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ACTORS AGENT/ MANAGER

Q - What is the job of an actors agent?

Geoff - To promote and nurture the career of an actor. Ideally from drama school through to old age. It's very much a partnership.

Q - On a day to day basis, what does your job entail?

Geoff - Most of an agent's day is spent on the phone, literally for 7½ hours of the day! We are trying to find out what is going on in theatre, film and television as far as jobs are concerned, so we make sure we are on top of all the important productions. If we find something appropriate, we submit our clients that are available to the Casting Director and then follow up to try to persuade them to put our ideas through to the director. Of course, we prioritise by pushing the clients we think have a realistic chance of getting the job. Beyond this, there's the logistical work such as arranging meetings and auditions as well as administrative work. We have clerical staff who update all the CVs, photographs and video clips etc. I also meet with our clients frequently, not least for the contact, but to see if they've changed physically, and if we need to address that in terms of their photographs.

Q - What are some of the differences between Personal Management and straight Agency?

Geoff - Personal management companies tend to be more hands-on with the client, nurturing them and helping them decide which options to take. We give a lot of advice. For example, not necessarily taking the highest paid jobs, in order to take the one that is going to do the best thing for their career. This is because we tend to have less clients per representative. The larger agents would, I suspect, not be wanting to talk to you unless you are going to increase their profits right away.

Q - Should a new film maker be worried that their projects are going to be given less attention until they have established themselves as a well known director?

Geoff - I think there is a popular misconception that we are all cutthroat. The way we approach a film-maker, whatever the budget, is to first of all ask what do we think of the project? After that, we see if it is a vehicle for any of our youngsters. I'll give you an example, we have a young director Mark Murphy, who is doing a film and has just cast one of our clients in the lead. It's not primarily because he's our client that Mark chose him, but actually because he's not got much time and our person was the right actor. He's going to see a couple of other clients as well, in smaller parts, but he's also going with other agencies' clients. We do this not because he's our client and we are doing him a favour - that is counterproductive. If we put a good client into a bad film, it does nobody any favours. You've still got a bad film at the end of the day. We are genuinely very flexible, if someone hasn't got any money, and the project is worthy, then we will put everything into it. We also find that actors don't forget where they've come from and may want to do smaller pictures when they get more established. Billy Boyd is a good example of an actor who has gone on to make major feature films, but still wants to look at smaller projects because that's what gave him the platform in the beginning.

Q - How should a producer approach you if they are wanting to cast a film?

Geoff - So much is done by e-mail now, that's the best approach for us. It should include an introductory paragraph, a brief synopsis (no more than a page) and if possible a draft of the script. Also have a cast breakdown, because if there are no roles for our people, then there is no point reading it any further.

Q - When you say cast list, what do you mean exactly?

Geoff - A brief synopsis of each character. The briefer the better, so we can get through them faster as we read so many scripts.

Q - Writers and Directors may have a very fixed view of what that character should be, but a good Agent or Casting Director can open their minds a bit .

Geoff - True. A lovely man named Jonathan McLeish who was a BBC Casting Director came to work here. He used to cast *Eastenders*. He came to work side by side with me for about 18 months or so, and I'll never forget the day we worked through a breakdown, and I was really quite pleased with my lateral thinking. There was a character who was in his mid-30's and he was fairly vain and masculine, and Jonathan turned it completely on its head and we ended up submitting a nearly 40 year old bald guy, I thought '*I never would have gone there!*' That is just the richness of the diversity that there can be.

Q - How soon before shooting should you be approached?

Geoff - Well, as much time as possible because of actors' availability. A month or two would be great. But many independent films give me about two to three weeks sometimes!

Q - What is it that attracts you or your clients to a particular piece and makes you consider it?

Geoff - Fundamentally, the script over reputation, because you can be disappointed very easily by a well known writer's work. Every time the script is the thing that persuades the client. And it is up to the client. We don't sit here all powerful and kind of say 'OK, we've got a script in, there is a part there for you, do it.' It's not a process where we sit on top of a hill, dictating to everyone. It's a partnership. It's not necessarily that important what I think, what's important to me is what the client thinks. They will either have their appetites whetted or not depending on what they read.

Q - On a practical level, what things can a film-maker bring to the equation to make it more attractive to the client?

Geoff - We would never want our client to be out of pocket for certain expenses. So we would always ask for transport to be taken care of once they are in production. Most of the time, you tend to find that cars are laid on these days. It makes a big difference in their performance because if they've had to wrestle their way through the great unwashed, then they are not going to be in the right frame of mind when they get to work. We generally don't insist on per diems on low budget films because you've normally got a food wagon there. If there is more money available, then that always oils the wheels, and makes things run smoother.

Q - Why are PACT / Equity agreements an attractive proposition to an Agent?

Geoff - Well, because everybody's got to eat. It's a romantic notion, but actors can't afford to do one low/no budget film after the other and expect to stay in their flat! We've had a situation recently where somebody was going to be out of their flat very shortly unless we get them a commercial, which mercifully is what we did! People cannot work for three or four weeks for nothing, no matter how much they like a project. They'll have to do voice-overs or waitressing to compensate. So, the PACT agreement is kind of designed to accommodate for exactly that situation. It establishes basic minimum figures so actors at least get a living wage.

Q - When we made our 3rd feature, we were actually going to pay our actors more. Then PACT and Equity got involved and we ended up paying them less, but everyone was happier with that. So why is this a good thing?

Geoff - Because of the security of the PACT / Equity agreement. I imagine there are thousands of situations where an agent has talked themselves out of money! I think Equity does a terrific job, not least because in any given situation we can pick up the phone and speak to a person in the department



Using Friends as Actors



Actors cost money. Even if they offer to work for free they will at some point probably ask for money for train fares etc. It is almost essential that your principal cast are pros, but if push comes to shove, friends and relatives are an option. If casting a friend or relative...



1. You will still need a contract. Always make a contract with everyone that appears in front of the camera - carry release forms that can be filled in on the spot. Not only will this protect you legally, but the sales agent will require these documents.
2. It is more likely that they will endure hardship and abuse than an unpaid actor - so if you need 'a body in the lake', ask a relative (you will still get earache, but you will be able to persuade them).
3. Equity, the actors union won't like you making a non union film - beware.
4. Unless you are sure of their skills, don't give them any important role. Be aware that they could be spectacularly awful. They may also be unprofessional.
5. Friends and relatives are great if you need a crowd - they will even come in costume (but beware of damaged egos when a costume is terrible).
6. Always consider an actor over a non actor, even if the actor in question has little or no experience. They want to be there and will have some training. There are thousands of actors just waiting for a break. Contact SBS, PCR or the Stage.

we need. And it will be a person we know well and have a dialogue with. We can iron out problems often before they have become an issue. I think Equity genuinely, is one of the few organisations where they really do have the actors best interests at heart and aren't there just to be a thorn in the side of producers and film-makers.

Q - There seems to be two kinds of low budget films. Those being made because the film makers want to make it to advance their career. They love the film, they can't get any financing, so they choose to make it this way. Then there are the more unscrupulous people who are doing it to avoid paying, to line their own pocket.

Geoff - I think we are not very tolerant of that sort of thing, whereas an actor, if a producer approached him directly and said 'Look, we will pay you, £100 a week for filming, but that's all we have got in the budget, is that OK?' they'd sort of shrug their shoulders and say 'Yeah, OK!' An agent would say 'C'mon! What are the circumstances?' We have to delve deeper to find out what the real situation is in order to protect our clients from abuse. So we are the buffer inbetween.

Q - So I guess the approach every new film maker ought to have would be courteous and honest?

Geoff - Honesty is everything because the minute I smell anything suspicious, alarms go off and I shut down. You've got your work cut out for you now because I've gone from being an ally to an obstacle.

Q - That's a really interesting point, because so many people fall foul of agencies, because they see them as an enemy, as opposed to an ally.

Geoff - I'm not surprised in some instances. I think there is an awful lot of arrogance out there and in certain circumstances, people are not doing things for the right reasons. It's all about ulterior motives, or other elements that come into it. I feel that if the project is good, and the production team is competent, you should want your actors involved whether it be for no money, or for half of what they are worth. A major film star, who would normally command £50k a week, but might now do it for £20k a week. It's your job as a film maker, to persuade us that it's something that they want to do. If you are open right from the word 'go', that endears you anyway, and if the project is good enough, then we will see that. And most of us have a general idea of what is accepted as being good and what is accepted as being bad.

Q - Do you think it is a bad idea for a film-maker to cast actors just because they know them personally?

Geoff - Yes hugely. A writer spends months and months working out his characterisations. Who in God's name is going to put somebody in a part because they are a mate? You might as well be a plumber, sorry to plumbers out there, but certainly not a film

Jeremy - If it's a good script it doesn't matter. There's an awful lot of low-budget films with poor scripts in which I'm not interested, but if there is a wonderful script with absolutely no money, I would much rather an actor did that, than a major movie that's not very good for a lot of money. Certainly, I think English actors appreciate that, and would rather do a quality film than rubbish for bucks. A lot of new film makers believe their scripts are wonderful, but often I don't share their enthusiasm, so it is important for them to remember that if I say I don't think it's suitable, it's not because I don't want an actor to do a low-budget film, it's because I believe the script is below par. Everything stems from the screenplay - if it is good, everyone believes in it and most of your problems are over.

Q - There is a myth in film making that the agent is simply an obstacle to get around. How would you feel about film makers who contact an actor directly, either by phoning them or sending a screenplay?

Jeremy - If an actor meets film makers socially and they chat and it all works out then fine, but I know actors do not appreciate getting phone calls from desperate film makers. Nor do they like getting their post box filled with wannabe scripts.

Q - What are the main problems dealing with a low-budget production?

Jeremy - There are basic things like transport, expecting an actor to get up at four o'clock in the morning and catch a tube to Neasden to start filming. I just say that is not on, it is the producer's job to provide transport. An awful lot of low-budget films are being made by first time film makers who have no real background you can check up on so I just have to go with my gut feeling. They've just got to be honest to make you trust them.

Q - What are the main concerns of an actor, especially if the budget is low?

Jeremy - They're not being paid a lot of money so what they do want is comfort. I think pushing them all into the same car to take them to the location is not what you want to do because they need that time to be quiet, to think about what they are doing. Nor do you want to put them up in crummy hotels. I know it's difficult because the money should be on the screen, but I think the actors comfort is something that is often forgotten. Basic things like no chairs to sit on, no umbrellas if it's pouring with rain, no tents - the sort of things which often don't cost very much. Everyone else on the set is busy most of the time, rushing around doing things, but often, the actor isn't doing much and is waiting for the next scene to happen. A green room is ideal, a place where they can sit and concentrate on what they are doing without being distracted by the crew. Somewhere warm, dry and quiet, even a kettle with tea and coffee can be so easily forgotten.

Q - What is your worst experience of a low-budget film?



Jeremy - A client of mine made a film in Scotland that has never seen the light of day - it was an absolute nightmare. They hadn't scheduled anything, so he never knew if they wanted him the next day or not, that is until 10 o'clock at night - even then, they might not use him the next day as arranged. I think the most important thing is the pre planning, making sure everything is worked out well in advance and they know what they are shooting each day. Obviously things can go wrong and no-one expects any less, but one has to know what one is doing, when and where. Actors get cross if they don't know what's happening and they feel they've been mucked around, especially if they turn up and then they're not used.

Q - What are the main areas in the contract that you would be looking to nail down?

Jeremy - Definitive dates. On a low-budget production, if an actor is doing just a couple of days, I would really like the days to be nominated rather than on or about. Billing is very difficult to negotiate and terribly important for the actor. On low-budget films, when actors aren't being paid very much, I try and make sure that everyone's on favoured nations (which is when the actors get the same, nobody is going to get more). If an actor is taking a big cut in salary and suddenly discovers that one of his contemporaries is getting a lot more, it can become very difficult, but if it's favoured nations there is no argument.

Q - What can a producer do to make your life easier?

Jeremy - I think being honest and absolutely straightforward. You know when people aren't telling the truth - when I ask, is so and so's client getting more than our client? and the reply is, well no, not exactly - well, what do you mean? - the answer - well, I can't say. You just want them to be straightforward and honest and say, well yes they are getting more money, because they're doing 6 weeks more work on it. I just think that good honesty in this business pays off in the long run. Agents all talk to one another and confer on deals. An awful lot of producers, especially young producers who are starting out, have very little respect for rather senior, well known actors, and expect to meet them without even giving them a script. The actor thinks why should I, I've never heard of this person. Producers should be careful not to sound too arrogant - if they are trying to get a star to work for them, they should be extremely respectful.

Casting



1. No-one is out of reach. Make a list of people who could play the parts in your picture and approach their agents. Actors can have a bad year and be eager for feature work, or may have a soft spot for the decadence of low budget film making. If you don't ask, you'll never know - and they may say yes.
2. Agents are all difficult. Their sole job is to protect their client, hustle as much money as they can and moan and groan about conditions. Agents often neglect to inform their clients of the potential job as the money is likely to be bad. Agents are paid on commission, and if the percentage is poor, why spend time and energy on negotiations if there isn't a pot of money at the end?
3. The agent's flip side is that if you have an exciting project, you are honest and upfront, then they may see your movie as a positive opportunity. Deals can be struck; for instance, a named actor is supplied along with four new faces for the experience.
4. If you have a way into an actor, bypass the agent and get the script to them. No agent will be able to stop an actor who is determined to be involved in a project. Be aware that some actors hate this approach and enjoy the protection their agent gives them from a barrage of wanabe film makers.
5. Get a copy of *THE SPOTLIGHT*, a book and online service with actors in Britain listed with pic. Spotlight 0207 437 7631 and www.spotlightcd.com.
6. You can get international casting information from the links on the Spotlight web site, including America, Canada and Australia.
7. There are several casting services where ads can be placed very cheaply, or even free. PCR and SBS for instance.
8. Videotape auditions, it will help you put a face to the hundreds of hopefuls you will doubtless see.
9. Be honest and up front about money and conditions - preferably on the phone when arranging an audition. It's better to know then, rather than on set if there are going to be problems.
10. If you are paying below Equity recommended levels, don't shout about it. Equity can be rather aggressive and tip the cart a little. Remember, that no matter how much Equity scream and shout, we live in a free world where people can do as they like. Just lie low.
11. Where should you hold auditions? Many agents and casting facilities have rooms for this purpose, but you can hold them in your front room if you like - we did.
12. Once you have cast a part, sort out ALL financial arrangements in a contract, before you shoot.
13. If you can afford to run with the Equity / PACT registered low budget scheme, do so. It will cost you some money, just over £500 pw and just over £100 pd, but agents love it and there are no contracts. Pretty much equals minimal headaches.
14. Using a casting director will help you get better and faster access to higher calibre talent. They also know agents and can speak the lingo. If you can afford it, it is money well spent.
15. Remember, your cast are the emotional vehicles through which the story is told. Alongside the script, getting the right cast is probably the most important job. Don't prioritise ANYTHING higher than casting.



maker. You have a responsibility to put the right person in the job. I should have said this at the beginning - my job is to get the right person the job. As a young film-maker, you owe it to yourselves to make sure the casting is of the highest quality because that is going to carry the script. I emphatically disagree with 'friends' being cast because they are simply available and cheap or free. I appreciate that it has to be that way sometimes, but it is far from ideal.

Q - On a practical level, how does the interview and offer process work? Can you make multiple offers to different actors for the same role?

Geoff - No, you can't do that. Technically once you make an offer, if an agent comes back and accepts that offer, then that is binding, whether it's on paper or not. So if you did make three offers for the same part, you could find yourself having to pay three people for one actor to play the part! From the actor's point of view, what generally happens is they go into the meeting and hopefully get the job or at least a recall, and then get the job. If so, the Casting Director will phone and say 'Fantastic news, we would like to make an offer for so and so to do whatever,' and our response varies from 'Sorry you haven't got much money,' to 'Oh brilliant news, well get your wheelbarrow out!' We know which Casting Directors will offer us the right money and which ones will try

and come under. There are actually some who go over, but in the main it is usually under, and you have to sort of nudge them to get what's right for the actor given their experience and the available budget.

