Script Document 3

Now, you've nailed the basic story and basic aspects of the characters. Write a **synopsis** and/or a **treatment** and/or a **step-outline**.



Here's an example of part of a synopsis.

### A Synopsis:

#### *The Hunger Games*

THE BEGINNING (Act I)13

SENECA CRANE and CAESAR FLICKERMAN discuss the background-history of The Hunger Games event before a television audience. KATNISS EVERDEEN wakes up to comfort her young sister, PRIMROSE, who is worried about the coming announcement ("reaping") of who will be the tributes (participants in the Games) from District 12 in The Hunger Games. KATNISS goes out to hunt for dinner and ends up meeting up with and dreaming what it would be like to live a life lived outside of the District 12 fences with her male-friend, GALE HAWTHORNE. KATNISS' younger sister, PRIMROSE, is chosen as a "tribute," but KATNISS bravely volunteers to replace her sister and becomes District 12's female tribute. The male tribute is named PEETA MELLARK. Then KATNISS comforts her mother and encourages her to take care of sister PRIMROSE before she's taken to Panem.

KATNISS and PEETA are escorted via high-speed train to the capitol by EFFIE. KATNISS and PEETA are shocked and disgusted by rich food and treats. They're introduced to their mentor (and jaded alcoholic), HAYMITCH ABERNETHY, a former winner of The Hunger Games. KATNISS doesn't like him, while PEETA is drawn to him. They come together, and HAYMITCH reveals the key to their survival.

The synopsis includes main plot points, foreshadowing incidents, and the climax and resolution of the story. You can find details of these documents, along with explanations and examples of treatments and step-outlines in my scriptwriting book.

You be the *script doctor*! Write these pre-script documents first and get feedback, *then* write the first draft of your screenplay! ■

Photo (left) by Julen Sanchez. Follow IG @julentto.

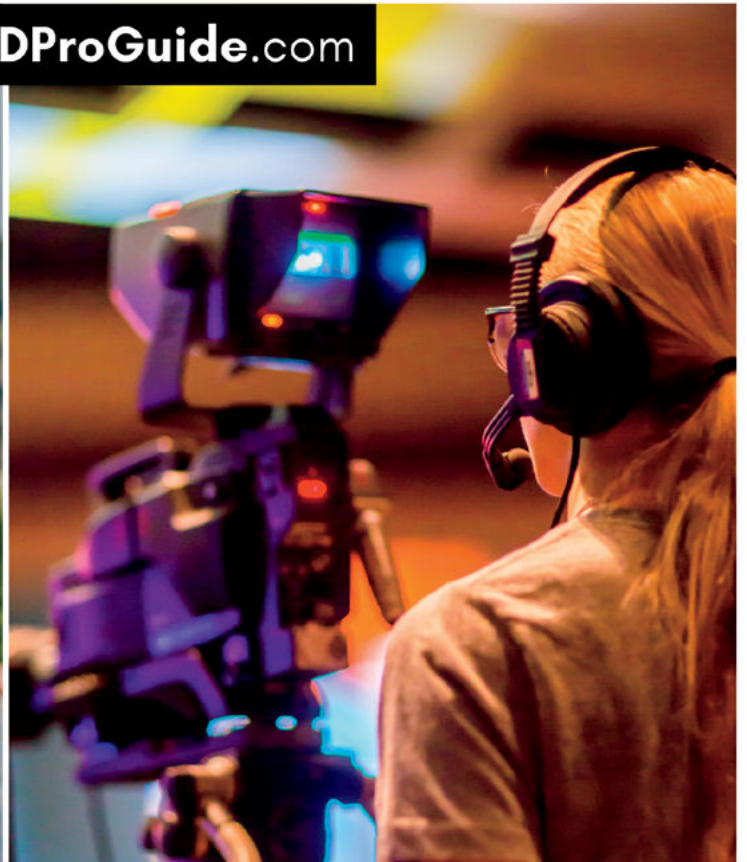
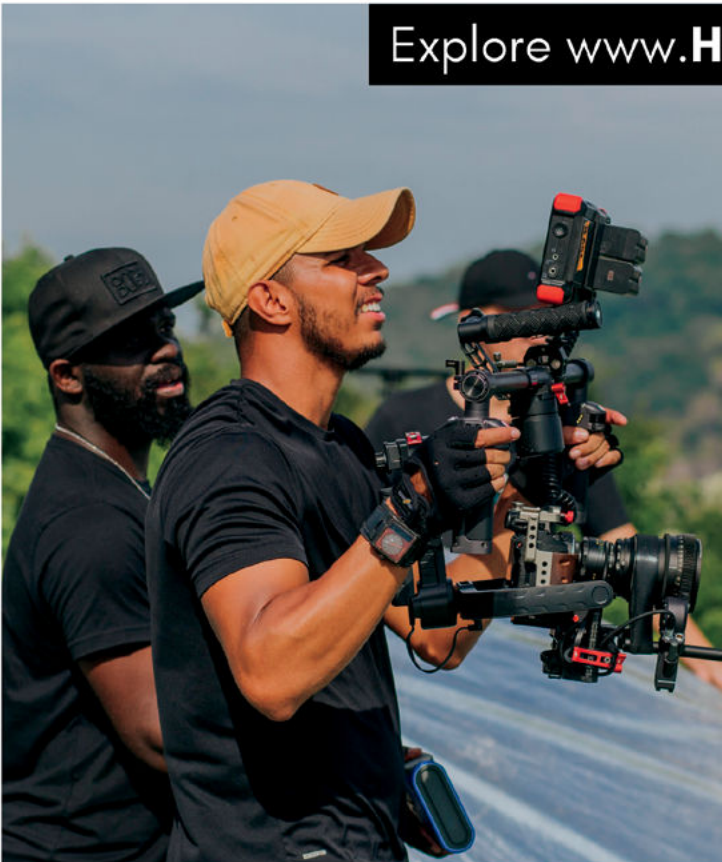




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# 10 Must Know Tips *for Getting Staffed*

By Neil Landau

In Hollywood, where episodic TV production budgets tend to be most substantial, showrunners will hire a staff of dedicated writers to bring a diversity of points of view into “the room,” and to maximize productivity, efficiency, and script quality.

Staff writer jobs are highly coveted in Hollywood (and increasingly elsewhere) as “entry level” opportunities for writers ready to take the leap from freelance or undiscovered talent into gainful employment. It’s extremely demanding work, so it certainly helps that even “lower level” staff writing gigs can be quite lucrative<sup>1</sup>.

It’s one of the few creative professions that still offers emerging talent a place to earn money while they hone their craft. Under a supportive, nurturing showrunner, a staff writer can thrive and work their way up the ladder... all the way to showrunner.

