



101 FILMMAKING

TIPS + TRICKS

 PremiumBeat

FORWARD

Filmmaking is all about making mistakes and learning from them. There's something to be said about spending countless hours in pre-production and production only to end up with footage that didn't align with your creative vision. It sticks with you.

Almost every mistake that happens on a film could have been avoided and a fundamental understanding of your craft is a great place to start. As filmmakers, it's our job to recognize these mistakes and learn from them. It's this creative problem solving that makes filmmaking so great.

Even if you don't like every filmmaking position, knowledge of how all the necessary roles work together to create something amazing can help you later on when you're directing a feature of your own. At the very least, a better understanding of your gear will free up time on set to focus on storytelling, rather than figuring out how to operate the camera.

So, if you're feeling inspired to learn about filmmaking on a fundamental level, we invite you to check out the contents of this e-book. As with most things in filmmaking, the contents of this book may change in the years to come, but the concepts will remain the same.

Good luck and don't give up!

PremiumBeat



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01 PRE-PRODUCTION

EVERY GREAT FILM BEGINS WITH GREAT PRE-PRODUCTION. AS A FILMMAKER YOU HAVE TO CONVEY YOUR CREATIVE VISION TO YOUR TEAM. FROM SIMPLE BRAINSTORMING TO DETAILED STORYBOARDS, PRE-PRODUCTION IS JUST AS CREATIVE AS EVERY OTHER ASPECT OF FILMMAKING. DON'T SKIP OVER THIS IMPORTANT STEP.

How To Best Approach Your Indie Film Budget



Creating a budget for your film will guarantee that every dollar will be spent wisely.

A properly constructed budget will allow you to look critically at all of your departments, which in turn provides you with much needed clarity on critical decisions that need to be made throughout the process.

For example... How much do you need to set aside for star talent? What elements can you (or should you) barter for? Is it better to rent or buy gear? What can you get for free? What are the largest unavoidable expenses?

To begin the budgeting process, break things down into the four following major categories, all of which are standard to just about any film budget:

- Pre-Production: 10%
- Production: 35%
- Post-Production: 35%
- Distribution and Marketing: 20%

Understanding your needs ahead of time for each of these basic components of the filmmaking process will keep you organized and ultimately make your life that much easier.

Pre-Production

Pre-production is comprised of all the items you must address in the beginning phases of your production, up until the day you go to shoot your film. In this stage, your budget will account for items such as location scouting, insurance, office expenses, courier services, script fees, casting director rate, and just about anything else that you need to pay for before actually getting to set.

Theoretically, pre-production should be the easiest to predict in terms of cost. If you're shooting a low or micro-budget film, this stage will likely be the cheapest of the four components of your budget: no more than 10%.

Production

For films of any scale, production is often where the most amount of money is spent, simply because there are more unavoidable costs during this stage.

Big ticket items (paying your cast and crew, location permits, gear rentals, insurance, etc.) are all items that will necessarily need to eat into your budget. Other line items (catering, lodging, transportation costs for cast and crew, makeup) are also big considerations, but some of these can be mitigated by thinking outside of the box. For instance, if you're really on a shoestring budget, you might be able to get a local catering company to sponsor your film, ultimately bringing down your food line item.

During production it's wise to keep a "miscellaneous fund" that isn't accounted for in case you incur unforeseen expenses like repairing

equipment that breaks or renting additional gear that will help you get the most out of your shots.

As mentioned earlier, the majority of film budgets (not including huge blockbusters that spend most of their budget on marketing) are spent during production. Regardless, designate about 35% of your budget to actually shooting your film. As you will see in the sections that follow, both post-production and marketing deserve just as much attention and funding.

Post-Production

Leave a healthy portion of your budget for post-production, even if you aren't making a heavily post-driven film, such as a VFX spectacle or action movie. No matter what genre you're working in, if you skimp out in post, your film will suffer and the money you spent in production will be somewhat wasted. Post-production funds will go toward your editor, colorist, sound designer, composer, and the rest of your post team. Not to mention, you may need money for music licensing, stock footage, and deliverables like a DCP for festival screenings.

Allocate about 35% of your budget for post-production... the same as your production budget. This may seem like a lot, and many filmmakers choose to put more into production, but you will be doing your film a disservice by cutting corners in this department.

Your final audio mix alone is worth its weight in gold, as clean audio will literally make your film more valuable when you go to sell it. Some films get completely ruined in post-production because of a lack of funds... films with great scripts and great production/cast/crew behind them. Without enough budget or time left over for post, the final products just didn't work.

Distribution and Marketing

Once you've got the final master of your film, it's time to start pushing it out into the world. It's rare that independent filmmakers allocate a sufficient amount of budget to marketing, but this should really never be the case. After all, without marketing dollars? No one will ever see your movie.

To start, you need to create a strategy to reach your audience and eventually turn a profit. There are cost-efficient options such as blogging or reaching out to other bloggers/online publications in hopes that they will share your film's trailer or write a review. As well, social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, and Vimeo can be instrumental in your film's success on a grass roots level if you really push things on those platforms.

That said, you will also want to account for the following marketing items in your budget: a website for your film, screenings at various theaters, film festival applications, local ad campaigns, and hiring a publicist, if needed. Like any other phase mentioned here, make note of what can be done on your own and what bartering options are available to you within your network to keep your costs down. In any case, do your best to allocate at least 20-30% of your funds to marketing, and be prepared to do most of the leg work if you are trying to keep the costs down.

There is no one-size-fits-all budget format, and ultimately you must create a budget that is most in-line with your film's needs. However, it is essential that you create a well-thought-out, organized budget for your project to ensure that all bases are covered when it comes to the four important elements of filmmaking. Familiarizing yourself with the film's needs ahead of time will make the entire process (and your life) easier.

When you begin itemizing your expenses, be sure to gain a clear understanding of what you can contribute to the process on your own and who you can utilize in your network to lend your film a helping hand. After you've worked out these essential details, don't forget to include some breathing room by creating a "contingency" fund, which will go toward miscellaneous or unforeseen expenses you may (and likely will) incur when setting out to make your film.

Five Tips For Casting Your Indie Film



All of these tips are focused on the creative aspects of casting. Their purpose is to help you get the right talent attached to your project – not necessarily to provide a how-to guide for a casting call.

If you've never held a casting session, you'll probably want to do some homework before approaching the aspects of the process described below. It's very important that you know how to actually get actors into the room and how to run a casting session on a basic level. Once you're able to nail the logistical side of it, you'll be ready for the fun (but challenging) creative part. Let's look at the tips:

1. Don't Do Cattle Calls

One of the most common mistakes filmmakers make is bringing way too many people into casting sessions. Rather than pre-screening

the actors diligently, people bring in just about anyone that applies, worried that the right actor will be missed.

The more people you bring into the audition, the less time you can spend with each of them. Why not pre-screen your talent by really going through their resumes and headshots beforehand, so that you can just bring in the people that you instinctively feel could be a good fit? This will mean more time with the right people and a session that isn't cluttered and confusing.

2. Direct as Much as Possible

If an actor doesn't nail the first take of their audition, don't just throw them out of the audition room. More often than not, the actor in front of you is much more capable than they may seem... they just don't "get" the scene. And can you really blame them? Often they are given two or three pages of sides and are expected to play the role as well as they would if they knew the script and character inside and out.

Give some direction and don't be afraid to do two or three takes if you need to. This advice is also true for actors that are nailing it right off the bat. Give direction and feedback to see how they react to it. This will help you gauge their versatility.

Sometimes you'll have an actor come in that is perfect for the scene, but maybe not the part, because they are not versatile enough.

3. Pair Actors Together

Traditionally, casting sessions can get pretty crammed. Even if you're more selective about who you bring in, you're still bound to run behind at some point as actors pile up in the waiting room. The last thing you want to do in this situation is rush through auditions, as you'll miss out on having the ability to give direction and see how the actors can really work.

The best solution to this situation is to start bringing in actors together. If there is a three person scene and you have actors for each of the three characters in the waiting room, bring them all in. It will make things more efficient and give you an even better view of how your potential talent can work with other actors.

4. Callbacks Are Key

Never assume that you'll find your talent on day one – even if you're only casting a single person. Many directors are overly optimistic before a casting session and make the mistake of not doing callbacks. If there is one thing you absolutely have to do during the casting process – it's callbacks.

Callbacks will give you an opportunity to see a different side of the actors that you liked, try out new scenes with them, and bring in some new actors that couldn't make the original auditions. At the end of the day, it may be a bit of a pain to do a callback or two, but you'll be a lot better off than if you only do a single day and wind up casting the wrong person for your film.

5. Use a Casting Director (But Only Sometimes)

It's pretty easy to hold a casting session yourself. Many filmmakers who are on a tight budget will bypass using a traditional casting director for many reasons.

Nonetheless, there are some situations where a casting director is a great option, regardless of your budget. For instance, if you've held multiple casting sessions and no one was clicking for you, getting a casting director involved will change everything. They can bring out people that you wouldn't otherwise have access to and will take care of the difficult legwork for you. And if you do have a decent budget to work with, it's even more essential to use a casting director. They might get you access to name talent and they will be vital to your process in the end.

The Three Elements That Make Most Micro-Budget Films Fail



Many up-and-coming filmmakers are scared to make a film with no budget. They often don't have the experience to know how difficult it is to raise the funding to make a film... and won't even consider making one on a limited budget.

While there's nothing wrong with aiming to raise a substantial budget to make your first feature, the truth of the matter is that it's extremely difficult to do so, even for seasoned filmmakers. In order to raise that kind of money, you need to have a calling card (usually in the form of a low/no-budget project) so producers will trust you with their money.

The good news is that making a film with little or no money can still yield great results that are comparable to any well-funded film, so long as you are creative and adopt a solid strategy for yourself. As

we all know from watching studio produced films over the last several years, more money doesn't necessarily translate to better movies. If you're eager to make a film, but money is tight, here are three considerations that you should never overlook.

1. Story Is Everything

Technological breakthroughs in all the various facets of filmmaking have completely changed the world of cinema and digital production. While, in many respects, these great advances have opened up a new and exciting world for filmmakers from all walks of

life, I would argue that the quality of independent films has greatly suffered over the past several years.

It used to be that a great story/screenplay got your film made. But with easy access to digital cinema cameras and post-tools, simply owning the right gear (or knowing someone with the right gear) is enough to get your film made — even if it doesn't have a fully developed story.

Understanding cinematography, editing, or particular uses for gear is critical to your success as a filmmaker. However, your camera and all the various 'toys' you utilize throughout production are simply there to enhance your story. You may think that you need to hyper-focus on developing your skill set behind the camera in order for your film to have a cinematic quality. But you need to put just as much emphasis on the story and concept. After all, a great idea with poor production value will go a lot further than a poor idea with great production value.

Look at a film like *Clerks* by Kevin Smith. Yes, that example is going back a couple of decades, but even for its time, the quality level of that film was extremely poor. It was black and white, grainy, poorly lit, badly composed... but guess what? It was a success because the writing and the story were on point.

2. Immaculate Location Audio

Nothing is more detrimental to your film than poorly recorded amateur audio. If you've already made a film or two, you should clearly understand how critical great location audio is and also understand that poor audio can completely ruin your project. Not having a big budget is absolutely no excuse for not capturing great audio. It really just comes down to prioritizing it, rather than taking a "we'll fix it in post" attitude. For whatever reason, even though most

filmmakers know how important great audio is, the audio department is one of the first things that's compromised on low-budget films.

For smaller productions, try the Zoom H6 Handy Portable Digital Recorder. It's a relatively low-priced field recorder with most of the features you'd find on similar (yet more expensive) recording equipment. It takes 4 XLR inputs and has many of the same features that you would find on a more professional audio recorder. In an ideal world, you don't want to be rolling your own audio. A dedicated sound recordist is always a far better choice. Nonetheless, in a pinch you can get great results with a device like the Zoom H6 and a couple of quality mics.

No matter if you choose to hire a sound recordist or do your own location sound, make sure that you put just as much effort into the sound as the image. After all, it's been proven time and time again that audio influences an audience's experience far more than imagery.

3. Understand Your Limitations Early On

If you're shooting a film with little or no money, you need to identify your creative limitations early on. Keep your head out of the clouds when it comes time to develop your idea and screenplay. So often filmmakers with small budgets will want to write a script with car chases, explosions, exotic locations, and other extraneous elements and don't realize until it's too late that this just isn't feasible.

Embrace limitations when making films with very little money. Strategically utilize what you have around you and quickly dismiss what is not in the realm of possibility for your film.

For example, if you have a certain location in mind for a scene, but the permit to shoot there is too expensive, change the scene around

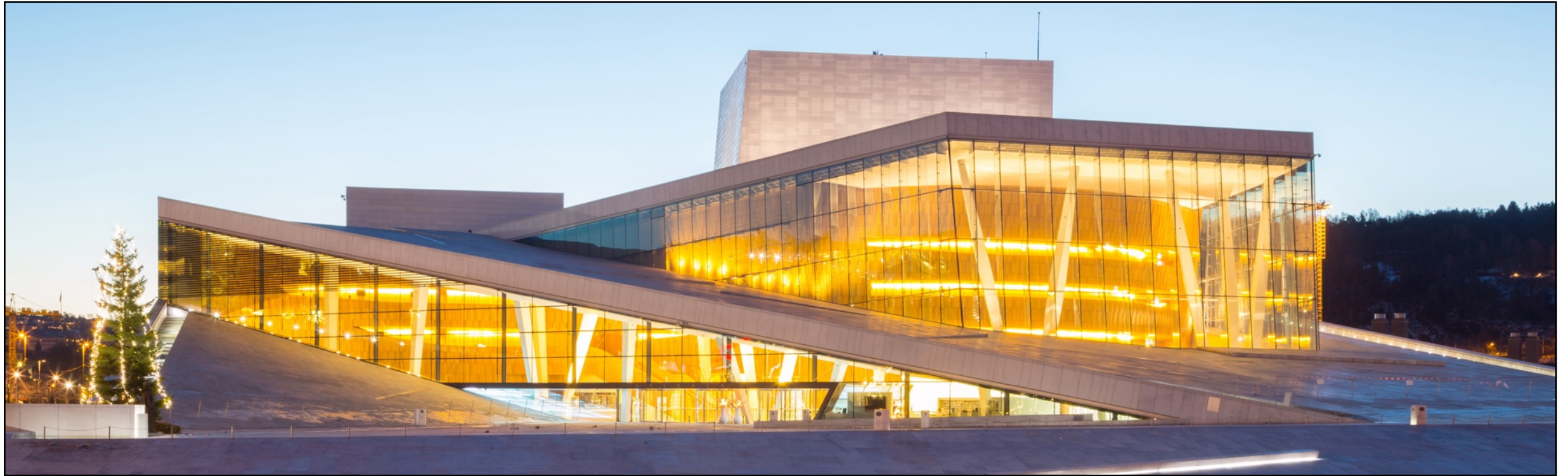
to take place in a different part of that same location where you can get away with guerrilla shooting. This may seem like a compromise, but more often than not, the scene will actually become stronger and more unique by changing it around. Shooting limitations can force originality and uniqueness in the scene.

In Summary

There are many great tips and suggestions could be made to no-budget filmmakers with regards to lighting, casting, camera choices, and so on. However, most of these elements are secondary and the success of your micro-budget film will rely very heavily on having a vision and maintaining your focus. Your ability to focus on a well-told proactive story is critical – and thankfully this part of the process doesn't cost you a dollar.

There's nothing wrong with wanting to shoot on a great camera or having a preference for the visual elements of your film. But at the end of the day, whoever is viewing your film is going to be captivated by the story, the sound, and the execution far more than the technical merits of your visual production. Always keep that in mind!

Five Tips for Finding a Great Film Location



Location scouting is a lot like finding a needle in a haystack – it takes time and patience. Take advantage of the following tools and approaches to find a great location for your next film project.

1. Go Digital

While having an official location scout is still necessary for big budget productions, you may be able to virtually scout a location. Using this approach is also useful for doing a preliminary look before you go and see a location in person.

Here are a few online location tools you can access from your desktop:

Locations Hub

[Locations Hub](#) is a great website for scouting because it is entirely dedicated to locations for film... *not* photography. This is important because a lot of locations that are great for photography aren't that well-suited for filmmaking due to noise, traffic, etc... You'll also find detailed maps, pictures, and website links to film commissions here. The best part? Locations Hub is completely free to use. However, many locations on Locations Hub will charge you to shoot there, so be sure to do your research.

Flickr Map Search

On top of being a really great photo sharing website, Flickr can be a really useful tool for location scouting. Using [Flickr's map search](#), users can see where photos were shot on a detailed map. Flickr's extensive user base also makes it really great if you're looking for something specific. Users can search their area by keywords... so if you need to find a "grungy blue wall," you can easily search for one.

Shot Hotspot

[Shot Hotspot](#) is arguably the best location scouting website for photographers. Shot Hotspot is selective about the shooting locations they accept. Users can refine their search by landscape, architecture, water, and a variety of other factors. Shot Hotspot also ranks locations near you based on popularity.

In addition to these websites, there are also a lot of location specific websites with shooting locations, especially if you live in a major city. It may seem obvious, but do a simple search to see if there is a location scouting website for your city.

2. Contact the Local Film Commission

If you're shooting a big production, odds are you already contacted your local film office to get film permits. A film commission is also a great place to contact when you're looking for a potential shooting location. Many film commission websites will have detailed maps and photos of popular shooting locations in their area. More often than not, film commissions are happy to work with filmmakers coming to their area to shoot.

3. Tour In Person and Take Lots of Pictures

It *almost* goes without saying, but touring a location before the day of the shoot is a must. While you're location scouting, take along your

phone to capture pictures of your location that you can share with your producers, lighting director, sound recordist, set designer, and anyone else who will be a leader on set.

There are also a lot of really good apps that can help you with capturing your potential locations, like Panascout and Map-A-Pic. These apps allow you capture photos with cinematic cropping.

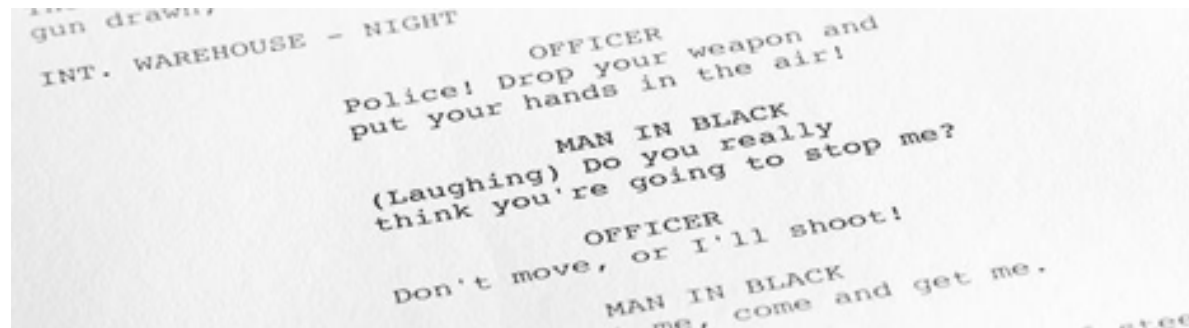
Make sure to take a director's viewfinder with you so you can see how your location looks at various focal lengths. This is critical. Eyes can be deceiving. By purchasing a cheap director's viewfinder, you can get a better idea as to what the location will look like once you get your camera on location.

While you're at a potential location, there are a lot of questions you need to ask including:

- Is there power?
- Is this location near any airports?
- Do I need a person to let me into this location?
- Where are the breaker boxes?
- Is the neighborhood safe?
- Will there be a place for the crew to set up equipment?
- What's the parking situation like?
- Are there any events scheduled for your shoot day?
- Does this location cost money?
- Is there a bathroom?

It's also very important to understand what the lighting is going to look like at the time of day you will be shooting. Your location may look perfect at 10 in the morning, but, come 5 in the evening, you might be dealing with shadows from trees, buildings, or electricity poles. This is why it's best to location scout at the time in which you will be shooting.