I think from an actor's point of view, they are constantly being told there is no money in the budget. Then look at the camera and think, 'well it is an inanimate object but you are paying it ten times a day the cost of me. Why is that when I am the creative element?' The cost of talent as opposed to technicians is tiny. So as an agent you have to get them as much as possible, so they feel good about themselves on set. There is nothing worse than having an actor resenting you the experience when they are trying to deliver a performance. You have to reach that position where, as an agent, you have to push things to the point where the producer is about to walk away. I had an hour long phone call with a producer for a deal who was shouting at me down the phone, not threatening in any way, but shouting at me, really, really angry and after an hour of the conversation, he invited me out to lunch! That's kind of the process you have to go through, if you pick up the phone and say 'so and so has got the job, we are paying £500 a week, is that OK?'; any agent that says 'Yep!' is not doing his job properly, you have got to know what is underlying that, and know that you have to push as much as you can.

Q - Many film makers never deal with professional negotiators. Do you have any advice for dealing with these people?

Geoff - You need to learn the dialogue and the terms. So when the phrase comes at you, you know how to respond to it. Then when you turn it back, the person on the other end is thinking 'Oh shit, that's not meant to happen!'

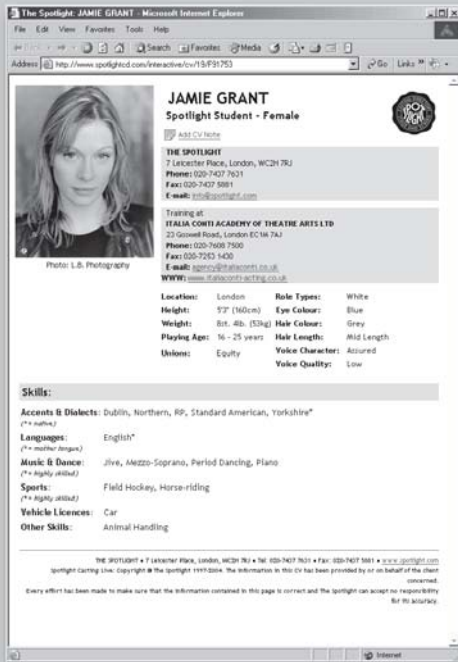
Q - What can a film maker on a low budget film do to make an actor comfortable so they can give their best performance?

Casting Online Resources



When casting a film, you can look at hundreds, even thousands of actors. This is a huge amount of data to sort through. The web is of course a terrific and immediate resource that can help do your job more efficiently and better.

1. Join the Spotlight, a database (and books) with various Equity actors in the UK. Pretty much every working actor is listed with credits, skills, contacts etc. It is one of the tools ALL film makers will use. Casting directors often email you a link which will bring up specific actor details immediately. Fantastic! The Spotlight also has listings for Canada and Australia. Check out www.spotlightcd.com find links and purchase a CD-ROM with pictures of the actors. For America, get a copy of the Academy Players Directory.



2. To help generate ideas for actors, use the Internet Movie Database (www.imdb.com) to get pictures and filmographies of actors. For a fee, you can join imdbPRO and get information on their representation and other details not listed in the general section.

3. There are several casting services and trade magazines where ads can be placed very cheaply or for free, such as PCR. Check out PCR at www.pcrnewsletter.com, Casting Network at www.castingnetwork.co.uk, Cast Web at www.castweb.co.uk, Castcall Information services at www.castcall.demon.co.uk. Also check out Script breakdown Services at www.breakdownservices.com who have offices in LA, New York and Vancouver with sister companies in London, Toronto and Sydney.

4. On the whole, actors are not very techno savvy, so don't expect online video clips, showreel DVD's etc. Some will have them, most will not.

Pic (left) - Spotlight online.

Method Acting & Classical Acting

Broadly speaking, actors can use one of two main techniques to elicit their performance. These are classical acting and method acting - essentially, pretend to be it (classical) and try to be it (method). These are the powertools of their trade.



Classical Training

A style that was used by Shakespeare and the Greek Classics for their plays. Many of the great theatre actors such as Laurence Olivier and John Gielgud come from classical training, as are some of the greatest film actors such as Judy Dench, Jeremy Irons and Anthony Hopkins. With classical acting, sometimes called technical acting, the actor does not let the character envelop their 'way of being', rather they rely on a planned performance using specific acting tools such as precise speech and movement to

get the desired performance. In

classical training, the actor uses external factors to analyse a character.

Method Acting

(Also known as the Stanislavski System which Lee Strasberg adapted to create 'the Method') refers to immersing yourself in the role and actually becoming the character, if only to a small degree. Actors can use relaxation techniques to allow them to access emotions. Method actors often use sense memory to stimulate the emotional response, where the actor recreates or relives a past experience they've had, one that has a similar emotional response to what is required by the scene. They will access their five senses to recall how things felt at that time in order to bring it to life in the present. They become one with the character and will frequently stay in character until they are done with the project. This method is very internal and can be very rewarding as well as frustrating. Robert DeNiro, Al Pacino, Anne Bancroft, Marlon Brando and Dustin Hoffman all came out of this school of acting.



Geoff - The actor needs to be given the space to prepare, and you can't expect them to jump off the tube, come racing in, sweating, take off his jacket, be padded by the make-up girl, and go into his emotional scene. He might be able to, if it's a rushing to work scene, but if it's a completely different scenario, he would have to have time to settle, think about what is about to happen and prepare himself mentally. Also, Directors need to be people people. So often you hear stories about mistreatment of an actor say in the audition process where an actor will walk in, walk up to the desk and stick out a hand, and the Director will not even look up. I've seen it. You just think, 'what are you doing?' This person is supposed to be giving you their best, and you are putting them on edge the minute they walk into the room. So some people are on a power trip, and that is something that filters through, in the end, I'm not saying there is a black list, or Directors that we won't have our people working with, but you certainly hear stories that recur about people.

Q - Are there places where you keep an eye on projects that are coming up?

Geoff - We get a lot of feedback from our actors who hear on the grapevine. We see all the professional casting reports. I have to be honest, when it's busy, as it is at the moment, we don't have the time to go out searching for low budget films because there are other priorities. But the direct approach is best and we would prefer a company to phone us up, and say, 'we are doing some films, would you mind sending us a brochure of your client list, or e-mail us your client list'. We would be only too happy to. Of course before anyone commits to anything we will need to see the script and the synopsis and so on, so we've got nothing to lose and everything to gain by doing it.

Q - Why not bypass the agent, and then just go to the actor?

Geoff - Because actors are the worst negotiators in the world. They want to do the job, and the minute the Producer or Director starts talking to them about the job, they will be trying to see if they will fit into the role. If you start talking money, they start to glaze over, and they will say 'Speak to my agent, speak to my agent!' It's generally not the done thing, for a very good reason, they are very vulnerable.

Q - If somebody is making a picture, should they come and meet you?

Geoff - In an ideal world, it would be nice, but generally we don't have time for any pleasantries.

Q - Is that one of the reasons why you would work with a Casting Director, because you have existing relationships?

Geoff - Yes. If we know Gail Stevens is casting a television production, we would unhesitatingly submit any of our clients, as long as the role was large enough. If it were an unknown casting person, Director or Producer we would need to have as much information as possible to make a judgment as to whether it was something we wanted to be involved in. So yes, if it was a major film and they wanted a client to play a lead and take up 4 months of the year for very little money, then it would probably get to the stage where we would meet and talk things through. If there are any concerns, then it's much better to have a face to face meeting.

Q - One of the mistakes that I see so often in independent films is that they didn't start casting from the top and then work down.

Geoff - Yes, why not start big? They might say yes. But you must make sure they are right for the film. You have to cast your leads first and match everybody from there otherwise you have got problems. For example, if you stick a mammoth actor in a smaller role against a lead who is weaker, you've got a problem on your hands. So, yes you actually have to cast down sometimes, and lighten a character because it's not going to work in reality. A good Casting Director will prevent that from happening. Again most of our day is spent talking to Casting Directors, so I obviously have a bias towards them, it's a very well-oiled process.

Q - How do the contracts work when it comes to lower budget stuff?

Geoff - Well, they are usually in the form of a letter of agreement. In a few cases a lawyer's contract. We have a natural aversion to those as we'd much rather the money was spent on the production than on lawyers. There must be thousands of examples out there on the Internet of contracts you can manipulate yourself. Just make sure it covers certain elements. The Equity contracts are good. They are very well thought out, so I would always try and get hold of an Equity contract to look at and base it on that, if not use it. Even on low budget films you should try and work with Equity as it keeps everyone happy and the process can run much more smoothly.

Q - How does payment of an actor work?

Geoff - Normally, it's very simplistic. They get paid on the Thursday of the week they are filming. If they are only being employed for 2 days, then what generally happens is they shoot the 2 days and are paid very soon afterwards. Sometimes you can have problems getting the money, but if you get any of those instincts before hand, i.e. if you like the person who sold you the project, you love the project, your actor was going to be terrific in it, all was well with the world, and they say to you *'this is filming on February 3rd, we'll have the money in your bank account the following Wednesday, is that OK?'*, I say *'Yes, absolutely fine.'* If they had been a plonker from the word go, I would say *'he's not filming, until you pay him!'*

Q - What advice would you offer a new film maker?

Geoff - Everyone in the industry, successful or otherwise, will have an abundance of advice to give. Be selective and bear in mind a lot of it will apply to what has worked in the past, which may not necessarily work for your film. Don't be afraid to push boundaries. Learn from the past, but don't live in it. Also, you *need* a sense of humour, so if you haven't got one, get one! And be passionate about what you are doing, and if you can't be - stop doing it!



Catherine Arton
Casting Director

CASTING DIRECTOR

Q - What is your job?

Cathy - I'm a Casting Director. That means a variety of things, but mostly that I help the Producers and Directors find cast for their film, or television programme.

Q - When should you be approached on a low budget film?

Cathy - From a production's point of view, probably as soon as possible. If you do get a 'name' attached, that can help you with the financing.

Q - What do you need to do your job?

Cathy - I need the script and a very strong sense of what the budget is. I need to know contingency, in regard to budget too. I need them to think both ways, best case scenario casting, worst case scenario casting. I'd really love them to have an ideal A-list Hollywood cast list, if they could have their dream cast, who would it be, it really helps.

Q - How important is nailing down dates in the schedule?

Cathy - It is important, but you do have to go with the flow and be aware of the Production requirements. Things do go wrong. You have to get availability from the actors, so if you are going for a name, they are very often booked up for a very long time. If you are hoping to shoot season dependent scenes, then in theory you need to get it pinned down too, etc.

Q - How do you charge for what you do, by the day, or by the job?

Cathy - Each job is a different story. I try very much to be fair and go with the budget, and there are points at which I won't go below, but by the same token if it is a beautiful script from a new Director, and deserves to be made I'll work as hard as I can to help and get it made.

Q - So when you get the screenplay do you or the Producer or Director draw up a cast list of the characters, what do you do from that point on?

Cathy - I do a *cast report*, which means, from the perspective of casting, I write a synopsis of the script, and then I define, in regard to budget, the type of actors I feel will be attracted to the script and why. Then I start to make suggestions and see what fits.

Q - Is the reason that people hire you because you have existing relationships, you have your eye on new talent?

Cathy - Yes.

Q - Do you hold auditions?

Cathy - Yes. I do generals for myself, so I can see who is new. I also go to new shows, school showcases etc., to spot new talent. During auditions, each Director has a different method, or thing that they prefer. Sometimes I will just do a basic casting, the first casting by myself with a cameraman and go from there, shortlist, and show the director the tapes.

Q - The Director isn't always available as they are busy doing stuff?

Cathy - Yes. Some Directors enjoy interviewing and know what they want, some have a very actor-friendly perspective on things, some of them are ex-actors, so they love to be there and see what kind of commitment an actor can give to the part immediately. It is that immediacy thing. Some Directors just like to sit back and hand me a note saying 'Ask them this!'

Q - What would actors supply to you, in the early stages of casting?

Cathy - A CV and photograph. Possibly a reel of their work, but that's rare.

Q - What is Spotlight?

Cathy - Spotlight is a very useful industry guide where the majority of British actors and some international actors can put their headshot and details. It exists in book form and via the internet, which is more popular now as its so accessible and has a database. It has a search feature, so if you are looking for a male, 20-year old, black actor who can roller-skate, you can search for that.

Q - Can the production get access to that as well? So that you can make phonecalls and say 'Quickly look at this person on Spotlight, without having to post a photo?'

Cathy - You can send them a shortlist.

Q - Do you do the deals with the actors or does the production?

Cathy - Both.

Q - What are the common areas of negotiation with an actor when you are talking to an agent?

Cathy - Obviously dates, whether it is Equity or not, payment, billing tends to be a big one, per diem (daily allowance money), nudity is another, hours they will be expected to work, days off etc.

Q - Do you think it is fair to say that some actors are just not worth working with on a low budget film?

Cathy - Absolutely. The time you can waste pandering to an actor's ego can be enormous, but I have to say that it is very rare that that happens. In my experience, most actors are a delight to work with, and have a passion and love for the art. Some of them get a bit confused, especially when they get a lead in a low budget feature, they suddenly start comparing themselves to Julia Roberts, or Brad Pitt, and assume that it should be on the scale. I think that you have to make it very clear to the actor and agent once they are interested in doing the project, the nature of the project, and spell out even what is seemingly obvious to you.

Q - Can a production help in the casting, I'm thinking in terms of maybe they have got existing relationships, or what about small roles, extras, that kind of stuff? Who takes care of all that?

Cathy - Normally I get an extra agency involved or they have one already. As you well know, you can get friends and family and investors to fill those parts too.

CATHERINE ARTON
casting director

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Extras



Low budget films are often let down by simple things, such as, there not being enough extras in a scene, or just plain old bad or the wrong extras. On lower budget films you are almost certainly going to pull extras from friends and family, but if the scene needs more people, you may need to look at extras agencies.

1. New film makers tend to be younger, and populate their backgrounds with students of the same age and look. This is a dead giveaway. Try and find older people to populate your backgrounds.
 2. Untrained extras may look at the camera, turn up inappropriately dressed etc. Write up a sheet of do's and don'ts and send to them all.
 3. Empty shots make the film look cheap. Use extras for screen clutter. Just make sure they look appropriate.
 4. To find extras, contact extra agencies such as The Casting Collective (www.castingcollective.co.uk or Real People (www.realpeople.co.uk) or internet sites like www.ukscreen.com or www.freshfaces.com. The union that covers background artists, walk-ons and doubles in film and television is BECTU's sub division, FAA (Film Artists' Association).
 5. A new background artists agreement using the FAA/PACT agreement will have come into play by November 1st, 2005. This raises the basic day rates of extras (£69.03 / day and £86.80 / night), calculates overtime in half hour increments, provides for supplemental payments if the extra makes costume changes and provides provisions for holiday pay. Go to www.bectu.org.uk or www.pact.co.uk for more information.
 6. Extra casting agencies have lists and access to the 'right looking' people for your shoot i.e. school kids, medical professionals, professional musicians, actual firemen, actual police officers etc. People who genuinely look the part and therefore make your film look more 'real'.
 7. Before securing your extras, make sure they've been informed of how long you anticipate them to be on set.
 8. If there are a large number of extras from one source, provide free transport to move them to and from the location.
 9. Make sure there are enough loos available and that food, tea and coffee, and water are on hand at all times.
 10. Remember that your extras are going to have to do a lot of waiting around and will get bored very easily. If you can afford to, entertain them in between shots and make sure they have a green room.
 11. Your extras might not show up, so be prepared to have a backup plan.
 12. Make sure you have at least one but preferably more designated production crew members to take care of all the extras, providing them with call times, what to wear, what to bring etc.
- Provide your extras with release forms and make sure they sign this before they appear on camera.