But that takes time – often many years, if ever. *So, how the heck do you get staffed?*

## #1. You need to write an A+ original pilot to get noticed.

*What is an A+ original pilot?* Again, it’s one that only you can write, that showcases your unique and fresh voice while engaging the audience the same way TV has always done: via empathy.

It used to be that you had to write speculative “spec” episodes of existing series, but from my research, less than 5% of today’s showrunners read these, and it’s now considered old school. Plus, with so many shows streaming today, the chances of a showrunner knowing the show you’ve spec’ed is quite low.

Nevertheless, I do strongly recommend that you write at least one spec episode of a show you love to demonstrate that you can capture the tone and essence of writing for characters you didn’t originate in a setting you didn’t create. It’s for your own edification. You never stop learning.

## #2. Make a brilliant piece of short content.

If you don’t have an A+ original TV pilot script as a calling card, there is another way in: you can make an amazing short or feature-length film (I didn’t say this was the easier path). Another door into a TV writers’ room is coming off another show – but there’s an inherent Catch-22 in that scenario in that you’d need an A+ writing sample to get staffed in the first place.

*Impossible?* Not in this business. Anything is possible. I know of showrunners who’ve hired writers based on reading short fiction, journalistic articles, and even scholarly essays.

Of course, playwrights, improv performers (who tend to be great TV writers, by the way) and standup comedians have all “come out to the coast” from New York for decades. But now you can also gain entry via a web series pilot or podcast. Draw on your personal experiences -- or research your subjects to gain the highest level of authenticity.

## #3. Get repped.

The other big Catch-22 is getting a rep. In other words, you need to have at least two A+ writing samples to get repped, and it’s unlikely that you’ll get staffed without a rep. The one guarantee is you won’t gain either a rep or a job without a great, emerging body of work.

Of course, “greatness” is subjective, and access and timing are also key. The definition of luck = opportunity + experience. Be ready.

Literary agents are preferable to literary managers, and some writers have both (plus an entertainment attorney). Many emerging writers will start off with a literary manager and then add to the team as success (hopefully) arrives.

I don’t recommend trying to get an agent too early. Once you’ve gained some traction in the business, the agents will come to you. Hard to believe, but it’s true *if you have an exceptionally good writing sample*. All your contacts in the biz are worthless if you don’t have exceptional, fresh material.



The onus is always on the writer to generate new material. If you blame your agent for lack of work and opportunities, you're probably off base. Your rep's job is to send out your material to warrant meetings, sales, and/or staffing opportunities. Part of your job as a writer is to make your agent's job easier. No agent or literary manager is incentivized to withhold your brilliant scripts from execs and showrunners. They don't get paid unless you get paid.

#### #4. Pay your dues

and work your way up the food chain, from Writer's P.A. to a coveted Writer's Assistant position. Being a Script Coordinator can also be very helpful to eventually getting staffed on the show. Whichever position gets you inside the writers' room taking notes: go for *that*.

#### #5. Internships

See #4 above, and avoid unpaid internships that solely require you to run errands. You're there to learn, not to be exploited as free labor. Clarify — up front — what a particular internship's main responsibilities will be.

#### #6. Don't quit your day job.

Save your money when you earn, and live within your means. You never get staffed when you're rabidly trying to get staffed. It's not an absolute rule, but it tends to be true. Desperation isn't attractive in the entertainment business. Brilliance is.

#### #7. Attend TV conferences for TV writer/producers/executives.

The best of the TV conferences can offer both educational panels *and* opportunities for networking and making contacts.

But always remember that attending conferences isn't the same as writing! Or as Whitney Cummings stated at a commencement event at UCLA: "Don't network. Just work."

#### #8. Enter the viable and legit TV writing contests.

Usually, the most viable competitions can give you a leg up in getting read and noticed. But avoid pricey entry fees and exploitative practices of competitions that also try to bilk you for script consultancy services. Always do your own due diligence and make sure you're not being bamboozled. Many script competitions for TV writers are legit, but many more are not.

#### #9. Consider diversity programs and fellowships at the major studios and TV networks can be beneficial to getting staffed.

Acceptance rates are super competitive, and showrunners are incentivized to hire fellows from these programs because the fellow's salary is paid from the studio/network diversity initiatives' budget. (They don't impact the show's production budget unless the writer's option is renewed.) The diversity programs themselves can serve as valuable learning and networking opportunities, but there is no guarantee that you'll get staffed out of the program.

The only downside: some former diversity program fellows who have been staffed have expressed to me that it can feel demoralizing starting off their careers as the "diversity hire, a form of tokenism. Effective showrunners will treat all members of their writing staff with equity and respect.

#### #10. Create your own show.

The celebrated FX series, *Pose*, was written by my former grad student at UCLA, Steven Canals. Steven's pilot was *inspired* by director Jennie Livingston's documentary film, *Paris Is Burning*, which celebrated the ball culture of New York City and the Black, Latinx, gay, and transgender communities, but Steven's original, much darker and grittier pilot script for *Pose* was based on his personal POV and experiences as a biracial queer kid growing up in the projects in the Bronx.

Steven's meteoric career trajectory is extremely rare. In Season 1, he was credited as Co-Creator and Co-Executive Producer. In Seasons 2 and 3, he was credited as EP, directed several episodes, and served as the primary showrunner.

Steven Canals is living proof that personal passion, tenacity, and talent can break through and enter the *zeitgeist*, even for niche content. Of course, it helps if you can get Ryan Murphy on board to shepherd your series through development and production. (Steven shares Co-Creator credit with both Ryan Murphy and Ryan's producing partner, Brad Falchuk).

In 2021, Steven was nominated for two Primetime Emmy Awards for Outstanding Co-Writer *and* Outstanding Director of a Drama Series for the series' two-part finale. Bottom line: Steven's success story demonstrates that the most valuable I.P. of all in the TV business is a great pilot script and series mini-bible. No adaptation required. ■

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<sup>1</sup> Visit the Writers Guild of America website: [www.wga.org](http://www.wga.org) and click on the MBA (Minimum Basic Agreement) to see salary ranges and script fees for TV writers. Please note that streamers pay staff writers significantly less than broadcast networks (yes, *still*), and streamers do not offer residuals for reruns. Some top showrunners on streamers are making hundreds of millions of dollars via overall deals.

# Find Your New Storytelling *Niche*

By Scott McConnell

I recently rewatched the classic adventure film, *Journey to the Center of the Earth* (Fox, 1959), starring James Mason and Pat Boone. I encourage every creative to watch this film for its many excellent cinematic and story values: exciting plot, heroic characters, stunning visuals, big life-supporting theme, and evocative music, among others. But I want to focus on the key aspect of the film that I think best explains why it is adventure storytelling and filmmaking at its highest level. *Its originality.*

As a general point for all creatives, if you want to write a popular film or novel, one key way to help you reach that success is to be *original*. Easily said. Often believed to be achieved. Rarely done.