4. Know Your Script

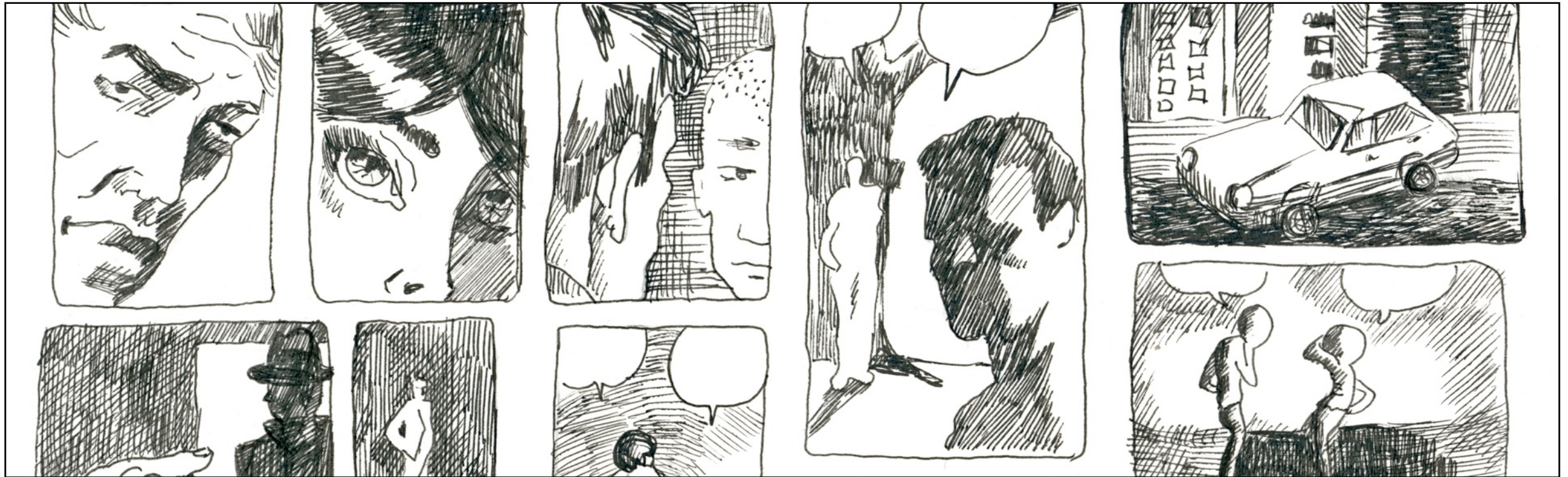


Don't put the cart before the horse. While you may feel inclined to go location scouting before you have a script, it's best to wait. You don't want to show up on set and realize that the pivotal window shot can't happen because there isn't one.

5. Take Audio Seriously

While you're at a location, talk, clap, and listen to hear if there is anything to be concerned about. Even if it seems like a small problem, take it seriously. You don't want to spend time fixing your bad audio while on set.

The Benefits of Storyboarding Your Next Film



Storyboarding is a commonly overlooked part of the indie filmmaking process. Here are some ways that your production can benefit from storyboarding.

While it may be true that storyboarding is not necessarily a mandatory part of a filmmaker's process, there is a reason why most major feature films still storyboard every last shot.

Storyboards not only let you and your collaborators "see" the totality of your film while in production, but they also help you get there in the first place by helping sell your ideas more effectively to potential investors, producers, etc. When you consider all of the benefits of storyboarding, it will be hard to justify ever producing another film without properly storyboarding again.

Why You Need to be Using Storyboards

The greatest incentive for storyboarding is simply the fact that storyboard will help you make a much stronger film by allowing you to visualize your movie before it's even made. This is essentially your chance to create a blueprint for your film that will help you identify any potential problem areas or missed opportunities while you still have a chance to fix them.

Technically speaking, you can include as much or as little detail as you want when storyboarding, as long as the ideas are accurately

conveyed. By the time you get to post, your editor will be thanking you, as the film will have coverage in all the right places, proper transitional moments, and a slicker aesthetic.

You Don't Need to Be an Artist or Designer

It's a huge misconception that storyboarding requires you to have the ability to draw/illustrate professionally. That's not at all to diminish the role of the storyboard artist, as they are truly masters of their craft and will inevitably deliver the best results. But if you can't afford a storyboard artist or need to do it yourself, that's perfectly okay.

As an independent filmmaker, no one really needs to see the storyboards outside of you and your team, and once again, all that matters is that your story is conveyed. If you choose to storyboard by hand, your illustrations can be as simple as geometric shapes used to illustrate props/staging and stick figures for your characters. Or to make things even easier, you can use any of the vast number of storyboarding programs available to download on your computer, tablet, or phone.

Storyboards Strengthen Your Vision

Your screenplay is the backbone of your film, but no matter how beautifully written it may be, it will never translate exactly as you might be picturing it to film. There's a pretty common saying among directors: if your final film looks even 70% of the way you thought it would, you did your job really well. Storyboards play a huge part in getting to that 70%, as they help you visualize your project in a way that's not otherwise possible.

The last thing you want is to get to set and realize that something about your shoot isn't congruent with the script. Storyboarding will help you nip those issues in the bud and keep your vision alive.

The Basics of Storyboarding

Having now gone over some of the perks of storyboarding, Let's very briefly break down the basics of storyboarding your film for those of you that have never done it.

Generally speaking, for every illustration (or storyboard) you create, there are five types of shots to choose from: master, long, medium, close-up, and extreme close-up. Sound familiar? Once you've decided on which of the five shot types you want to go with for any given shot, you'll want to illustrate camera movement.

To depict a panning or tilting shot, where the camera either moves sideways or up and down, you'll want to create two frames to indicate where the camera will start and where it will wind up. From there, you can use arrows moving in both directions in order to portray movement.

To illustrate a tracking shot, (which involves moving the entire camera in order to follow your continuously moving subject), you simply draw an arrow on the frame – indicating camera placement – and point it in the direction the camera will be moving in.

You can also illustrate zooming, which only involves a lens and no camera movement at all. To show zooming in (moving closer to the subject) and zooming out (moving away from the subject, taking in more of the scene in its entirety), you'll have two frames on your storyboard, and depending on which direction the zoom is going in, you'll either have arrows moving toward the interior frame or out toward the exterior frame.

These are some of the basics of creating a storyboard. As you can probably gather, it's pretty easy to pick up. Just remember how critical storyboards are to the filmmaking process. At the very least,

understand some general rules/technique associated with creating them so you can ensure they get done properly.

Renting vs Buying: How Do You Know When to Pull the Trigger?



With technology changing daily, the question of renting vs buying equipment is a tough one. Let's explore these options in the context of today's video production industry.

We are at a point where technology is changing faster than we can take advantage of it. As soon as 4K video technology jumped onto the scene, word of 5K, 6K, and 8K was on the tips of many tech-guru tongues.

So, taking into account the rapid acceleration of technology, filmmakers and video producers have to decide the best option for obtaining equipment: renting or buying? First let's look at some of

the most important questions. Depending on your answers, this alone may tell you which way you should go.

What Type of Project Is It and How Long Will It Take?

Is this a small project where you can shoot and edit it in a day, where the income potential is relatively low? Or, is this a project that could take weeks to produce, where the income potential is fairly substantial. Let's explore this a bit...

For smaller projects, renting equipment is often the most economical choice. Sites like Lens Pro to Go and Borrowed Lenses have streamlined the rental business through online ordering and offer relatively inexpensive pricing.

If you're working on a longer project, say, a feature film or television series, it may make the most sense to purchase the equipment and then sell it upon completion of the project. Many reality television projects (that require tons of cameras) work this way.

Depending on the amount of usage, you may be able to sell the camera for close to what you bought it for. That number will likely be even closer if you bought the camera used.

If you do buy used, be cautious! There is not a shutter actuation count for video like there is with DSLR photo usage. Be sure to inspect the camera for any scratches, check for dead pixels, ask about the repair history, and ALWAYS test shoot with it before handing over money!

The other option would be to buy a camera and keep it, but you've got to factor in how many times you plan on using it to see if it's a worthwhile investment.

To help in finding rental options, here's a list of rental providers.

Borrowed Lenses

help@borrowlenses.com

(650) 508-3370

Lens Rentals

support@lensrentals.com

(901) 754-9100

Lumoid

hello@lumoid.com

(800) 683-5690

Abel Cine

customerservice@abelcine.com

(888) 223-1599

Rent Glass

service@rentglass.com

(913) 732-4781

How Many Projects Are You Producing in a Year?

Let's say that you're a filmmaker who does commercial work and you produce three to four projects each month over an entire year. Is renting still your best option? If you'll be using the same camera in most projects, it would obviously make sense to purchase; renting that Canon 5D Mark III once a month would cost you much more than its \$3,000 purchase price. There's an old saying that goes "If you have to borrow a tool more than once, you should probably go ahead and buy one."

The most important thing is to be realistic. For instance, if you're on an elaborate campaign for a client, don't immediately run out and rent or buy the equipment just for that campaign. Look ahead and ask yourself how often you'll use this equipment. Don't 'anticipate' that you'll need the camera often until you start renting and shooting with it consistently. Then make the leap.

Be Responsible About Your Investment

Each option has its strengths and weaknesses. When you rent, you'll get the most current equipment that likely comes insured through the rental provider. Additionally, the rental company should be able to quickly find you a replacement camera if the equipment is defective for some reason. With renting, you'll have the freedom to switch cameras. But just like any rental setup, you won't have any equity in the equipment.

When you buy, you don't have to travel to pick it up or wait for it to ship. Protect your camera and gear investment by insuring it. Don't assume it's covered under your normal homeowner's insurance. You may require a "personal articles" policy or even a business insurance plan; some insurance companies require this if you are making money off your equipment.

This additional cost may pay for itself in spades if your camera takes a bath or goes missing.

Five Tips For Getting Great Film Locations For Free



Skimping on location can leave your film feeling amateurish and cheap. Here's how you can get A-list locations for next to nothing!

Production value is one of the most important elements during any filmmaking process, as having a film that looks high end not only helps connect with the viewers more effectively, but also keeps the perceived value of the project higher. This is key when it comes time to sell or license the film.

Filmmakers today clearly understand the importance of production value, which is why the internet just about explodes every time a new camera is released. Sadly, there is often little emphasis placed

on locations and it really shows. It could be argued that your film's production value would benefit more from using incredible locations than shooting on a less-capable camera. Here are some tips to help you score those amazing locations while maintaining your budget.

Don't Be Afraid to Ask

No matter what you're shooting, chances are some (if not all) of the locations may be available to you through friends and family. You

need to be careful about going down this road, as you don't want to simply use locations out of convenience. After all, your best friend's apartment might not look like the luxury condo that you wrote into your script.

But when there is a location that you need, and that a friend or family member has access to – then ask! The worst thing that will happen is that they say no, and in the best case scenario you just landed a killer location for free. And remember to never take advantage of the situation. Giving them a credit on the film or taking them out for dinner can go a long way.

Strategic Partnerships

In a lot of shooting scenarios, you can likely offer product placement or credit to a location or business that may be willing to help. For example, if you need to shoot in that previously mentioned luxury condo, you might be able to contact a real estate agent that will let you shoot in one of their properties in exchange for a credit on your film.

If your film is in any way substantial, you truly will be doing them a favor as well, so try to think of which businesses might be willing to help in exchange for easy publicity.

Free Permit Areas

For exterior locations, permits are always the biggest hurdle, as many public areas can cost thousands of dollars a day to shoot in. The good news is that there are actually loads of areas that don't charge for film permits. And sometimes they're just a stone's throw away from your original desired location.

This is something that you really need to look into, as you would probably be surprised to learn that a lot of fantastic locations can be had for nothing at all. You will still need production insurance in

order to get the free permit, but if you do your homework, you might just score some amazing exteriors for free.

Guerrilla Shooting

While some areas offer free permits, there will be times that you want to shoot in a very specific location and there is no free option that you can sub out for it. In these situations, you might want to consider shooting guerrilla style.

In a lot of cases, scenes can be reworked to avoid overly complex setups or heavy dialogue. If you're in a tough situation, consider trimming your scene down a bit and getting some high production-value shots by going guerrilla. Just be sure that if you cut any important moments out of those scenes (in order to achieve them more easily without a permit), that you work them back into the script somewhere else.

Also, proceed with caution. Shooting guerrilla can lead you to get your gear and footage confiscated. You can also get fined. So be careful and be ready to deal with the consequences if they arise. Go guerrilla at your own risk! And always look out for the safety of your cast and crew.

Shoot Out of Town

Pretty much every major city (especially LA and NYC) are very in the know about film productions, and as such it is much harder to shoot in a metropolis. In major cities, so many of the people that you will talk to about shooting (business owners, home owners, etc.) have already been through the ringer... and in some cases gotten burned. So they are unlikely to let you do it unless you're paying them the big bucks.

For these reasons, shooting out of town could be a really great option, especially on a project that requires loads of different

locations. In smaller cities and towns, people are generally far more open to filmmakers. They see it as something exciting and fun, as opposed to a possible threat to their property.

8 Questions to Ask Yourself When Deciding on a Script



Have you written or received a script for your next project? Here are eight questions to ask before moving into production.

There are a tremendous amount of scripts written every year. Conservative estimates began at 30,000-50,000 scripts, and that's only including those filed with the Writers Guild of America (WGAE & WGAw). If scripts filed for copyright are included, the number can easily go up to 100,000.

With all those scripts floating around, it must be easy to find your next project — right? Wrong. According to the latest Scoggins Report, only 90 specs were sold in 2014

So what does all this mean to you as a filmmaker? If you find a script that you can get behind 100%, then you have found a very rare story. Here are some questions to ask before you get your film moving.

1. Why Do I Want to Tell This Story?

It seems like an easy question, but it really isn't. When it comes to deciding on a project, you must be willing to give your whole life to seeing it through. That means you need to be emotionally involved

with every character. You need to know every little detail in order to make this project a reality.

If you don't think you need to know every character, just look at D.B. Weiss and David Benioff, the showrunners of *Game of Thrones*. The duo actually got the green-light for the show when an HBO executive saw Benioff working out in the gym while reading his annotated copy of his *Game of Thrones* book. That's the type of dedication a project requires.

2. Why Am I the Best Person to Tell This Story?

You cannot only dedicate yourself to a script, but you also have to believe in yourself. If you don't feel like you have the ability to see a project through to its completion the way it should be done, then you'll begin to question your own abilities. Don't be afraid to walk away from a project if you don't believe in yourself. A bad film can destroy your mentality.

If you do believe in yourself, don't just rely on your skill. Really push yourself to do something you've never done before. This is a chance to not only hone your skills, but to create a project that you can cherish forever. You need to believe that you are the perfect person for this job, and that no one could ever do it better.

3. What Is My Emotional Connection to This Script?

As mentioned in the first question, you need to become emotionally involved with every character. You also need to become emotionally attached to the story itself. What is the true meaning of the film? What do you want your audience to take away after the credits start rolling?

This was something incredibly challenging for director Pete Docter as he was reworking his film about emotions, *Inside Out*.

"I'll tell you a story: there was a dark point about three years into the making of the film. The pressure was mounting. We were approaching a screening and I went for a walk the weekend before, going, 'Shoot, it's just not working. What if I just quit and move to Mexico — what would I miss the most?' And I thought, well, my friends. But then I thought, the people I really feel close to are the people that, yeah, I've felt happiness with, but also they are people that I've been pissed off at, and scared for. The subject matter I'm dealing with in this movie is the key to relationships. So I got electrified, went back, talked to the guys, we rewrote the script, and that was a major turning point in the film."

4. Am I Willing to Dedicate Months or Years to This Project?

Is the story so great that you are willing to dedicate yourself to the project for years? You don't know what obstacles await, and your production could be halted. Are you willing to wait to make this film?

For a great recent example, look at director George Miller. His 2015 film *Mad Max: Fury Road* received rave reviews, and the film was heralded as an all-around spectacular action film. You may not know that the film was stuck in "development hell" for 20 years. Miller reacquired the rights to *Mad Max* in 1995. It took three more years until he had his story in place.

He was set to start filming in 2001, and then the events of September 11th postponed the project. Then turmoil in Namibia, the location of the shoot, postponed the project further. Principal photography didn't begin until July 2012.

5. How Long Is the Final Product?

Is this a full-length feature or a short film? That is one of the first things you need to decide. If it's still very early in your career, making

any film over 30 minutes in length can be an incredibly daunting task. The length of the film will also help determine the length of production. You have to take into account the budget and time you have to make this project. From there you can decide the length you want to aim for.

If you can't afford the project, can you make another version? If you are unable to make the full-length feature, try making it a short film first. Short films have successfully turned into features. Look at *Bottle Rocket*, or 2014's Best Motion Picture Oscar Nominee, *Whiplash*.

Director/Writer Damien Chazelle was unable to secure funding for *Whiplash*. He pulled one of the most prominent scenes from the film and turned it into a short. His goal was to submit the short film to film festivals in hopes of securing funding for the feature. The short film was so powerful and well done, he not only secured funding, the short won Best Short Film at Sundance. The next year, the feature was nominated for five Oscars, winning three of them.

6. When and Where Is the Film Set?

The setting of your film is a huge factor. Do you have the budget to shoot an epic in the desert? Is the film a period piece? If so, go ahead and hand over your budget to costumes. Are you able to turn this script into a film you can actually shoot now? The best thing you can do as a filmmaker is embrace your limits.

The 2004 film *Primer* is a perfect example. Not only did the film have a limited budget (approximately \$7000), the script called for time travel. The story and science behind it was so sound, the story actually carried the film. With some creative thinking, nearly the entire film was shot in a storage unit. A perfect example of embracing your limits and working with your budget.

7. How Many Actors and Crew Members Will the Project Need?

Now that you have looked at the story itself, what about the practical necessities for bringing the story to life? How many characters do you need to cast? How big of a crew do you need? These are major factors. Not only do you need to know how many people you need, you need to know how much each of them will get paid.

Will you be able to afford costumes (or even food) for the set? Are you still going to have enough left over for your camera, lights, and gear? This leads us to our next point.

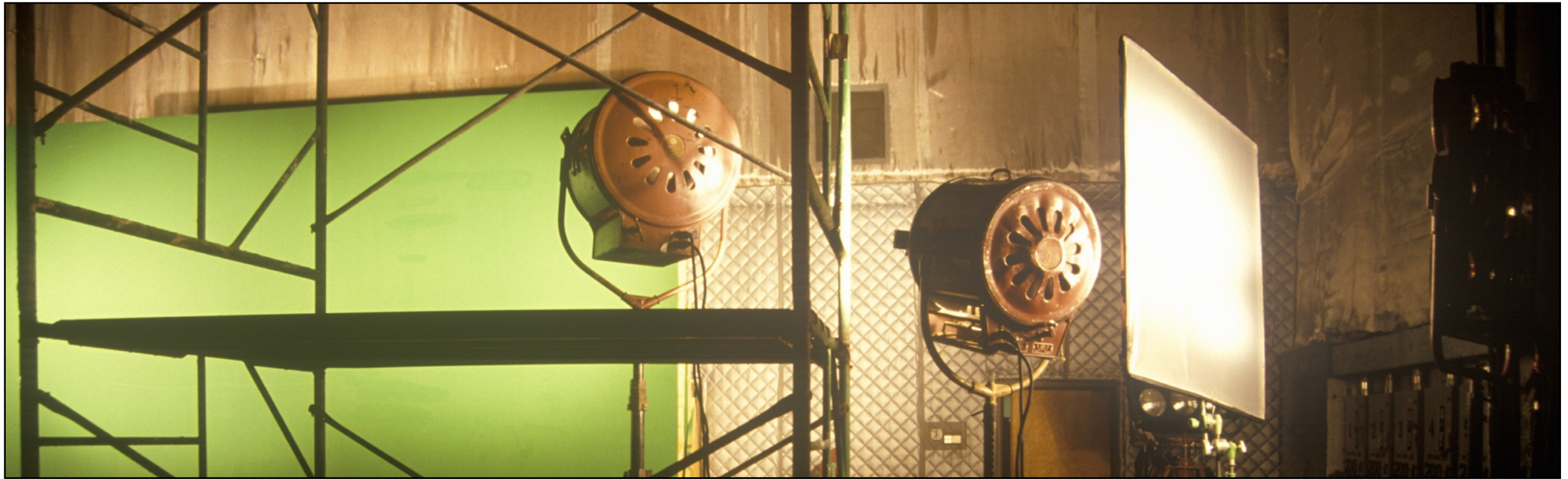
8. Can You Afford to Make This Film?