Q - As new filmmakers tend to be young, they can often fill all those background parts with mates from university, and suddenly everyone in front of the camera looks like they are 19?

Cathy - Yes, that happens a lot, and I think it is unfortunate. Everyone has older family, get them involved.

Q - Can a filmmaker do the casting themselves without using a Casting Director?

Cathy - Absolutely.

Q - What are the problems that you see in that process?

Cathy - I think there is a naiveté in what to expect from agents and actors if you do that. You can get tongue-tied and intimidated by their knowledge because they know more than you do.

Q - Agents can be quite intimidating, as they are professional negotiators.

Cathy - Yes they are, they are generally extremely good business people, and they know the meaning of the dollar.

Q - What is the deal with Equity in terms of, if you make a low budget film. Should you be Equity, do you need to be Equity?

Cathy - No. Though I think Equity is a very important body for both film makers and actors. By the same token, perhaps there could be more leeway in nurturing and helping the new filmmakers get their very first foot on the ladder of making a film. To put them through the same hoops, as somebody like Sam Mendes, is I think not fair, and I think we need to nurture our new talent a little bit more.

Q - How do you approach big names, say you want Kevin Costner?

Cathy - Go to his agent, unless I know somebody who knows him, in which case . . . (laughs)

Q - What is the procedure for going for somebody like that?

Cathy - Same as any other, if you start to get intimidated by the idea that they are a big name you will fail, but if you just go ahead and treat them like any other actor, you have much better odds. It is just a mindset. You contact their agent, ask their availability, and then say 'I have a script that I'm very interested in sending to them', then you just keep pressing to get the script sent.

Q - Are scripts sent by paper in the post now, or is it done more electronically?

Cathy - Both.

Q - What is the process when you make an 'offer', what does that mean when you offer a part to an actor?

Cathy - If you make an 'offer' to an actor, you are legally bound to use that actor, and it is quite a process to 'un-offer'. It is considered extremely bad form to pull out, and you will get a bad name.

Q - What are the common mistakes that you see?

Cathy - Sometimes a filmmaker will mistake an actor's enthusiasm for talent, and because they seem to see eye to eye on the project they go 'Yeah, this guy understands me, this is great!' Then they get them in front of the camera and they don't pull it out of the hat. A lengthier audition process can be useful. I don't want to be negative, but also very often a filmmaker will try and be someone they are not, out of insecurity they will try and yield certain power during the audition process, and it does not create the best environment for the actor. What they should be aiming to do is create the most friendly, nurturing environment to get the best work out of the actor, without going over the top, to really see what the actor can do. Actors are frequently very excited or nervous and they wouldn't be there if they didn't want the part.

Q - Frequently filmmakers are terrified that someone will find out that they don't know what they are doing?

Cathy - Yes, and the actors have the same fear on the other side (laughs). I think it is very useful for a filmmaker, before the audition process, to either read one or two acting theory books. Just to get a bit of jargon, to get what they want out of the actor.

Q - Do you think it would be wise to put Directors through an acting class, or even auditions?

Cathy - Yes. Both.

Q - What advice would you offer a new filmmaker?

Cathy - Always remember the reason why you wanted to get into film, and keep your passion, and do it from the heart. Don't do anything because you think you are pleasing somebody else. Do it from the heart, because it appeals to you.



Tim Gale
Equity

EQUITY

Q - What is Equity?

Tim - We are the Trade Union that represents actors, singers, dancers, stunt performers & stunt co-ordinators. We have 45,000 members who are all professional performers with either substantial work behind them or who have been suitably trained. We negotiate collective agreements with employers' organisations which determine the relationship between producers and actors/stunt performers etc.

Q - What is the procedure for making a film with Equity agreements?

Tim - Equity has a cinema agreement with PACT which has provisions for film agreements and registered low budget films. To access our agreements a film must be registered with PACT, through PRA Ltd., the Producers Rights Agency, and it is they who issue the contracts. The producer supplies to both PACT and Equity a copy of the budget for the film which has been audited and verified by a film chartered accountant. The producer then pays 0.25% of this budget to PACT as a levy, even though they do not need to be a member of PACT. The budget must also reflect that in excess of 5% of the budget is spent on the performers. The producer will lodge the performers' fees in an Escrow bank account which is held for each artist and is currently a maximum of two weeks fees @ £2500 per week (ie the max held is £5000 per artist). However, if you are using an artist for two days @ £150 per day, then only £300 would be held. These fees are the same for a low budget film. When principal photography is finished, there is a two week turn-around to check artists have been paid and then the Escrow is returned.

We only accept letters of financial guarantee from the Studios (Warners, Disney etc.) or the major TV companies (ITV, BBC, C4). Equity would then release contracts to the producer who would then be able to hire the chosen performers. The contract is 20 pages with fees that are calculated on a weekly or daily basis. The producer does not pay the performer out of the money in Escrow. The money held in Escrow is a guarantee until after the shoot wraps and the performers have been paid and then the money is released back to the producer. Usually for low budget productions, it is usual that no-one is paid more than anyone else and other than a 75% for cinema and UK free TV use fees, other uses are not pre-purchased until after the film has recouped between 1.75%-2.75% dependent on its registered budget. Agents may also negotiate extra things like credit billing on the film and poster, per diems for the cast etc.

Q - What are the Equity agreements for low budget? i.e. the PACT/Equity low budget cinema agreement? (what are the budget ceilings etc.)

Tim - We consider films budgeted under £3m to be *Low Budget*, films with budgets under £1m are considered *Very Low Budget*.

Q - To use an Equity agreement, must you be registered with PACT and must your accounts be certified by the Guild of Film Production Accountants? And if so, how do you do that?

Tim - You only have to register with PACT if you're going to be using the *Low* and *Very Low Budget* agreements.

Q - Do you have any agreements for films under the budget of 250k?

Tim - No, the *Very Low Budget* agreements apply to this budget. However, for features and shorts budgeted under 250k the budget is not required to be certified by the Guild of Film Production Accountants. Instead you just submit a summary of the budget.

Q - Within the agreements, do actors receive a share in the profits of a film or a share of the proceeds from sale to TV, video and DVD rentals and sell through?

Tim - Yes, for films under £10m, actors receive a non-negotiable 2% share in the profits of the film (2% of the producers' net profit). For films over £20m, actors receive a royalty from the theatrical release and also from sales to TV, Video/DVD rental and sell through.

Q - How much is a day rate and weekly rate for an actor?

Tim - Minimums; on very low budget; £150 per day & £600 per week. Minimums; on low budget; £175 per day & £700 per week. Standard feature film minimums; £380 per day & £1520 per week. There are no half day rates.

Market/Medium & Territory	Use Fee	Initial Use Period/Extent of Use
Theatric North America and Non-Theatric Worldwide	37.5%	Unlimited
Theatric World excluding North America and Non-Theatric Worldwide	37.5%	Unlimited
Videogram	90%	Until the amount of 50% of Production Cost has been earned in worldwide wholesale Videogram receipts less those excluded items set out in the definition of Distributor's Gross Videogram Receipts.
UK Premium Pay, Pay Per View and On Demand Television	25%	Four (4) years from first Use in this market
UK Network Terrestrial Television	20%	The earlier of five (5) years from first Use in this market or after three (3) transmissions
UK Secondary Television	5%	Four (4) years from first Use in this market
USA Major Network Television	25%	Unlimited
USA Non-major Network Television	10%	Unlimited
USA Pay Television	20%	Unlimited
World Television excluding UK and USA	10%	Four (4) years from first Use in this market

Q - What is the standard work week schedule for an Equity member?

Tim - Five day week. 10 hour day including one hour for lunch. Minimum 12 hour overnight break.

Q - As well as the day rate and weekly rate, what are the pre purchased rights for USA/Canada and rest of world, theatrical and Video and TV?

Tim - I will supply you with a breakdown (see box above).

Q - Are these pre purchased rights included in all agreements i.e. even in the very low budget agreements? If certain rights have not been pre-purchased, can you pay these if and when the film is sold or do you HAVE to pay for this upfront? Or is there a certain percentage that the film must recoup until this is paid?

Tim - Under the low budget arrangements beyond either the 75% or 50% use fees purchased, there are no further use fees payable until the production has recouped 2.5 times its production budget if not more than £1m, 2.25 times its production budget if not more than £2m, 2 times the budget when between £2m & £3m. Statistically an insignificant number reach this level.

Q - On a low budget production, are actors generally paid the same?

Tim - In my experience, yes but there is no rule on this and there can be differentials in actors' pay even in low budget films.

Q - What are the benefits to actors for becoming an Equity member?

Tim - Members receive expert help & representation in relation to their working lives as well as specially negotiated insurance rates. If a member is having problems with a production company not paying, in addition to advice, we can provide legal advice and even legal work. There's an Equity pension scheme that members can join too.

Equity
performing for you

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Films' Organiser

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Anatomy of a Movie Section 5 - Pre Production

Q - With regards to stunt members, what happens with compensation in case of a fatal accident?

Tim - This would depend on whom liability for the accident lies with.

Q - What are the different schedules in your agreements?

Tim - Theatrical release, Video release, TV etc. The actor is paid a basic fee for doing the work, then the producer must purchase the rights to use this in a variety of different areas – theatrical release, video release, TV etc. – these are the use fees.

Q - If you plan to have only a TV/video release, but you then get picked up for theatrical, can you and must you convert your agreement to theatrical?

Tim - Yes, this is covered within the agreement – most productions would usually have pre-purchased both theatric & video rights.

Q - Is there a way that Equity can track a film in foreign territories? (I.e. to see where a film has sold to make sure that use fees are correctly covered.)

Tim - We do have means of checking use abroad but I can't for security grounds detail these here. I would point out that selling a film in a territory not paid for & then failing to pay the artists would constitute fraud, a criminal offence. We would not hesitate to report & have prosecuted any fraudulent use of our members' work.

Q - What is the BECS?

Tim - Recently new initiatives have come out of Europe that give performers legal rights to payments when their work is rented or lent on video/dvd or audio tape. To ensure that UK performers receive monies arising in the UK and Europe from these new legal rights, The British Equity Collecting Society (BECS) was setup in 1998. However performers must sign up to BECS as rights are held individually so BECS must have your mandate in order to act on your behalf and collect any monies due. Signing up costs nothing and performers can withdraw at any time. BECS now has agreements with collecting societies in Switzerland, Denmark, Belgium, The Netherlands, Greece and Norway. In the past year BECS distributed over £800,000.00 to British performers and hopes that this figure will continue to rise in the coming year

Q - In cases where minors are used, what's the issue with pay and Equity contracts there?

Tim - We do not represent children under 16.

Q - If you had someone who was a walk on and had no speaking role, do they have to be an Equity member?

Tim - Equity does not represent walk-ons & background artists in film although we do in TV – the FAA represents film extras.

Q - What are the general rules and regulations in an Equity agreement for actor's accommodation, transportation, ADR in post etc.?

Tim - Accommodation is outside the terms of the agreement – this should be agreed with artists/agents before signing the contract. ADR is payable on low budget films at the rate of £71 per four hour session.

Q - What information does Equity require from producers?

Tim - We require cast lists and after principal photography the artists' report. This lists the time & salary each artist received on the film and is used to work out what they are owed out of the 2% net profit/royalty.

Q - What power does Equity have? Can it shut down a production?

Tim - We try to persuade our members not to work without equity contracts. No we cannot shut down a production if it's working with non-union contracts. Under European law no trade union can force or coerce an employer to use union members so a filmmaker is free to hire non equity members. The equity contract not only helps in stating the rate of pay but also protects the performers and their rights. There is a special attention list that Equity publishes quarterly where either individuals, companies or agencies are listed because they have either owed or still owe money to members. We advise our members to consult Equity before accepting engagements with or through any of the names on this list. We also tell members to consult us when they are offered a non-Equity contract.

We also can recommend that our members not work in a variety of circumstances and we have powers under Health & Safety legislation to close down places of work if H&S is not being cared for properly. This has happened on occasion but only when there were serious breaches of safety. It only would happen if there were immediate dangers to cast and crew that could not be resolved on the spot – for example, if asbestos was found on a location or a biohazard. Most other H&S issues can be improved with only small disruption to the filming. This misuse of course would have to be proven in a court of law.

Q - How can Equity help low budget film producers?

Tim - Through the registered Low Budget Film arrangements with PACT. Being registered with Equity makes the agents more likely to feel that the production is going to be run in a professional manner than if not using Equity contracts. Therefore it creates less problems with the agent and also less fighting about the rate. Everyone realises that it's a standard rate and a standard contract. Also because of this, agents can help film producers find well known performers with successful careers to take part in certain productions because they like the production company, the producers, the director etc. and ultimately it could also help their actors so agents are much happier to use Equity contracts.

Q - How early on should a producer come to you to sort out the Equity agreements?

Tim - Unless circumstances dictate otherwise, producers should make contact at least four weeks before filming commences. Filmmakers can call us to get quotes of the rates when putting together their budgets. Unfortunately these rates are not available on our website (www.equity.org.uk).

Q - What are the common problems you encounter with producers?

Tim - Failure to understand the contracts that they are using. The contracts are not guidelines; they are a set of legally binding obligations on both parties. Therefore the terms & conditions are as stated within the contract and the producer needs to be au fait with these in relation to the work to be done. If part of the agreement is not understood, advice should be taken from PRA or Equity. There are always some non-Equity productions but in my view these are largely semi-professional in nature. Using Equity contracts helps everyone; the agents, artists & producers all benefit from using a well-known set of rules & regulations that protect the latter as much as the former.

Q - What advice can you offer producers/filmmakers?

Tim - Talk to us, we're not here to make life difficult for filmmakers. We recognise that it is in everyone's interest that films get made and I'm always happy to discuss issues and try to help.



WORKING WITH KIDS

Q - What is your job?

Stephen - I run a children's casting agency and drama company.

Q - How does one go about casting a child in a film?

Stephen - Well, the first thing you have to do is know what you want or who you want. Sometimes we will get a brief, but once a casting director comes on board and sees a whole range of children, that brief changes. They may want to see a whole new age range for example. So know what you want from the outset, and then contact a good casting agency. Some are stand-alone agencies who see the children for ten or twenty minutes and they are on their books and that's that. There is hardly any further contact except for things that may come up for them. Some casting agents take it a bit further and actually work with the children and really they know the kids. There is nothing worse when the casting agency sends a child to the casting director and they are not suitable. It is embarrassing for the child. You have to know your kids. We have classes all week, Monday to Thursday evening and all day Saturday. Also consider location because if you are doing a project that involves two or three weeks filming in London, then you probably want a child from London instead of Manchester because you will have to deal with things like accommodation.

Q - What are the broad rules for using children in each age bracket?

Stephen - First, the rules are, a child that is up to five years old is five hours a day. That is set in stone. Five years to nine years is seven and a half hours. Nine years and older is nine and a half hours. Playing down, where a sixteen-year-old plays thirteen could work, or a seven year old to play five for instance. The main thing about the hours is that it is during the day. You can get night shoot clearance, but that gets a bit more complicated. Try to think about using children during daytime, especially if they are younger. Toddlers and babies should be used in the late morning after they have been up and about for a while, not just after being fed. And remember, even though we say children as adults, they are still children and be aware of that. They can only take so much direction in a short space of time. And if they say they are hungry or need to go to the loo, you have to accommodate them.

Q - Do children cost more than adult actors and are there any problems for a film maker to consider when hiring children as actors?

Stephen - Strangely, in the main, they are roughly half the price of an adult actor. Which is strange for me, as that they work just as hard or even harder than the adults. One thing to consider is to get a sixteen-year-old that can play down to a fourteen-year-old. But remember, when you choose them for the part but start shooting six months down the line, that sixteen year old is now seventeen.