*Journey to the Center of the Earth* is a brilliant adaptation of the classic novel of the same name by one of literature's most ingenious and popular writers, Jules Verne. Frenchman Verne was a prodigious writer of original stories in the second half of the nineteenth century, mostly in the adventure and science fiction genres. Let's look briefly at the premises of four of Verne's greatest stories and see a key idea that unifies them.

*Around the World in Eighty Days*, about the first people to travel around the globe in a balloon.

*Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, about the first man to conquer living under the seas in a submarine.

*From the Earth to the Moon*, about human's first flight into space to land on the moon.

*Journey to the Center of the Earth*, about the first humans to reach the core of the earth.

As you have no doubt noticed in each of these four stories, Jules Verne created his own niche of how to be original. He created inventive hero tales of humans (often using some new technology) struggling against great odds to do something that no other human had ever achieved. Thus, Jules Verne created fascinating, exciting and inherently original stories.

What is the big takeaway here for writers, publishers, producers, and directors?

The *great power of originality* in a story to attract, seduce and move an audience.

How are you going to be original in your story? What can you learn from Jules Verne's large creative footsteps? Do you have an original *niche*?

Or are you going to dish up the same old cliches, boring concepts, shallow themes, and empty characters that infest our screens and novels?

You can create a much better story if you find your own way to be original and inventive in your story premise and its characters. For example, what new story *niche* can you find and dramatize? Some exciting new world, science, or discovery, for example, as Verne did? At the very least, you must find and add to your story some element that is *new, unique, and different*.

Cliches are a brick wall for any creative. But originality can be a door opener, not only to the awesome world of imagination but also to that of thrilling artistic success. To be original takes artistic courage, great mental effort, and an unassailable belief in a personal vision. Let the masterfully inventive Jules Verne excite and inspire you to find your niche of storytelling originality. There are still many ways to be imaginative! If needed, let me help you. ■





# Sound Stages Are *Not* Empty Warehouses

By JC Cummings

Throughout my years as a Producer/Director, I've shot in several studio stages around the globe. I've had the privilege to design and build seven stages for other companies. Each had very different profiles, while all had to perform according to the same requirements to do the job.

When I walk onto big empty areas, the first gesture I perform is the **clap test**. The clap test is an elementary sound test, measuring the *deadness* or flat sound of a stage. Clapping my hands together tells me what sound challenges I might be facing. The importance of *dead sound* is critical for any production with dialog or active set or talent movement.

Generally, if you have an untreated cement floor, the sound will bounce. If the flooring is wood based, sound may bounce and carry. All these issues can be controlled but may not be a budgeted item. An audio tech will comment on any *bounce of sound* or ambient noise creeping in, a truck driving by or an aircraft flying 30,000 feet above the building— they hear it. If wall sound proofing is done correctly, it will minimize or eliminate most sound bouncing interference. Rubber based shoes (tennis shoes) are a great and easy remedy for crew members walking around.

By the way— keep in mind sound op's hate air conditioning noise coming on and going off, so make sure the stage has some solutions for the air units, or at least, ask the question.

The next item I look at is the *pipe and chain* grid. How high is it, can I get a jib arm or crane on the stage without hitting the lights? A standard stage grid should be at least 28 to 36 feet. Many insert stages, or small stages less than 6,000 square feet, typically have lower ceilings and *flying* pipe and chain about 16 to 20 feet from the floor. These type of insert stages are easy to hang lights, but can create interference with tall sets, green screen setups and jib arm high shots with more than a six to 12-foot extension from center post.

Now, where are the electric boxes or plug-ins? Make sure your grip package includes distribution (distro) hot boxes. You'll need a few, so production doesn't overload the house system interrupting the shoot. Make sure you dedicate an area for hair/makeup and other items making your production a wonderful experience for the entire team.

Shooting on stages are considered *controlled productions*. If you know what you're looking for before you record the production, it could save a lot of downtime and bring your shoot in on budget. ■



# 10 Simple and Essential Tips for Working with Beginning Composers

By Tony Halliwell

**Working with a student or beginning composer? Deriving from my experiences working as a startup composer, I'd like to share with you some quick tips for improving your workflow and collaboration with newcomers who are just starting out or who have only a few films under their belts so far and building up. Or— maybe your project is one of their firsts!**

## Tip #1

### Communicate, Communicate, Communicate

It sounds obvious, but filmmakers and composers need to be on the same page— *all the way*. Keep the composer updated on any plot changes or creative decisions, even if they don't directly impact the footage itself, and make them fully aware of any alternate scenes, cuts, or endings. You'll get the most relevant scores when you give your film composer the most relevant information. Equally, it's important to allow and encourage the composer to reach out and communicate with you— no matter how busy you might be at the time.

## Tip #2

### Start Communicating Early

Most of the time, I've only been *invited* to compose and thus have only had the filmmaker-composer dialogue opened after picture-lock. This is silly. If the composer has not been briefed, prompted or inspired until 3 weeks before the picture premiere, you're going to get a rushed, falsified soundtrack accompanying your cinematic masterpiece. Get the composer on the job from day one! Invite them to coffee or an online video call *as soon as you know* you want them on your project, and then, send them the key materials.

## Tip #3

### Send Your Composer All of the “Key Materials”

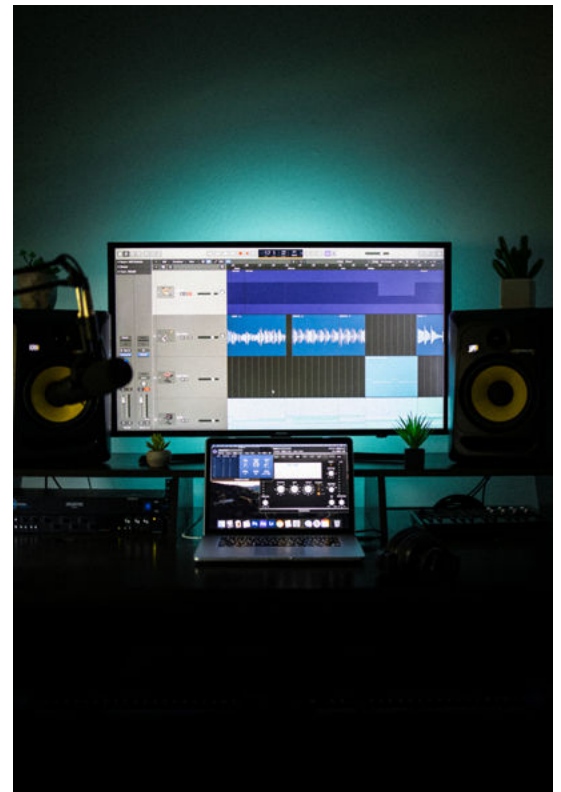
Music composers may act coy sometimes— we might say, *‘Leave it with me!’*

But please, just send your composers the script, mood boards, musical reference tracks, and relevant or similar films / TV series as soon as possible.