As any filmmaker can tell you, making a film is incredibly expensive. Every project presents even more expenses you never accounted for. This is why many projects require multiple studios collaborating to make a film. Trying to take on a whole project alone is nearly impossible.

Even if you can't afford it now, you may be able to afford it later. We've presented many examples already with making short films first, or even waiting for years.

After all of this, you still face your decision to move forward with this project or not. If you have not been swayed at all, and your mind is still set on a project, get to it. Start making the film. Just know challenges will arise, but handling problems is the greatest skill a director can have.

The Art Department: Design, Construction, Decor, and Props



The art department is often the largest part of a film crew. Hundreds of employees make up several divisions, including Art, Sets, Construction, and Property. Let's take a closer look.

The art department is responsible for the visual aspects of filmmaking. This includes everything on a set, as well as the set itself. The department is supervised by the production designer.

Throughout filming, sets must evolve. Either they are adjusted, or new sets are constantly built. Many members of the art department are on standby, in case any changes must be made. The positions are incredibly creative and require an immense amount of skill and

attention to detail. Here is a breakdown of the art department and the duties of each member.

Production Designer

The term production designer was created by William Cameron Menzies. At the time, Menzies was working as the art director on the set of *Gone with the Wind*. He coined the term due to the film's massive scope.

The production designer is responsible for the entire visual appearance of the film. To achieve the overall look, they will coordinate with the art department, costume department, makeup department, and more.

They not only work closely with the director to bring his vision to life, they also work with the producer to calculate the needed budget. The cost will depend on the type of film, whether the art department has to achieve a modern style set, a fantasy castle, or a sci-fi space ship.

Depending on the production, a production designer may even be hired well before a director. They will look at scripts to estimate the cost needed to bring the story to life. Once a director is in place, they will collaborate on how to best shoot the film. They will either decide to build sets, use visual effects, or shoot on location.

Once decided, the production designer will deliver sketches and outlines to the art director, who then delivers their work to the construction department. The final sets built by the construction department will then help set decorators and prop buyers determine their needs for the film.

The Art Department

The overall art department includes a sub-department also called the art department. This department includes the preliminary designers who will plan the overall look of the film.

Art Director

The art director reports directly to the production designer. They oversee the artists and designers who help create the overall look of the film. It is their job to supervise the planning and practical design of sets and set pieces. On large-budget projects, there may be

multiple art directors. If so, the main position will be the Supervising Art Director or Senior Art Director. On smaller projects, the job of the production designer and art director are typically combined.

The art director will analyze a script to make note of all necessary props and special set pieces that may require an extended time to design, build, or acquire. They will also oversee the creation of all necessary plans that will be given to the construction department.

They are also responsible for the maintenance of sets, making sure any rebuilds or changes are made on schedule. They will manage the creation, dressing, and striking of all sets and locations.

Assistant Art Director (First Assistant, Second, Third)

The assistant art directors are responsible for carrying out the art director's plans, including measuring locations and other necessary information the production designer needs. They are also responsible for researching and making props, assisting with model making, and surveying sites. On larger productions, assistant art directors will manage the smaller locations or sets.

Standby Art Director

This is an art director that monitors the art department during filming. If there isn't a standby art director, the responsibilities fall to the props master and on-set dresser.

They will watch the video playback monitor to make sure all set pieces appear as needed. They will coordinate with standby painters and standby carpenters if any last minute changes are needed on set during filming.

Draughtsman (Set Designer)

Draughtsmen are responsible for the technical drawings of sets. Their drawings, computer models, and physical models will include all measurements and materials needed for construction. On many sets, a draughtsman is usually the first assistant art director.

Concept Artist (Illustrator)

A concept artist works on a specific set piece. This includes the design of creatures and monsters, all the way to the look of a space ship.

Graphic Artist

This position creates physical graphic elements for a set. A graphic artist will create newspapers, posters, fliers, contracts, logos, signs, etc.

Storyboard Artist

These artists will turn a screenplay into a set of detailed illustrations. Storyboard artists will create storyboards, which the production team uses to plan out every shot. These visualizations are often created well before shooting begins.

The storyboard will show the entire film from the point of view of the camera. It will show camera angles, a character's actions and position, as well as all other major elements needed for a shot.

They will also list any necessary movements on screen, like a character jumping or an object falling.

Model Maker

When a draughtsman requires a specific model, it is the model maker's job to draw and then construct the miniatures. They can use a range of materials to create the models, including clay, wood, metal, plaster, and plastic.

Art Department Coordinator

With the large amount of employees in this department, the art department coordinator is responsible for monitoring daily operations. They will work among the various departments to verify that all sets and props are ready on time. They will also manage the department's budget, and schedule the set's construction, dress, and strike.

The art department coordinator will also create location notes. These detail everything from details of construction, needed set dressing, and props. They will use these notes to gain licenses and permission for location shoots, as well as verifying health and safety protocols are met.

Sets

Set Decorator (Stylists)

The set decorator is responsible for decorating a film set. This includes furniture, drapes, fixtures, paintings, and overall decor. They are also responsible for dressing props, which includes everything from cars and animals to dishes and household items.

Set decorators also work with product placement and acquiring approval to use copyrighted items. Prior to a shoot, they will photograph all items and assign them to each set. On set, they will manage the swing gang and place everything in the appropriate

place. After the shoot, they will make sure the set is broken down and that everything is returned to the responsible rent house.

Leadsman

The leadsman or lead man is in charge of the set dressers. They direct the crew that places all the furniture, drapes, and dressing props on set.

Set Dresser (Swing Gang)

Set dressers (also called the swing gang) place and remove all dressing props. They are responsible for practically everything on the set: furniture, rugs, drapes, lamps, decor, doorknobs, etc.

Swing gang is most often used referring to the on-set dressers, those making any last-minute changes prior to cameras rolling. Any parts of the set that are not permanent are referred to as the swing set. These are items that can be move around on set or easily removed if they don't work for the overall look of the shot.

Buyer

The buyer is the one responsible for purchasing or renting set dressing. They work with stores or rent houses to schedule deliveries and purchase any necessary dressing props.

Greensmen

A greensman is a set dresser that is specialized in landscape and plants – greens. This includes real and artificial plant life.

Construction Department

The construction department is responsible for building the actual structures that make up the set. Framing walls, doors, or constructing entire buildings.

Construction Coordinator (Construction Manager)

The construction coordinator oversees the entire construction department. They order all construction materials, schedule workers, and supervise the actual building of the sets.

Head Carpenter

The foreman of the carpenters and laborers.

Carpenters

Carpenters are the expert wood workers on set. The build, install, and remove wooden structures. The not only construct the actual physical set, they also make any wooden props and furniture.

Key Scenic

This artist is responsible for surface treatments. The key scenic can paint wood to give it an aged or distressed look. They also make props look more realistic, like painting foam to look like a rock or brick. They can also paint a window to look like stained glass.

Painter

A painter is responsible for the final appearance of a set. They are responsible for all surface preparation, priming, painting, and finishing. The can also apply special finishes, like marbling or graining, to sets.

Plasterer

These artists apply plaster to walls, ceilings, and floors. They also create molds for interior and exterior walls, or use fiberglass to create intricate panels – like on a spaceship.

Sculptor

Sculptors typically create large set pieces like busts, statues, or elaborate miniatures. They use an array of materials, such as foam, clay, metal, and wood.

Property Department

The property department, or props, is responsible for all practical movie props. These are not included in the set dressing or costume department, but rather used by an actor in a scene. This includes food, firearms, swords, or specific items like a proton pack or custom vehicle.

Props Master

As the chief of the property department, the props master is in charge of finding or making practical props. If the film is a period piece, they are responsible for making sure that the props are accurate to that era.

Prop Maker

The artist or technician that creates custom props. This can include creating any type of casings, or wiring electronics to make a functioning prop.

Weapons Master (Armorer)

This prop manager is in charge of all firearms, swords, or other weapons. They are also trained and licensed to use the weapons, and will often collaborate with the stunt manager and actor to maintain set safety.

How to Get Hired as a Video Professional



There are many outlets for employment in the video industry, it's simply a matter of positioning yourself so you are visible and well-represented to employers. Here's how to get hired as a video professional.

Sometimes, you might find yourself searching for work in a certain niche that you think you belong in, but it's important you don't let preconceived notions limit your access to quality opportunities. For example, many video producers come out of school certain that they will become professional, classically-defined filmmakers but, frankly, those jobs are limited.

If you haven't already, consider other kinds of production, like commercials, reality television, or even corporate marketing and training videos. There are many opportunities to be creative and

produce beautiful work in areas you may not be thinking about (often with the added bonus of a more preferable work/life balance).

Networking

Regardless of your field, the single best way to get work is through people you know. Start early and don't ever stop!

Even if you are still in school, use that opportunity to create connections! You are surrounded by a built-in network of people

who are preparing themselves to go out into the work force. They may not be a professional resource in the near term, but foster relationships with people who are smart and who are driven, or who you find common ground with, because, down the line, those relationships will be very valuable when you are looking for employment.

Networking in school is a less formal version of the practice, but the value is that you can foster the relationship on a personal level without any of the baggage of the quid pro quo nature of most professional interactions. Relying on family members can be a mixed bag, but often reaching out to relatives can be beneficial, too (they should have a vested interest in your success, after all!).

If you are post-graduation, don't give up on tapping into that network. Get involved in alumni organizations or reach out to the career center at your school and ask them for ideas for organizations or clubs to join. Connect with old friends online and, if they are working in your field, reach out to them.

The goal can't always be to find a job directly from those in your network. A great way to utilize those you're connected to is to ask them for "warm introductions" to people that may be in their network. Look at their LinkedIn profiles to see who they are connected to and if you find anyone who you may be interested in meeting, ask them to write a simple email of introduction. The recipient will be far more likely to talk to you or help you out if they know you have a mutual connection.

For professional networking events, look on Facebook, LinkedIn, or MeetUp.com for industry organizations in your area. Good keywords in this search are "[Your Town] Producer's Association" or "Filmmaker's Group." Find an open meeting or networking event,

bring your business cards, and show up! For most filmmakers and video producers, networking is unpleasant. The hardest part is making yourself actually show up and walk through the door, but once you are there, you'll find others that are happy to talk to you (because they're uncomfortable, too!). In fact, a great ice breaker can be, "Man, I always feel so awkward at these, don't you?"

If you're not comfortable talking about yourself, be prepared to ask questions of others. In fact, it's good practice to have a few prepared questions you can ask others about themselves. It helps keep a conversation going and some people really enjoy the opportunity to talk about what they do. How did they get into their profession? What kinds of projects have they worked on? If you hear something you can relate to or you're interested in, use that as an opportunity to share a little about yourself or ask follow-up questions. Just remember, the more often you can rally yourself to attend these events, the easier they get.

Go Searching

Producers want to find a talented crew that they can trust and will always be on the lookout for those people. Beyond networking, they use other resources to fill open positions.

One great resource is Staff Me Up, a production-specific, nationwide job posting site.

Look for gigs on your state's film commission or entertainment department's website for listings. These sites can also inform you of work limitations in your state, like union or guild requirements.

Your Resume

You work in a creative field and employers want to see a creative resume (if you are applying for a job that requires a resume). Submitting a plain-text Word document may not necessarily hurt

you, but it won't do anything to help you stand out from the rest either. A quality resume is an effort multiplier — it takes some time to do it right, but it will continue to yield you better results every time you use it down the road.

Use Behance.net or other resume design sites to look at designer's resumes to find inspiration for yours. If you're not comfortable building something from scratch, download a resume template.

Take time to get the wording just right. You can find lots of advice about what content to include in your resume. Then go the extra mile to double and triple-check each sentence and the visual layout. Be sure to watch your spacing and alignment; we work in a visual industry and those who will employ you want to know that you can identify visual errors. Also, spelling or grammatical errors will irritate an attention-detailed producer, and may automatically disqualify you from employment, depending on the temperament of the employer.

If you don't have a lot of credits to your name, make sure you have a well-written summary statement that highlights your abilities, your competencies, and your goals.

Your Online Reputation

The first thing many employers will want to see is your website and portfolio, so make sure those are updated with your latest and best work.

Almost always, if you work in production, you need a reel of your work. Depending on the types of projects or the clients you've worked with, you may not be able to use certain collateral. Ask them if it's okay to use samples from content they own. Sometimes you can use clips as long as you don't use the original audio. If you're not sure, it's best not to risk copyright infringement!

With regard to social media, if your personal profiles are public, you need to be especially careful. Just be mindful of what you are putting out there into the great ether that is the internet. As Susan Adams with Forbes.com put it:

Keep private things private, while assuming nothing is truly private.

It's important to be present on social media sites like Facebook and LinkedIn because it allows people to get a better sense for who you are. Use these platforms to promote your work, if possible. Share production stills or industry related article or blogs you like. But keep in mind that what you post can hurt you too (especially as election season rolls around).

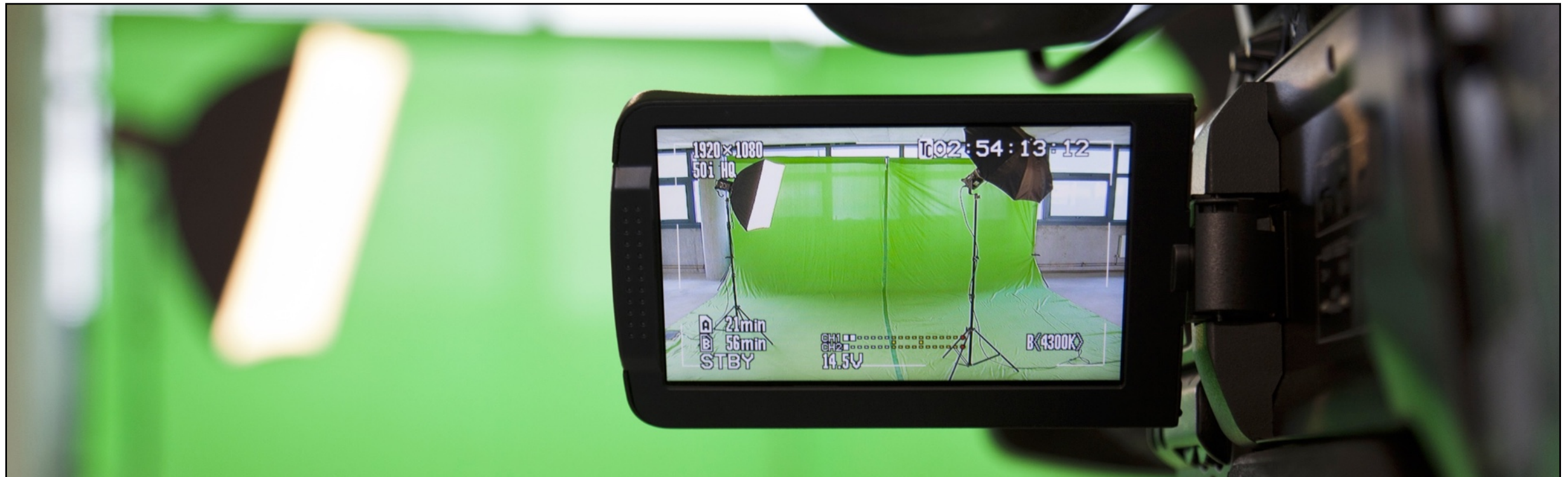
The bottom line is that, if you look for them, there are opportunities to connect all around you. Whether it's face to face or online, engage with others and be prepared to share your experience and knowledge. And don't limit yourself by what you think you should be doing. Sometimes it's worth it to take a low-paying Production Assistant gig if it means you can form relationships with new people you'd like to work with or get to know. Be mindful, be intentional, and don't give up!



02 GEAR

THERE ARE A LOT OF THINGS THAT AREN'T IN YOUR CONTROL ON SET. GEAR SHOULDN'T BE ONE OF THEM. GEAR SHOWS UP WHEN YOU DO. GEAR HELPS YOU SEE YOUR CREATIVE VISION THROUGH TO THE END. IN AN INDUSTRY FULL OF SURPRISES, INCONSISTENCY, AND EGOS, GEAR IS STEADY AND LACKING IN PRIDE.

Ten Essential Filmmaking Tools Under \$100



Filmmaking can be an expensive career, but there are certainly deals to be had. Come in under budget with these ten filmmaking tools that are as affordable as they are essential.

Working as a filmmaker often comes with a hefty price tag. To help ease the strain on your wallet, we've done some bargain shopping and found some filmmaking tools that you can put in your kit without breaking the bank.

Note: the links in this section are examples of where you can purchase this filmmaking gear. These are not sponsored or affiliate links. We encourage you to purchase at your favorite gear store!

1. Canon 50mm F/1.8 II

50mm lenses are a great investment and can be had for those on a budget. The Canon 50mm F/1.8 II is probably one of the most affordable lenses out there and the image it produces is great. Yongnuo has also released an affordable 50mm 1.8 knockoff version.

2. Spider Rig

Most filmmakers like to have their camera mounted to some type of shoulder rig or grip system. For DSLRs, you can essentially have

both mount styles in one Spider Rig. These rigs are really affordable and have a wide flexibility range.

3. Camera Cage

Maybe you don't need the whole rig and you just want a sturdy and tough camera cage with a top handle. There are a wide variety of options here. A simple search on eBay brought back a number of cages that are below \$100.

4. Yongnuo LED Light

Sometimes you need more light to really capture a great shot on the fly. There are many options out there to help solve low-light problems, but one of our favorites is the YN-300-II from Yongnuo. It's sturdy, bright, and exceptionally affordable.

5. Hoodman Compact Collapsible Viewfinder (For Canon LCD)

In some situations, there can be so much light that you really can't see the LCD screen on your DSLR. For those moments, you'll want to grab an LCD Viewfinder. We found a Hoodman Compact Collapsible Viewfinder to be a solid option.

6. Benro A48FD Series 4 Monopod

On documentary film shoots where the pace is quick and frantic, using a tripod is really out of the question. Instead, I run with a Benro Monopod, which I've found to be a really quality product at a great price.

7. Sennheiser HD 280 Pro Headphones

You can never go wrong with a great pair of headphones like the Sennheiser HD 280. These headphones were recommended to me by several musicians, as well as a composer I frequently work with.

They produce a nice quality flat sound, which is what you want when capturing audio or mixing.

8. Rode VideoMic GO

So now you have headphones. Check. But how are you capturing your recordings? We recommend Rode if you're on a budget. While it doesn't capture the kind of audio as Rode's NTG line of shotgun mics, it captures quality sound for the price tag.

9. Tascam DR-05 Portable Recorder

Okay, we have our headphones and we have our mic, so what are we recording to? For that solution, we suggest looking at the Tascam DR-05. This portable recorder is great for those on a budget and it's fairly easy to use.

10. Lowpro Photo Sport Sling 100 AW

Well, now we have all of this new gear. Where are we storing it? Take a look at the Lowpro Photo Sport Sling. It has dual compartments and plenty of space to hold all of the new equipment we've picked up. Bonus: You can also tie your Monopod to one of the bungee straps on the side!

How to Spot Counterfeit Camera Gear



Not sure if that equipment is legit? Does that deal feel too good to be true? Avoid getting scammed and learn to spot counterfeit camera gear with these quick tips.

Unfortunately, not all camera gear is created equal. In fact, some pieces of equipment are created simply to trick users into buying them. Let's look at a few tips for helping you spot counterfeit camera gear the next time you're on the market for new equipment.

1. Look for Misspellings

Misspellings, whether intentional or unintentional, are an immediate sign that your equipment is fake. Give your equipment a quick look. If there's something misspelled, it's a fake.

