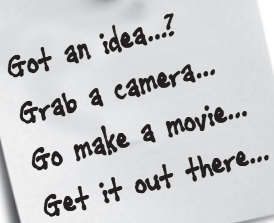


THE GUERRILLA FILM MAKERS POCKETBOOK



Got an idea...?
Grab a camera...
Go make a movie...
Get it out there...

BY

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AND GENEVIEVE JOLLIFFE

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THE GUERILLA FILM MAKERS COMMANDMENTS

(REVISED AND UPDATED)

**Thou shalt striveth
for excellence each and
every day. Only through
excellence can thou
reacheth salvation**

**Thou shalt make movies,
and keep making movies
for only this way can one
learn the craft**

**Thou shalt cast from thine
mind the phrase 'it cannot
be done'**

**Thou shalt surround
thineself with positive and
excellent people**

**Thou shalt respect the
film makers who will come
after thee and never
burnest bridges that
others may need to use**

**Thou shalt backup all data
from cameras in at least
three places**

**Thou shalt shoot
hundreds of great stills**

**Thou shalt only shoot
when thine screenplay is
Oscar worthy**

**Thou shalt cut thine
movie, then recut, recut
and recut more**

**Thou shalt beg, borrow,
blag but never stealeth,
for this burneth bridges
for others who follow**

**Thou shalt Twittereth
these words regularly**

**Thou shalt Facebook and
blog thine progress for
thine followers**

**Thou shalt shareth with
all film makers whatever
thou learneth**

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Thanks to **Lynn and Stan Morris** for their babysitting skills.

And of course our publisher **David Barker**, for staying cool...

But most of all we want to thank

YOU THE FILM MAKERS...!

...for being so inspirational, for pushing the boundaries of possibility, imagination, and occasionally the law(!)

YOUR FILMS ROCK...!

...and we cannot tell you just how much we look forward to interviewing YOU about YOUR amazing success in the next book... **So remember, AIM HIGH!**

Stay in touch, join the Facebook page, join www.guerillafilm.com and let us know how you are getting on,

AND MAKE AMAZING MOVIES!

Team Guerilla Film

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JOIN THE WEBSITE

www.guerillafilm.com

The web component of this book is a place where you can...

- Watch videos of film makers interviewed in the book.
- Listen to podcasts with film makers and experts.
- Download contracts and forms for using in your films.
- Find links to cool film making resources to help you make better films.

But it will be so much more. Our sincere hope for the website is that it will evolve alongside you, the film makers. So swing by and get involved...

And check out our blogs at... www.chrisjonesblog.com and www.guerillagal.com. And join our Facebook group called **Guerilla Film Maker**.

THE GUERILLA

FILM MAKERS POCKETBOOK

LEGAL DISCLAIMER

READ THIS FIRST!

Nothing in this book should be construed as legal advice. The information provided and the sample contracts and documents are not a substitute for consulting with an experienced entertainment lawyer and receiving counsel based on the facts and circumstances of a particular transaction. Furthermore case law and statutes and European and International law and industry practise are subject to change, and differ from country to country.

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www.guerillafilm.com



THE SETUP... THE GUERILLA FILM MAKERS

Q – What is a guerilla film?

GFM – It's a film made with no real resources. It's a question that we get asked a lot and there is no straight answer aside from when you are making a guerilla film, you know about it! Think 'no cash' and 'bending all the rules to get it done'.

Q – So what do you need to make a guerilla film?

GFM – With technology today, all you need is a good idea and the passion and drive to make it happen. HD cameras on phones, real time video downloading, access to all manner of first rate film education - if you feel film making is your calling, there really is no excuse now. In reality though, you are going to need a camera, some microphones, some lights, an edit suite and lots of time. You will also need a great idea that has been developed into a terrific script, a merry band of crazy people who are prepared to follow you on this journey, and a bunch of actors willing to risk looking like idiots when they deliver your dialogue!


Q – Why choose to be a guerilla film maker?

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WHAT DO YOU REALLY NEED?

Making films is fun and exhilarating, kind of like an addiction. But let's be clear, to make a successful career in this business is going to require guts, determination, passion, perhaps a little bit of luck... and, of course, some kit! So what do you really need to start making your movies, be they shorts, features, docos, virals or any other variant?