## Tip #4

### Get Used to Hearing Demos

The majority of Film/TV composers I know don't come up to the surface after the first creative ‘dive’ with solid bars of gold. Just like a script, cinematic music soundtracks take a lot of revision and refining whether they've been composed to the project's visuals or not. Preferably, get the composer sending you demos before you've even shot a second of footage, and give constructive feedback on them.





## Tip #5

### Refine the Soundtrack Together

I'm totally aware that not every film director will have time to work as a project mentor to the music composer. However, if your composer has contacted you with a question or thought about the soundtrack that they're not too sure about, it **would not be wise** to advise them that, *'It's up to you!'* You and/or your team created the brief for the entire film, right? How are your composer's demos, sketches or ideas so far going to grow into a perfect component to your creative vision? What are the fundamental 'seeds' that need to be captured in your production? These could be thematic topics, moods, dramatic techniques, or references to artistic / cultural movements, etc. Are those exact 'seeds' there in your composer's drafts, ready to blossom?

## Tip #6

### Be Prepared for Scrap Metal

If your composer has come up with something, maybe they've slaved away day-and-night for a week to create it, and you don't think it fits, or you simply don't like its sound, style, or vibe— I'd advise you to still encourage and support their feat. First of all, they've provided material, which can usually be very easily transmuted, tweaked, and cross-referenced to fit the themes and topics of your project. Secondly, they've put in an awful lot of effort to create something for your film or series. There are far too many filmmaker-composer relationships I've witnessed which have involved demoralizing each other, sometimes rather heavily, and maybe even without realising it. Avoid these dynamics like the plague!

## Tip #7

### When It's Right, Reproduce It

If your composer has touched on a sound, style or vibe that you think is absolutely perfect for the project, positively encourage him or her to inhabit that creative space for the rest of the process. This doesn't mean coming up with exactly the same thing for each scene, but rather, it means inspiring them to seek that same motivation and creativity that you hear in their super-awesome sample that they've just showed you and encouraging them to call upon those strengths whilst composing the full soundtrack. Did they have a specific character in mind? Or a specific film, TV show, song, soundtrack, dance, sculpture, painting, poem, or colour? *How* did they hit the spot just then? Ask them!

## Tip #8

### Don't Worry Too Much About Temp Tracks

I know full well how nerve-wracking it can feel to get a new project going, and filmmakers might use their favourite or most relevant pieces of music as a temp track to directly convey to their composer the kinds of moods and styles they're thinking of the most. However, a solid description or treatment of the project and its narrative or cinematic shape will actually do *more* to help the composer out than references to existing music will. If your composer is creative and intuitive, they will naturally know which musical notes, chords, instruments and tempos to pick. This is only truly effective, however, once you've described the pace, shape, narrative and general attitude of your upcoming production to them with as much clarity and depth as possible.

## Tip #9

### Don't Hire More Than One Composer

I would advise against hiring more than one composer usually. Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross work together like a dream. But they're super-seasoned, experienced guys that have known each other (and their regular directors) for years, if not decades. They're well-equipped with rig and co-compatibility and can churn out a score which provides more than the sum of its parts.

But if you're thinking about hiring two or more composers who have never met, or even two or more composers who just don't seem to click as insanely well as Reznor and Ross, I'd say, in the politest possible way, forget it.

## Tip #10

### Enjoy the Process

Remember this is enjoyable work. At times, working with a music composer can be frustrating. I know that for sure. There have been times I've been frustrated with communicative differences. But ultimately, we're doing what we love for a living. Don't let the imagined pressures of success distract you from thoroughly enjoying the collaborative and creative aspects of this awesome job. Don't even let real-life deadlines ruin the fun. We're incredibly lucky to be doing this. ■

*Photo on Page 40 by Elijah Merrell.  
Follow IG @ejmerrell*



# Get Expert Insights and Unleash Your Creative Vision with AJA Video Systems

## Io X3

### The Ultimate Game-Changer for Multi-Cam Workflows

Discover the ultimate game-changer for film, video, TV, broadcast, and live production: AJA Video Systems' Io X3.

*Student Filmmakers Magazine* features expert insights on this revolutionary equipment that streamlines high-quality HDR I/O up to 2K/HD 60p on compatible Thunderbolt™ 3-equipped Mac or PC hosts running professional video and audio applications.

### Io X3: The Ultimate Solution for High-Quality Live Production Capture

By Philip Grossman

*Cinematographer, Photographer, and Host of Discovery Science Channel's "Mysteries of the Abandoned: Chernobyl's Deadly Secrets."*



The hardest part of live production is capture and getting a good quality digital file. AJA Video Systems' Io X3 solves this problem especially for smaller productions. From my perspective, what is unique is that they have built it as an Io utility "box" that can be controlled by software. So, you could set it up to manage a small OBS type workflow that

would be fairly standard in a university/school setting, as well as streaming applications. The only limits are what can be built in software, so as faster computers are released, the user could get additional functionality with the same Io X3. Here are some quick tips for employing the Io X3 in post-production scenarios.

#### Plan, Plan, and Plan Again

The first tip is universal – *plan, plan, and plan again*. Figure out your needs, what could potentially go wrong, and how you would rectify the issue. This way, you have the answers ahead of time. When working on set or live production, things go wrong all the time. The better prepared you are to deal with them (mostly by figuring out what could go wrong and having the answer ahead of time), the less stress and better product you will always create.



## Recording Small Live Events for Post-Production

The Io X3 is perfect for recording small live events for post-production. It provides a secondary record to cinema cameras or primary record for ENG type cameras, allowing cutting to begin as soon as possible. It captures high-quality video and audio from multiple sources, including up to 16-channel audio on each SDI port and 8-channels on HDMI. With its compact, rugged, and portable design, it streamlines high-quality HDR I/O up to 2K/HD 60p on compatible Thunderbolt™ 3-equipped Mac or PC hosts running professional video and audio applications.