2. Where Are You Buying It From?

Buying from a reputable seller is everything. Look for reviews and ratings regarding your seller. If they have low ratings you can be assured that there's something sketchy going on.

3. Instruction Manuals

Fake equipment almost always comes by itself in a box. So, if there's a manual included in the box, it's a good sign that the product is real. This also applies to equipment purchased online. Sure... someone

could probably fake a manual, but scammers likely won't make the effort.

4. Look for a Warranty

Almost every piece of new equipment comes with a one year warranty included in its box. If a warranty isn't in the box, you can bet your lens is a fake. It's also important to note that boxes are easy to fake. Just because your equipment is in official-looking boxes doesn't make it legit.

5. Serial Numbers

Most professional equipment comes with a serial number located somewhere on the exterior. If your piece of equipment doesn't come with a serial number, then there's a good chance it's fake.

6. Does it Fit?

Official equipment such as lenses, adapters, and rigs will be incredibly snug. If you hear things moving around when you lightly shake the equipment, there's a problem. This is especially true when buying camera lenses or adapters. Good adapters should fit lens mounts perfectly with no slippage.

7. "Too Good to Be True" Prices Usually Are

The online camera market is incredibly competitive, so it's no surprise that online stores are always trying to undercut each other in terms of price. However, if you find a piece of equipment for half the normal retail cost, it's probably a fake or, even worse — an empty box!

8. Holograms

Most of the popular camera manufacturing brands have "official" stickers that feature holograms. These stickers are hard to replicate, so they're great indicators of official equipment.

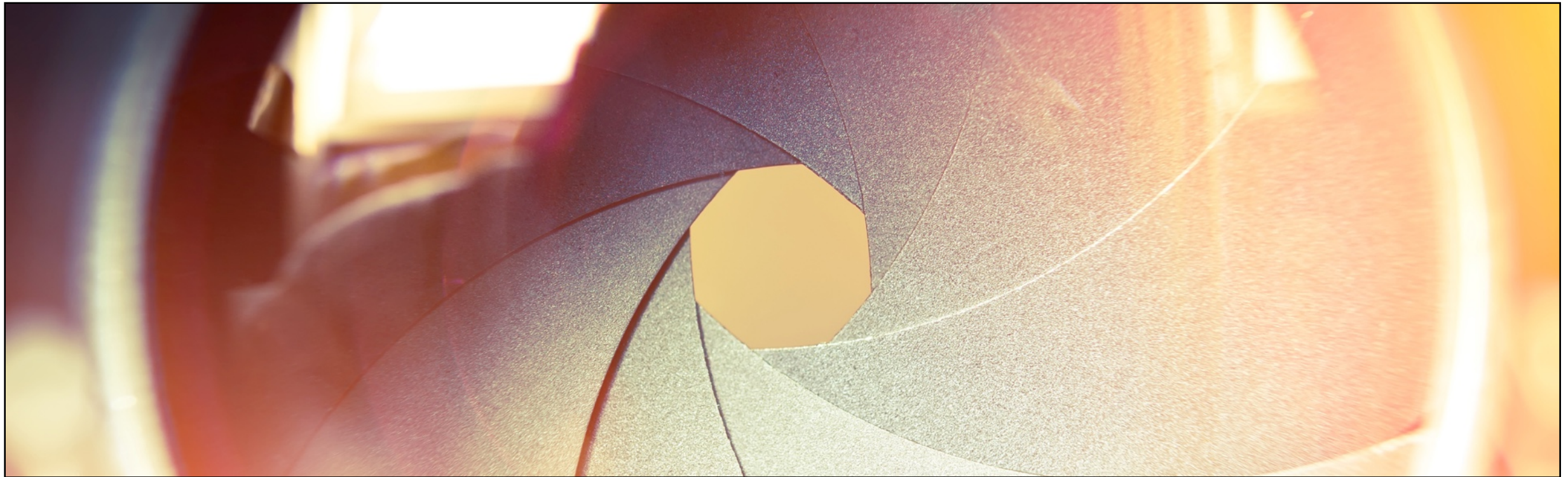
9. Clear Printing

Printed information on genuine equipment is almost always incredibly sharp and easy-to-read. Counterfeit equipment, on the other hand, tends to be lower in quality – including written content. You won't see illegible text on official equipment.

10. Test the Equipment

Test the gear! If you're buying a piece of camera equipment in person, you should always test the gear before you buy. If the seller won't let you test the camera – that should be a huge red flag. Even if you're wanting to buy your equipment online, it's good practice to go to your local camera store and test the camera to make sure it is a good fit for you.

Nine Questions to Ask When Buying a New Lens



Thinking about buying a new lens? Here are nine things to consider.

As my fellow sufferers of Equipment Acquisition Syndrome know, it's always exciting to add a new lens to the arsenal. Before you do, ask yourself these nine questions.

1. Do I really need a new lens?

Fact: Getting a new lens will not make you a better photographer or videographer. If you don't have the basics down (composition, value, color theory, lighting, etc.) you likely aren't getting the most out of your current lens.



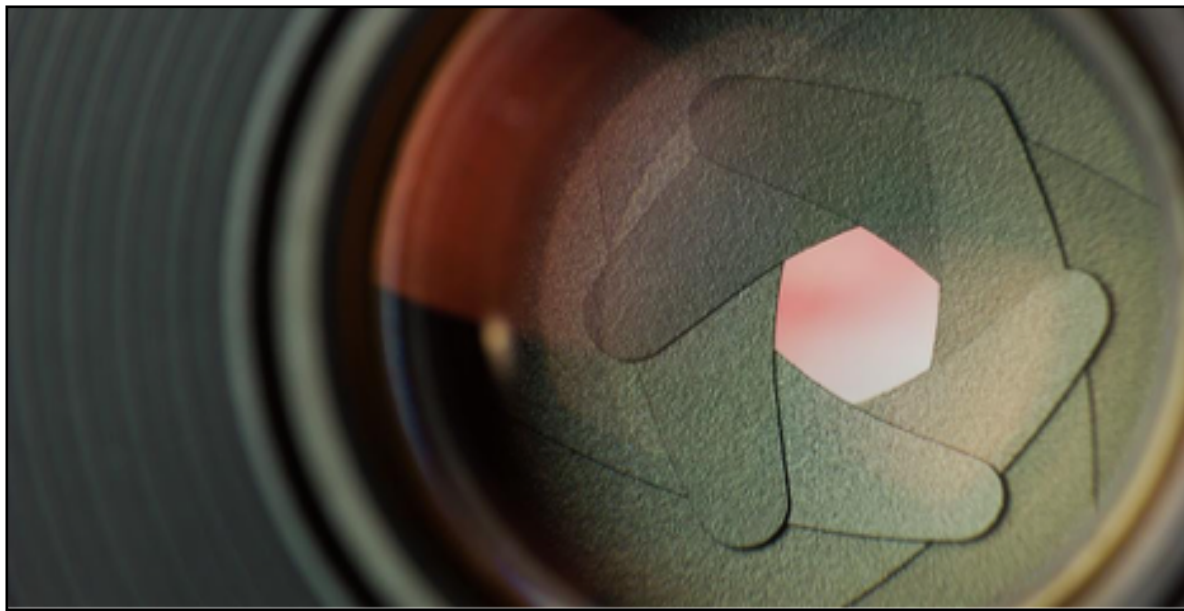
Until you can take good photos with the lens you have, there's no good reason to drop \$1000+ on a new one.

2. Does this lens fill in any focal length gaps?

Can you shoot an extremely wide shot of a small room? Can you capture a bride's face from across a chapel? Do you have the right lens for the job? If you're going to invest in a new lens, make sure you're working toward having all of your focal lengths covered.

Get a good standard prime and multi-purpose zoom lens to start. From there you can begin to get into more specialty lenses like fish-eye, hyper-telephoto, and macro lenses.

3. What is the F-stop?



An F-stop is a mathematical formula that figures out approximately how much light a lens will let to the sensor. Practically speaking, a lens with a lower F-stop number allows more light through the lens, capturing a more out-of-focus background.

It's a good rule of thumb to get a lower F-Stop lens if you can afford it, but F-stop isn't everything. You also need to consider the T-stop...

4. What is the T-stop?

Whereas an F-stop is a mathematical formula, a T-stop is an actual reading of the amount of light that a lens sends to the camera. A T-stop is typically used by cinematographers more than photographers, but the information is none-the-less important.

5. What kind of stabilization does it have?

For those unfamiliar, stabilization on a lens is typically described in terms of stops. This means a lens with 2 stops of stabilization will allow you to shoot with a shutter speed that is twice as slow, allowing twice as much light to hit the sensor.

Stabilization is one of the most underrated features on a lens; a little stabilization can go a long way to make your images and video higher in quality. Speaking of quality...

6. How is the image quality?

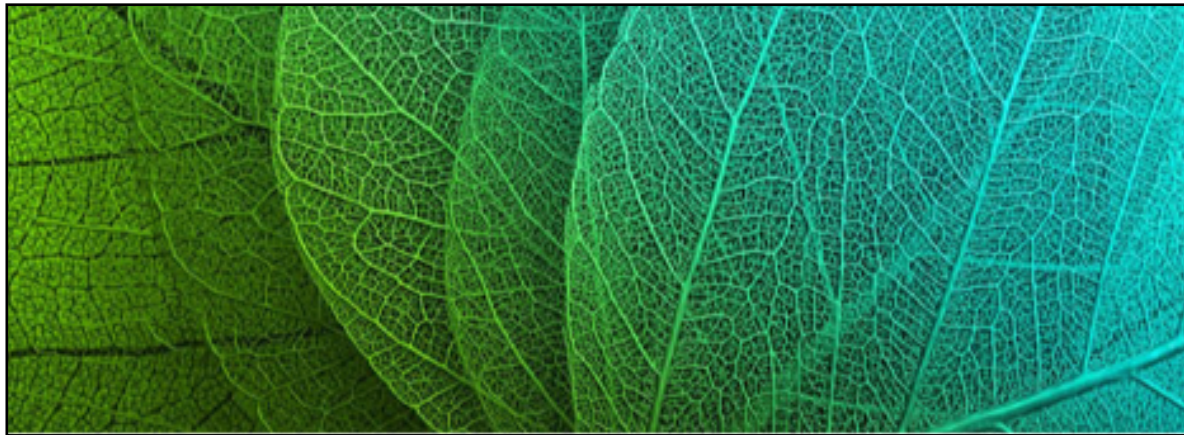
Specs are one thing, but the actual quality of the final images/video is another. Before you buy a lens, you should examine the image quality. Websites like DPReview and PhotoZone give detailed reviews of virtually every lens on the market. Just because a lens is fast doesn't mean it's necessarily sharp. Do your research!

7. Is the autofocus fast and accurate?

If you primarily shoot video, you likely won't use autofocus very often. However, photographers will want to invest in a lens with great autofocus. Keep in mind, cheaper camera lenses like Tamron and Sigma tend to feature slower autofocus abilities than their "name-brand" counterparts.

This isn't an issue when shooting a stationary subject, but when you start shooting moving subjects at events like weddings, autofocus becomes a very important issue.

8. What is the minimum focus distance?



Cheaper lenses tend to have minimum focus distances that are extremely far, which can be aggravating if your subject is close. For example, a 50mm lens with good macro capabilities can get better close-up images than a 200mm lens with bad macro capabilities. When you're searching for your new lens, take the time to look at the minimum focus distance.

9. Why am I buying a new lens?

A brand new lens is almost always going to work perfectly right out of the box. However, buying a new lens is a lot like buying a new car: As soon as you put it on your camera, it will lose 30% of its value.

Buying a used lens from a credible dealer might be a better option. Many dealers offer a 30-day return policy on their lenses, and even if you have a lens for more than 30 days, you can likely unload it on eBay for close to what you paid for it.

Lens vs Camera: Which is a Better Investment?



Every year, high-end digital cinema cameras get released, effectively rendering their predecessors outdated. Should you invest in new lenses instead?

It's quite common for the first generation of any electronic product to have technical issues, and unfortunately, it's usually the users that support these cameras early on that end up getting the short end of the stick. Not to mention that they often need to wait so long to get their gear that, by the time it actually comes in, there's already a next generation camera around the corner that probably has better specs at a lower price point. For these reasons and more, many filmmakers, DPs, and other creative pros who are considering investing in camera gear are choosing not to. For many, renting

cameras on a project-to-project basis has become the way to go, and for others a different investment has become preferable – lenses. Here are three reasons why **lenses are a far better investment today** than camera bodies.

1. They have more longevity.

A great piece of glass is timeless. You could take a vintage lens from 40 or 50 years ago, mount it to an ARRI ALEXA, and the results will be amazing – as long as the lens was kept in good condition. Unfortunately, the same can't be said for cameras.



Many years ago, when film was still the standard, a DP could invest in a film camera (like at Arriflex SR2) and use that camera for years to come. At that time, technology didn't move nearly as fast, and the camera was a much smaller part of the overall equation with regards to image quality.

If a new film stock came out, that stock could be used in an old camera and that camera could potentially capture images that were on par with a new film camera. Unfortunately with digital, that is obviously not the case. The good news is that lenses do still have the longevity that film cameras once did. If you invest in a really high quality lens kit, those lenses are going to stay relevant for many years to come.

2. You can use them across multiple cameras.

One of the greatest things about lenses is the fact that they are so adaptable. A camera is just a camera. It does what it does, until it's either outdated or breaks down and then it's replaced. Lenses, on the other hand, are far more universal and can be used on any camera that you buy, rent, own, or are asked to shoot on.

Many production companies and producers own camera gear, so if you are brought onto a production that already has a RED DRAGON for instance, you could sweeten the deal by offering to bring your Cooke Primes to set with you, which may very well help you land the gig and up your rate. Not to mention these lenses can be used on your own cameras at any point too, and will continue to work for years to come as new camera bodies continue to come and go.

3. They rent better.

Just about everyone wants to invest in a RED or an ALEXA so that they can rent it out, either directly or through a rental house. The problem of course is that so many people are doing this now that rental houses are flooded with these cameras. Many shooters that have invested in expensive digital cinema cameras end up finding it extremely difficult to rent them out. The cameras end up collecting dust on a shelf somewhere. Lenses however, will always rent better. Far fewer people are investing in great glass, and lenses (as we saw in the previous point) are so adaptable that a single lens kit will be relevant to far more potential productions than a camera body would be. In other words, a production that's looking to shoot on ALEXA isn't going to want to rent your RED camera — but they very well might want to rent your Schneider PL Mount lenses.

The Five Lens Filters Every Video Shooter Should Own



Post-production and color grading can go a very long way in making your images look amazing. But in order to achieve a truly cinematic image, it's what goes in front of the lens that matters most.

When DaVinci Resolve Lite was released for free, just about every editor and shooter I knew became an amateur colorist. At around the same time, many of my colleagues had started shooting with RAW cameras, or cameras that could shoot to ProRes. They started to overemphasize the post-production process to the point of neglecting some traditional elements of cinematography.

The general trend over the last few years has been to 'fix it in post' and focus far more on color grading and post-processing than nailing the image in camera. As such, the use of lens filters has

almost become an afterthought for many enthusiast level DPs, as they mistakenly believe that they can replicate the look of any given filter in post.

If you want to achieve the most cinematic image possible, you need to get as much done in camera as possible. Let's take a look at the use of lens filters, as they are silently becoming a forgotten trick of the trade. The first two are the most critical (you may already own them), but the others are also extremely valuable.

1. UV Filter



UV filters do exactly what it sounds like - filter excess UV light from hitting your lens/sensor and negatively affecting your image.

Truthfully, most modern cameras don't really require a UV filter. However, you might consider buying one simply as a means to protect your lens (and investment).

Many professional shooters like to keep a UV Filter on their lenses at all times to protect the surface of the lens from scratches and also to take the impact if the lens is dropped. You need to be careful when using UV Filters, as some of them can actually cause strange reflections/flares when shooting, but it's just good practice to keep one on your lens whenever possible. Just remember to take it off before shooting if your lens is prone to flares.

2. ND Filter

If you don't already own an ND filter kit (or a variable ND), you need to get one. If you're new to this - ND filters (essentially) are like putting sunglasses on your lens. They allow you to control the exposure of your image without having to adjust your shutter speed, iris, or ISO setting. They are invaluable to have and a complete necessity for achieving specific depth-of-field looks in camera.

ND filters can be purchased as a kit and stacked together to bring down the overall exposure in small increments, or a variable ND filter will get gradually darker as it is rotated. Variable NDs are the easiest and fastest to use on set, but are often lower quality and can cause a slight color cast on your image.

3. Polarizer

Next to an ND filter, the polarizer is arguably the most important creative filter that every DP should have. Polarizers effectively cut out glare, reflections, and other unpleasant sources of light without darkening the entire image substantially. In very simple terms - they are designed to cut out the light that you don't want in your image, but leave all of the light that is giving you your exposure.

Polarizers are particularly useful when shooting through a car window or any other piece of glass that's causing a reflection. The filter will help the camera see right through the glare.

They also work beautifully when capturing shots of the sky and clouds, bringing out fine detail and an overall richness that isn't possible without them.

4. Diffusion

With today's cameras being as overly sharp as they are, there's never been a better time to own a diffusion filter. As the name implies, diffusion filters soften your subject slightly and can often create a beautiful, very subtle glow around certain parts of the image.

When diffusion filters are used with soft cameras, they can often create a final image that's almost *too* soft and somewhat dream-like. However, when coupled with cameras like the Lumix GH4 or Canon C300, which are very sharp to begin with (almost to a fault), they help to get the image looking less digital and more organic.

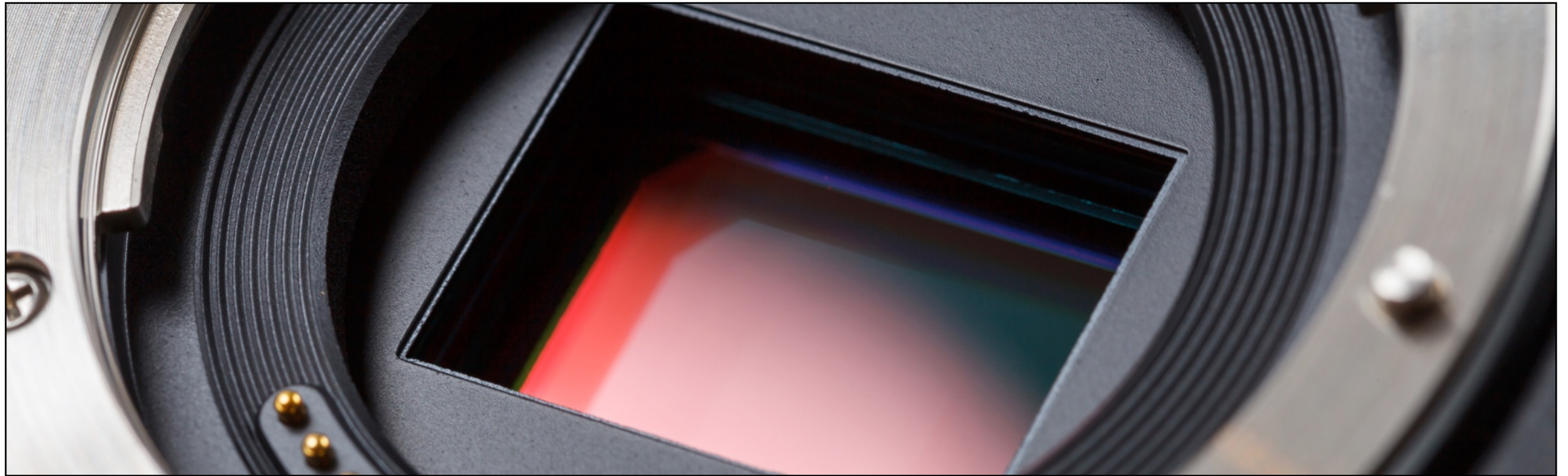
5. Color Filters



Color balancing filters can effectively warm up, cool down, or otherwise add some sort of color effect to your image. Custom white balancing and color correction can certainly replicate the look of a color filter easily, but the end result will never be exactly the same.