Q - If the story concerns an intimate portrayal of the life of a thirteen-year-old, should you get one who might be really in touch with the emotions?

Stephen - Perhaps. But a really good sixteen-year-old actor could portray the emotion you would want in a thirteen-year-old. Maybe even better.

Q - Does talent level in a child change dramatically from year to year?

Stephen - Yes, and the danger is that if a child is wanted then there is a huge demand for how that child looks at that point in time. Two years down the line, whatever made that child popular, the cuteness or whatever, may have moved on. So the core thing with children is to work on the skills, as those things stay with them. The superficial stuff, when that isn't there, the skills still are. And it is a difficult transition to go from a successful child actor to a successful adult actor. We have a mission statement, if when the child reaches the age of eighteen and they want to go to drama school or arts school, we want them to be prepared to make the decision.

Q - What is the process when a filmmaker comes to you looking for actors?

Stephen - Usually it is a casting director who comes to us with what is required from the director, and we try to find that person. We may have a conversation with the producer about the storyline, the concept of the characters and then give a slight steer as to what kind of child they should be looking at. Once we know what they want, we would show them a range of suitable children. I would suggest that they go to other casting agencies too. There are certain publications they can use like PCR or Cast Call, where they can advertise and get them straight through. If it is a lot of children, it is best to work with one casting agency because, say if you have fifty children on a shoot, we can arrange a bus to take them there and back. So see a few agencies that you trust and then see the children.

Q - How do you suggest a director should audition a child actor?

Stephen - I'm not sure it should be too different from adults. Most twelve and thirteen-year-olds can handle being directed like adults. You can say things like, 'Can you give that to us again, but with a little more mischievousness? Or with a little more anger.' Any actor worth their salt would be able to understand that. And a director would need to talk to them like that from the start of the film anyway. So I don't think there should be too many concessions unless they are younger, but nothing too extreme. Maybe you have to spell it out a little more, explain it in greater detail. Our child may only be doing four pages out of eighty, but if our child knows the whole story and where that child fits in, you will get a better audition. Often it evolves into where the first stage of casting is just a few words and the second stage is them reading the whole script.

Q - What is a child-acting license, what are the restrictions and how do you get one?

Stephen - It is literally that - a license for a child to work as a performer. The rules and restrictions are a bit of jungle at the moment. Slowly it is evolving, but it is a jungle and people can interpret it differently. The legislation that is there is based on common sense and most people can use their common sense. For instance, if you have a period drama that has a child in make up and costume for three or four hours and the child is loving it, it is a great experience for them. You will have to break for lunch and whatever, but that child could be filming well into the evening. And if you are halfway through a scene, with half an hour to go, and the time to pull the child has come, technically you have to pull the child. But that would upset the child who has been waiting for the scene, it would upset the film crew and the director. I would like to think there is some flexibility there based on common sense.

Right now the cut-off age is sixteen-years-old, at the end of GCSE's academic year - so that means even if they are sixteen, it is only in June that they are finished - then that child is not of compulsory school age, no matter how old they are. So before that they will need a license, which you get from the local educational authority of where they live. The license has about seven pieces of paper that need to be completed. They need a photograph of the child, a birth certificate, school clearance forms, a form signed by the production company, a form signed by the parents, a form signed by the doctor, and a master form that we fill in. We have destroyed several rainforests with all the paperwork that we have used and it is often for one child that runs around in the background of a shot. And each authority has different requirements. Some say they need to see original copies of all the forms rather than faxed copies. The maximum time to get a license is twenty-one days, which actually in practical terms is not very practical! I can't imagine when filmmaker knows twenty-one days ahead of time that he needs a child, let alone the locations that are required on the form.

Q - What is the role of the chaperone?



Child Performers Licence Restrictions - ENGLAND			
AGE	9 to 16	5 to 8	UNDER 5
Maximum hours at the place of rehearsal or performance	9.5 hours	7.5 hours	5 hours
Hours	7.00am - 7.00pm	9.00am - 4.30pm	9.30am-4.30pm
Maximum period of continuous rehearsal performance	1 hour	45 minutes	30 minutes
Maximum number of hours for the entire performance or rehearsal	4 hours	3 hours	2 hours
Rest and meal breaks	If present for 4 consecutive hours (including presence for educational purposes whether or not tuition takes place at place of performance): 2 breaks, one meal break for at least an hour, the other breaks at least 15 minutes	If present for more than 3.5 consecutive hours (including presence for educational purposes whether or not tuition takes place at place of performance): 2 breaks, one meal break for at least an hour, the other breaks at least 15 minutes	Any time not used for work but be used for meals or rest.
	If present for 8 consecutive hours: 3 breaks, 2 must be meal breaks of at least an hour each, the others at least 15 minutes.	If present for 8 consecutive hours: 3 breaks, 2 must be meal break of at least an hour each, the others at least 15 minutes	N/A
Education hours	3	3	NIL

Stephen - It is someone who puts the child first. Someone who can say, 'The child is fine. I know they worked hard, but they are fine...' or, 'I know we are within the hours, but the child needs a break'. What I have noticed in the last five years is that the awareness of the child on set has been growing. Most productions now have a second or third person, like a runner, who will be with the children to keep them happy, or getting them water or whatever.

Q - Where do you find tutors and chaperones?

Stephen - Each educational authority has a list of licensed chaperones and tutors. And then there are professional tutors who go around teaching. And when you are doing your budgets for children, you must consider the chaperone. If it is a low budget, no-budget or student film, often the mums and dads would go along and do the job. But children are not the same as when their parents are around. They can then, without parents present take bigger risks, make mistakes, shout and they can let themselves go. Even in a dramatic situation, with a parent there, it is not quite the same. It is different if it is a stage production because everyone is there. You've got to go and do it. So even for low budget movies, a chaperone might be better.

Q - Are there things that can be done when filming to keep a child character within a scene, but as they are shooting beyond their hours, do it without them being present?

Stephen - Yes. You can frame them out of a shot so we know they are there, but they are not on screen.

Q - There is a moment at the end of Aliens where Ripley is running through the ship with the little girl holding onto her. Well, that little girl is actually a dummy and if you look closely you can see it clearly.

Stephen - Yes, there was another one where there was a child in a car with a big wheel spin and it was done with cameras going all around the car, not the car actually moving. So you think the child is in danger, but he/she is not. You can use doubles too, and we have pictures of twins in our book. Again, that can be a dangerous road because they can look the same, but they might give the same standard of performance.

Q - Can children handle the edgier material such as bad language or sexuality that might be in independent films?

Stephen - Usually they are fine. I think parents think of their children as younger than they actually are. Scenes with swearing or sexuality are not a problem provided that we know about it ahead of time, so we can tell the parents. Same thing goes for gore or violence. Just tell us about it so we can alert the parents. Again it is all about common sense and I think these days people use common sense more than five or six years ago.

Q - Are there any things to consider if the child is in a lead role?

Stephen - Just be aware of the challenges, especially if it is a younger child, because they don't have the experience of acting at that level. Also they can be unpredictable because they are kids. But don't be put off because of their age or their abilities or licensing laws. Children can add depth to any film.

Q - What are the restrictions when you have to take a child out of school?

Stephen - If it is during weekends or holiday time then it is no problem because it is not during school. We try to restrict filming to four days a term to two weeks a year a child can be taken out of school without requiring extra tuition. If it is more than that, then, they will need a tutor. And that is potentially expensive. So if you are going to use a child try to use them during summer or Christmas holidays and/or weekends. The bottom line is that the schools have the ultimate say so.

Q - What are the parents of child actors like in your opinion?

Stephen - I don't mind the parents who are 'pushy' because they are on your side. What I don't like are the parents who are apathetic. We could be hyping a child up and you get somewhere and you phone up and the mother says, 'I don't know whether he can do it.' And you just feel all your energy drain away whereas a parent who is on the side of the child, is on your side as well.

Q - What would be some good cost effective and sensible ways of keeping children occupied during takes?

Stephen - Film makers want their children to act like kids in front of the camera, but off camera to act like adults. If you can do that, great. But even the best of the kids are going to need time to get back into kid mode in front of the camera. And vice versa. It doesn't happen suddenly and that is something to be aware of. If it is during term time, they will have homework to do. If it is holiday time, then we bring a whole range of things for them to do. We bring cards, we bring books and the like. If it is longer term,

Child Performers Licence Restrictions - SCOTLAND and WALES

AGE	9 to 16	5 to 8	UNDER 5
Maximum hours at the place of rehearsal or performance	8 hours	7.5 hours	5 hours
Hours	9.00am - 7.00pm	9.00am - 4.30pm	9.30am-4.30pm
Maximum period of continuous rehearsal performance	1 hour	45 minutes	30 minutes
Maximum number of hours for the entire performance or rehearsal	3.5 hours	3 hours	2 hours
Rest and meal breaks	If present for 4 consecutive hours (including presence for educational purposes whether or not tuition takes place at place of performance): 2 breaks, one meal break for at least an hour, the other breaks at least 15 minutes	If present for more than 3.5 consecutive hours (including presence for educational purposes whether or not tuition takes place at place of performance): 2 breaks, one meal break for at least an hour, the other breaks at least 15 minutes	Any time not used for work but be used for meals or rest.
	If present for 8 consecutive hours: 3 breaks, 2 must be meal breaks of at least an hour each, the others at least 15 minutes.	If present for 8 consecutive hours: 3 breaks, 2 must be meal break of at least an hour each, the others at least 15 minutes	N/A
Education hours	3	3	NIL

Anatomy of a Movie Section 5 - Pre Production

you can put a video on a laptop. And they have to like their own company as well. It is often difficult for one child and no other children around and that is something for a film maker to consider. They do better when there are two kids.

Q - Do you find it helpful for the adult actors to spend time with the child actors?

Stephen - Yes, the really talented young actors that we have get on better with the adult actors than with their own peer group.

Q - Do directors usually know when they have gone too far or do you have to step in?

Stephen - I have been doing this for fifteen years and I can count on one hand the number of times I have had to step in and say, 'That's enough.' I wouldn't say it to the director. I would talk to the second assistant director and he or she would have a word with her/him. Some directors push adults any way they can, but they don't know when to stop. The problem is that a child wouldn't say 'stop it', whereas an adult might.

Q - What do you think are the common mistakes made by productions when dealing with children?

Stephen - With younger children, though you can talk to them as adults, you need to plan your shoot as if they are children. For instance, the first day on the set instead of saying, 'They are here... let's go!', some time should be spent explaining the whole thing to the child so that they get to know the cast and the crew. Maybe some sort of initial party or get together would be a good idea. The other thing to do is to make your casting briefs as specific as possible. Some of the briefs we get are very vague: fourteen-year-old boy with dark hair who can act. Then the child gets there and there is a row of fourteen-year-old, dark haired boys and they are in with audition for only minutes. Then maybe the video will go to the director. And you don't hear anything if it is a 'no', and that is quite hard for children to take because there is no feedback. It is quite understandable because these people see one hundred children and are they supposed to write one hundred letters? Still it can be emotionally difficult on a child to go up to London, get all hyped up for a video shoot and then nothing. Or worse, you make several trips for callbacks and then don't get it. Sometimes there is a lack of communication with the child. Very early in the proceedings you should sit down with the child and very casually, as you and I are doing now, explain to them what it entails to make a movie. That way, they really understand what is going on and know where you are coming from.

Q - What advice would you give a new film maker ?

Stephen - Some of the children that we have want to act and some of the children *have* to act. Those that have to act have got to do it no matter what it means. They are naturally devoted and naturally focused. More often than not, they are talented, but they will do anything to act. I think a film maker has to be the same way. If he has to make films then he should!

Q - What is Shooting People?

Stu - Shooting People is a network of filmmakers, primarily an emailed daily digest. It exists to make easier the process of getting films made, so as to enable people to achieve what they want, in a much more streamlined way. An example could be someone might be crewing up a production and needs to find people to collaborate with, or you could post questions about issues that you are unclear about. Over time it has evolved and we now put on events, run a few different events a year, competitions, as well as publishing books and running a website resource and archive etc.

Q - So it's like having a massively extended family of friends who are all in the business - possibly at your level, or above you or below you - and you get to ask lots of questions? Gone are the days of stepping out of my bedroom and saying 'I have no idea what to do, who to talk to, I feel very alone', there is really no reason to feel alone?

Stu - Exactly. Over time we have grown on from that, to cover different areas. We started out primarily as a filmmaking website, but now we are helping out with Documentary, Writing, Casting, Animation, and different genres like Music video. We are getting bands involved who want to get music videos made as well, that has been quite a successful off-shoot. Also we are going international, our New York list is steadily growing for instance. So you sign up for the lists you want and every day, they will come through to your mailbox in the morning with an edited digest of messages relating to that subject. You can post onto those lists and ask a question, and if it is relevant it will get posted onto the next issue. Then it will get an audience of thousands of people who will see that the next morning, and be able to help you with whatever you are posting for.

Q - For someone who is very cash-strapped, or from a particularly socially-compromised background, who can't go to film school. . . Do you think that joining Shooting People (SP), maybe joining the NPA (New Producers Alliance), buying a bunch of books, blagging a camera and shooting a film is a viable alternative? I am not saying it is the same as film school, but it is a really good way of kick-starting yourself into something that you want to do for a maximum of a few hundred pounds all in?

Stu - Absolutely, yes. Taking that approach means that you can get out there immediately, to start finding different people to collaborate with, to start making things happen. We see that as a great way for people to get into achieving the thing that they want in the industry. Quite a lot of what happens, happens behind the scenes. People will post and find people to work with, and what happens from that point, happens in the background. Ashvin Kumar, who made the short film 'Little Terrorist', crewed the film from SP, then they went off and they shot it, and it got nominated for an Oscar. To watch that process, from the original posting on the list, to being nominated for an Oscar, is amazing.



Q - Who set it up and why?

Stu - It was born in 1998 by Cath LeCouteur and Jess Search. They had just finished making their first short film and were struck by how difficult it had been to find the people to work with and to get questions answered. That was the motivation for setting it up in the first place.

Q - How much does it cost?

Stu - To be a member is £30 a year.

Q - How can filmmakers best use SP?

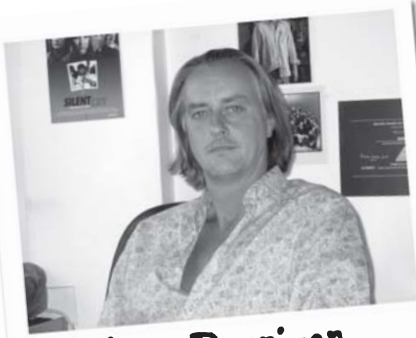
Stu - You should approach SP as being a community of people that you can help with the things they want to do, they can help you with things that you want to do. You can ask questions or search our database of questions and answers going back many years.

Q - How can the first time filmmaker be assured that what they are getting is good information, or highly opinionated waffle?

Stu - We have editors on our lists, who come together and check that whatever gets posted is relevant and interesting. We do encourage debate on the lists as there are some subjects for which there isn't a 'right' answer. These debates can last many days. Each list has an Editor who will be working in that industry, and have a depth of experience in that field. So inaccuracies are not posted.

Q - What advice would you offer a new film maker?

Stu - I would say that the most important things are to not be daunted by it, get out there, communicate with people, make contacts and believe in your ability and use whatever resources you have available that are going to help you be successful in making films. To be successful in making films, you are going to have to blagg stuff, be convincing to sell your ideas, to use whatever is available to get that thing made. SP is a useful thing to join to get started on that.



Tim Dennison
Lighthouse Entertainment

PRODUCER / LINE PRODUCER

Q - What is the budget of a low budget film?

Tim - There are 2 categories of budget. The British low budget film is a couple of million quid, where it is bonded, and as soon as it is bonded, you've got to put all your rates in at a certain level. I would class independent filmmaking, as unbonded, and is generally below a million quid to make.