You are going to need a camera, the latest and greatest. Do your research. Ask around and see what others are using, but remember, the best camera to get is the one you borrow from someone else. The camera you buy for starting a film career will not be the camera you take through to bigger and more ambitious films in the future, so it's wise to not over invest in too much kit too early. You will also need microphones, lights, a car and loads of other stuff.

Rounding off your arsenal will be an editing system with good speakers – it could be Adobe Premiere, Avid, Sony Vegas or Final Cut Pro. The most popular system right now is undoubtedly FCP (Final Cut). You will also need a system to drive the software and lots of hard drive space. We would also recommend you keep your editing computer separate from your work computer.

GFM – Very few film makers we know would ever choose to be a guerilla film maker. They do it because they don't have any other way into the film business. Like us, when they started they did not know powerful people, are not related to anyone within the film business, and do not have significant wealth behind them - but they do have burning desire and a great story they need to tell. Then the little voice kicks in and they start thinking... 'You know I could do it with what I have, I mean I already have a camera, and I know someone who has a location I could use...' and before you know it, the ship is launched.

Film making is like being infected by a disease. For most of us, it happened at a young age when we saw 'that film' (insert your own movie here) and found yourself deeply impacted by the experience. That's like 'the bite'. Over time you start making little films and if you are lucky, you get bored and move onto a job that pays well! If you're not lucky, and you probably aren't as you are reading this, then you're infected for life. We love that old adage, 'film making is not

BEING THE BEST... ON THE CHEAP

- 1. Make lots of little movies. Learn the craft of putting images together with sound.*
- 2. Ask for feedback and take it onboard.*
- 3. Work on your sound, learn how important clean dialogue and the use of sound FX & music can be.*
- 4. Act in other peoples films. You will find out how hard it is to be an actor – which will make you a better director.*
- 5. Become a skilled editor – edit your own, and other people's films.*
- 6. Shoot, edit and master to DVD a wedding video. Make money. Make people happy. Learn to shoot under pressure.*
- 7. Make a documentary about your mum or partner doing the washing. Do it in a day.*

taught, it's caught!' Sadly, all of us at the *Guerilla Film Makers Handbook* are also infected, so we welcome you with open arms.

Q – This is starting to sound pretty scary!

GFM – Let's keep it in perspective, the worst day being a guerilla film maker is better than the best day stocking shelves at the local supermarket. You really do get to chase your dreams instead of dreaming about chasing your dreams. And it's a marathon too. Over the six books we have now published, we have seen many film makers fall by the wayside, but those who commit to the long haul, usually make it all the way. We are seeing friends who have struggled for 15 years, finally get that break and are now directing fully budgeted movies. It's exhilarating. So guerilla film making is a jumping off point, not an ending point.

Q – So it's a long journey?

GFM – It can be. And it's frustrating to see people who are more connected or wealthier than you, get breaks that you feel you should have – but that is nothing to do with your own reality. You are not them, and they are not you. You need to use what you have, your skills, your ambition and drive, and not worry about anyone else. Focus is a key skill you must have.

It's also important to pace yourself too. Don't try and do it all too quickly, take your time to make lots of short films, go to festivals, make friends, share your movies, accept criticism, write lots of scripts, work on other people's films... There's lots off stuff to learn, and fun to have, before you tackle that big break out film.

There's a bunch of myths out there, and many of those myths evolved out of the film business of the nineties. But it's the Wild West out there now, the nineties are long, long gone, and no one can offer very specific film making plans or templates to follow anymore. You have to arm yourself and find your own path to the summit. And you do that by relentless training, getting in shape, and THEN and only then, making a big movie.

Q – Do you have both producers and directors on guerilla films?

GFM – Sure, but it's much more fluid than on budgeted films. One lesson we learned very early on is that if you want the luxury of directing, you must also learn to be great producer. You need to be part of that fabric, that decision making process, to control your own destiny.

We have interviewed film makers who have managed to make films entirely on their own, literally 'one man cast and crew'. But most are a couple of dedicated people, who work for a long time, often many months, with a dedicated cast and crew of five or ten people.

If you can, find a partner. Working with another person is so important as it makes you much more effective. With a partner, you can't go off on self indulgent whims, and often, the other partner is good at stuff you are terrible at, so the relationship is complimentary. You also have a shoulder to cry on which really helps, and if you know your partner is working late on a budget, you tend to work late on the script too, and so productivity of the team soars. Find a partner. We cannot stress this enough.