These filters are especially useful if you're shooting with a camera that doesn't allow for custom white balancing or recording to a heavily compressed format, as they will allow you to capture your look in camera and avoid having to grade the image too heavily in post. That said, they can be fun to use and experiment with regardless of which camera you're using. They often create unpredictable and unique stylistic effects.

Ten Things to Know About Mirrorless Cameras



Thinking about getting a mirrorless camera? Here are ten things you need to know.

Mirrorless cameras have been increasing in popularity over the last few years and for good reason. They offer many benefits over traditional DSLRs.

1. Mirrorless Cameras Aren't Limited to Cropped Sensors

Even though most popular mirrorless cameras are cropped, it's possible to have a full-frame mirrorless camera. For example, some cameras like the Leica M9 and the Sony A7 are both full-frame and mirrorless. Having a full frame sensor is important because it allows you to get wide shots without having to use an expensive fish-eye lens or a Speed Booster.

2. Mirrorless Cameras are Small and Lightweight

Because mirrorless cameras don't have a mirrorbox mechanism, they tend to be smaller and lightweight. For example, the Sony a7S is only a little over a pound – that's half the weight of the Canon 5D Mark III. While it may not make a big difference on a professional shoot, if you do a lot of street photography, a lighter camera can do wonders for your shoulders.

3. Mirrorless Cameras Don't Have Mirrors

Do you know what "mirrorless" means? In short, a mirrorless camera is different than a DSLR because it doesn't use a mirrorbox

to send the image to the viewfinder. Instead, when looking into the viewfinder on a mirrorless camera, you are actually viewing a digital representation of the image as it passes through the sensor.

4. Mirrorless Cameras have a Shorter Flange Focal Distance than DSLRs

A flange focal distance is the distance from the end of the lens to the camera sensor. In a DSLR, the flange focal distance must be large enough to allow space for a mirror. In a mirrorless camera, you don't have this issue.

5. Speed Boosters Make Mirrorless Cameras Much More Viable for Video Production

It's no secret that most mirrorless cameras have cropped sensors. This is normally a problem because of the difficulty in capturing wide shots with a cropped sensor. Speed Boosters not only increase the incoming light of your lens, but they also make your overall image wider.

6. Some Mirrorless Cameras Can Shoot 4K Video

Many popular mirrorless cameras, like the Panasonic GH4, allow users to shoot in 4K. Gone are the days of mirrorless cameras being behind when it comes to resolution. Other mirrorless cameras, like the Sony a7S, can output 4K via HDMI. While it's safe to say that the market isn't quite ready to watch/broadcast videos at 4K resolution, having the ability to record 4K is a great way to ensure your camera is future-proof and gives you more options in post.

7. Mirrorless Cameras Can Take More than Just MFT Lenses

Although the large majority of mirrorless cameras natively have a micro four thirds lens mount, there are a number of mirrorless cameras that accept other types of camera mounts by default. These

lens mounts range from the high-end Leica M mount to the consumer level Samsung NX Mount.

8. Mirrorless Cameras Aren't Just for Amateurs

You definitely won't have to look long to find an amateur mirrorless camera, but the same could be said about DSLR cameras. You might be surprised to hear that mirrorless cameras aren't just entry or mid-level cameras — they can actually get pretty high-end. Luxury camera manufacturers like Leica have camera lines that are entirely mirrorless.

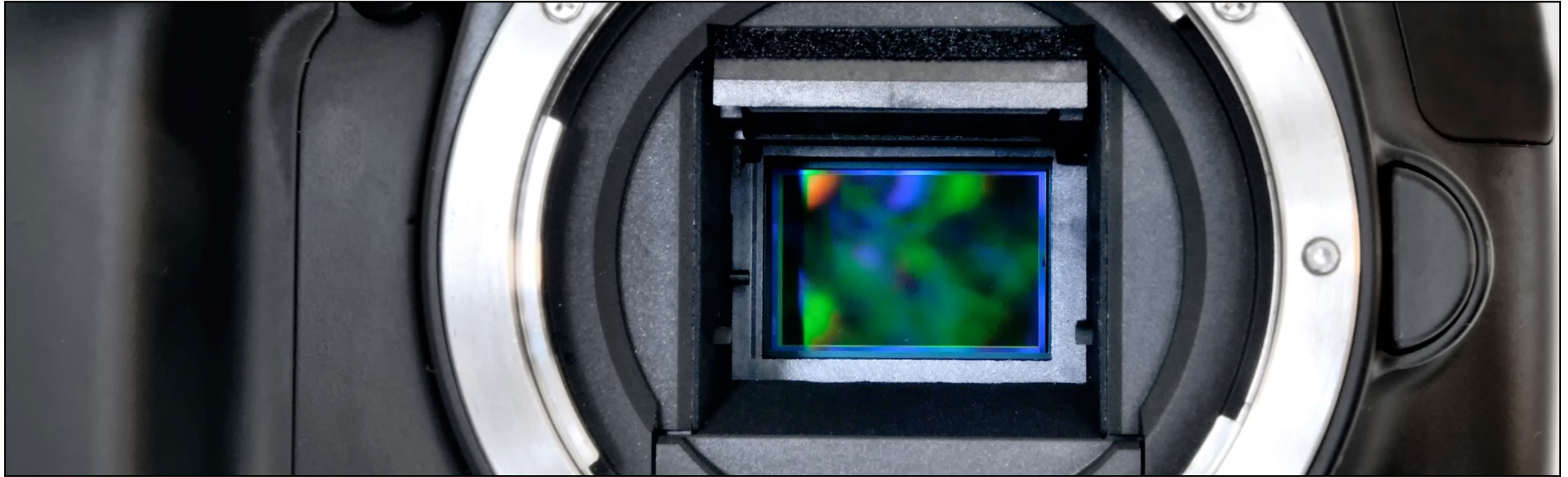
9. Mirrorless EVF Viewfinders Give You In-Line Exposure Read-Outs

If you regularly shoot photography with a DSLR, then you know that even with an exposure meter you can get results that are vastly different from what you expected when you clicked the shutter button. However, when you use a mirrorless camera, you're actually looking at a small video screen instead of an optical viewfinder. This can be better because it gives you an accurate image readout without having to take a picture and review how it looks.

10. Mirrorless Cameras are Silent

Because mirrorless cameras don't have a mirror box on the inside of the camera, they don't have to flip a mirror up when shooting a picture. For this reason, the operation of a mirrorless camera is quiet. This is a great feature if you shoot live events like weddings.

How Do Camera Shutters Work?



Let's slow time down and take a look at how different camera shutters work.

There's nothing like the sound of a professional camera shutter. It's become so synonymous with photography that digital cameras and phone cameras often have a fake sound effect to make the photography experience more authentic.

But have you ever wondered about the process behind that magical sound effect?

How do DSLR shutters work?

When it comes to a DSLR camera shutter, there are three basic mechanisms: the mirrorbox, the bottom door, and the top door. When you look through a DSLR view finder, you are essentially

looking through a series of mirrors that get their light directly from the lens. When you click the shutter button, that system of mirrors flips upwards to allow light to pass to the sensor. This is why the viewfinder goes black for a short amount of time when taking photos.

Once the mirror is flipped upwards, a small door will move from top to bottom exposing the sensor beneath. After that, another door will fall down, covering up the entire sensor. This process can vary in time depending on the length of your shutter speed. Sometimes a shutter speed can be so fast that your camera sensor won't be entirely exposed at any one time.

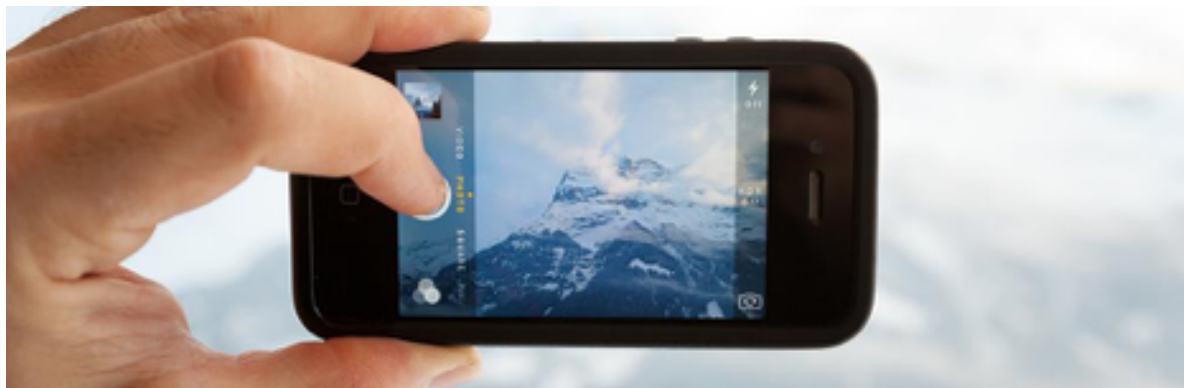
After the second door closes, your mirror will fall back into place. The doors will then reset to their original positions underneath. This entire process from mirror up to mirror down is known as an actuation. A typical DSLR can withstand over 100,000 actuations in its lifetime.

How do mirrorless camera shutters work?

Unlike DSLRs, mirrorless cameras don't use a mirror box or pentaprism to project light directly into the viewfinder. Instead, when using a mirrorless camera, the sensor is perpetually exposed to incoming light by default with nothing in between. This is why mirrorless cameras use either an LCD screen or an electronic viewfinder to monitor what's coming through the lens.

As soon as the user hits the shutter button, a door will swing up to cover the sensor. Once covered up, the sensor will begin exposing. The door will then swing down to expose the sensor to light. After that, another door will swing down to cover the sensor. The sensor will then stop exposure and the doors will reset.

Why do cameras still have mechanical shutters?



Before the existence of digital sensors, it was vital that your camera have a mechanical shutter. Why? Because you can't simply turn film on or off like a digital sensor. Pre-developed film is light sensitive, meaning any exposure to outside light severely damages your

images. However, In the age of digital photography, the landscape is certainly different. Modern sensors are fully capable of taking photographs without a mechanical shutter.

Smaller consumer cameras like point-and-shoots and phone cameras are all examples of shutterless cameras. Shutterless cameras tend to have more image noise in the image than their shuttered counterparts. This is because shutterless cameras constantly send power to the sensor. When a user hits the shutter button, the sensor is flooded with more power and the image is captured. If you're familiar with ISO, you know that more power equals more noise.

We will likely see professional shutterless cameras in the future, but for now they're simply too grainy/noisy for most high-end professional photography.

How do shutters work when capturing video?

When shooting video, the shutter process is much different. Because a typical still camera can only activate its shutter mechanism about six times per second, the physical shutter doors are far too slow to shoot video (which is typically shot in 24 or 30 fps). Instead, when shooting video (or in the live-view mode) your shutter doors and mirror are left open, leaving your sensor perpetually exposed.

Instead of relying on mechanical processes, the 'shutter speed' when shooting video is only a reference to a timed amount of power that goes through the sensor. This is known as an electronic shutter. After each frame is captured, the electronic shutter resets.

What is a global shutter?

Although the name would insinuate that it's simply a type of shutter process, a global shutter is more of a camera-sensor-related feature. When it comes to camera sensors, there are two main categories that you need to know: CMOS and CCD.

CMOS sensors are more common among consumer and prosumer cameras, but they're also more problematic. This is because CMOS sensors read pixel information from the top left of the sensor to the bottom right. Here's why that's a problem: if your subject is incredibly fast and moves position during capture, you'll get warped images. This is known as rolling shutter and it can produce some pretty annoying "jello" effects, especially when shooting video.

On the other hand, CCD sensors (or global shutters) will record the entire frame at once, very similar to a film camera. This eliminates warping and leaves you with a more pleasing image.

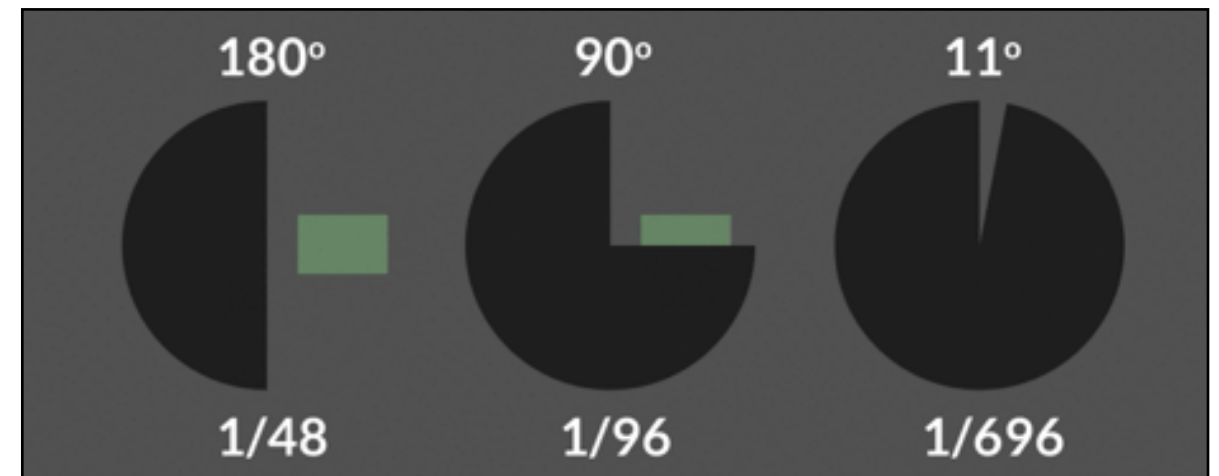
What is a rotary disk shutter?

Rotary disk shutter only pertains to actual film (movie) cameras. As you probably already know, a film camera works by exposing 24 individual film frames to light per second. The result is fluid motion that gives the illusion of movement. As you can imagine, the mechanical processes already covered in this article (known as focal-plane shutters) are far too complex and time consuming to be performed 24 times per second. Instead, a film camera uses a rotary disk shutter.

This shutter looks very similar to a fan. In short, the rotary disk rotates on the inside of the camera body, exposing the film to light and then covering it up again with the blade of the disk. The rotary disk process works in 3 steps: under the cover of the disk, the camera film moves into place, the disk allows light in, and then the disk covers the frame. Repeat this process 24 times per second and you have yourself a moving picture.

The thing that makes rotary disk shutters truly unique is the way in which the shutter speed is calculated. In modern cameras, you can select the exact shutter speed you want for your image. But in

traditional film (movie) cameras, you have to calculate your shutter speed yourself. Rotary disks have the shutter angle (or the size of the pizza slice - see chart), listed on their blades. DPs can then go in and determine what the shutter speed is by calculating the shutter angle with the frame rate.



If you are looking to shoot on film in the near future, there are a lot of really good online resources to help you figure out your shutter speed. It's also not uncommon to see shutter speed displayed by shutter angle when shooting on high-end cinematography cameras.

What in the heck is a leaf shutter?

A leaf shutter is a shutter that functions inside of a lens. Instead of acting like a door or a fan, a leaf shutter works a lot like a lens aperture.

You won't find leaf shutters in everyday cameras. Typically they are only found in medium-format high-end photography cameras. They can function at higher flash sync speeds (up to 1/1600), making them great for anyone who wants to shoot outdoors at a low F-stop with a strobe. Because these lenses are handcrafted rather than manufactured on an assembly line, they tend to be incredibly expensive.

Seven Tricks for Keeping Your Camera Equipment Organized



Clean up the clutter with these seven tips for staying organized on set.

In the chaos that is a film set, it can be difficult to stay organized. When your attention is torn between directing, cinematography, or whatever else the shoot demands, it's hard to keep track of all your equipment. Here are a few tips for keeping it all organized.

1. Label Makers

Labeling your equipment is the best way to stay organized on set. You can guarantee your equipment doesn't go home with someone accidentally by purchasing a cheap label maker. You can also color-code the labels to correspond with respective bags. For example, if you have a lens with a green label, your crew will know to put that

TRIPOD - PROPERTY OF PREMIUMBEAT

equipment in the green-labeled bag. There are tons of ways to utilize labels for your individual purpose. Label makers are cheap... use them to your advantage.

2. Make an Equipment List

You should have a record of all the video/film equipment you own, if only for insurance purposes. Organize this list by equipment type (camera, lighting, audio, etc). Next, modify this master list into a checklist with two checkboxes next to each piece of equipment. Print off a new version of the checklist each time you head out on a shoot and check off each piece of equipment you'll be taking with you. This checklist serves two purposes:

1. What type of shoot is it and what equipment will it require? By going through the checklist, you'll be able to quickly ascertain what you need and what you don't. Add a check to the first checkbox each time a piece of equipment gets packed. By going through this list, you'll minimize the chances that you'll show up to the set without a crucial piece of gear.
2. When the shoot is wrapped, go back over the list and add a check to the second box when you verify that you have each piece of gear. This will minimize the chances that you'll leave gear on set or confuse it with someone else's property.

3. Sectioned Bags

You don't have to spend a lot of money to get a good sectioned camera bag. These bags offer greater flexibility because they can be changed and manipulated to accommodate your individual needs. Be sure to get one with velcro sides that allow you to change the layout of the bag at will. I'm a big fan of LowePro bags for their durability.

4. Velcro Cable Organizers

Velcro cable organizers are a great way to manage your cables on set. You'll be able to easily identify cables by their color (very useful on long cable runs), as well as keep them tidy during storage.

5. Tackle Box

From adapters to microfiber wipes, it can be extremely difficult to keep up with all the small pieces of equipment necessary for making a film/video. Instead of simply throwing all of your small parts into a random zipper in your camera bag, try using a tackle box instead. I recommend getting a clear tackle box that is clear and has moveable dividers that will better accommodate different-sized gear.

7. Get a Card Wallet

Losing a memory card can be one of the most heartbreaking experiences for any filmmaker. Instead of going through this awful ordeal, purchase a memory card wallet. These storage cases will also keep your cards safe from the elements. Make it a habit on set to ALWAYS add a used card to your memory card case when you pull out a new one. This will ensure that you only have one card out at a time.

7. Labeled Lens Caps

Got a bag full of lenses? Labeled lens caps make it easy to quickly grab the right lens from your camera bag, as they are labeled with focal lengths. Brands like LensBling make versions of these caps, or you can easily create your own by labeling the caps you've got. Labeled lens caps also make it easier when you are working with production assistants who might not know an 85 from a 24.

Nine Tips for Shooting in Cold Weather



Keep your equipment safe when shooting in cold weather.

Thinking about shooting in cold weather? Check out a few of these tips.

1. Avoid 'Cold Soaking'

"Cold Soaking" is allowing your camera to become as cold as the environment around you... and you want to avoid this. Allowing your camera to reach sub-zero temperatures is a recipe for disaster, as most cameras aren't created to withstand subzero temperatures. Keep your camera in its case until it's time to shoot. In extreme temperature scenarios, it may be beneficial to include additional insulation in your camera bag.

2. Carbon Fiber Tripod

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that a cold metal tripod in cold weather is a bad idea. Instead of freezing your fingers off, try using a carbon fiber tripod. Carbon fiber tripods are great for shooting in extreme temperatures. They're also extremely lightweight when compared to their metal counterparts.

3. Bring Extra Batteries

Batteries drain faster in cold weather. So next time you have to shoot in extreme cold, make sure you pack two to three times your normal supply of batteries.

4. Use Hand Warmers

Small hand warmers are a lifesaver in cold weather and they can serve a variety of other purposes. For example, a small hand warmer can be placed in your camera bag to regulate the temperature.

5. Bring ND Filters

Snowy weather is bright even when it's overcast. For this reason, you should bring your ND filters along. ND filters cut out incoming light and allow you to use a wider aperture even in bright conditions. This is really important if you are wanting to get a shallow depth of field.

6. Gradually Go from Cold to Warm

Problems may arise if you quickly go from a cold environment to a warm one; condensation can form on your camera and lens. It's best to allow your camera to slowly adjust to room temperature.

One trick is to keep your lenses in Ziplock freezer bags, allowing them to acclimate to the temperature change before opening. Adding silica gel packs in the baggie can help alleviate any humidity.