Q - If you assume that somehow you have managed to get a bit of money, you have put a deal together, what do you, as the producer, do?

Tim - As in any film, you have to set the parameters. If for example, when you go out to raise money, you have to know how much you need, or the minimum you can make the film for. So to do that you need to have a screenplay which is at a level of development that is suitable for shooting. Then you must do a budget and a schedule, just to work out the overall dynamics, to give yourself a blue print of how you will do it. You will need to sit down with the Director and say 'How are we going to achieve this, with this amount of money?' To a certain extent that blueprint then sets the tone for everything else.

As is often the case, a project begins with the Producer optioning a project for no money, say £1k, £3k, whatever, they then spend a year and a half developing it, constantly trying to extend the option, which depends on what the relationship is like with the writer, and after two years, you are still nowhere - and so you say 'right, sod this, what is the minimum we can do this film for?' Sometimes on that £2m, traditional UK low budget, bonded picture, you say 'right, hardcore facts, forget union rates, if we get all heads of department for £500 a week, 2nd ADs for £350, and the tea boy for £150, rewrite to make it more shootable, then shoot on HD ...' and you basically pair it down to the bare minimum, just to be able to shoot the film.

Q - I know every film is different, but there are some broad parameters for a low budget, independent film, where it is do-able, but not to the point where everything is so compromised that it becomes either crap or unsaleable. What do you think is the minimum budget, minimum shoot time, before it becomes silly?

Tim - I think you have to pay people something, even if it is only £100. I think that as soon as you go below the £300k threshold, there can be some ramifications that may appear on the finished article. However, in saying that, it also depends on the screenplay, if you have a screenplay which has got brilliant dialogue, is set in 3 rooms, and you can shoot it over 3 weeks, and you pay people a couple of hundred quid to do it, then it could be made for £100k.

Q - Once a picture is up and running, what is it that you do? Assuming that you will take on the Line Producer roles as well as Producer role?

Tim - I will use a recent film that I did as model, where the budget was £300k. I had done a budget and schedule and knew the money was in place. The story was set, predominantly in one location, as is the case with so many low budget films. Finding that location became central to making the budget work, and after looking at many places, we found it. We were then able to set dates for pre-production, and at £300k, your prep time is going to be around 6 weeks. My key thing then was to sort out the heads of departments, the DP, Production design etc., and we were paying the crew, on average, around £300 a week. In an ideal world I

would have a 'second me' in the production office! The problem is nobody is as good as oneself, whether other people think you are a load of shit, is irrelevant, you know what you have to do, and sometimes telling other people what you need to do can waste time when you could be doing it.

So finding a Production Manager to assist would be fairly crucial to putting the project together. As soon as you say, 'OK, prep starts June 5th', and that 6 weeks commences, and you have done a cash flow, then the train begins, and you can't get off (laughs). At this level, the biggest challenge is just the sheer workload, and you can only do so much in a day before your mind becomes overloaded and ineffective. So that is why it is good to have a Production Manager, a Production co-ordinator, a Production secretary, which would be the norm in any £2m picture. It is good to have that network behind you so that you can off-load work. You want to avoid the situation where you spread yourself so thin that the net suddenly develops a couple of holes, and things aren't done.

At the end of the day, my task is to service the Director. As irritating as it can be, as Directors can be, the Director's job is to demand, and get what he wants, and can go to the extent of being quite arrogant about it to get what he needs. It is the Producer's job to, in the most diplomatic fashion, provide that, in any form necessary, within the budgetary remit. That can be quite a testing time. There is a slight difference between a Line Producer and a Producer, because a Producer can say to the Director, 'No you can't do that' or 'we don't have enough money to do that, you are going to have to rethink the way you want to shoot that'. Whereas to a certain extent, a Line Producer works under the Producer, and is more of a go-between.

Q - That's an interesting point about the dynamic between the Producer and Director. Do you think that is why it would be wise for a new Director to try and get involved with a more experienced Producer, even if it is only in an advisory capacity? Simply because most new Directors push so hard, so far and they waste time and resources pursuing a fanciful goal that isn't that important?

Tim - Yes is the straight answer. Sometimes you get Directors that are so frustrated with trying to get their film going that they actually take on the producing role as well, which in my opinion is a total no-no. So you do need to find a Producer to come on board. The more experience they have, will in turn lighten the load for the Director. They will also guide the Director into making some sound decisions. For example, a novice Director might over shoot a scene, purely to compensate for not being 100% confident on how it is going to cut together. If you are a Producer that has got some experience, you can sit down with the Director and comfort them to a certain extent and say 'we've got 'X' amount of stock that is going to allow you to shoot 'X' amount in a day'. Try and storyboard it with the Director, even if it is stickmen storyboards. At least you are rehearsing how he is going to shoot it, and to a certain extent, it is getting the Director to make choices before getting to set. In theory, this should relax him because he is actually working out in his own head how he is going to do it, which in theory should help you when you are shooting it.

Q - In your experience on low budget films, is the script ready to shoot?

Tim - I think that if there are problems in the script and they are not addressed before it is shot, they will come and bite you on the arse when you preview the film. I often think that low budget films are underdeveloped. Because as a Producer / Director you are trying to build a body of work, you want to make your film as quickly as possible. It is sometimes rushed into development, rushed into financing and it will show. There are times when a Producer will look at a screenplay and say 'we have got too many locations here, we've got £300k and you've got 45 locations!' You can rewrite, with the same dialogue, or capturing what the scene is saying, but merge locations. You can only get to that once you have done the schedule and you will see how many locations you have got.

If you are doing low budget, you will often hear that you have got to do it in one location for obvious reasons. Just make sure that that dynamic works, that you can sustain a film in one location, yet keeping it fun and punchy.

Q - How do you go about doing a budget and a schedule?



Anatomy of a Movie Section 5 - Pre Production

Tim - To a certain extent you need to do a schedule first, because the schedule will dictate how many weeks you are going to film.

One needs to break down the script, and highlight all your key locations. If you are not governed by cast, by Julia Roberts being in it and shifting things around her (and you won't on a budget of £300k!), then locations will dictate the schedule, with actors taking second place. For a £300k film, you are going to shoot 6-day weeks, so you just try and structure it accordingly. Once you have done that, you can then do your budget. You have got to sit down with the Director and say 'Do you want to shoot on high definition, what is the level of cast you are going to get, how do you plan to shoot it?' Are you working with a contingency, a contingency is normally 10%, but on £300k you sometimes slash that to 5% just to get the figure in at £300k. Then you just have to work out what you will need if the schedule works out at 4 weeks, 5 weeks... You have to work out what elements you need for that 5 weeks. Are you filming on location, have you got location costs, do you have to put up actors, crew and cast, feeding people etc. The core thing is you have to be smart with your money as £300k doesn't go far, and you have minimal ability to go over in any area, so you have to put all the money up on screen. To do that, you need to maximise shooting hours, ideally everybody being in the same location. As soon as you start travelling and moving people around, it takes time.

Q - Do you think it would be wise to almost make a film in your head as a Producer / Director before you even get to set, so you can confront those compromises?

Tim - From my side of things, if you have got no money to make your film, you need to give yourself lots of preparatory time. The prep time is there to work out all your problems before they even develop, this is why storyboarding is useful, because it is a way that everybody can rehearse in their head what the Director is trying to achieve - costume, wardrobe, make-up, all departments can see what they have got to achieve. I think that is really crucial in pre-production time. Pre-production is communication. Have regular meetings where everyone, from each department, can ask questions and openly address problems. As soon as somebody says something from one department, somebody from another department will chip in and say 'Hang on a second we thought we were making that, are you doing that?' So pre-production is sometimes more crucial on low budget than it is on regular budgets.

Q - What kind of problems do you see during the shoot? What are the common problems you have to deal with?

Tim - Tiredness. Especially if you are night shooting, or if you go from nights to days. You have got to keep aware of people's politics too, and keep a smooth running ship. There is always the weather factor if you are on location, which is why you schedule weather cover scenes. Predominantly, it's about staying on budget and on schedule. Of course, you have always got a major problem if you are looking at the rushes and thinking 'fuck, we have got a problem here! (laughs)'

Q - Once the shoot is finished, that whole family, the camaraderie, the whole crew and pre-production staff, they all disappear, and you look at your bank balance and you realise you have spent more than you should have done. Then you enter post-production which is a horrendously expensive stage, at the very final steps at least. What mistakes have you encountered in post-production that are easily avoidable?

Tim - I think that locking the edit takes longer than you anticipate. With the best will in the world, the edit can go on and on and on. Sometimes through insecurity, script problems, fixing problems on the shoot, and even having distance to address overall pace. I actually like the time when you have wrapped the crew and you return to a small team of people. It is far more relaxed and controllable, but one of the pitfalls is that you can take your foot off the gas, and before you know it, you are a month in, and they are only halfway through scene 2! You have to manage your post-production schedule as you do the main shoot.

Q - One of the things new filmmakers rarely take into consideration is cost of sales and distribution deliverables, which is a budgetary cost, but it is not part of the pure filmmaking process - do you have any comments on that?

Tim - When you are making the film, you just want to get the thing shot, and that is an achievement in itself. If the film is going to be the success you think it is going to be, you will need certain elements to service the world sales, commonly called deliverables. Currently this is coming in at about £80k! On the last film, we shot on HD, so that £80k includes a 35mm blow up (£30k), trailers, your errors and emissions insurance (£7k). All these elements, financially, you have to find. You could say to the Sales Agent, 'OK we don't have the money to do a trailer, would you pay for it?', so the Sales Agent will pay for it, and obviously they will pay money



Negotiating Tips

Getting your film made will rely largely on your ability to negotiate amazing deals, or creatively work around problems, or just plain work hard! Most of all, remember, no-one owes you a break, so be humble and charming.

1. Everything is negotiable. Every list price you will ever be quoted will have another figure next to it which is what the person you are negotiating with is allowed to go down to. The trick is to find out what that figure is.
2. Find out from friends what kind of deals they got - it's a good yardstick.
3. Set up an account with the company and stretch the credit as far as you can. It is cheaper than a bank loan. Always keep in touch with the company you owe money to, never lie and never ever try and get away without paying. Good will can be stretched if you are civil, have a good reason for not paying, and can offer a schedule of payments within a set time frame.
4. When approaching people for deals or freebies, be polite and DON'T try and hustle. Most people who are in the Industry have been in it for many years and can spot ignorance and arrogance a mile away. Both these qualities are not desirable. Go to a person for help and advice - everyone likes to help someone out, it makes them feel good inside. Follow up thank you letters will often get a repeat performance if it is needed.
5. Many things can be begged, borrowed or stolen. If there is any opportunity for a company logo to be featured on screen, they will probably supply you with free samples of the product. Cars, costume, cigarettes etc. These can all reduce your budget. They may even pay (product placement).
6. Be thorough, ring around and get the best quotes. You will get a feel for who will be able to help you.
7. Many companies, not related to the film industry will often render their services for free just to be involved in the production (for the fun) or for a credit on the end titles. Tickets to the premiere can be a good bribe.
8. Go into negotiations with a maximum you will pay and don't go over it. If you are prepared to walk out without making a deal, you are in a very strong position.
9. If you can pay cash on delivery, you can push harder for a bigger discount. This is the best way to get the biggest discounts. Avoid doing non VAT declared deals (cash in hand) - it may seem like a good idea at the time, but when Customs & Excise or the Inland Revenue ask you where the money went, you may have problems (you should be VAT registered anyhow in the UK).
10. If you can't get a discount, get something thrown in for free.
11. Remember to say thank you afterwards. If you can, send a bottle of booze or even chocolates and flowers. Whatever the gift, it will be appreciated.
12. Take whoever you are doing the deal with out for a drink and build a relationship. After your shoot, start taking the credit controller out for a drink, as you probably can't afford to pay and you need to extend good will to as near breaking point as you can.
13. Find out when a hire companies off season is and use them during that period. They will frequently reduce prices on equipment and services.
14. Especially in the post production phase, try using facilities after hours or in non-peak hours. In addition, see if you can hire the assistants of the main editors or telecine operators, people who want the opportunity to move up the ladder.
15. Go to the hire company and introduce yourself personally. People like having a face with a name.
16. Make sure you get all quotes in writing and faxed over to your office. Ask them to list the equipment or materials, the service and the dates and the exact agreed amount. This will help avoid any misunderstanding and make it harder for the company or individual to retract their offer.



plus money for the mark-up to do that. Suddenly what you as an independent guy could do for £2k, a Sales Agent would charge £8k for! If you go to a trailer making company, they will quite easily charge you £15k for a trailer. So you have to be aware of how you cash flow for your deliverables, and if you've scrimped and scraped just to get the film shot, cut, dubbed, as a lot of people do, don't think you can relax when it's done as there is still a lot of work to do and pay for. You really need an advance from a Sales Agent to cover the cost of the deliverables. Of course that advance is then just another tranche of money which puts you a step behind recouping your budget.

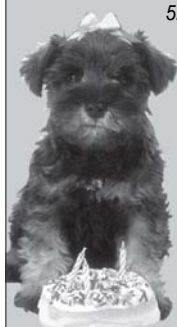
Q - You have made quite a number of lower budget British pictures, some of them very low, some of them not so low, and some of them you would have been paid well, others not so well. After the film is complete and entered sales, from how many of those films have you seen money - that is, money from actually selling the film?

Production Value



While the director isn't directly responsible for production value, the job is split through other departments such as, camera, production design, script etc. It is the directors job to make sure that production value does not turn into production failure. If the production values fail, the whole credibility of the world in which your story is set, and therefore the audience suspension of belief, can be compromised. It can be as small as typos in a newspaper headline, or a background artist who looks out of place.

1. Fill the scene with as many props as possible without it looking cluttered.
2. Do not use cheap wigs and costumes unless you are doing so for comedic reasons. They never look good.
3. Try to use practical lights in a scene to highlight props and set decorations. This can be anything from a desk lamp to buttons and dials that light up on a submarine control console.
4. In exterior situations, shoot during 'golden hour' to get the best light. Often in the UK that's golden minute!
5. Always shoot wide shots of your locations as it makes your film look bigger.
6. Cast people of different ages in your film, if appropriate, so it does not look like a student film maker using his friends.
7. Find creative ways of moving the camera to make the film more dynamic. Don't fear going hand held when appropriate, it can add energy.
8. Stunts can be a lot cheaper than you think, and make a film pop with excitement. Brainstorm with a good stunt co-ordinator on how to get more bang for your buck.
9. Make sure you have enough close ups and cutaways. Eye light in close ups always looks good.
10. Try to get permission to use the real thing whenever possible. A real corner shop will look better than one you build on a set.
11. Try to get as many extras as possible for crowd shots and public locations (like a car park or train station) in order to make the scene look bigger and more real. If you are restricted on extras, shoot on the long end of the lens to compress down the space you need to fill.
12. For night shoots, wet down streets with a hose in order to make a scene shimmer on film.
13. Pay particular attention to the colours in front of the camera (costume, location, props), and try not to have clashes unless you want it.



Tim - In a word, none! Next! (laughs)

Q - So the key is, whatever money you are going to get, you get upfront and during the shoot as some kind of fee?

Tim - Yes. It is crucial to say that.

Q - What do you think about HD?

Tim - HD is excellent. I'm of the film era, I used to have a film post-production company, but I can't fault HD. There are so many advantages. The films that I have done on HD have been transferred to 35mm and no distributor has said, 'oh it's shot on HD'. The only thing I would warn people of though, is, if you go to the trouble of mastering to HD (before you spend £30k making a 35mm neg / print) you will want to screen it for distributors and sales agents in HD, and the screening facilities are hugely expensive compared to standard 35mm screening rooms - 35mm would cost me a couple of hundred pounds where HD is closer to a grand. That will change though as HD becomes more prevalent.

Q - How do you feel about making low budget films?