8. Go to local film festivals. Expose yourself to lots of different films, even if you don't like them.

9. Become a photographer and study how to capture amazing images. You don't need a crew or actors to learn this skill. Develop an eye for composition.

10. Work on other people's films, and learn at their expense. Find out about other short films being made in your area and offer yourself for free. You will learn and make contacts.

11. Ask experienced people if you can buy them a cheap sandwich for lunch. Ask LOTS of questions and let them ask about you.

12. Go to art galleries, the ballet, music concerts and the theatre. Expose yourself to as much and as varied art as possible.

13. No-one will ever just give you an opportunity. You have to make your own until you have 'value'. Then you'll have lots of opportunities.

Q – Do guerilla films always lead on to bigger films?

GFM – Of course there are no guarantees, but logic dictates that if you make a film, you learn something, and you take that new knowledge to the next film.

But climbing the ladder is not for everyone, and some film makers will get much more pleasure staying small, taking complete creative control over their movies, utilizing a very small setup (such as a bedroom with edit suite and a small HD camera kit), using the internet to get their films out there, and all the time, hold down another job and have a family in due course.

They may not make much money at all, but, and this is crucial, they are making films that really connect with huge audiences, and having fun too. Ten million hits on YouTube is both possible and a staggering statistic for these film makers. Not long back it would be inconceivable that a short film maker could ever reach an audience of that scale. We live in truly amazing and exciting times.

Of course, if you do get that 'ten million hits' on YouTube, suddenly other sections of the film business sit up and take note. They will probably ask you out to lunch to feel you out.

Q – What models for success are there?

GFM – It all begins with an understanding of what you are making. There are two basic steps in a film maker's life. Learning to make films, then making films to make money. Of course there is a crossover and you never really stop learning, but there is a basic ground floor of 'learning' you kind of need to reach before you can start engineering a business around making sustainable money.

The problems usually arise when a film maker thinks they are making a film that will attract sales, when in fact they are involved in a learning experience. Of course there are two important points.

First, there is a learning experience to be had by trying to sell your film, successfully or not (perhaps this is most valuable learning experience of all). And second, what the hell do we know! There is always that film that comes out of left field and sells a shed load of territories and copies. As Goldman says, 'no-one knows anything'.

PPP A STRATEGY FOR SUCCESS

People often ask how we got so much for free when making films, how we got crews to work such long hours, and why they are all still our friends (mostly). The first thing to remember is that if 'we believe', it's much easier for others to believe too. So it all begins with what most people would call conviction and passion. Then add PPP – requests that are professional, persistent and polite.

So when you send out a letter, make sure that it's short, specific, concise, typo free and has accurate contact details. That would be a professional letter. In our office, we regularly receive a hand scrawled DVD in the post.

That is NOT professional. Persistent means when they say no, you professionally and politely ask again, maybe in a different way. Or you ask someone else. Polite means always being gracious. It's hard to dislike anyone who is always smiling, calm and confident.

To recap... Set your goal then be professional, persistent and polite about getting there...

Q – Assuming I am ready for my first big project, what then?

GFM – What kills most careers dead is being shut down because the film maker can't survive the long haul. We can all do the sprint, but how about the marathon? So reduce your overheads, that means selling the nice car (that was bought on credit that you are still paying off), living at home with mum, cancelling the gym or your TV cable deal... Learn to live very cheaply. Second, make money from making movies. That could be working on film and TV crews, making video virals or music promos, even wedding videos. The idea is to stay away from a normal job that will suck your soul dry. And also stay away from a long term job in the business or you will get seduced into earning money and not chasing your dream (with the one caveat that this 'corporate ladder' approach does work well for some people).

One very successful model is making special interest DVD / films – like a film about railways or, as a friend of ours did, Scooters and Mopeds

(www.scooterfilm.com). In these films, there is no story as such, just an engaging video about a niche group and their loves. The people interested in that niche will often pay over the odds for tailored and detailed content, buy extra copies for presents and even buy the sequel from the website before it's even made (as they all joined your Facebook group, you can stay in touch). If you are smart, using the film making kit you already have, you can make this film for little more than your time and basic expenses. Then you own that title and for the rest of time it could make you money. Do this several times over and you have a library of titles.