If condensation gets inside the camera or lens body, it can permanently damage the hardware. In these extreme scenarios it is best to let the camera completely dry out before attempting to use it again.

7. Dehumidifiers

One way you can significantly cut back on condensation is to put a dehumidifying pack in your camera bag. Just as you might imagine, these packs are designed to absorb moisture, making your camera less likely to experience damage as a result of condensation.

Lens cap manufacture BRNO make dehumidifying lens caps that have silica gel built-in. If you're going to be doing a lot of outdoor

cold-weather photography or filmmaking, it might be worth it to get a few.

8. Get a Coated Lens

Most modern day lenses come with special coatings that allow them to withstand the elements. This is especially important when shooting in cold weather, as it's easy to get things like snow and condensation on the lens. If you're considering renting a lens, check to see if it has a specialty coating.

9. Winter-Proof Cases

There are a few winter-proof camera cases you can buy to protect your camera gear, including the Camera Duck which goes for about [\\$130 on B&H](#). Camera Duck also sells large warmers designed to fit over their weather covers.

Buying Tips: Tripods for Video



Don't cheap out on your camera support! Investing in a quality tripod and fluid head is a smart decision for the future expansion, performance, and safety of your gear.

Build quality in a tripod has a huge impact on the final image for both filmmakers and still photographers.

Inexpensive tripods are often shoddily constructed, made from aluminum or a similar thin metal. This flimsy construction makes the tripod prone to breaking and doesn't provide strong stabilization.

Conversely, investing in a more expensive, higher-quality tripod will provide a more stable image, a longer product lifespan, and additional peace of mind when you go to shoot. Are you in the market for a new tripod? Make the following considerations...

Avoid Center Columns

Tripods with height adjustable center columns introduce a lot of vibration and instability to your camera rig. There's a reason professional quality tripods don't have center columns: the engineering will not provide enough stability. If you're looking for adding height, go with a tripod that has longer legs.

Avoid Aluminum, Stick With Carbon Fiber

Aluminum tripods are usually much more prone to vibrations than tripods constructed of carbon fiber. Aluminum has a longer

dampening time, meaning vibrations are much more prevalent and travel easier throughout the tripod.

Carbon fiber has a much shorter dampening time, containing and minimizing vibrations with every camera movement or bump of the tripod. Although lightweight tripods tend to cost more, they do not necessarily perform better.

Load Capacity

Every tripod will have a maximum load capacity, ranging from 7-10 lbs for cheaper models and upwards of 50 lbs for higher-end types. This is where a little planning can go a long way. Selecting the right tripod for your needs (and future needs) is key to your tripod investment.

Factor in the weight of your camera and the weight of any other equipment that will be rigged onto your tripod. As previously stated, account for the future when you might add more equipment to the tripod. A teleprompter, monitors, lights, field recorders and microphones all add weight. Never plan to be at or near your tripod's load capacity. If you have a 20 lb rig, a tripod rated at 30 lbs will obviously perform better (and safer) than one loaded to capacity.

Head & Bowl Mount

Not all tripods come with a fluid head. It's important to use a quality head with the appropriate counterbalance and weight load. Tripods that use bowl systems are the most widely used by professionals because it's easy to level and balance a fluid head in a pinch to get that perfect shot.

What You Need to Know When Buying a Used DSLR



In many cases, buying a used DSLR allows you to get a lot of bang for your buck – but there's a lot to consider before deciding to drop your hard-earned cash.

One of the greatest barriers to filmmaking is the amount of money you need to invest in yourself and in your projects. This is especially challenging for new filmmakers who don't have a lot of money to spend on equipment. Between lenses, camera bodies, lighting, and accessories there is only so much money to go around, and this doesn't include the money you'll need to actually fund your projects.

It's not all bad news though, as these days there's more used gear on the market than ever... especially with regards to DSLR bodies. The key is knowing what to look for in order to make the right

investment. As such, here are a few key tips for purchasing used DSLRs below to help you make the right choice.

Buy from Non-Professionals

Professionals are notorious for treating their camera gear poorly. In production, a camera isn't typically treated well as there are many different hands on the camera and it's being used day in and day out. For this reason (among many others), buying a DSLR from a professional shooter is likely going to mean that the camera you're

buying has a lot more wear and tear on it than if you were to buy it from a consumer.

I have personally bought loads of used cameras from consumers, and often they've barely been used at all. So whenever possible, look for inexperienced shooters to buy gear from. They usually keep it in the best condition possible.

Always Check for Shutter Count

A camera may look fine on the surface, but check the shutter count if you really want to know how much it's been used. The shutter count shows you the amount of actuations that the shutter has completed. This will give you a relative idea of how long the shutter has left before it will need to be replaced.

Buy Last Year's Model

There's really no sense in buying a used camera if you are purchasing the current year's model. Most of the time, if you are buying the most current model of a camera second hand, you're not going to be getting a great deal on it — and you'll likely not be getting a warranty.

The whole point of buying used equipment is obviously to save money. If you aren't really saving much, do yourself a favor and cough up the extra couple hundred bucks to get a current camera model that will give you the peace of mind of knowing you have a full warranty.

If you're set on buying a used camera though, make sure to get last year's model as that's the only way you're going to save any substantial money. In many cases, the current model of a camera is not going to be that far off from its predecessor (with regards to specs), so don't buy into the hype that you need the latest model to make your work look good.

Don't Forget to Inspect the Sensor

Whenever anyone inspects a camera they want to buy, they tend to inspect nearly everything (the body, the viewfinder, LCD screen, etc.), but the sensor. As I stated earlier: even if the camera looks amazing on the outside, there might be issues lurking beneath the surface that you need to identify as soon as possible.

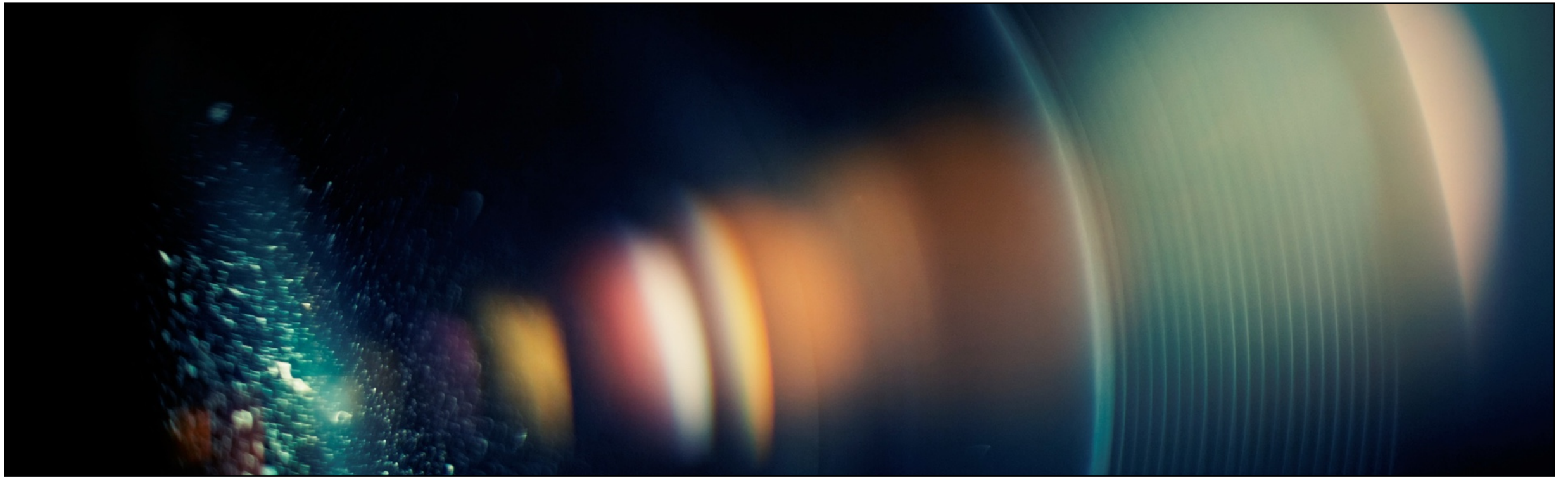
The biggest and most common of these issues are scratches or imperfections on the sensor. You need to be very careful about buying used gear. The seller may not be completely truthful about the condition of their DSLR, and sensor issues are relatively common in older cameras. Be sure to shine a light at the sensor before signing off on the deal and make sure everything looks nice and clean so you can put your mind at ease. If you don't do this, you will be kicking yourself down the road when you notice major issues with your footage.

Always Test Shoot with the Camera First

For many reasons, including those stated above, it's extremely important that you test shoot with the DSLR you want to buy before committing to the sale. Whether there is a sensor issue, a recording problem, a faulty LCD, or any number of other common problems, you likely won't know there's an issue with any given DSLR until you actually shoot with it.

I would recommend that you not only shoot with the camera, but also look at the footage on a proper monitor to ensure that there aren't any noticeable problem areas or artifacts that may not have been visible when playing it back in the camera. Always bring an SD/CF card and a laptop (or card reader) with you when checking out a used DSLR, and don't be shy about taking test shots.

Understanding Lenses: What is Focal Length?



Mastering focal length is the first step to understanding how a lens works.

The most important information to know when looking for a camera lens is the focal length. Focal length tells a photographer or videographer a lot about how the image is going to look. The shorter the focal length, the wider the angle of view and vice-versa. Let's dissect (mostly) everything you could ever want to know about focal length.

Types of Lenses

Lenses are often broken down into three different categories: wide, telephoto, and standard. A wide angle lens is any lens that is 35mm or smaller. Lenses that are wider than 24mm can be called ultra-

wide angle lenses, but most photographers just call them fisheye lenses. Due to size exaggeration, wide angle lenses are great for shooting landscapes, real estate, and architecture.

Telephoto lenses are any lens with a focal length of 85mm or higher. They are usually very long in length, making them easy to identify. Telephoto lenses are generally used to shoot objects that are far away, making them ideal for capturing weddings, wildlife, and events.

Telephoto lenses usually have more glass elements inside than wider lenses, making them generally more expensive. In fact, you've



probably seen an expensive telephoto lens at a sporting event. Telephoto lenses can be broken down into two further subtypes: medium/standard telephoto (85-300mm) and super telephoto (300mm+). Telephoto lenses usually create a very blurry background, making them ideal for isolating your subject.

Without a telephoto lens, wildlife photography would be a challenge.

Standard lenses are any lens between 35mm and 85mm. The most commonly used standard lens is the 50mm prime or “nifty-fifty” as it’s affectionately referred to by many photo pros. Standard lenses usually have a



much-cheaper base price than their wide and telephoto counterparts.

These lenses are the Goldilocks of lenses (not too wide, not too telephoto), making them perfect for shooting portraits, medium shots, and general photography.

Technically speaking, a lens is considered standard or “normal” if it is close to the diagonal length of the camera sensor in millimeters.

Zoom vs. Primes

Lenses with focal lengths that can change are called zoom lenses and those that remain fixed are called prime lenses. When comparing equally priced prime and zoom lenses, prime lenses will usually produce a better image.

This is because zoom lenses require many moving parts that hinder light’s ability to move through the lens. Professional photographers do use zoom lenses for their work (like the Canon 70-200mm), but it’s more typical for high-end productions to use prime lenses, as they let in more light. Lenses that come with a camera (kit lenses) are usually zoom lenses.

What is Focal Length?

Focal Length is not...

- The length of the lens.
- Half the length of the lens.
- The diameter of the lens.

Focal length is the measurement (in millimeters) from the optical center of a camera lens to the camera’s sensor. The optical center is also known as the focal point. For all lenses (including primes), the focal length changes depending on what the lens is focusing on. For

example, a 50mm lens focusing to infinity will have a focal length of 50mm. But when focusing on an object 1 meter away, the focal length needs to be moved 2.6mm farther away from the camera sensor to be in focus. Thus what you thought was a 50mm image, is actually a 52mm image.

Crop Factor

Not to be confused with a 35mm lens, most high-end cameras have a camera sensor that is 35mm in length. A 35mm sensor is “full-frame,” meaning it uses the entire lens when capturing an image.

This 35mm standard was designed to be identical to film cameras which used 35mm film to capture images. So a 50mm lens on a 35mm film camera will act very similarly to a 50mm on a 35mm “full-frame” sensor.

However, if you are using a camera that has a smaller sensor than 35mm, you are going to experience crop factor. If you’re in the photography or video world, then you are probably well aware of crop factor. For those who aren’t already acquainted, crop factor is a phenomenon in which a lens will act more telephoto than it actually is. So for example, a 100mm lens on a camera with a crop factor of 1.6x will have a similar field of view as a 160mm lens on a full-frame camera.

When you read online about cropped sensors, you’ll run across pages and pages talking about how cropped sensors have a focal length multiplication factor. This means that if a camera sensor has a multiplication factor of 1.5x, then a 50mm lens will actually have a focal length of 75mm. This is actually somewhat false. As we found out above, the only way for an image to be in focus is for the camera sensor to be a very specific distance away from the camera. If the focal length actually changed from 50mm to 75mm you would have



an image that was completely out of focus. Instead, a crop factor is actually decreasing the of angle of view. Focal length is physically similar but angle of view changes.

Canon 5D Mark III- Full Frame Sensor



Canon t5i - Cropped Sensor



The market offers camera adapters that increase the angle of view of 35mm lenses to reduce crop factor. These adapters are called focal length reducers (but we know they actually mean 'angle of view increasers'). Cameras with a cropped sensor can make shooting wide shots very difficult, so be sure to take that into consideration before purchasing a lens.

Chromatic Aberration

Remember how we talked about the focal point inside of the lens? This point is the place in which light is directed. Unfortunately, light doesn't always bend perfectly. If you've ever shined a flashlight

through a glass prism, or seen a Pink Floyd shirt for that matter, then you know that bent light will separate into different colors because color waves move at different speeds. This happens in camera lenses too, and most photographers consider it a bad thing. It's called chromatic aberration.

For a digital camera, chromatic aberration occurs when blue, green, and red light separate across three separate focal points. The result is the skewing of colors around the edges of objects within your picture.

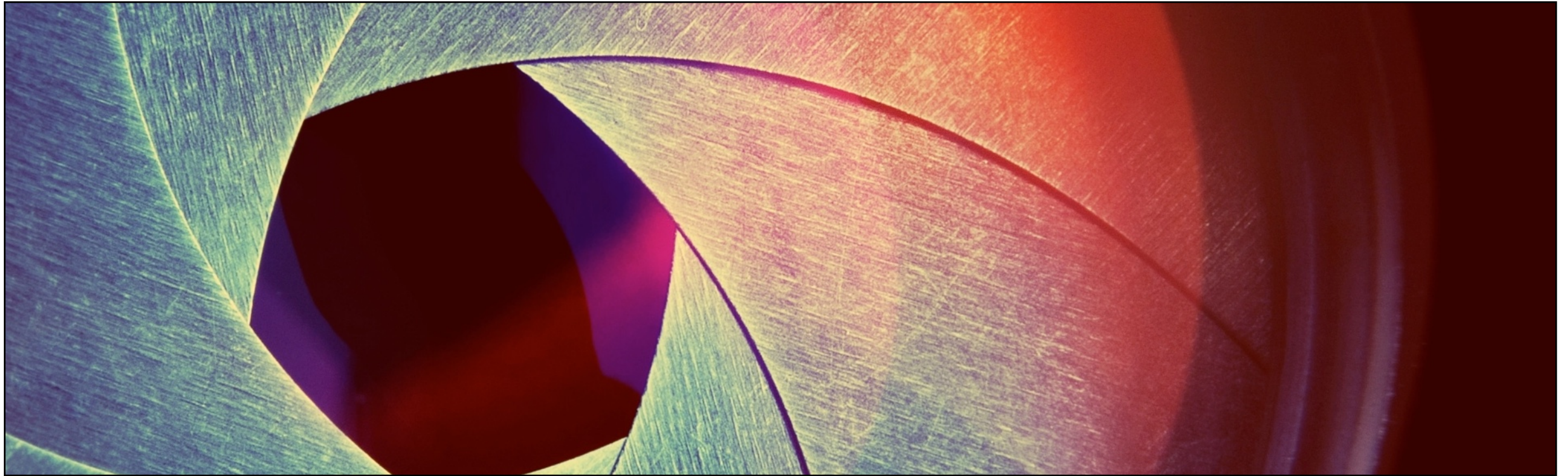
Newer camera lenses have a lens element known as a 'flint' that's specifically designed to focus red, green, and blue light rays onto a single point... but older lenses typically do not. Good quality lenses have minimal chromatic aberration.

Chromatic aberration is worse around the edges of an image frame, so when you're buying a new lens, look around the edges in your image for color shifting or "purple fringing." However, if you are intentionally trying to get a vintage look, try using an older lens with an adapter. You'll find plenty of chromatic aberration!

Conclusion

Here's the most important take away: focal length is directly related to the angle of view. There are many more technical things to learn about focal length, but the topics discussed in this section are the most important for understanding how it plays into both photography and videography.

Understanding Lenses: Aperture, F-Stops, and T-Stops



What exactly does an aperture do? Let's take a look at a few must-know lens terms.

There is no lens concept more misunderstood than f-stop. Everything about f-stops runs counterintuitive to how one would actually think they work... but have no fear. Let's take a look at every aspect of f-stop and how it relates to photography and video.

What Is an F-Stop?

An f-stop is the numerical representation of the size of the lens aperture in relation to the focal length. Generally speaking, an f-stop will quickly tell you how much light your lens is letting in. A lower f-stop number (1.2, 1.4, 1.8, 2) will let in more light compared

to a higher f-stop number (8,11,16,22) which doesn't allow very much light.

Although the actual f-stop numbers may seem arbitrary, they actually stand for something important. In photography and video, a stop is a step that either doubles the incoming light or cuts the incoming light in half. Knowing what numbers represent in stops is very important to figuring out how much light is coming into your camera.

Taking your f-stop from a lower number to a higher number decreases the amount of incoming light in half. Moving two stops higher decreases incoming light by four, and so on.

If you move from a lower number (2.8) to a higher number (4), it's called "stopping down." If you move from a higher number (11) to a lower number (8), it's called "stopping up."

The Science of the F-Stop

While most people think an f-stop is an actual reading of the amount of light that is coming through a lens, it's actually far from it.

An f-stop reading is a math equation for the focal length of a lens divided by the diameter of the entrance pupil (or aperture size). Practically speaking, this means lenses with larger apertures (low f-stop numbers) tend to be physically larger than their small aperture (high f-stop number) counterparts.

Take the the Canon 50mm line, for example. The 1.2 is larger than the 1.4 and the 1.4 is larger than the 1.8. The f-stop formula also means telephoto lenses tend to be much wider than comparable standard lenses.

Just because a lens has a similar f-stop doesn't mean it lets in the same amount of light. For example, a 50mm f/1.4 lens from Canon will probably let in a different amount of light compared to a 50mm f/1.4 from Sigma. This is attributable to light transmission through the lens. Due to the glass elements, it's impossible for 100% of light to pass through the lens. Most lenses allow for 60-90% of the light to pass through. Nicer (and more expensive) models typically allow for more light to pass through the lens.

So how are you supposed to know how much light is actually going through your lens?

T-Stops

Filmmakers in early hollywood answered this question by coming up with t-stops, or transmission stops. T-stops are a measurement of how much light is actually going through the lens at any given f-stop. T-stops take into account the percentage of light that comes through a lens and mixes it with the f-stop number. For example, a 100mm lens at f/2 with a light transmittance of 75% will have a t-stop of 2.3. Similar to f-stops, the greater the t-stop number, the darker the image. Generally speaking, t-stops are used much more in the filmmaking industry than in the photography world.

Depth of Field

Besides indicating how much light is coming through a lens, an f-stop indicates how blurry the "out of focus" parts of your image will be. You might be familiar with the term "depth of field." Simply put, depth of field is the amount of space that is in focus in your image. Lower f-stop numbers (1.2, 1.4, 1.8) will have much more camera blur than higher f-stop numbers (8, 11, 16).

Practically speaking, this can create a problem when you need to let in a lot of light while also needing to have a wide depth of field. A quick solution would be grabbing a lens with a wider field of view because they have a wider depth of field compared to a telephoto lens. This is a common problem in the photography/filmmaking world and the best solution is using off-camera lights.