Tim - Although the journey of making films is a fucking rocky one, there is a good part of me that prefers doing a non-bonded picture, where you have more control and freedom. Working with people that are not doing it for the money, who are doing it for the fun and camaraderie. That is on the sentimental side. On the business side, it is fucking hard to make low budget films work as a business. There are two kinds of producers. There is the more technical kind of guy, more hands-on, which is more the category

that I come into. Then there is the guy who is more of the schmoozer, political animal, that is not particularly interested or needs to know the mechanics of making the film, they just need the key element of the script, the relationship with the Director, the Agent, and those are the dealmaker producers. It is a business at the end of the day. I admire people like Jeremy Thomas who has been around for a long time, but has still kept his autonomy, and still does low budget stuff. He is putting money together, project by project, piece by piece, patchwork quilt financing! You kind of have to work out who you are and where you see yourself.

Often I think you need more of an accounting brain than a producing brain. You also need another brain or mindset to be dining with bigger players in the UK funding scene, so you can move in those circles. If you are not in that circle it is fucking tough to get in. I do think everybody should do their own low budget film. If it is not a success, fine, but you learn so much by doing it yourself. I've learnt many lessons and I am still learning, just by trying to do my own things.

Q - What are the most common mistakes that you see Producers making?

Tim - Often, it is only when it is too late and you have kind of learnt from the error that you know how to fix it, but it's usually too late. Over budget, over schedule, are obviously the most common problems, hence, get somebody with some film knowledge to look over the budget and see if it is feasible. If you go to somebody who has just done a \$20m picture, they would say '*fuck that pal, you are wasting your time!*' If you get a film off the ground, in itself, in it's own right, it is commendable. When I look at some films, I suppose I question, ponder, think '*how the fuck did they get that made?!*' You look at the script and you think '*Christ, I can't see any commerciality in that!*' It's not a criticism, and if they have got the balls to get it up and running, good luck to them.

Q - What advice would you offer a new filmmaker?

Tim - My girlfriend thinks I am crazy (laughs), but if you have got the film bug, you will make films, and it is very difficult to get out of it. To a certain extent you have to be selfish, it is a selfish business. That selfishness will often take out other chunks of your life. You have to be prepared to go to all lengths. Any producing person will often question themselves as to why they are doing it, what are they doing, how are they doing it... most often, *why aren't they doing it (laughs)!* I do think that when it goes well it is fun. But boy, when there is a drought it is fucking painful! Your girlfriend has left you, you are bankrupt, and it is not pleasant. Sitting in a creditors meeting, trying to explain yourself and how you've run up a £70k debt, and that you scheduled the film for 5 weeks, and you were 5 weeks in and you had shot a third of it! You do think *fucking hell!* With all the downside, the plus side is that I think there are lots of good people in the business. There are two sides to every coin. If you want to do it, have a good crack, make your own film.



BECTU

Q - What is BECTU?

Martin - BECTU is the Broadcast Entertainment Cinematograph & Theatre Union, with about 26,000 members in the entertainment industries. In film and TV side, we represent permanently employed members at the BBC, ITV, film studios, film labs, post-production and facilities houses, etc. And of course we also represent around 10,000 freelances who make up much of the production workforce.

Q - What is the PACT/BECTU Freelance Production Agreement?

Martin - This is an agreement with PACT that sets out minimum rates of pay and a framework of other working conditions (hours, travel etc.), and acts as a benchmark across a wide range of film/TV production.

Q - What can you offer your members?

Martin - Collectively we negotiate agreements with employers on members' terms and conditions of employment. These include the PACT/BECTU Agreement mentioned before, freelance agreements with other employers such as the BBC Natural History Unit, and major staff agreements with the BBC and ITV. In addition we give a range of individual services and benefits. For instance, we issue a regular bulletin called "Early Bird" to alert freelance members of upcoming job opportunities - while making it quite clear that we are not an employment agency.

We can help with career development, training needs, and qualifications by putting members in touch with other organisations - Skillset, Skillset Careers, FT2, regional skills panels, and so on. We also advise on rates of pay, contract queries, insurance cover, the do's and don'ts of working abroad and on whether the prospective employer is known to us as a dodgy customer. And of course we give support when a member has a problem - e.g. an employer won't pay them for the work they've just done. Sometimes this means us dealing directly with the employer on the member's behalf. Sometimes it means getting our lawyers involved. It all depends on the circumstances, and it's all paid for by the member's subscription. Finally, we help out on essential but boring-sounding stuff such as insurance - freelance members can get Public Liability Insurance through their union membership - tax, NI, and so on.

Q - What is your Script Registration Service?

Martin - This is a service where members can register a treatment, script, or design with us, to protect themselves against copyright theft.

Q - Is this free to members and what is the process to submit a script?

Yes it's free to members. All they have to do is send in their script in a sealed envelope. We can then provide dated confirmation that it existed in a particular form at a particular point in time.

Q - What benefits can you offer Producers?

Martin - We are a trade union. Our role is to represent the interests of our members as workers in relation to their employers. Producers, in general, are those employers. So it's not really our role to offer benefits or services to them. There are other

organisations - PACT, the NPA - which do that. Having said all that, we do have Line Producers and Production Managers in membership, and when they find themselves in dispute with their employers, then of course we will advise and represent them like any other member.

Q - What are the BECTU rates?

Martin - We have negotiated minimum pay rates with PACT: these are on our website - www.bectu.org.uk - click on Agreements and follow the links. We issue recommended rates for work on Commercials, also at the website. And we have information on current going rates in different types of production which is available to individual members.

Q - How do members join?

Martin - The easiest way for freelancers is to go to the website and click on "Join". If you're freelance you can join online.

Q - Does BECTU have agreements that Producers can use for crew?

Martin - Yes, the PACT/BECTU Freelance Production Agreement.

Q - Does BECTU have any particular agreements for crew working on low budget productions?

Martin - The PACT/BECTU Agreement is a minimum terms Agreement. It is intended to provide a minimum set of pay-rates and conditions for all film/TV productions with mainstream or commercial exposure or potential. Many experienced freelancers command personal rates a lot higher than those on the PACT/BECTU ratecard - and quite right too. For Producers who want a good, experienced, reliable crew, the PACT/BECTU Agreement provides an absolute minimum benchmark on rates and conditions.

Q - Are there any agreements or advice for crew who are working on UK co-productions that are shooting overseas?

Martin - We have negotiated a standard insurance package for overseas work with PACT, and we regularly advise members on other issues related to working abroad.

Q - Can BECTU negotiate deferrals with a Producer?

Martin - Absolutely not. Deferred pay deals are bad news, and 100% deferrals are unlawful, a breach of the National Minimum Wage, and we don't have anything to do with them.

Q - What is BECTU's policy on crew working on non BECTU films? What if the film production company can't afford to pay the union's recommended crew fees?

Martin - There's no such thing as a "non-BECTU film". If members are working on a production, and need our assistance, then we will do whatever is necessary to help them. If we're looking at a low-budget film which is not being made under our Agreement, and a member agrees to work below the union rate, then so long as the contract itself is legal that's their choice. We may not like it but there it is. We believe that members who regularly do deals of this sort only undermine their own career prospects.

Q - Can BECTU shut down a production/ blacklist or expel it's members who work on non BECTU films?

Martin - Again - there's no such thing as a "non-BECTU film".

Q - Does BECTU help its members with any payment disputes?

Martin - Yes, all the time. We are experts in the arcane science of debt collection.



Anatomy of a Movie Section 5 - Pre Production

Q - Can BECTU help film Producers find crew for their productions? Likewise with Health and Safety crew?

Martin - Yes we can help with crew via our online crew directory - Crewbus (www.crewbus.org.uk) - which is a good place to look for freelance talent. We certainly provide basic advice to some especially naïve Producers on the do's and don'ts of health and safety - even though this isn't really our job. And we invest a lot of time working with the Health & Safety Executive and industry employers on practical health and safety arrangements. But if you are asking whether we would recommend a particular individual to a Producer as a Health & Safety Adviser, then the answer is No. That would put us in a very invidious position.

Q - What is the magazine that you offer your members?

Martin - The BECTU magazine Stage Screen & Radio comes out ten times a year. It contains the 'Ask First' list where we identify companies which have failed to honour their obligations to our members. Usually, though not always, this means they have refused to pay for work done. The 'Ask First' list is widely consulted in the industry, not only by our members but by facilities houses, post-production houses etc., who are keen to avoid getting stung by rogue production companies.

Q - What common mistakes do you come across?

Martin - Dangerously long working hours, and ridiculously low pay for newcomers - sometimes no pay at all - are the biggest problems. I wish I could describe them as "common mistakes" but I'm afraid it's worse than that - they are now part of an ingrained culture. Many Producers genuinely think that this is the only way to make films. Of course it isn't, and nor is it the way to develop a skilled and stable workforce.

Q - What advice would you offer new Producers / Filmmakers?

Martin - Our starting point is that the film/TV industry is just that: an industry, not a hobby. Within that industry, we do our best to ensure that the people whose skills underpin the whole business are properly treated and properly rewarded. Low / no-budget filmmaking is encouraged by colleges offering a glut of superficially attractive media courses, regardless of the fact that the number of graduates vastly exceeds employment prospects in the industry. The low / no budget production sector exists because a lot of young people coming off media courses see no other way to get started. And because a few grubby characters who like to call themselves "producers" want to make a few bob by ripping these same eager young people off. These are the ones who insist on going into production even though they can't, or won't, raise the budget to pay for it. We all know how they try to square the circle, by begging or borrowing money from family, friends, or ads in 'Loot', by calling in favours, by offering "deferred pay" deals to prospective crew members. We have three problems with this. Firstly, low/no-budget production undermines pay rates, budgets, expectations and standards right across the industry. It plays right into the hands of the worst, most brutal, cost-cutting employers. Secondly, to get people to "defer" all of their pay is actually illegal as a result of the National Minimum Wage. Thirdly, there is increasingly little justification for it, because the industry is slowly putting the pieces back together in terms of skills, training and career patterns. We have a highly-regarded training co-ordination body in Skillset. And we have new money coming into the industry to fund training and tackle the looming skills crisis - most importantly, the new Skills Investment Fund in the feature film sector.

So my advice to would-be new filmmakers is that film and TV is not a hobby, but an industry. If you seriously want to make a career in this industry - to earn a living in it - you've got to put in the groundwork, get the careers advice, decide on your line of attack, research the training opportunities, do the training, build your network, work your way up. You may even get to make "your film" - but on real money, rather than a wing and a prayer.

Q - What is your job?

Andy - Research and Legal Liaison Officer for BECTU - with responsibility for health and safety policy issues.

Q - Who should deal with Health and Safety issues on a set?

Andy - The production company/employer - i.e. the producer - carries ultimate legal responsibility for health and safety. Against this background they may delegate some specific health and safety tasks to key individuals (e.g. production managers, heads of department) within their respective areas of operation. The self-employed will often be regarded as employees for purposes of health and safety regulations. If something goes wrong, it's the producer that will be sued.

Q - What are the common areas for health and safety?

Andy - Excessively long working hours on shoots, including prep and wrap time and travel to locations, is a major problem, with consequent concerns about fatigue leading to accidents. Other common health and safety areas are physical hazards such as lifting and shifting of heavy loads, camera cranes, falls from height, electricity. Hazardous substances such as chemicals. Environmental hazards such as temperature, noise, unsafe locations and hazardous tasks such as camera tracking backwards or working alone.

Q - How much is common sense?

Andy - Common sense will only get you so far. Creatively driven film-makers tend to have their minds on priorities other than health and safety. It's better to give some thought to health and safety in advance of the production rather than relying on common sense to get you through.

Q - What happens if there is an accident and it's found to be a health and safety issue?

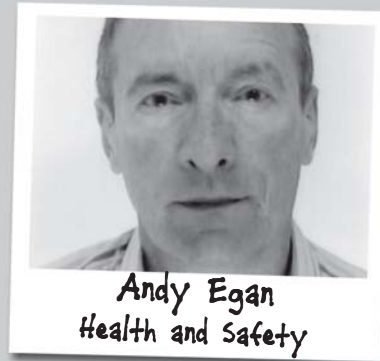
Andy - Deal with the injured person straight away - through first aid and medical help if needed. Then there is a legal requirement to record and report work related accidents. The injured person has the right to take independent advice and, if they consider someone was at fault, to make a legal claim. If the accident was serious, the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) may investigate.

Q - What about food preparation?

Andy - If food is prepared on site, health and safety regulations require suitable standards of hygiene governing where the food is prepared and where it's eaten.

Q - Where can film makers get more detailed information?

Andy - The HSE produces a great deal of useful information, including a series of information sheets for the 'entertainment



industry' (www.hse.gov.uk; HSE Infoline 08701-545500). BECTU provides information for its members, including the BECTU Health and Safety Handbook and 15 separate Health and Safety cards for different film occupations. (www.bectu.org.uk; tel 020 7346 0900) The BBC Health and Safety website is useful for health and safety in our industry (www.bbc.co.uk/ohss).

Q - What would you say to a film maker who is making an ultra low budget film and doesn't consider health and safety a major issue?

Andy - It will certainly be a major issue if you get sued when someone suffers an injury. Far better to invest a bit of time and effort in advance into sorting out health and safety.

Q - Stepping back from rules and laws - what things do you think lead to accidents happening?

Andy - In respect of employers - a lack of thought about health and safety and in particular about risk assessment (i.e. the duty to assess risks and identify precautions). In respect of individuals, long hours of work and the pressure to get the job done rather than raise awkward questions.

Q - What common mistakes do you see?

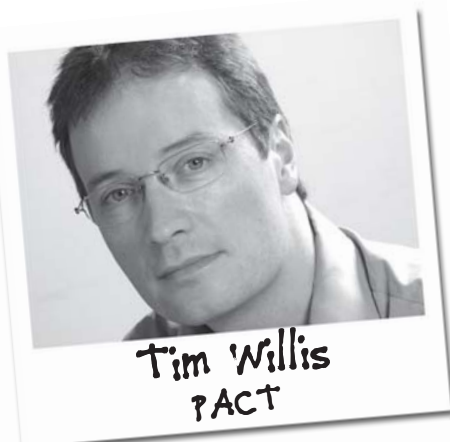
Andy - Waking up to doing a risk assessment only after the accident, rather than preventively in advance. Working on, for creative reasons, just a little too long. Scheduling for a shoot that's too short and for daily hours that are too long.

Q - What advice would you offer a new film maker?

Andy - Educate yourself on basic health and safety and get insurance cover.

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PRE PRODUCTION



PACT

Q - What is PACT?

Tim - PACT is the Producers Alliance for Cinema and Television - the UK trade association that represents and promotes the commercial interests of independent feature film as well as TV, animation and interactive media companies.

Q - What kind of services does PACT offer?

Tim - We have a range of services for our members such as the business affairs surgery run by PACT's business affairs advisor Rowena Evans, as well as subsidised legal services provided by a leading city law firm; we offer financial support for film and TV companies who are attending key international festivals and markets and in addition we provide industry conferences, networking events, training. But our most important service for independent filmmakers is through the PRA, the Producers Rights Agency, which negotiates and maintains Film and TV agreements with broadcasters and Unions. It provides PACT members with model contracts and supplies help and advice.

Q - How much does membership cost ?

Tim - Producer membership is turnover related. If your turnover is under £500k a year, then it is £825. If it's between £500k-£2m, it would be £1,175, if between £2-£5m, it would be £2,115, £5-£10m it would be £2,350 and then over £10m, £2940. If you're a start up filmmaker with under £100k turnover and a limited company, you can join for £415 inc. VAT. However you'll have to upgrade in two years or if your turnover exceeds the £100k.

Q - What is the Production Levy for feature films and TV?