Of course, most of us don't want to make a special interest DVD, so this is a means to an end.

Q – What about documentary?

GFM – If you have a good idea and access to the subject, we suggest you really consider making a doc. Our *Guerilla Film Makers Documentary Handbook* is filled with case studies of people who just started shooting and ended up on the world stage. It makes a lot of sense. Of course all the same rules apply to documentary as they do with narrative – it's got to be a great story well told, with engaging characters and hopefully gripping sequences with a killer finale. Remember, you may have the kit already, so why not?

Q – What about narratives? Specifically shorts?

GFM – The world of short film making is thriving, largely thanks to the internet and people having just a few moments to watch something, either online or as an email attachment. Festivals have increased in their numbers too, so there are loads of places to get screened. Cheap cameras and kit mean that anyone can have a crack, which is great, but the flip side is that it's now more competitive than ever.

Short film sales are not good though. It is possible to sell a short, but generally, whatever money you spend making and exploiting a short, should be written off. It's not a business proposition, but it is still tax deductible! Think of shorts in terms of fun, learning, breaking new ground and most importantly, having some excellent work to show off your skills. And it's a fact, you can make a short film and end up winning an Oscar™. Every year it happens to one new film maker, so why not you?

Q – And features?

GFM – The world of micro budget features is now saturated. But it's still possible to break through. We suggest there are two ways to do this.

First, your film is so innovative and unusual, it captures the imagination of festival coordinators, journalists, studio executives, and the film starts to get a real buzz. This is VERY hard to engineer, in fact we suggest it's near impossible to manufacture that buzz. If it happens to you, it's probably about being in the right place at the right time with the right movie. Or you are just so darned unique and amazing that your talent cannot be ignored. But you really must be that special, and not just think you are because your mum told you so.

The second plan - you make a targeted genre film and adhere to those genre expectations – a good example of this approach is a micro budget British thriller called *Ten Dead Men* – an actioner with loads of punching, kicking and of course, ten deaths. It's simple, knows what it is and has sold tens of thousands of DVDs in the first few weeks of release. Apparently the acting is not amazing, but the fighting is. These guys do not need to recoup very much before they are out of the hole and making another film, with all their experience from the last film in their arsenal.

Genre is so critical for micro budget films. Along with that comes trailers, posters, key art, and of course a very tight edit. No-one likes to be bored, especially distributors in Cannes or at the American Film Market.

GOALS TO SET NOW

1. *Whatever goal you set, put a deadline on it or it will become 'one day, some day' and you will never do it.*

2. *Get out of bed one hour earlier every weekday.*

3. *Read 20 shooting scripts downloaded from the internet by the end of next month.*

4. *Call a film school and ask for a tour, irrespective of whether you want to go or not.*

5. *Make a short film next weekend. Conceive between now and then. Shoot Saturday. Edit Sunday. Youtube Sunday night.*

6. *Watch a foreign language film every night for a week.*

7. *Go to a film festival in the next four weeks.*

8. *Make three phone calls you have been putting off today.*

9. Read this book from cover to cover **BEFORE** putting on your shelf.

10. Write four pages of script every day for 25 days – then spend 25 days editing and rewriting. Now you have a first draft feature script!

11. Research a local film maker, director, editor, camera person, anyone(!) and ask them if can you buy them coffee in return for advice.

Whatever you
choose to do,
make sure you
Do IT!
Success lies in
DOING IT,
NOT TALKING
ABOUT IT!

Q – Which would you choose?

GFM – All are great models. We have made genre features, Oscar™ chasing shorts and controversial docs. For us, it's all about making movies, making sure those movies make some money back and then moving on to the next. Follow your heart.

Q – What mistakes do you seen film makers make?

GFM – Over the years we have seen hundreds of film makers come and go, some successful, others not. We have personally advised many of them too. Most mistakes are really not mistakes, more a misunderstanding of where they are in their own personal careers and journeys. All too often people invest too heavily too early, make big mistakes and find it hard to recover from those disasters. So take your time, make lots of films, make your mistakes when it doesn't matter and no-one is looking. When you are ready, take the money you can hustle and make the 'break out' movie that is worthy of your time and talent.

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

GFM – Commit to every experience being a learning experience, take every opportunity, and make even more opportunities yourself. But do remember to have fun and enjoy it along the way, or your life will fall apart and your movies will end up being dull.