### Streaming Workflows

The Io X3 also offers an interesting and extremely portable solution for streaming workflows, which is great for small teams. With four independent inputs for workflows with OBS and Wirecast, together with simultaneous MultiView monitoring for each source, Io X3 is a perfect fit for streaming workflows. It offers pristine 2K/HD/SD I/O with HDR directly from any modern laptop or computer, making it ideal for remote editorial and VFX. With its eight switchable analog audio ports, the Io X3 allows users to shift between eight channels in or out, split connectivity between four inputs and four outputs, and includes a 3.5 analog audio connection to plug in headphones directly.

### *Share This Tip. Pass It On!*

Best advice. Always anticipate what could go wrong and prepare for it ahead of time. I guess I learned that as a boy scout, and then, in university studying engineering.



## Revolutionize Your Multi-Cam Workflow with AJA Video Systems' Io X3

By William Donaruma  
*Professor of the Practice in Filmmaking,  
 Director/Cinematographer/Editor*

The AJA Video Systems Io X3 greatly simplifies the multi-cam workflow while maintaining a higher quality I/O. This would be true for either staged, three-camera set-ups for continuing post-production work later or streaming capabilities for live productions on campus.

Best uses on our side, at the University of Notre Dame, Department of Film, Television & Theatre, would be streaming theatrical productions both live and for faster turnaround posting online later. Lately, we have been recording multiple cameras, having students, sync and edit the camera positions, finish with color, and then, export for streaming on a site.

We have also set up cameras with a downgraded HDMI input to a switcher that then will stream via OBS to YouTube. Having SDI inputs and multiple audio options would facilitate this streaming process significantly. We would also be able to run a streamed speaker series right into the podium computer system in our theatre. Currently we do separate recordings that need to be edited and re-posted for viewing later.

The features in the Io X3 that are most impressive are the quality, bit depth and HDR capabilities, along with 8 channel audio support.

### *Share This Tip. Pass It On!*

My advice for students using post-production workflow is to make sure you are capturing at the highest quality you can so that you can make the appropriate color, exposure and FX changes without the sacrifices that break down video like noise and banding artifacts.

## High-Caliber Live Events Anywhere The AJA Video Systems Io X3 Delivers

By Guy Shelton

*Visual Communicator; Digital Media Director for the Knoxville Catholic High School and The Irish Media Network.*



The AJA Video Systems Io X3 is an impressive compact piece of gear. I can see its implementation being great for large lecture halls, churches that want a few angles of video or schools that are getting their own broadcast program off the ground.

The three main uses I see for this system is both mobile and fixed multi-camera video installs, as well as an ingest machine for additional post processing flexibility. The beauty of these types of systems is that they are compact yet powerful enough to pull off a multi-cam broadcast, all while being flexible enough to be used in just about any way imaginable.

For us, this would make the perfect device to take to away sporting events and be able to run a multi camera broadcast when we don't have the luxury of being in our home studio/control room. With 4 inputs and the ability to interconnect with a second Io X3 to give us 8 inputs, I could see this running over OBS, vMix, or another software based switcher and giving a field crew the ability to still produce really high caliber live events.

On the editing side, the ability to ingest multiple audio inputs and send out the program video, all while connecting to a record deck could save tons of time and make the editing process a lot faster. If you implemented this in the editing bay then you could easily connect a camera and film a behind a scenes of how you're editing or use it to dub audio or track sound effects then you can push all of that to one final record on a Ki-pro. Even better, you can then walk to the control room, put your drive into a Ki-Pro there and your video is near-instantly ready for playback. No waiting on uploads and downloads to be able to play your content back in a live production setting.

*Share This Tip. Pass It On!*

If I could share one piece of advice with a film student it would be to keep shooting. Spielberg didn't pick up a camera for the first time and become an award-winning director. He became an amazing director because he kept shooting. Some of his films flopped but we only recall the good ones, so don't be afraid to shoot something and it does not turn out how you had imagined. It's in the process of things not going as planned that we often learn the most. Secondly, stay organized - if you let your footage get unorganized or you forgot if you had shot that scene or not you're going to waste a lot of time and give yourself a lot of headaches just because you didn't take good notes and stay organized. Your preproduction will always dictate how well your film turns out. If you wing your film it will look that way. If you plan out everything you can first then the only issues you have to work out are the ones that arise on set.

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The Io X3 is the ultimate solution for high-quality live production capture, with applications across film, video, TV, broadcast, and live production. Its portable design and ability to deliver pristine 2K/HD/SD I/O with HDR make it ideal for remote editorial and VFX workflows. It simplifies streaming theatrical productions, recording live events for post-production, and managing small OBS-type workflows. [Learn more at www.aja.com](http://www.aja.com).





# 3 Essential Workflows in the World of Filmmaking and Content Creation

These diagrams will help you understand the processes and how the AJA Video Systems Io X3 fits seamlessly into each workflow. Whether you're a novice exploring the realms of filmmaking, a seasoned professional, or an enthusiast seeking insight into this dynamic landscape, these visuals will guide you through the NLE, OBS, and streaming workflows.

## NLE Workflow for Io X3 Application Scenario

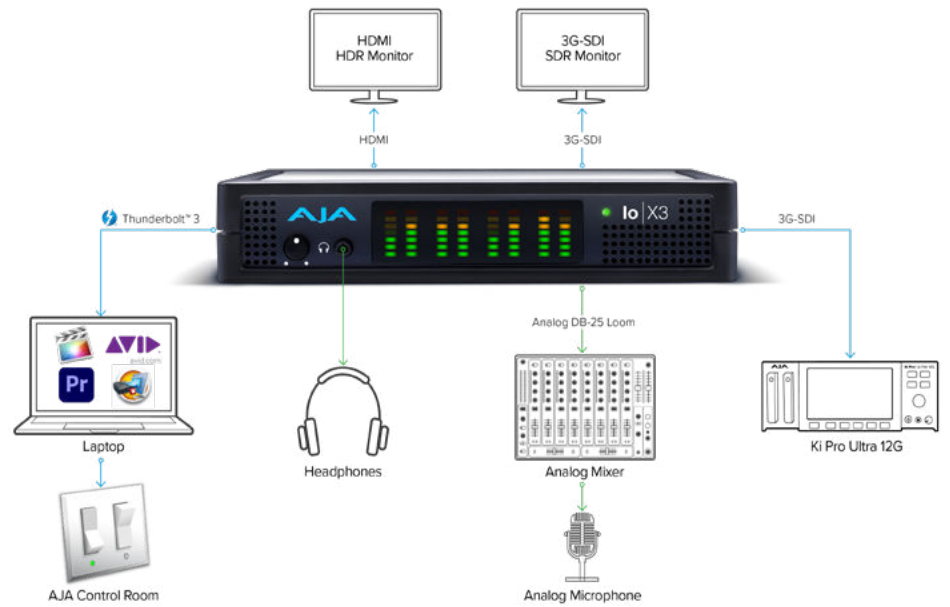
Io X3 supports all major NLE applications such as Apple Final Cut Pro, Avid Media Composer, and Adobe Premiere Pro, offering a range of practical and user-friendly features as depicted in the NLE workflow diagram. Positioned at the heart of the NLE workflow, the Io X3 connects directly to the host laptop via Thunderbolt 3, ensuring ultra-fast transmission. The host laptop runs the NLE software, and the timeline output is simultaneously displayed through both the HDMI port and the 3G-SDI port, supporting HDR and SDR monitoring. The front analog audio jack facilitates convenient headphone monitoring, while a standard Tascam DB-25 loom establishes a connection between an analog mixer, microphone, and the workflow. The front panel VU meters respond to the individual channel levels. To record the NLE output in real time for archival purposes or hand-off, an AJA Ki Pro Ultra 12G is linked, supporting Apple ProRes or Avid DNxHD codecs. Regardless of whether you're editing promos, news footage, sports, long-form content, or any other demanding video environment, Io X3 serves as the ideal companion.