Tim - PACT has two principal sources of income - your annual membership subscription and a production levy on the budgets of feature films and television programmes made by PACT members. As soon as you are commissioned by a broadcaster, or begin production of a feature film, you should complete the on-line production information form at the following address: http://www.pact.co.uk/mbr/pr/pr_info_form.asp The production levy is due on the first day of principal photography and the production budget is defined as direct costs and overheads (so excluding the production fee and any contingency or completion guarantee). You should be aware that it is a condition of PACT membership that you pay the production levy due on any work in accordance with the Memorandum & Articles of Association. The production levy for feature films is calculated at 0.25% of the production budget up to a maximum of £1,000 for the first £1 million and thereafter 0.5% on the balance, up to a ceiling of £4,500 (ex VAT). For television productions the production levy is calculated at 0.5% of the production budget, up to a ceiling of £4,500 (ex VAT). The production levy must be included as a line item in your production budget and you should notify PACT so that we can invoice you directly. For television productions fully funded by the BBC, Channel 4, Five, or where the BBC fully funds a feature film, the production levy is remitted directly by the broadcaster to PACT. You should confirm with the broadcaster that it will be paid and therefore will not form part of your production budget.

Q - What is the PACT / Equity low budget scheme?

Tim - PACT and Equity operate a registered low budget film scheme. To qualify, a film needs to have a budget of less than £3m. For films budgeted above £250k to £3m you need to get your budget certified by an accountant who is a member of the Production Guild. The benefit of registering your film is that in addition to paying artists the daily/weekly rate, you would only need to pay either an additional 50% or 75% (depending on budget) to acquire worldwide all media rights that would otherwise cost 280% of their fee.

You are not limited in where and what media you show your film, but there is a hold back period for one year from its first theatric release before you can show it on UK television. If you are unable to secure a theatric release then the period is 15 months from the date of delivery of the film to its principal financier. Once the budget has been certified you must send a copy of the accountant's letter with the top sheet of the budget and a letter from your company stating that you wish to register the film under the low budget provisions. For films with a budget of less than £250k a budget summary from you will suffice. You would also have to send a letter in which you identify the financiers of the film, the commencement date of filming, where it was to be filmed, and for how long. You also need to confirm the number of cast roles and that all of the Artists would be contracted under the terms of the PACT Equity Cinema Agreement. Once this information has been passed to our offices it would normally take three to four days for registration to be agreed.

Q - Do you have to be member of PACT to access the Pact/Equity low budget scheme?

Tim - No, but you do have to pay the Levy.

Q - Do you provide other agreements?

Tim - PACT / PRA have negotiated many agreements with relevant counter parties to cover the rights and obligations of producers in relation to musicians, writers, crew and cast with all the relevant guilds and unions. A list of the agreements, model contracts and guidance notes which PACT members can access include: The PACT Equity Cinema Agreement, The PACT/Bectu recommended minimum pay rates and agreement, The PACT/Equity TV agreements, Writers Guild agreements as well as those covering minors, composers, locations, producers, directors etc.

Q - Are there any pay rates or minimums for Producers?

Tim - There are no establish pay rates or minimum rates for producers. Pay rates are all negotiable.

Q - Can PACT help its members with legal advice and/or business services?

Tim - PACT's business affairs service is intended to provide advice on all matters relating to developing and putting together a production to exploiting your rights. If you wish to obtain advice on service agreements for cast and crew, employment issues etc during production, you can approach the PRA. PACT's Legal Service, operated in association with Davenport Lyons, is designed to allow independent production companies with a modest turnover access to first class professional advice. The scheme is designed to make expert advice available at times when producers are struggling for finance. The rates offered will not be made available, either directly or indirectly, to broadcasters or other financiers, and once an allowance for legal advice is made in development budgets, or a television programme / feature film is commissioned or funded, the fee level would be a matter of agreement between Davenport Lyons and the client. The arrangements for invoicing for such fees would also be a matter for Davenport Lyons and the client to agree directly. An important principle of the PACT Legal Service, and one reason why the service can be offered at such an economical rate, is that all legal advice is paid for in advance by means of renewable bond lodged with PACT. The Legal Service will be charged to members at a rate of £75 per hour, excluding VAT and disbursements.

Q - Can you register your script for copyright protection with PACT?

Tim - One of the traditional means of registering copyright is to post a copy of your work to yourself; solicitor or bank manager by registered mail to be retained unopened. If you are a PACT member, an alternative is to use our copyright service. Before the work is shown to anyone, the material to be registered must be sent to David Alan Mills, Membership Officer, PACT, 2nd Floor, The Eye, 1 Procter Street, London. Pact will date stamp each page of the work and retain a copy in case of dispute. The original will be sent back to you with a covering letter confirming receipt. This service is free of charge to members. If there is a copyright dispute the individual / organisation may approach the Pact business affairs advisor for advice.





Tracey Wilson
Storyboard Artist

STORYBOARDS

Q - What is your background?

Tracey - I went to art college, and then worked as an illustrator, doing children's books, advertising, that kind of work. Gradually I got interested in doing film work but wasn't sure how to get into it. I always had a fascination with film. The first time I ever heard that they used artists was when I picked up a book about ILM and saw the drawings by Ralph McQuarrie. I realised they actually used sketch artists, and so I began to pursue that. I started doing pop promos and commercials and got into it that way, and then got onto a feature film.

Q - What was the first feature film you worked on?

Tracey - The first film I did was *Dragonheart*, but just before that I did work as an illustrator on a film called *Crusade*, which fell through. On *Dragonheart* I had to learn as I went along. I couldn't tell anyone that I hadn't done it before, but the director knew apparently. They told me it would be for three and a half weeks in Slovakia, but it ended up being for four months.

Q - What is the job of a storyboard artist?

Tracey - Storyboards are like a map to help the rest of the crew know what the director wants, and to inspire everybody. It's a series of drawings that represent that shots that the director wants. I would of course work closely with the director to create them. It's like a map that enables people to tie everything together. Storyboards are the first visualisation of the screenplay. A lot of the job is thinking, I'd say only 20% of it is drawing. The rest of it you've got to sit down and construct a sequence and think about what's going to work. When you're short of time, you are often forced to draw quick *line work*, but if you have more time, it's nice to render the story boards so they have more of a feeling rather than just the actions.

Q - What is a concept artist?

Tracey - A concept artist works for the production designer, and they draw how the set is going to look, and design everything to do with the set. Whereas the story board artist draws the action. You work primarily for the director. We all collaborate of course, but the director would be the one to hire the story board artist and the production designer would choose the concept artists. Sometimes they overlap, if they can't afford a concept artist, the story board artist may be asked to do concepts as well.

Q - How soon are you brought in?

Tracey - Usually, just after the producer and the director are on board. Often you're the first person to be hired.

Q - Is there a certain style to doing the storyboards?

Tracey - No, everyone's got their own style. Some people will do more action films, other people will do more romantic comedies. It depends on what your illustration style suits. You'll abbreviate certain words like POV for point of view and MS for a medium shot. There are direction arrows which help too. I have worked for a couple of directors who refuse to have arrows on their drawings, which I think is a bad idea, as it doesn't help people see which way something's moving. By the time the boards are locked and you get to set, the boards are turned into a kind of flick book for quick reference.

Q - Do you literally do every shot the director wants?

Tracey - It depends on the director. Usually to begin with, we start on the big sequences that they know are definitely in the script and will cost a lot of money. Some directors just want the main effects sequences story boarding, and some want to lock down all the dialogue sequences as it's like a security blanket for them, so they've got something on paper and they can say 'well this is what I asked for'. If they don't get it, they can prove it.

Q - Are they always just black and white sketches?

Tracey - Usually, but if it's an important scene, we can do colour key frames as well. But usually, for speed reasons, we do them in black and white. Also you get a lot more drama from black and white, as there's a lot of light and dark. When you want to pick something out and show more detail, then it's nice to do those key frames in colour, so they can work out how everything's going to look and work with the art and design departments as well.

Q - How big do you end up drawing them?

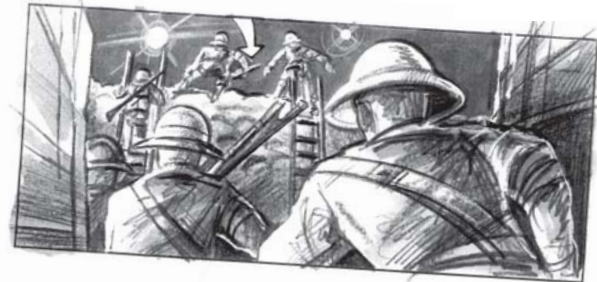
Tracey - We usually do three frames on an 8.5" x 11" page. On average, you're likely to do about ten or twelve pages a day, that's pages, not frames. Then you may also rough out more frames too.

Q - Does it go onto the computer at all?

Tracey - Often they make 'animatics' from the storyboards, but some people have started storyboarding on the computer using software. They look pretty good, but I find it's often quicker to draw something than do it on the computer.

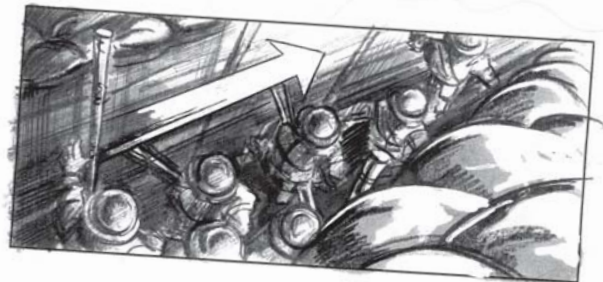
Q - Have you worked on low budget movies?

Tracey - Yes. There tends to be more work to do on the smaller ones because you're the only one on it. On bigger projects there's usually two of you minimum. Often you work harder as they expect you to do a lot more in terms of character design as well, whereas if you're on a bigger film, that's usually handled by concept artists. When you're working for an independent director, they'll often call you at nine in the evening, or they'll try to get you to work a weekend without realising you don't get paid for weekends. It's just a bit more loose.



Q - How long do you think it would take to board a low budget drama?

Tracey - With smaller projects I've done it in six weeks. There's a lot of it that doesn't get covered, but pretty much all the big sequences do. I've also worked with people who've had a spec project that they want to present and I've just done a few boards for them in two weeks.



Q - Have you ever found that the location is different to what you had drawn, and so the story boards are abandoned?

Tracey - Yes, you can do all these boards and then see the film and it's nothing like what you drew. On the other hand, it's nice when you see the film and it is shot for shot what you have drawn.

Q - Would you work with the stunt co-ordinator?

Tracey - I've worked with stunt co-ordinators. On *Die Another Day*, we had to work closely with the 2nd unit director and the stunt co-ordinator on some



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scenes. I had to draw a sword fight, so that was tied in with the stunt co-ordinator and various fencing moves.

Q - Do you find action sequences hard to storyboard?

Tracey - It depends on the sequence. For example, with a fight scene you tend to just do a few key frames as the scene needs to be properly choreographed and this involves the stunt coordinator. I worked on a project where they wanted all the fight sequences storyboarded shot by shot. So the stunt guys did rehearsals which we taped and then the storyboard artists drew them up from the tapes. Action sequences, in general, are fun to draw.

Q - Are there differences doing story boards on films laden with effects?

Tracey - Yes. They like you to establish, in the storyboards, what could be a matte painting or what could be CG or a model. We write a note by each frame saying, 'this would be model,' or 'this would be 2nd unit'. That helps them to break down the sequences.

Q - Does the director sit with you and say, 'I want that shot here?'

Tracey - It depends on the director. I've worked on projects where I've been given shot lists, where the director's said, 'I want this shot, this shot and this shot', and figured it all out. But often the director doesn't really know what he wants until he sees it. He has an idea, but he likes you to be a catalyst for new ideas. So they give you the script and you go away and come up with a couple of ideas. I find it takes about three weeks to get into their head, to get to know what they like and don't like. There have also been cases where you work with a director who didn't like what you were doing, it wasn't that you are doing anything wrong, it was just the fact that you didn't really fit. Often the director doesn't want to hire a storyboard artist, and it's the producer's that make them. Then again, I've worked with some lovely directors who are very open to ideas, and if you come up with a good idea, they will let everyone know it was yours.

Q - Do you need to understand what look different lenses will give?

Tracey - Yes, it's good to know about lenses. If the director wants a certain lens, like a 50mm lens, then you'll know what he's going to be seeing through that lens and you can draw it accordingly.

Q - You must have a lot of directors referring to specific shots from movies as well?

Tracey - Yes, more than people realise. A lot of stuff's repeated in an indirect way. They never want the same shot, but they'll say they like that shot in that movie. So you have to think of something that's similar, but is also as good as that. You're often asked to draw a character to look like an actor. If there's someone who's a big box office hit, they like the boards to look like him or her.

Q - How do you present storyboards?

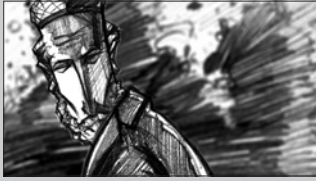
Tracey - If you're at a production meeting, everyone is handed a copy of the sequence or they are pinned on the wall, and you go through them. Often the director doesn't want anyone to see the boards until they're approved.

Q - What happens in those meetings?

Tracey - It's with all department heads. They want to make sure everybody's clear about their tasks and what the director wants. It's at that point an effects guy will say 'You can't have it explode that way, you've got to do it this way', and so we'll change the boards accordingly. This meeting would be pretty far in advance of the shoot. If you have a four month prep period, you'd probably have a big meeting at least once a month, and then more frequently in the last few weeks. It just helps to figure out as much as you can before the first day of shooting. At least have the first few weeks of shooting boarded and settled and sorted out. Obviously it's going to change from day to day, but if you can have a more or less clear idea of the basics, that usually helps.

Q - Would you recommend all directors use story boards?

Storyboard Abbreviations



MCU
Medium close up,
(head and shoulders).



MS
Medium shot, head and
upper torso, versatile
and basic shot.



CU
Close up (head),
actors need to be
aware that a close up
might mean that they
can move around less
in the scene as the



LS
Long shot, a wide shot
which is generally
includes a character's
whole body and
immediate
surroundings.

camera will need to follow them. It's common to shoot a wide or mid shot and then 'crash in' for a close up of the same angle (there may be minimal relighting), and the camera may not even be moved. Either a zoom lens would be zoomed in or a prime lens will be swapped for a longer lens to get the close up shot.



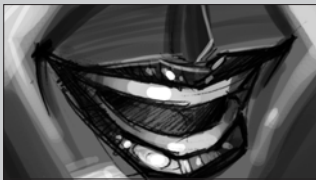
BCU
Big close up. Any
movement will be
exaggerated, so an
actor opening his
eye's wide will seem
like a surprise, or an
extreme shock has occurred. Actors will not be able to move
around too much as they will quickly move out of shot.



ELS
Extreme long shot, a
very wide shot where a
character's would
seem tiny in the frame.
Great for establishing
shots.



MLS
Medium long shot, in
between a LS and an
ELS, character is
relatively small in the
frame and you see
much more of their
surroundings.



ECU
Extreme close up
(eyes or anything
extremely close), This
is more of an effect
shot, the actor's eyes
as a killer approaches



High angle/Low Angle
Camera is looking up at
the subject or looking
down at the subject.
High angles looking
down can dominate and
low angles looking up

for instance, the bullet going in the gun chamber, the number flashing on the cell phone for instance.

can imply power. Beware of production problems when using these shots - looking up might shoot 'off the set' etc.



EST
Establishing shot or
master shot, often
used to introduce a
scene or location to
the audience.
Generally, this is a



Dutch Angle
An extreme tilt of the
camera. Used to make
things look weird or
crazy.

wide shot of a building or landscape or an introduction to the location in which the scene is set.

Storyboard Abbreviations cont...

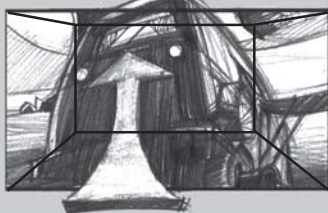


Pan and Tilt
Moving the camera horizontally or vertically.