WORDS OF WISDOM FROM OUR FRIENDS



'If it is something YOU don't believe in, you won't have the passion and physical energy to get your shit together and convince a million people to believe it. You've got to feel it...'

CATHERINE HARDWICKE,
Director, 'Thirteen', 'Twilight'

'Stand your ground. I wouldn't be sitting here right now if I hadn't stood my ground and been a pain in the ass. Get people to work for you for cheap. Inspire your crew and actors and they will do anything for you...'

RICHARD KELLY,
Writer and Director, 'Donnie Darko'



These quotes are drawn from expert interviews in other books in the Guerilla Guides series.

The Guerilla Film Makers Handbook UK Edition

The Guerilla Film Makers Handbook US Edition

The Documentary Film Makers Handbook

Check out the website for details at www.guerrillafilm.com



'Grab a camera, shoot on video and experiment. Robert Rodriguez said 'Every filmmaker has twenty bad films in them, so you might as well get them out of your system early'. Video is a perfect way to do that...'

STU MASCHWITZ,
Magic Bullet

'The day that you go home early is the day that you become complacent...'

EDGAR WRIGHT, Writer and Director, 'Shaun of the Dead'



'Appreciate that the longer it takes, the more you can benefit from the journey. It is a marathon, not a sprint. You need to figure out who you are in the world if you are going to say anything valuable...'

DAVID YATES, Director
'Harry Potter'

'Treat making your film, however you're making it, not as a means to an end, but as the best film you're ever going to make. Do something you believe in, something you love, and enjoy it...'

CHRIS NOLAN, Director
'The Dark Knight'



INTRODUCTION



'Be on the look out for good ideas – they are the one constant. Good ideas will take you anywhere you want to go, in any part of Hollywood. There was never a meeting or a place that I couldn't get into as long as I had that one thing, a good idea...'

BOB KOSBERG,
Hollywood Pitch King

'Don't take no for an answer. Be tenacious and believe in the projects you are pushing and the filmmakers you are shepherding. Be resourceful and leave no stone unturned when you are trying to get a project off the ground...'



KEYA KHAYATIAN, Hollywood Agent, UTA

'Spend a lot of attention on your first twenty pages. It has all been seen before, so the secret is saying it in a different way...'

JOHN O'BRIEN, Writer



'Write and keep writing...'
ROBIN SCHIFF, Writer



'Make your own film and understand that you can't and shouldn't compete with Hollywood. Even if you had an unlimited amount of money. Make the film you want to make...'

**ED SANCHEZ, Director,
'The Blair Witch Project'**

'You can turn a great script into a bad movie, but you cannot turn a bad script into a great movie...'

ELLIOT GROVE, Raindance



'Listen to everyone. Listen, listen, listen. Listen to everything they have to say, then forget it all and go and work it out yourself. Because the filmmaking process is changing so much that every 6 months everyone is wrong again...'

CHRIS ATKINS, Film maker



'If you can get a picture of who you are, through other people's eyes, you'll save yourself so much time. It will free you, it will liberate you, so that you can spend your time on that area to which you're most suited...'

**STUART HAZELDINE,
Writer and Director**

'It sounds corny, but don't give up. If you really do believe in it and yourself, then keep going...'

MICHAEL MCCOY, Independent Talent Group



'Don't be afraid to push boundaries. Learn from the past, but don't live in it...'

GEOFF STANTON, Agent

'I would say this to everybody starting out – do what you are told. Put your armor on, because your ego may well get bruised...'

OLIVIA WILLIAMS, Actor



'Any time there's an option of taking an easy way out by producing shoddy work, remind yourself of your standards and remember that keeping to them will set you apart from the crowd. Not that many people do this, but not that many people make it to the top...'

ROB HALL, Assistant Editor



'Learn to talk about yourself and your project in one minute or less. Check your ego at the door. Never have more than two screaming, yelling, freaking-out meltdowns per movie. Enjoy this experience, you never know how many more of these you might get to do...'

RICH HULL, PGA

'Don't give up...'

JOHN SCHMIDT, Content Film



'Take a job, any job and work hard. Work as if it's your last job...'

DEREK ROBERTO,
Production Co-ordinator

'Choose to be in this industry because you are passionate about telling stories in a cinematic form. Don't do it for money, it won't work out. It's a tough field. Be prepared for a long involvement...'