Sharpness

You would probably think that a lens is at its sharpest when the aperture is as wide as possible, but that's actually not the case. Modern lenses are actually at their sharpest around f/5.6-8. This is simply due to the science of the multiple glass elements inside the lens. So while an image shot at f/1.2 may look super sharp due to its depth of field, it may actually be much sharper at f/5.6.

Clicked vs. De-clicked Lenses

For most modern lenses, an aperture is adjusted by a motor that communicates to the camera. So if you wanted to adjust your f-stop, you would use a wheel on the camera instead of adjusting anything on the lens.

However, if you have an old lens or a lens that is designed for filmmaking, then you probably have an actual ring on the lens that allows you to adjust the aperture blades. The lens will make a clicking sound when it goes from one predetermined f-stop number to the next. These are often referred to as “clicked” lenses. Needless to say, lenses that click between f-stops are bad for filmmaking. They will jump harshly from one f-stop to another during adjustment, which is jarring to the viewer.

To avoid this problem, lens manufacturers sell “de-clicked” lenses that can move smoothly between f-stops. If you ever need to move from one lighting situation to another (like indoors to outdoors), a de-clicked lens will allow you to smoothly adjust the aperture without the audience noticing. If you need a lens to be de-clicked, you can pay to have it done professionally. If you’re really tech savvy, you can even do it yourself... but be careful. You can destroy your lens if you’re not careful.

If you’re a photographer or filmmaker, understanding f-stops is crucial to mastering your craft. Although they may seem counterintuitive at first, over time you will be able to recall how f-stops relate to light and depth of field without even thinking about it.

Understanding Lenses: Image Stabilization



Image stabilization is an easy concept to grasp, but the implications of having a more stable image go far beyond sharp photos.

At its core, image stabilization (abbreviated 'IS') does exactly what you'd imagine: it compensates for the movement of your camera or lens to produce a more sharp image.

There are two very different types of image stabilization offered in modern cameras: lens stabilization and sensor stabilization. While sensor stabilization may be a little easier to understand, the majority of this chapter will cover lens stabilization, as it is most common in professional camera equipment.

Lens Stabilization

Lens stabilization occurs deep within your camera lens, using a system of electromagnets to move internal glass elements. When image stabilization is engaged, your camera will activate these electromagnets and create a "spring-like" suspension system where the glass can absorb camera shake, thus making your still images more sharp and your video more smooth.

While the stabilization concept is exactly the same across every lens brand, different names for optical stabilization include:

- Canon – Image Stabilization (IS)
- Nikon – Vibration Reduction (VR)
- Sigma – Optical Stabilization (OS)
- Tamron – Vibration Compensation (VC)
- Leica – MegaOIS
- Pentax – Shake Reduction (SR)

While the names may be different, they all stand for the exact same lens stabilization method.

Sensor Stabilization

In sensor stabilization, the *sensor* moves to compensate for shake, not the lens.

In contrast to lens-based stabilization, sensor stabilization doesn't rely on moving parts inside the lens. Instead, as the name implies, the physical camera sensor moves to compensate for the shift in movement. Because sensor stabilizers require more room to shift the output image, the lens output (the light projected on the sensor) must be much larger than the sensor itself. That means this type of stabilization is virtually impossible with full-frame sensors. Olympus and Sony cameras often use sensor stabilization in their cameras. The biggest downside to using sensor-based stabilization is that stabilization needs to be adjusted for different lenses.

Why Is it Important?

Image stabilizers are important because they make your image sharper, even at slower shutter speeds. As you may know, an image shot at 1/125 of a second will be sharper than an image shot at 1/8 of a second. An image shot at 1/125 of a second will be four stops darker than an image shot at 1/8.

However, most lens stabilizers allow users to have the “sharpness equivalent” of a shutter speed three to four times slower. For example, a lens with a 4-stop stabilizer shot at 1/8 shutter speed should have the same sharpness as in image shot at 1/125 without image stabilization — but with 16x more light!

However, not all lenses allow for three to four stops of stabilization. Before you buy your lens, check how many stops the stabilizer guarantees. It makes a huge difference.

Having the ability to shoot at slower shutter speeds is really important for any photographer. If you were to switch from a lens without image stabilization to a lens with 4-stop image stabilization, it would be like going from an f/5.6 lens to an f/1.4!

Problems With Stabilizers

No matter how steady your hands are, there will always be a little camera shake if you're holding the camera with your hands, making image stabilizers very useful. But if you were to take your camera, place it on a tripod or table and leave the image stabilizer on, the stabilizer will still try to stabilize the image even if there is no camera shake. It may result in the lens perpetually stabilizing itself in an endless “feedback loop” which can break the stabilization features in your lens. So be sure you turn off IS if your camera is on a tripod. Newer stabilized lenses will automatically shut IS off if they detect the camera is on a tripod.

Stay Alert! Anti-Shake vs Image Stabilization

Some lower-end camera manufacturers will try to fool their customers into thinking the camera has built-in image stabilization by saying it has “anti-shake” technology or an “anti-blur” mode. In reality these “features” do nothing more than reduce the shutter

speed or increase the ISO. While this isn't a feature in professional cameras, it's more common in lower-end cameras. Always check the detailed feature specs before making a purchase!

Mode 1 & Mode 2

While older lenses with stabilizers usually stabilize for panning (left/right) and tilting (up/down), newer lenses are increasingly giving photographers the option to turn off panning stabilization with "mode 2." In mode 2, the lens will still feature vertical stabilization, but will allow for motion blurring to occur during a pan. This is important for photographers who like to shoot pictures of moving objects with a blurred background to insinuate speed.

Is Image Stabilization Worth It?

Having the ability to shoot at a lower shutter speed is extremely important for you as a photographer, but with more stops comes an increased price. In fact, a lens with image stabilization is likely to be almost double the cost of a lens without it. In the end, it all comes down to what you're looking for.

If you're looking for the most light possible, then image stabilization will definitely get you a bigger bang for your buck. However, if you want a lens that gets you more bokeh or a blurrier background, then you might want to purchase a lens with a larger aperture instead.

Conclusion

Image stabilization is arguably more important than a low f-stop number. Before you purchase your next lens, check how many stops of stabilization the lens will offer.

The Camera Gear You Need for Shooting Wedding Videos



Shooting a great wedding video requires as much gear as shooting a small film. Here are some considerations for everything from camera stabilization to screwdrivers.

When shooting a wedding video, you may be overwhelmed by the amount of gear you actually need. Here are some of the best items for shooting the big day. These camera gear options are not only compact, they're ready to be used in the fast-paced wedding environment.

Camera (and Lenses)

Obviously the most important thing you need to shoot a wedding is a camera and some lenses. As far as cameras and lenses are concerned, just have a backup camera ready. While shooting

wedding video, you should at least have two cameras. Three is the best option, which gives you two to shoot with and a backup cam.

Stabilization

If the couple wanted shaky camcorder footage, they would have just asked that random family member who has a camcorder. Since they hired you, you'll need to make sure your footage is as steady as can be. Here are some considerations for camera stabilization.

Tripod

The tripod is the golden standard of all stable footage. Users think they need that latest and greatest stabilizer toy to get the best footage, but that couldn't be further from the truth. A solid tripod and fluid head will do more for your video than any of the following suggestions.

The added benefit is the ability to set up a tripod and let a camera run while you attend to other shots. It also makes a great assistant during the ceremony. You can set a tripod in the back of the venue and just let the camera roll while you work on another camera angles.

Monopod

Now that you have a camera on a tripod recording the ceremony on its own, you will need something to hold the other camera you should be shooting with. One of the best (and often cheaper) options is a monopod.

Monopods are great for a multitude of reasons. They are compact, lightweight, and very versatile. Many carbon-fiber monopods can hold an incredible amount of weight. With the ability to quickly adjust the height, you can go from a low-angle shot to a high-angle shot in seconds.

They are also great for maneuvering through crowds. In very limited space, you can still shoot incredible footage and then get out of the way in an instant.

Handheld Stabilizer

These tools are the Steadicam, Glidecam, Grip Handles, Merlin, etc. This category includes pretty much any stabilizer that does not go

over your shoulder and does not require battery or computer assistance to operate. Obviously they are handheld.

Handheld stabilizers are best used during the reception. They capture fantastic dancing footage. You can work your way in and around the dance floor. The handheld stabilizers are also good to use during portraits, as you can follow the couple and photographer as they take pictures.

Also, here's a pro tip: do not follow the bride down the aisle! There is nothing worse than a videographer or photographer getting in the way of the ceremony. This is not your moment! Stay out of the way! You are supposed to capture the wedding, not be part of it.

Note that this category did not include 3-axis gimbals. While great for filmmaking and indie productions, 3-axis gimbals are not the best for wedding video. You cannot discretely move around a dance floor with a MoVI or Ronin.

Slider

A camera slider performs magically when it comes to b-roll. You can easily attach it to a tripod and run around the venue capturing everything from exteriors to table centerpieces. Adding the slightest amount of movement can make footage much more intriguing.

You can slide along the entryway table, capturing the signature book and photos. You can slide into an entryway to help transition from one location to another. You can even use a slider to capture a jib shot.

Audio

How you capture audio is going to depend on the type of camera you are using. As DSLRs are the most common cameras used to shoot wedding video, you will need multiple audio sources. If you are using

a traditional video camera, you may have built-in microphones or the ability to plug in a mic via XLR.

Recorder

You are going to need a versatile audio recorder. You want something that has built-in microphones, accepts external microphones, and allows you to plug into a soundboard.

If you are working with a great DJ, then you can easily plug into the DJ soundboard (if they let you). Be wary of this, as no two DJs are alike. You could end up getting a terrible mix that you can't use. Be sure you have plenty of backups in place as well, like an audio feed to your camera or an additional recorder.

Wireless Lav Microphones

To capture quality audio while being as discrete as possible, you will need a wireless lavalier microphone. The best option is to attach a lav to the officiant and a second lav on the groom. They can easily put the transmitter in their pockets.

If you only have one lav, the officiant is often the safer bet. They are the ones talking during the whole ceremony. Be sure to tell the officiant they need to be close to the couple so you can pick up the vows.

Don't even try to attach one to the bride. It should go without saying, but there is no way they spent all that money on their beautiful white dress for you to attach an ugly black transmitter to the back of it.

On-Board Camera Microphone

If your camera has a microphone built in, be sure you have it recording. Even if you aren't planning on using it, it's good to have a backup. Also, it will help you sync the footage when you are editing.

If you are using a DSLR, you will need to attach a microphone to get passable audio. It should be noted that adding a mic to a DSLR still isn't going to be the best option. The cameras were not designed to capture optimal sound. Just use it as a backup.

Audio Cables

Make sure you have plenty of cables handy. You will at least want XLR, 1/4 inch to 3.5mm, and RCA audio cables at the ready. You will need these to plug into the DJ soundboard, any venue speakers, and into the audio recorder.

Lighting

You won't be setting up any three-point lighting during the ceremony or reception. However, you will want something you can use in a pinch. The best option is to use an LED light that you can use on camera, handheld, or on a stand.

A small LED light is portable and easy to toss in your bag. Odds are you won't really need it until the reception. The DJ's light setup may provide a great look. If not, just have a light ready for any low-light situations.

Miscellaneous Support Gear

Alongside all of this large camera gear, here are some of the smaller things to take into consideration. This camera support gear will make everything go much smoother.

Quick Release System

Don't waste time attaching your camera to different systems. Make sure you decide on a single quick release system, that way you can leave a quick release plate on your camera and just quickly snap into place.

Memory Cards & Case

You will need a ton of memory cards. As mentioned before, shooting a wedding video is just like shooting a small-budget film. Avoid trying to shoot everything on a large card. Having multiple cards may be seem tedious, but if something goes wrong it's easier to lose 16GB of footage rather than 64GB.

You will also want to keep track of which cards you have already used. You can lock SD cards, but you may forget to do so. One of the easiest things to do is putting all your cards in a case in the same direction before the shoot. Then as you use a card, simply put it back in the case upside down or backward.

Filters

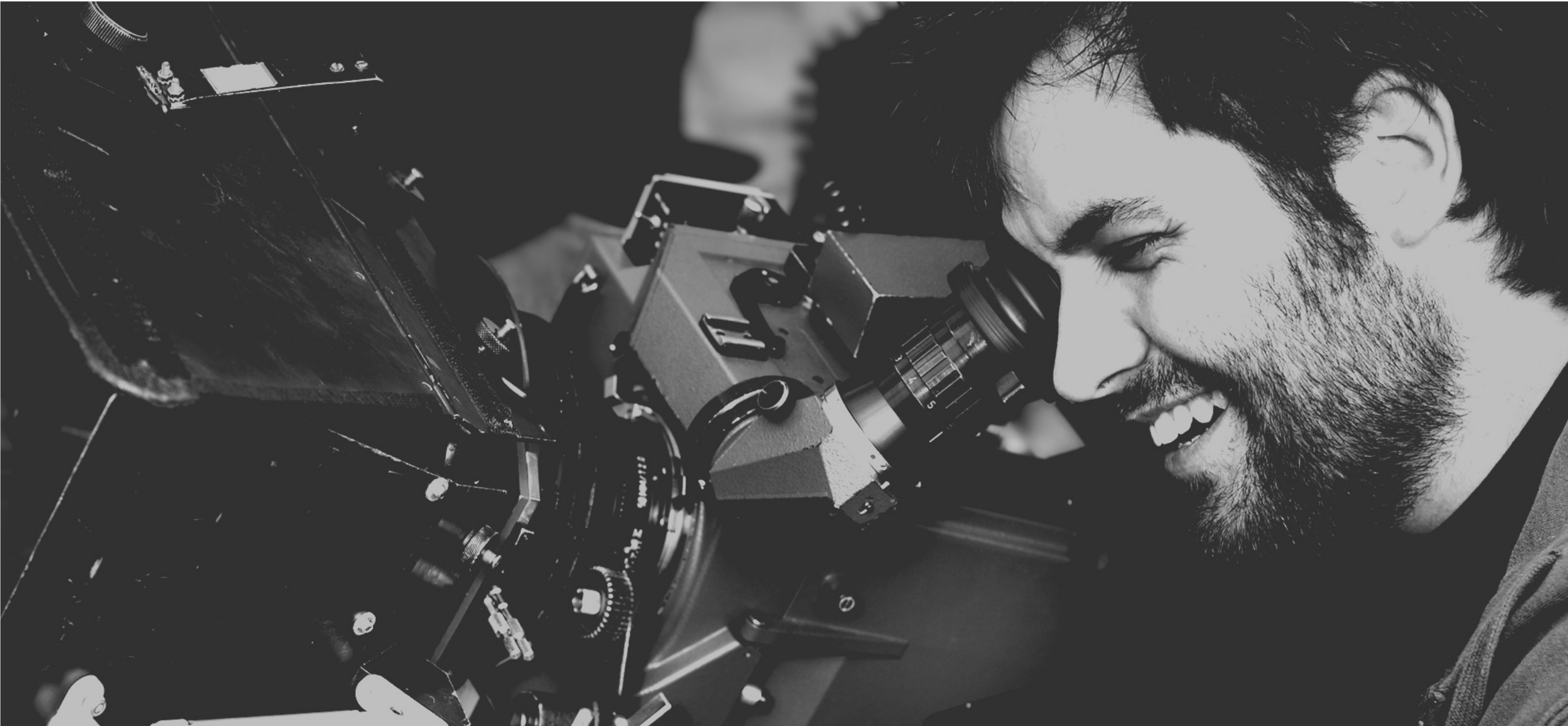
Many weddings are going to be shot outdoors. Be sure to have filters for each of your lenses.

Batteries (All Kinds)

Have plenty of batteries for all of your various needs. Be sure to have camera batteries, AA, and 9V batteries for your audio recorder or microphones, as well as batteries for your lights. If you don't have enough batteries, be sure to set up a charging station so the batteries will be good to go when you need them.

Tools

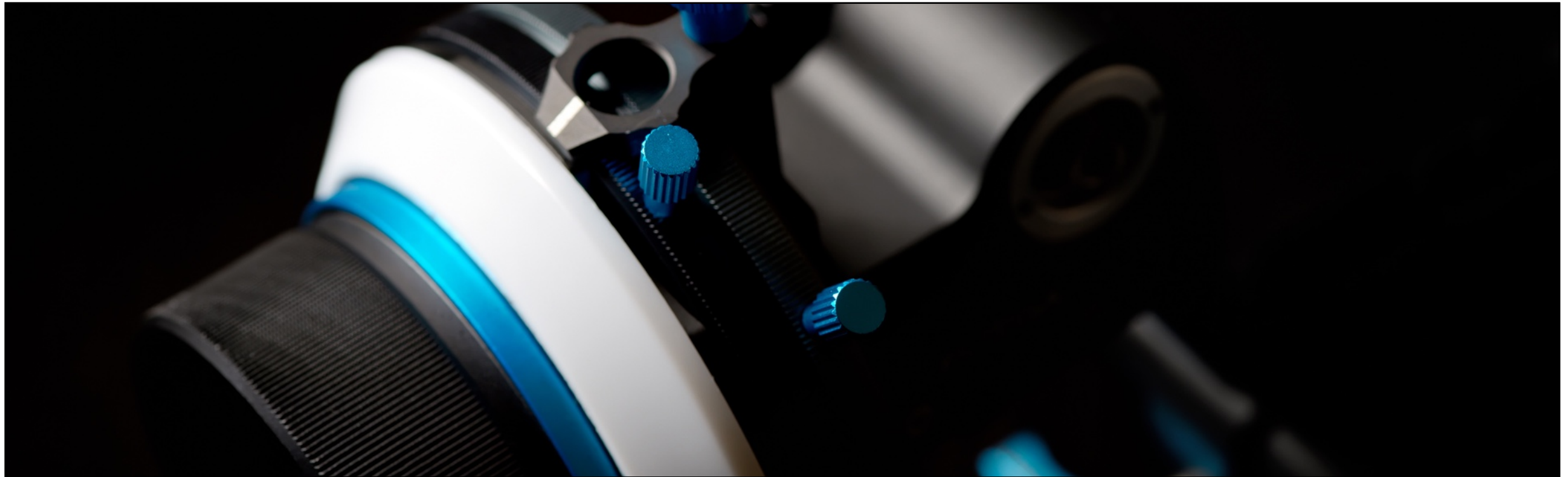
Here are some essential tools to have in your bag: gaff tape, extension cord, surge protector, allen wrench, screwdriver, multi-purpose tool. All of these will come in handy at some point. Make sure you have the right sizes and types of tools for your gear. It'll be hard to tighten a flathead screw with a phillips screwdriver.



03 CINEMATOGRAPHY

THERE'S PERHAPS NOTHING MORE CAPTIVATING OR INSPIRING THAN AMAZING CINEMATOGRAPHY. PROFESSIONAL CINEMATOGRAPHY HAS THE POWER TO GIVE INSTANT CREDIBILITY TO YOUR FILM. THE ART OF CINEMATOGRAPHY IS MUCH DEEPER THAN SIMPLY OWNING A NICE CAMERA. IT TAKE DISCIPLINE, SKILL, AND A FUNDAMENTAL KNOWLEDGE OF COMPOSITION.

Three Hacks for Shooting Without a Focus Puller



Cinematographers on low-budget indie films are often required to operate their camera while also pulling focus. Here are some hacks to make this situation less frustrating.

The role of a focus puller is critical on nearly any professional set. The skills required to accurately pull focus in challenging situations are independent of the skill set required by the cinematographer, though there is some crossover.

Even if a DP also happens to be fantastic at pulling focus, they are often busy with the camera and keeping an eye on lighting. In these instances, a dedicated 1st AC can make a world of difference on set.

All that said, there are many situations where DPs need to fly solo these days, which can lead to frustration when they are unable to

deliver the desired creative results. In my opinion, the frustration usually stems from attempting to act as both DP and 1st AC, as opposed to setting up the shots in a way that allow for a single operator/focus puller.