Zoom
A zoom lens is used to zoom in (closer to the subject) or out (away from the subject). The advantage of a zoom lens is that the camera does not move and so

there is no need to refocus. To get a smooth zoom you will need to hire a special zoom control unit. Zoom shots can look a little odd because we cannot zoom our eyes and so our brain knows that this is a trick effect. NEVER allow an operator to perform a zoom manually, it must always be motorized.



Dolly
Moving on the camera in or out, or alongside (crabbing). Dolly shots are effective but take a lot of time to set up. Dolly shots can be

enhanced by using a little zoom at the same time (which means your track could be shorter).



OS - Over shoulder, the camera is looking over someone's shoulder. Often used in conversation coverage.

Other abbreviations include...

OC - Off camera, this refers to dialogue / sounds off camera.

VO - Voice over.

POV - Point of view, shot from your main character's point of view, such as looking down the dark corridor.

The storyboards featured here were drawn by Andrew Yap, email him at andrews_battle_hymn@yahoo.co.uk www.corneredreality.com

Tracey - Whatever they're comfortable with. I do believe, however, that storyboards are an essential talking point when you begin a project. Not only do they help with budgeting and storytelling, but they capture the mood and emotion of a script, and are a good visual representation of the directors ideas.

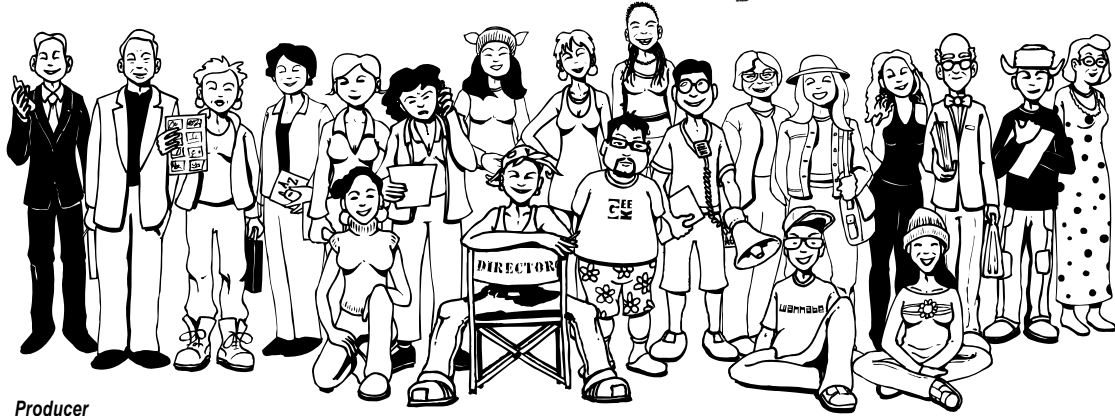
Q - What are thumb nails?

Tracey - The director will give you a little sketch, and you'll go away and produce something much better. I worked with one director who had a white board and would quickly draw up, shot by shot, what he wanted. Of course there were bits missing and I'd go away and fill in the spaces too. If the shots have already been figured out, it makes my job a easier. It's nice to know what's going on in a directors head, if they can put pen to paper and do something, it doesn't mater how scribbly, it will help.

Q - Do you have any advice for new film makers?

Tracey - Watch as many films as you can. That helps with regard to story boarding, and directing as well. Keep a library in your head. As a story board artist you are often asked to pull up a certain shot from a certain film and it's good if you know that film, and when you're drawing a sequence, it's nice to remember how they did angles in various scenes. The more you see, the more you remember. A lot of people don't know what they want until they see it, or they know only what they don't. That's not unusual. Then they change their minds a lot too. That is part of the creative process too. But it helps, especially if you have little time and money, to have some initial idea of what you want.

The Crew And What They Do



Producer

Head of the production, the first one on the film and the last one off. Generally, they are the ones who have found the screenplay and are involved in all aspects of the film making process. They raise the finance for the film, and are answerable to financiers. On a low budget film, more often than not, they will be also doing the job of the line producer, such as scheduling and budgeting.

Executive Producer

Usually the person who has made the film possible in either putting together the finances and/or creative package. Also, used as a credit, given as a 'thank you' for funds or services that have made the film possible.

Line Producer

Assigned by the Producer early on to help produce the film's budget. Takes care of the main deals with facility houses, keeping in control and in line with the budget. Not necessarily needed on a low budget movie where the producer and/or production manager will do the job.

Unit Production Manager (UPM)

Needed early on. One step below line producer. Helps the producer prepare the production schedule. Makes sure the director has everything he or she needs at an affordable price, keeps in contact with the accountant. Visits the set daily to be aware of everything that is happening in order to make things run smoothly.

Production Coordinator

Works with the UPM. Makes sure there is a smooth flow of information between departments both verbal and written. Prepares call sheets with 2nd AD, schedules, orders equipment, and co-ordinates transport.

Production Secretary

Hired early on by the producer for secretarial administrative skills.

Production Assistants (PA)

Assistants to the production team, where job varies from being a typist, running errands, carry equipment, etc.

Runner

Runs for everything needed, fulfils a variety of chores from messenger to miscellaneous buyer to getting food. Sometimes a PA and the runner are one and the same.

Production Accountant

Takes care of monies throughout the shoot. Arranges for payments, expenses, petty cash, etc. Keeps an eye on how the shoot is going with regards to the budget.

Location Manager

Organizes location scouting and takes care of everything associated with shooting on location, i.e. getting permissions and permits, hotel bookings, bathrooms, rental cars, notifying local police, authorities etc. Acts as liaison between crew and location owners. May have location scouts as assistants.

Director

The creative decision maker throughout the filmmaking process who directs the cast and crew from pre to post-production. Responsible to the producer for transforming the screenplay into the finished film.

Second Unit Director

Aids director in shooting certain shots, generally those that don't require sync sound or the principal actors, i.e. cutaways, establishing shots, insert shots, etc. Receives instructions from the Director of what needs to be shot and how to shoot it.

First Assistant Director (1st AD)

The link between the production office and the set. Must ensure that everything is available that is needed on the day. Keeps in close contact with the director and the production manager as he/she must know everything there is to know about the script, locations, actors, sets, production schedule and how the director intends to shoot. Aids the Director, keeping up the energy and strength of the crew, pushing them within sensible limits to keep the show moving at a good pace.

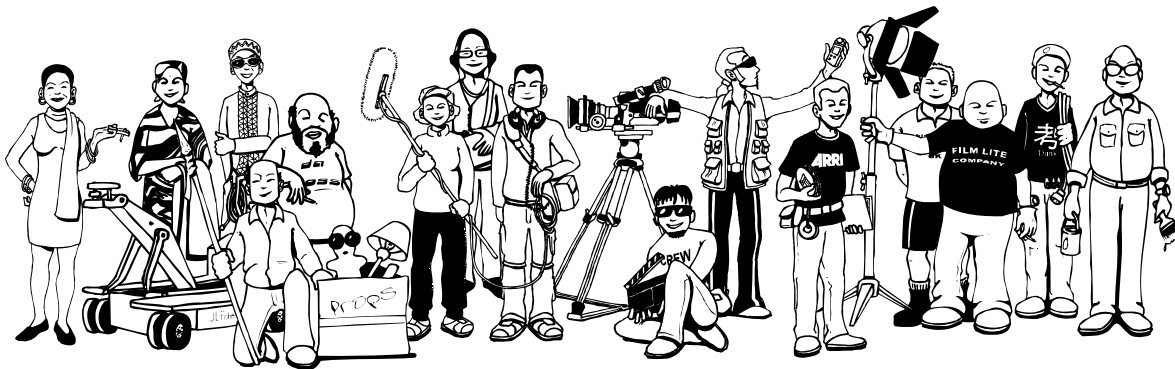
Second Assistant Director (2nd AD)

A backup to the 1st. Writes the call sheets in conjunction with the production coordinator, arranges cast calls, pick ups, extras, stunt calls, deals with payments to extras and is present when cast arrives and is available to sort out production problems if and when they arise on set.

Third Assistant Director (3rd AD)

Assists the 2nd AD and acts as a runner.

Anatomy of a Movie Section 5 - Pre Production



Casting Director

Oversees finding the cast, works closely with the producer and director. Has a good knowledge of agents and their clients after building up good relationships with them.

Continuity

Observes and records details of a shoot such as costume, props, and blocking to make sure that shots match during varied takes and that all shots are completed.

Storyboard Artist

Prepares detailed panels of shots as requested by the Director. On low-budget shoots this may not be deemed necessary.

Director of Photography/Cinematographer

Head of the camera team who collaborates with the director to establish the visual style of the movie. Familiar with camera and lighting equipment and film stocks. Contact person between the lab and production.

Camera Operator

Operates the camera. Familiar with equip., camera movement and an eye for framing.

1st Camera Assistant/Focus Puller

Loads film, keeps the image sharp by following focus, changes lenses, sets exposure, 'checks the gate' after each shot.

2nd Camera Assistant/Clapper Loader

Loads film into mags, cans exposed film and short ends, fills out camera reports.

Grip/Key Grip/Dolly Grip

In charge of operating dollies, cranes, laying track, moving cameras - all heavy work, so this person needs to be strong. If needed, they design or construct special rigs and camera mounts. The key grip heads this crew. Dolly grips specifically handle moving the camera on a dolly along track.

Gaffer

Chief electrician in charge of equipment and connection to power supply. Works closely with DP, explaining and delegating the lighting design. Works with Best Boy, generator operator and electricians (sparks).

Best Boy

1st Assistant to the gaffer.

Electrician

Moves and maintains the lights. Organizes power from the generator. Sometimes called "sparks."

Production Sound Mixer

Records the production sound, wild tracks, and ambience. Will either have their own kit, or will hire one from a sound house.

Boom Operator

Works with the production sound mixer either holding the boom microphone or arranging the necessary mics for a particular scene. Takes care of sound recording sheets, which will be used during editing.

Make Up Artists and Hair Stylist

Breaks down script for special make up or cosmetic makeup, i.e bruises, wounds or shaved heads, etc. Each artist will have their own basic kit and will take care of hiring wigs, special effects and prosthetics. Keeps continuity notes.

Costume Designer

Designs the costumes. Breaks down the script, working out costume changes according to story days, meets actors to discuss requirements. Usually, the first people from production to meet the actors. They must shop, hire, or make the costumes and have good social skills to have a good working relationship with the actor. Can have a costume assistant.

Dresser / Assistant

Sets up a working wardrobe. Arrives before actors to set up costumes, supervises their dressing, checks continuity throughout the day. Stands by with wet weather gear or warm clothing depending on conditions.

Production Designer

Works with the director and DP on visual style of the movie. Responsible for sets either in the sound stage or on location. Ensures the "look" of the set and props are as desired.

Art Director

Oversees the ideas of the production designer, arranging furnishings, liaising with the construction manager and art dept.

Set Designer

Responsible for the selection of props and supervises the dressin of sets. Prepares prop lists and works closes with the prop buyer in organizing the dressing and striking of sets. Makes continuity notes. On low-budget shoots, the set decorator and the art director may be the same person.



Leadman

Answers to the set designer and heads the swing gang (the people who set up and take down the set) and the set dressing dept.

Prop Master

Physically puts and removes furniture and props on the set. Keeps tabs on all props and looks after them during the shoot.

Prop Buyer

Responsible for finding appropriate props from specialist sources. Purchases, hires and maintains a record of art department budget. Organizes collections and returns of hired props. On low budget shoots, prop buyer and prop master may be the same person.

Prop Maker

Designing, building and operating any props. On low budget shoot, this may also be done by the production designer and/or the art director.

Construction Manager

Responsible for building sets within art department budget. Organizes materials and extra crew if necessary. Schedules building and striking of sets in conjunction with the production designer.

Painters/Scenic Artists/Carpenters

Work with construction manager on building and striking sets.

Stills Photographer

Shoots production stills for use in press kits, publicity and advertising.

Unit Publicist

Works with still photographer making sure the "right" shots are taken to publicize the film. Takes care of getting publicity while shooting, prepares press kits and makes sure that sufficient material is obtained during the production to publicize the film later on.

EPK Producer

Shoots a documentary of the making of the film for publicity purposes and for the DVD release of the film. Interviews the major creative forces behind the film including the actors, screenwriter, director and producers.

Caterer/Catering Company/Craft services

Oversees all catering (food and drink) requirements on the film.

Drivers

A team of drivers for ferrying crew, cast, equipment. Not necessarily required on a low budgets as job is doubled up with other crew members.

Stunt Coordinator

Oversees, plans and executes all stunts and action throughout the film. Coordinates with stunt performers and special effects coordinator.

Special Effects Coordinator

Oversees, plans and executes special effects throughout the film, including atmospherics (rain, wind, smoke) fires, explosions, etc. Works with the stunt coordinator.

Post Production Supervisor

Oversees entire post-production process. Not necessarily required on a low budget film. On low budget film these duties may fall to the editor/producer/director.

Editor

Once dailies are received from the set, the editor will assemble the movie. Works closely with the director.

Assistant Editor

Aids Editor with preparing picture and sound, synchronizing dailies if necessary, logging, maintaining good files and records and storage of all movie elements. On low budget films, not necessarily needed.

Sound Editor

Assembles production tracks, effects, music, recording extra effects, gets effects from libraries, organizes Foley and ADR. Ensures all location atmospheres are covered with wild tracks. Takes film to final mix with editor and director. Should hear and approve the final optical soundtrack.

Negative Cutter

Cuts the negative of a movie and conforms, or matches, it to the final cut of the film as decided by the director, editor, and producer and anyone else who may be involved. Final prints of the film are made from this conformed negative.

Foley Artist

Creates footsteps, sound effects, clothes rustle, etc. that match the cut movie filling empty scenes.

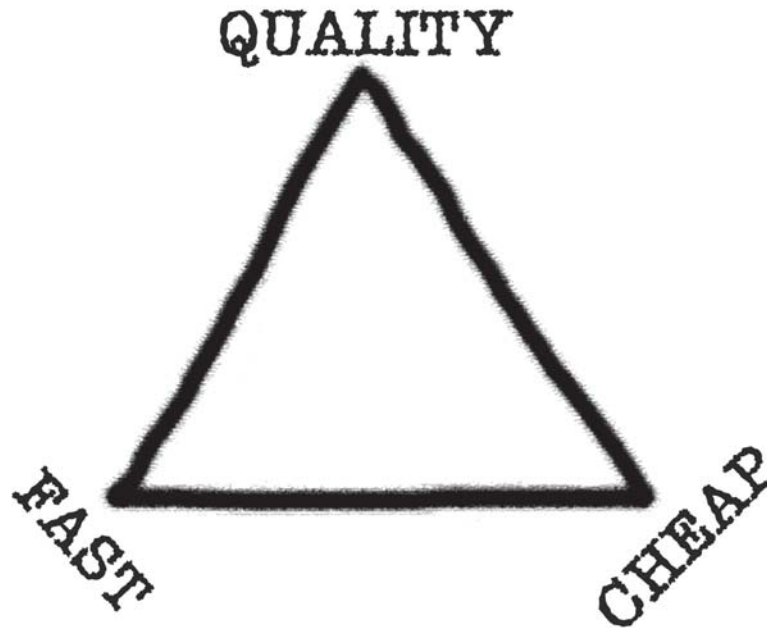
Composer/Musician/Music Copyist

Hired for the original score of the film and composes music in accordance with the director's wishes.

Music Supervisor

Hires musicians, locates and clears required additional music tracks.

The Film Makers Compromise



Study this simple triangle. Whatever film making discipline you apply, you can only ever have two corners, and always at the expense of the third corner. As an Indie Film Maker, almost certainly you are going to need QUALITY and CHEAP, and it will never be FAST. Knowing this, plan, plan, plan...! You can't do it FAST, so you must be prepared.