PAUL SESSUM,
Agent



'Wear comfortable shoes...'

GREG JACOBS, First AD



'Travel around the world, experience different cultures. Fall in love. Break up. Get into therapy. Read books. Find the scripts of great films and read them, then watch them to see how they made the leap from page to screen...'

ERIC STOLTZ, Actor

'Stay open and be flexible and roll with the punches. Don't let your ego get the better of you...'

**SUSIE DeSANTO,
Costume Designer**



'Working on a film is like being in an orchestra. Depending on what is taking place, sometimes certain instruments have a solo, and when it's your solo you need to be ready...'

**JUDY LOVELL,
Make-up Supervisor**





'Make it entertaining. It does not matter how serious the subject matter, how wordy it is, just make it entertaining. That is what it is all about...'

JASON THORP, Fox FX

'Don't be afraid to ask. Most people are flattered to be asked for their knowledge and expertise in an area. None of us got anywhere completely on our own – we all ask for help...'

SANDRA HEBRON,
London Film Festival



'If you have a great script and a great little scene to send out to five companies, you will get five calls. So, story, story, story is the key...'

LEIGH WHANNELL,
Writer and Actor, 'Saw'

'It's affordable to make your own feature film in your bedroom now, and make it as good as anything Hollywood is doing. So why not just do it? It really is as simple as that...'

JULIAN RICHARDS,
Writer and Director



'The best thing anyone can do is translate a story to the rest of the world no matter what format is used...'

DAVID HAYS, E-Film



'It takes persistence, hard work and if you're not prepared to fight the good fight it's better not to start. When you're told 'no', find a different door to knock on...'

TOM ORTENBERG, Lionsgate

'Have the courage to quit a job that is taking up your time from making your movie...'

**DYLAN KIDD,
Director 'Roger Dodger'**



'It is very easy to get intimidated and cowed as a first time film maker when you are working on a set with people who are much more experienced than you. You start questioning yourself. But you must remember that you're putting your own voice to it. You must stand your ground without being an asshole...'

**CHRIS KENTIS,
Writer and Director, 'open Water'**

'I don't think I have ever met a successful film maker that was not obsessed with the craft...'

JAKE WEST,
Writer and Director



'Be very courteous, it's amazing how far good manners will get you in this town...'

JEREMY BOLT, Producer



'Be absolutely determined. For all the ups and downs, over 6 years, whatever it took to get Dog Soldiers made, there was never a point where I thought, this isn't going to happen. I always knew it was going to happen, it was just a question of when...'

NEIL MARSHALL, Director
'Dog Soldiers', 'The Descent'



'To make a great film, you need life experience, so travel and engage in life. Working in a coal mine is better than learning the Avid at age 18. Life experience is huge in becoming a great filmmaker...'

NINA SEAWAY,
The Documentary Center



'This is your film. Trust your gut. Make your voice heard. Even after you sell the film, never be afraid to speak out on decisions that are being made – you know your film better than anyone...'

SHEENA JOYCE, Producer,
'Rock School'



'You've got to love it or you aren't going to make it. And surround yourself with some key people. Worry about the things you have control over and keep your eye on things you don't understand.'

ADRIAN BELIC, Producer,
'Genghis Blues'

'There are thousands of good films made and why some are more successful than others, no one can say. You need luck to be in the right place, at the right time, together with the right people...'

LUC JACQUET,
'Writer and Director, 'March of the Penguins'



'Think big but keep your overheads small...'
CATHY HENKEL,
Director, 'The Man Who Stole My Mother's Face'



'Don't take no for an answer. And you have to be more passionate about the story than anyone else because they're not going to care. You have to make them care...'

BRIAN HERZLINGER,
Director, 'My Date with Drew'

'To me, what you need is an idea and the ability to wake up every morning and deal with that idea and the many facets of bringing it to life...'

STACY PERALTA

Director, 'Dogtown and Z-Boys'



'I think documentary encourages filmmakers to be very flexible in their approach. To not go into subjects with a thesis all carefully worked out. They have to be open and on a voyage of discovery themselves and take the audience with them...'

NICK BROOMFIELD, Director



'While it's much easier to make a documentary, it's much harder to get them seen. So if you want that to happen, you have to be doubly thoughtful about what it is...'

MICHAEL APTEd, Director