## Streaming Timeline Workflow for Io X3 Application Scenario

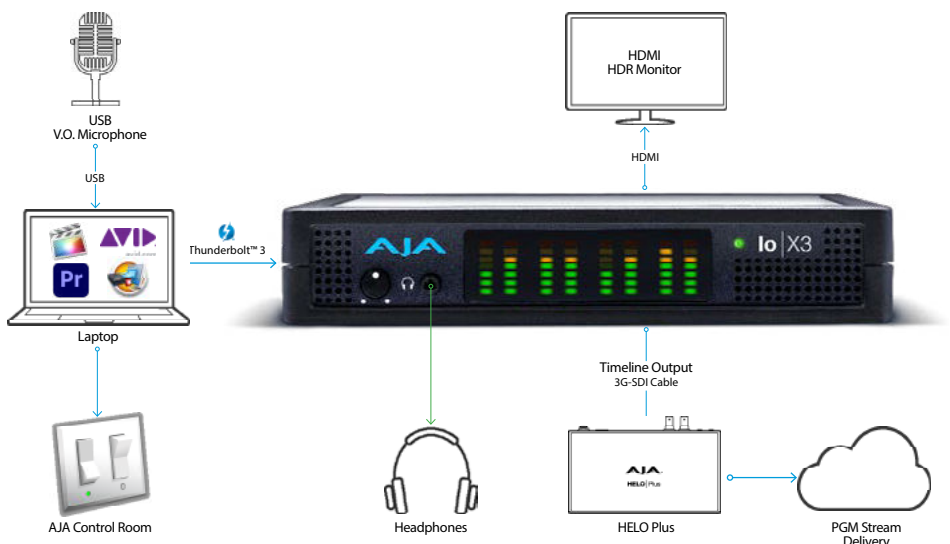
One popular method for streaming NLE and 3D modeling applications involves providing real-time commentary while creating edits or models using the timeline output. By following the same fundamental setup as the NLE workflow and incorporating AJA's HD streaming device, the HELO Plus, we can combine two high-quality AJA devices to establish an exceptionally robust solution. Establishing a seamless connection between the 3G-SDI output of the Io X3 and the 3G-SDI input of the HELO Plus is effortless, enabling the direct transfer of content from the timeline playhead to a live stream. To provide voiceover, a USB microphone can be employed. This straightforward yet potent configuration is versatile and applicable for various purposes, including entertainment streaming, remote collaboration, and educational endeavors. It empowers viewers to better comprehend and engage with the content being presented.

## OBS Workflow for Io X3 Application Scenario

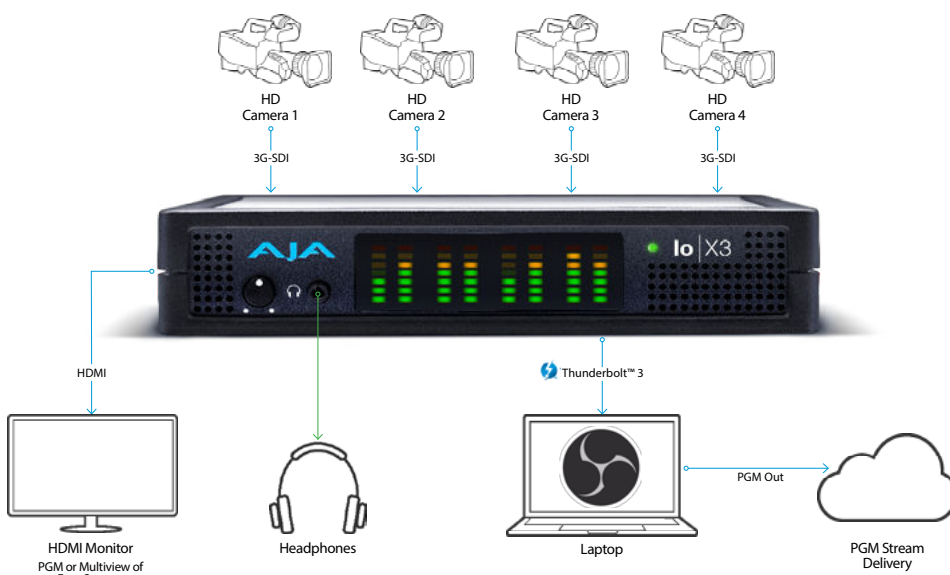
The Io X3 seamlessly integrates with OBS Studio, providing a comprehensive set of tools for live video mixing and streaming to various destinations. Once again, the Io X3 takes center stage in the depicted workflow, delivering the essential video input/output capabilities for a program featuring four camera sources. Through the Io X3's multi-channel support, the four HD cameras are directly connected to its 3G-SDI ports, which, in turn, are linked to the host PC or laptop via Thunderbolt 3. The host computer runs OBS Studio software, enabling you to conveniently monitor all incoming HD sources in a unified multiview format on any display using the HDMI port. Audio can be monitored using the integrated analog headphone port. The final program (PGM) stream is then output from our switched sources via the host computer.



**NLE Workflow for Io X3**



**Streaming Timeline Workflow for Io X3**



**OBS Workflow for Io X3**



# MAKING VISUALS SING

Micro-Budget Music Videos and Production Value on Kinglet's "Woodpecker"

By John Klein

Every indie filmmaking conversation tends to start with some variation of "write what you have." So, when I signed on to direct the music video for Kinglet's lyric-less prog-rock funky guitar song, "Woodpecker," I took that notion to heart, writing a concept of two late-night workers who find new life in a strange music broadcast. It would feature only the two band members Ryan Taylor and Kendall Lantz, and would only take place in one location (in our case, the black-box Philbin Theater and the basement of the University of Notre Dame's Debartolo Performing Arts Center) and could be shot with as few as two to three crew members!

With those tight limitations, frequent collaborator William Donaruma and I relied on several elements to heighten the cinematography and production value of the video.







### **Anamorphic lenses.**

In truth, any lenses that can give a little extra visual character will help! For our micro budget, we went with SLR Magic's 1.33x anamorphics, full of odd distortions and aberrations. The bright blue horizontal flares were key to the unique look of the video. We always had a light brought in just off-frame to force them into each shot, and affectionately called it "the JJ" for director JJ Abrams's noted love of lens flares.

### **Dynamic lighting.**

Movement, rhythm, and contrast are key in a music video. We mixed hard and soft light throughout, and we were lucky enough to procure a complement of Quasar tubes, which we mounted vertically onto light stands surrounding the performance, and linked them via CAT-5 cables. Ryan in turn wrote a program of shifting colors linked to the beat of the music, so we could edit between shots and keep the color consistent throughout the song.

### **Camera movement.**

Lots of videos rely on gimbals; given the weight of our camera system, we instead opted to stay on a Dana Dolly for just about every single shot that wasn't handheld, sometimes for quick repeating moves as short as a few feet. Every bit of motion gave an extra layer of parallax, especially with the lights in the background and the lens flares moving in and out. And we kept it consistent for the story, using simple symmetrical in-and-out motions during the early portions of the song and more diagonal and side-to-side motions for the performances as the characters come alive.

### **Lots of coverage.**

In a music video, editing is paramount, which means shooting as many options for cutting on the beat as possible. Sometimes it's as simple as a punch in, sometimes a slight tweak of a camera angle (always high or low), sometimes even multiple takes of the same shot with minor variations – jump cuts are more than forgivable in a music video, and even encouraged!

### **Color and contrast.**

So much cinematography lately goes to the bleak and washed-out end of the spectrum, and we didn't want to be afraid of saturation and deep contrast! Tony Scott's work wound up being a great reference for us – we wanted a reversal stock kind of look, and just decided to go for it.

All this, plus some wicked screen compositing work from Ryan (which made a long-distance cameo from guitar soloist Jake Howsam Lowe possible), gave our little music video a lot of oomph, befitting the song's rock-out feel. And it goes to show, as it always does in indie film, that you can do a lot with a little! ■

*View the music video, which played at Dances With Films, here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9kk2IMKUjI8>.*



# CONTRIBUTING WRITERS



**Michael Goi, ASC, ISC** was born and raised in Chicago, where he established himself in the fields of documentaries and commercials. As a cinematographer,

he has compiled over 75 narrative credits, four Emmy nominations and four ASC Award Nominations. As a director, he has helmed the pilot of *Avatar: The Last Airbender* for Netflix, four episodes of *American Horror Story*, as well as episodes of *Big Sky*, *The Rookie*, and many other shows. He wrote and directed the viral sensation, *Megan Is Missing*, and directed and photographed, *Mary*, starring Gary Oldman.

Michael is a three-time past president of the American Society of Cinematographers, served on the Board Of Governors of the ASC, and is the editor of the 10th Edition of the *ASC Manual*. He is the co-chair of the Directors Guild of America's Diversity Task Force and serves as an alternate to both the DGA National Board and Western Directors Council. He is a member of the Academy of Television Arts And Sciences, the Academy Of Motion Picture Arts And Sciences and the National Executive Board of the International Cinematographers Guild, and is the chair of the Motion Imaging Technology Institute's Board of Advisors.

Michael was accorded an Honorary Doctorate of Arts degree by Columbia College Chicago, and has appeared as a guest speaker at the American Film Institute, the University of Southern California, Walt Disney Animation Studios (for whom he demonstrated ice and snow lighting concepts for animators working on the film, *Frozen*), CineGear, IBC, NAB and many other international industry events. He regularly mentors students for various industry programs. An unrepentant movie buff, he has been known to spend all night in his home theater watching selections from the nearly 20,000 35mm, 16mm, Super 8, Blu-ray and DVD films in his collection.



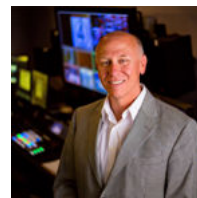
**David Landau** is a six-time Telly Award winning cinematographer, director of the cinematography program at Fairleigh Dickinson University

School of the Arts and the author of the book, "Lighting for Cinematography" from Bloomsbury Press. He also the lead author and editor of the forthcoming book, "Multi-Camera Cinematography", also from Bloomsbury Press.



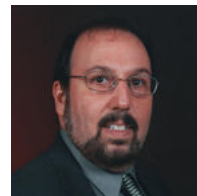
**John Klein** is a professor of digital media at Elmhurst University, as well as a cinematographer, director, and writer who produces under the banner of his

production company Glass City Films. ([www.windycitycamera.com](http://www.windycitycamera.com))



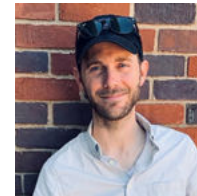
**Dr. Alan C. Hueth's** students have been well-prepared... More than 10% of his advanced students have had 26 film and television projects in 53 Film/TV regional,

national, and international festivals and won 26 awards. His students have worked at DreamWorks Pictures, Disney Studios, Paramount Pictures, Universal Pictures, and television networks, radio stations, and video production companies all over the country. He's now still helping his past students, doing some script and screenplay doctoring for feature-length films, and writing some media literacy books... in between spoiling his grandkids.



**Fred Ginsburg, CAS, Ph.D.** is a highly experienced and award-winning professional sound mixer (retired) whose decades of work included

features, episodic TV series, national TV commercials, corporate, and government. A member of the Cinema Audio Society and the University Film & Video Association, Fred holds doctorate, graduate, and undergraduate degrees in filmmaking; has published more than 250 technical articles along with textbooks, instruction manuals, and hosts an educational website. Fred, recently retired, is professor emeritus at California State University Northridge.

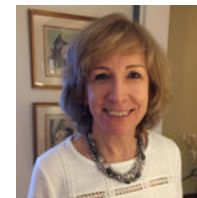


**Justin Matley** is an award-winning Audio Engineer, Re-Recording Mixer, Sound Designer, and Music Director/Supervisor. After a decade at NYC's

largest audio post-production studio, Sound Lounge, he went solo seven years ago, and currently works out of multiple studios in NYC and Connecticut. Justin works on a plethora of film, TV, radio, internet, music, and experiential projects for dozens of high-profile clients worldwide. An accomplished veteran of the broadcast, advertising, and film industries, Justin has thousands of projects under his belt, and has a reputation for being an excellent problem solver, team player, and creative executor. Justin is a husband and father of two girls. He loves the outdoors, skiing, politics, good tequila, and Boston sports teams. Visit his website at [www.justinmatley.com](http://www.justinmatley.com).



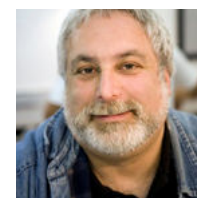
**David Appleby** is an award-winning filmmaker and professor emeritus at the University of Memphis. His films have aired nationally on PBS, ABC, A&E and Starz.



**Sheila Curran Bernard** and **Kenn Rabin** are the authors of *Archival Storytelling, 2nd edition: A Filmmaker's Guide to Finding, Using, and*

*Licensing Third-Party Visuals and Music* (Focal Press, 2020).

Bernard is an Emmy and Peabody Award-winning filmmaker and writer and the author of *Documentary Storytelling*, now in its 5th edition, and an associate professor at the University at Albany, SUNY.



Rabin is a consulting producer for both dramatic and documentary work and an internationally recognized expert on the use of archival materials in film

storytelling. His credits include *Selma* (Ava DuVernay), *Milk* (Gus Van Saint), and the acclaimed PBS series *Eyes on the Prize* and *Vietnam: A Television History*.





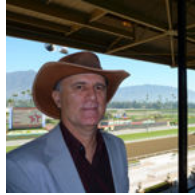
**Loren-Paul Caplin** has written feature films and TV scripts for studios and independents, including Paramount, Universal, Sony, and Fox Searchlight. He

teaches and has taught screenwriting at Columbia University, NYU/Tisch Department of Dramatic Writing, The New School (where he co-authored the Screenwriting Certificate Curriculum), and Hofstra University. He also wrote/directed the feature film, *The Lucky Ones* (Tribeca Film Festival, 2003), the short film, *The History of the World in 8 Minutes*, (New Directors/New Films Festival, MoMA), as well as several plays, and has done commentary for Criterion Collection and is a screenwriting consultant. Visit his website at [lorenpaulcaplin.com](http://lorenpaulcaplin.com) and IMDB page at [www.imdb.com/name/nm0135269](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0135269).



**Neil Landau** is an award-winning screenwriter. His screen credits include the teen comedy, *Don't Tell Mom the Babysitter's Dead*, *Melrose*

*Place*, *The Magnificent Seven*, *Doogie Howser, M.D.*, *The Secret World of Alex Mack*, *Twice in a Lifetime*, and MTV's *Undressed*. His animated movie projects include *Tad: The Lost Explorer (Las Aventuras de Tadeo Jones)* and *Tad 2 (Tadeo Jones and the Secret of King Midas)*. Neil's new projects include the new animated feature, *Little Big Boy*, for 4 Cats Pictures/A3/Artresmedia and Warner Bros. and the live-action feature film, *Flinch*, for producer Teri Schwartz (*Sister Act*, *Beaches*, *Nuts*) and WME (William Morris Endeavor) Independent. Neil served as an Assistant Dean of Special Projects at UCLA School of Theater, Film & Television and Co-Director of UCLA's MFA Screenwriting Program (Writing for Television track) for many years. Currently, Neil is an Associate Professor at Grady College of Journalism & Mass Communications and founding Director of Screenwriting in the new MFA Film & Television Program at the University of Georgia, where he also serves as Chair of the pre-jury selection committee for the Creative category of the Peabody Awards. Neil is author of six books, including the bestselling *101 Things I Learned in Film School* (Grand Central Publishing, 2010; reissued by Random House/Crown, 2021), and the all-new 2nd edition of his bestseller, *The TV Showrunner's Roadmap: Creating Great Television in an On Demand World*.



**Scott McConnell** is story developer and editor who helps creatives to better apply their imagination to their stories. Subscribe for free to Scott's *Writing Tips Newsletter* here: [bit.ly/3DnaZOR](http://bit.ly/3DnaZOR).



**JC Cummings** has become a sought-after Producer, Director, Showrunner, including a production logistics specialist in the film and television

industries. Mr. Cummings continues to share his knowledge with over 40 years of on-set production experience and storytelling as an independent producer. Beginning in radio for a brief time, moving to film and broadcast TV, where his career led him to acquire rights and later producing a successful nationally syndicated children's series. As success continued, Mr. Cummings was contracted to develop other television projects for broadcast networks and outside companies.

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



**Tony Halliwell** is a versatile and impactful composer, producer, guitarist and vocalist from the UK, paving the way for a new generation of

cinematic music. With his revitalising take on music composition and an eclectic host of genres and styles at his disposal, Halliwell, a recent Master's graduate from the University of Southampton, has set his sights on a lifelong journey to simultaneously embrace the way music is heard in our day and age, and turn it upside down.

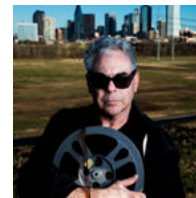
Visit Tony's artist profile at SoundCloud (<https://bit.ly/3BFL8ig>) and Spotify (<https://spoti.fi/3LfLcto>).



**Richard Tiland** is the President of New Evolution Video and dk3studios. "Since I was a kid, my passion has been media production. And through this

passion, I've been able to develop meaningful work relationships and create masterful visuals with my clients. Now as a proud production business owner, I am fully committed to ensuring that you have the best experience possible within the video industry. Let's create."

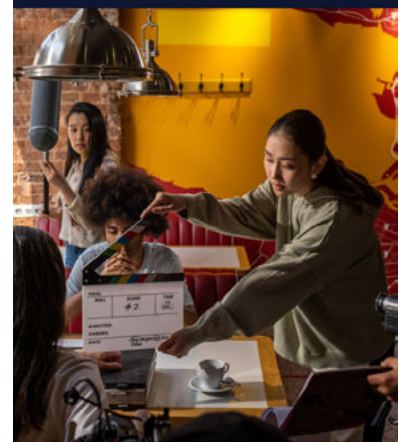
He can be reached at [richard@newevolutionvideo.com](mailto:richard@newevolutionvideo.com), (619) 365.5529. [newevolutionvideo.com](http://newevolutionvideo.com) [dk3studios.com](http://dk3studios.com)



**Bart Weiss** is an award-winning filmmaker, educator and director/ founder of the Dallas VideoFest and produces "Frame of Mind" on KERA

TV. He was President of AIVF and was a video columnist for *The Dallas Morning News*, and *United Features Syndicate*. He writes for *Student Filmmakers Magazine*. [www.videofest.org](http://www.videofest.org)

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