Here are three hacks for working without a dedicated 1st AC.

1. Attach a String to Your Talent to Maintain Your Distance When Tracking

Tracking shots are one of the most common shooting challenges when there's no focus puller on the crew. When following an actor, it

can be extremely difficult to keep your shot in focus, as the talent will always be walking at a slightly different speed than you.

As you can imagine, this is a nightmare when it comes to pulling focus. Unless you're shooting with a very high f-stop (leaving nearly the entire image in focus), your talent will drift in and out of the focus plane every few steps.

Attempting to pull focus yourself when shooting like this is usually a terrible idea, since by the time you move your focus to compensate for the talent's movement, you've already lost them again.

2. Always Use Peaking and Never Use Markers

Using marks on a follow focus is one of the fundamentals of pulling focus for a 1st AC. But when you're pulling focus yourself, you need to learn to throw that out the window entirely.

Even if your shot is locked off on a tripod and you're simply pulling focus between two characters on alternating lines, you still shouldn't be diverting your vision to the follow focus for too long, as it will inevitably take you away from the monitor.

If one of the actors moves in a way that is slightly different from the blocking, you may very well miss it if you aren't 100% visually focused on the monitor at all times.

For this reason, I always recommend using focus peaking whenever possible. Peaking is often used by 1st ACs to lock in their focus marks. It's sometimes then turned off so the DP can see the image without the strange effects of the peaking on the monitor.

When shooting by yourself though, it's critical that you learn to constantly shoot with focus peaking on. Rely on it solely, as it's truly the only way you can achieve critical focus without taking your eyes off of the monitor.

3. Avoid Unnecessary Pulls

When you're used to working with a focus puller, you might tend to take them for granted and simply assume that every shot needs a focus pull. In reality though, there are loads of scenes that don't require focus pulls at all.

If you can get away with shooting a wide shot at infinity (and it still works for your story), then go for it. Or if you want to use selective focus to isolate a character in a scene, intentionally avoiding pulling focus to their scene partner, that could be a great technique too – as long as it serves the story well.

How to Create a Low-Budget Film That Feels Like a Blockbuster



Trying to get a movie made with minimal financial backing can be frustrating, as tough decisions need to be made early. Check out these tips for creating a killer low-budget film.

Sure, you can get your crew to volunteer or call in favors to get your locations for free, but there are also risks associated with cutting corners that can directly result in your film suffering on a creative level. So how do you create the very best film with a minuscule budget?

There are places where you can afford to cut corners... and there are places where you absolutely can't. There may not be an exact formula for this, and of course every production has its own set of requirements and needs, but here are some thoughts on keeping

your budget down as they pertain to various departments on a typical small-scale film.

Casting a Low Budget Film

Skimping out on casting is the number one issue that most micro-budget films suffer from. When dealing with a low budget, it's tempting to call up your actor friends and ask them to give you a freebie, but this is generally a bad idea.

Unless your friend is exceptionally talented and you've written a role with that person in mind, you will end up casting the wrong

person for the role. And ultimately that will be a very bad starting point for your film. That's not to say that your friend isn't a good actor, but simply that they may not be the right person for the project. Don't simply cast them because they are free. Cast them because they are good and they deserve the role.

This however, doesn't mean that you need to spend an arm and a leg on your cast. Set up a real casting session (at an affordable location) and bring out actors that are willing to work on deferred payment or for their portfolios. You can absolutely get talented actors on board with your film who are willing to donate their time, if you in turn provide them with something of value – the script.

If you're going to get actors to come out for free, ensure it's worth their while. Give them the opportunity to play an amazing role and treat them well throughout the process. You want to find people that are as much a part of the film as you are.

Crewing a Low-Budget Film

There are certain crew positions that are essential to even the smallest of productions and others that (while equally important) may be able to be covered by other crew members. In general, the crew members you should have on every shoot are:

- Cinematographer
- Location Audio
- Grip
- Makeup
- Production Assistant

Are there other extremely crucial members that aren't on this list? Of course. Ideally your DP will want an AC, and your Grip will want a Gaffer to work with. But the truth is that when you are forced to boil

it down to the bare essentials, these film crew members should be able to cover your basic needs.

It's also a good idea to pay every last one of your crew members. Don't be too tight with the budget in this department. You're better off having fewer crew members that are paid than more crew members that are volunteering. Your crew is the lifeblood of your project. Unlike actors, who at least get the visual recognition of being in the film, your crew is literally hidden behind the scenes and often don't get the recognition they deserve.

With that said, if your budget doesn't allow you to cover their normal rates, then defer their payments and offer a smaller day rate to cover their expenses. You want your crew to be happy. If you don't show some good faith, then they will lose interest in your film and that will affect it negatively in many ways.

Locations

When producing a low-budget film, you can and should get most of your locations for free – but that doesn't mean they should look like you got them for free. In the same way that you should try to avoid casting your friends as actors, avoid asking your friends or relatives for locations – unless they are exceptional.

If your character is supposed to be a starving artist, but you shoot in your friend's brand new condo, well, that's not going to be very convincing. And since you don't have an art department, you can't even set decorate it to look the way you want it to.

Unfortunately, a small budget means you don't have the option of writing anything and everything that you'd like into your script. This truth especially translates to locations. In other words, just having a house doesn't make the house the right house for your movie. Of course, you have other options.

The easiest solution would be to rework the scene so it takes place anywhere else you may have access to. A coffee shop or park, for instance. Kevin Smith's *Clerks* is a perfect example of utilizing the locations that you have. He worked at a convenience store and wrote the story around that store as that's what he had access to. That's exactly what you should do, too.

For outdoor locations, you also have the option of shooting guerrilla style, without permits or permission. Films of all sizes have done this successfully and there's no reason you can't do it too. However, if you want to do go down this path, you need to take into account the risks involved and be willing to take responsibility for the consequences. In some cities you may get fined and even have your equipment confiscated. If you decide to do this, proceed with caution.

Food

You need to ensure that your cast and crew are fed well and fed on time, as that's really the least you can do for them given the sacrifices they are likely making to be a part of your film. With that said, there are still ways to save money in this department.

The first rule here is that you need to plan. If you don't know what you're getting for lunch, you'll wind up ordering individual meals for your cast and crew every day and you will very quickly be over budget. Instead, consider making some food yourself and bringing it to set, as long as it's still good quality. Pizza or subs are okay for a day here or there, but don't do it for every meal.

In general, with a healthy mix of making your own food and ordering affordable bulk meals that have been planned, you can save a ton of money in this area.

Camera

A lot of micro-budget films blow way too much money in the camera department. Many filmmakers (especially those without a camera background) overestimate the importance of the camera and underestimate the importance of the DP and lighting. As a result, they will often spend a massive part of their budget on renting a camera and leave next to nothing for the rest of the project. They're shooting 5K resolution, but still capturing poor actors and ugly locations.

If you or your DP own a 5D, GH3, Pocket Camera, or any other good DSLR/video camera, consider using it. A good DP will be able to make your DSLR footage look gorgeous.

Another option is to buy a used camera and sell it at the end of your production. In this case, you still may be looking at a DSLR, which are extremely affordable.

Production Design

Although you may not have the budget to pay for a dedicated Production Designer, you still need to pay a lot of attention to the production design department. With good production design, average cinematography can look Oscar-worthy. Obviously with bad production design, the opposite is true.

How you pay attention to this category is up to you. You may want to take the extra time yourself to source props/materials to make your locations work for you, or you may have someone else on the crew who can take your direction and step in.

While you or your crew may not be experienced in production design, the fact that you are paying attention to it and making an effort at all will go a long way. If you can afford a dedicated

Production Designer, then by all means bring one on board. If you can't, that doesn't mean you shouldn't do anything at all.

The other thing to consider is if you really have no time or resources to do the Production Design yourself (or hire a Production Designer), then choose locations that work well without it. Spend some extra time looking for the perfect locations that are already set up exactly the way you picture them in your head. When you find those locations, your need for additional help in this area isn't as strong.

Sound

Whatever you do, do not cut any corners when recording location audio. Instead of looking for ways to save money in this area, look for ways to pay your sound recordist well.

50% of your film is the audio. If you have poor audio, your film's production value will be lowered immensely. In fact, many would argue that good audio is more important than good visuals to the average viewer.

You may have a Zoom recorder and a decent shotgun mic, but that doesn't mean you should try to record audio yourself. Even if you're skilled at recording sound, you're supposed to be directing the film. It's not your job to record audio at the same time. If you try to do this, you're only taking time away from directing the actors and paying attention to the rest of the production. Do not skimp on sound!

Final Thoughts

With only so much money to go around on a micro-budget film, you have to be really careful about where it goes. Think of your budget as a balancing act between money and quality. Don't assume that you can simply save money in one department without diminishing the

quality of your final product. When you cut the budget, prevent a negative ripple effect on your film by making up for it in other ways. Usually this comes in the form of putting in more time.

One last suggestion: let your micro-budget set feel like a larger set. A big issue that plagues many films of this scale is that the cast and crew lose interest after a few days. They stop believing in the project due to the size and nature of the production.

If you make an effort to treat your set the way you would if you had ten times the budget, then everyone else will too.

Producing Documentaries With High Production Values



It's more crucial than ever to maintain high production values when producing documentaries. Here are a few ways to go about it.

Until recently, documentaries weren't necessarily known for their production value. Some of the best feature-length documentaries in years past had loads of technical issues, yet they still succeeded based on their content alone. It's harder than ever for a documentary to get seen and sold without a strong aesthetic and great audio.

While there are exceptions to this, there's no denying that the overall quality of the average documentary has increased dramatically over the last decade. This is likely thanks to the digital revolution opening up the door for documentarians to shoot on the

same equipment as high-end narrative filmmakers. For instance, it's not uncommon today for a documentary to be shot on a RED DRAGON or an ARRI AMIRA. Granted, not every documentary is shooting on RED or ALEXA, but even those shooting on high-quality DSLRs can certainly still hold up really well on a big screen.

The fact of the matter is that you don't need a high-end cinema camera to shoot a film with high production value – although it certainly can't hurt. There are countless ways to keep your production value high, even when working with limited gear. Here

are five of the most important elements to consider in order to achieve this.

Shoot Beautiful Interviews

Depending on the type of documentary you're shooting, one of the only opportunities you may have to shoot in a controlled environment will be your interviews. Every documentary is different of course, but it's quite common for the average doc to consist largely of talking head interviews intercut with some "day in the life footage" (or b-roll).

Naturally, the "day in the life" footage will need to be shot in a more run-and-gun style than your interviews, and no matter how great you are at shooting – it's going to have some technical problems.

The good news is that you can easily make up for this (and offset it visually) by capturing beautifully lit interviews that are easy on the eyes. Once again, remember that you only have so many opportunities to control the look of your film when shooting a doc – so take advantage of every one.

Prioritize Location Audio

It's perfectly fine if a few of your scenes need to be subtitled as a result of not picking up proper location audio, but you should be aiming for the best sound quality possible. You can subtitle a scene and get away with it, but that doesn't mean you should. The last thing you want is a 90 minute doc that's subtitled from end to end. Unless it's a foreign language film, the overall production value of your piece will suffer.

Even if you are shooting as a one man band, you should still be able to capture great audio. All it takes is a little attention to detail. Whenever possible, use a shotgun mic (either on a pole or mounted to the camera) in addition to a wireless lav mic that's clipped on your

subject. This will give you two separate audio channels to choose from in post and will ultimately help keep your audience much happier with the final product.

Great Music Is Key

We all know that great documentaries are made in the editing room, but one point that is often overlooked is the importance of music.

Documentary filmmakers often miss opportunities to include music cues that can really guide their story and help drive the point home. Understandably, you may not want to go overboard on the music so as not to bias your film, but there is a time and a place for music in almost any doc. You shouldn't be afraid to make use of some strong musical cues.

And remember, it's not just where you use the music, but the quality of the music itself.

Reenactments Can Work for You

At some point, the idea of shooting reenactments for a documentary became a faux pas, possibly due to the abundance of low-quality docudramas that were being produced in the 90s. Thankfully, dramatic reenactments are being used much more tastefully and artfully these days... and they can really up your production value.

Much like shooting beautiful interviews, reenactments give you another opportunity to have control over what you're shooting and add some high production value to your film that simply wouldn't exist any other way.

Crew Up



There are some cases where you may need to shoot scenes for your documentary as a one man band. You may need to shoot inconspicuously with no permit or document a person that doesn't want a whole crew following them around all day. In all other cases – get a crew!

You don't need a big crew. But if you can have at *least* a camera op and location audio on set, you'll be in very good shape. Having the freedom to oversee your production and not get bogged down with operating a camera can be very creatively freeing. In the end, it will allow you to capture better footage by being focused on the big picture.

Go Undercover With These Five Guerrilla Filmmaking Tactics



Guerrilla filmmaking can be risky, but sometimes there's no choice. Here are some important planning tips that can help prevent disaster.

When faced with the dilemma – to shoot without permits or not shoot at all – a lot of filmmakers will opt to shoot their film “guerrilla” style. In other words, they’ll choose to go ahead and film without location permits or permission from property owners in order to keep more money in the bank. While this may seem like a fairly easy decision (especially when faced with having to shell out potentially thousands of dollars for permits), there are some severe downsides to consider when going down this path.

If you’re caught at the wrong place at the wrong time, you run the risk of having your production shut down, receiving additional fines,

and having your gear confiscated. Thankfully there are some workarounds that can help you tackle a guerrilla or low-budget shoot if you want to do it right. These tips are equally as applicable to journalists who may be working in restrictive conditions.

Quick Note: When shooting guerrilla style there is always a risk that you will be shut down or fined. If you choose to go down this path, you are doing so at your own risk. Always be aware of the potential consequences. Be sure to check local laws and, most importantly, always keep your crew’s safety in mind.

1. Don't Get Tempted by Cinema Cameras – Use a DSLR



The DSLR revolution may be slowing, but there's still no better option for shooting guerrilla style than a DSLR.

The smaller the camera you're using, the less likely it is that you'll get caught, but there are other considerations as well. For instance, cameras like the Blackmagic Pocket Camera may be smaller than most DSLRs, but that doesn't necessarily mean that they are going to be the right choice.

The Pocket Cam (and other similar cameras) are unique looking and often draw attention from onlookers. They also often require more rigging than DSLRs, which ultimately brings up the actual size of the camera. While working with a small camera is one key to successfully accomplishing a guerrilla shoot, it's not the only consideration. DSLRs may not be in their heyday right now, but in capable hands they can produce gorgeous images.

2. Keep Your Crew out of Sight

If you're shooting without permits, chances are your budget is limited and your crew is pretty small to begin with. That said, it's still extremely important that you do not resemble a film crew in any way. Even with a three or four person crew, you can draw unwanted attention very quickly.

The number one rule when shooting guerrilla should be to keep the crew (no matter the size) out of sight unless completely necessary.

As mentioned above, film shoots tend to draw crowds. You need to be concerned about attracting members of the general public who can very quickly cause a scene around your guerrilla set.

It's a huge mistake to have more bodies present on a guerrilla shoot than necessary. Unfortunately, it's a mistake that many filmmakers make. The only person that needs to be present during shooting (outside of the DP and actors) is the director.

Always make sure your crew is situated in a low-key area when you're actually shooting.

3. When It Comes to Audio, Always Go Wireless

If you have a half-decent location sound recordist on your team, they will be begging you to use a boom whenever possible. Unfortunately, boom mics are the biggest giveaway of a guerrilla film shoot, so you're going to need to learn to work without one.

Your sound recordist may not be happy with you for requesting lavalier microphones only, but you are far more likely to get the shot you need when you avoid attracting unwanted attention.

Once you have your lavs up and running, the key is to figure out how to hide the wireless receivers and recorder. It's usually best to have your sound recordist standing by with the gear in his or her backpack. Alternatively, the recorder can be kept in a nearby car. This may seem like a bit of a headache to deal with, especially when trying to communicate with your sound recordist, but it really is the only option you have when shooting guerrilla.



4. There Should Be No Gear in Plain Sight

Do not betray your intentions by leaving Pelican cases, gear bags, scripts, and other paraphernalia sitting around. This is the opposite of discreet.

Since even tripods can give you away, handheld is often your only option. If more stability is a must for the look of your film, go ahead and use a monopod, shoot with stabilized lenses, or use a camera like the Sony a7 II that has built-in stabilization. Whatever you do, just make sure you're cautious when shooting with anything but a bare camera body.

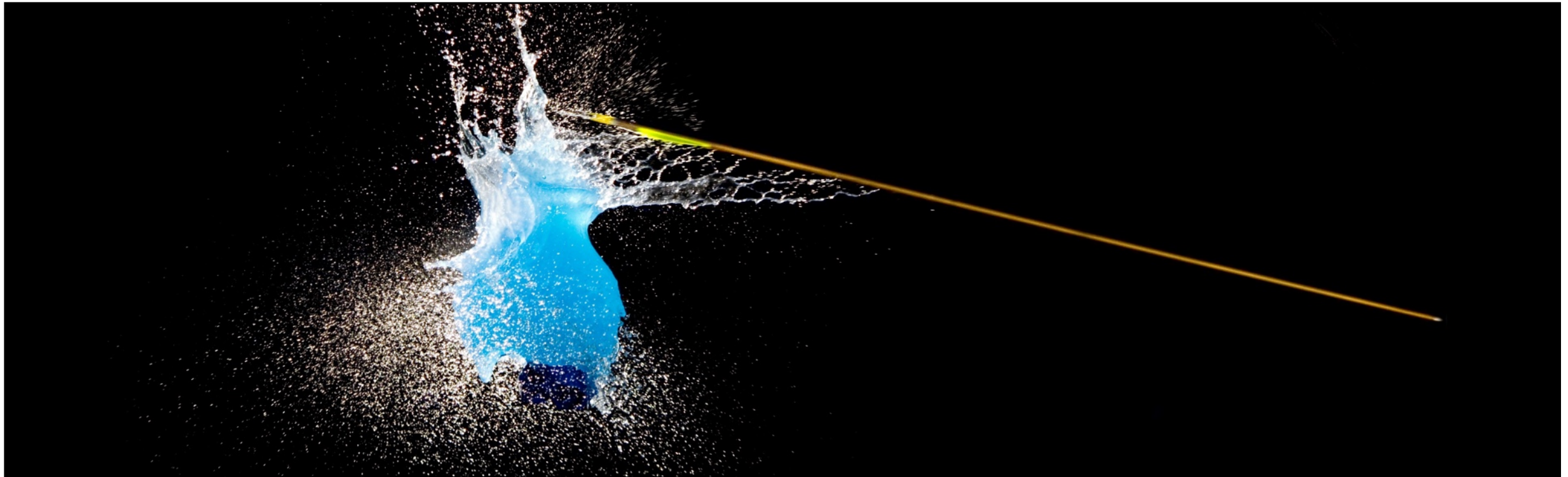
5. Plan in Advance and Work as Fast as Possible

The one and only way to properly execute a guerrilla shoot is to strip your gear and crew down to the bare necessities and plan as diligently as possible. This means doing your research online, going location scouting ahead of time (to see which locations will be easiest to shoot without permits), and preparing your crew as much as you can.

Planning will make you far more efficient when it comes time to shoot, which will subsequently allow you to work a lot quicker. Any and all setups that are required (such as hair/make-up or sound checks) need to be worked out in a different location close by.

If you've prepared accordingly, you'll only have three easy steps left once it's time to film: get in, get your shot, and get out.

Five Things to Consider Before Shooting Slow Motion



Thanks to advances in camera tech, shooting slow motion video is easier than ever before. Still, there are some challenges to consider before starting your next slow motion project.

For the longest time, independent filmmakers have been frustrated by the fact that they weren't able to capture high-quality slow motion video. Up until recent years, options were mostly limited to shooting at 720/60p with a highly compressed codec (such as the case with the 5D Mark II), unless you were willing to shell out a lot more money to buy or rent a higher-end cinema camera.

Over time, camera manufacturers started to recognize the fact that customers were demanding higher frame rates (for slow motion

usage), and we're finally starting to see a critical mass of cameras offering that ability.

The GH4 can shoot at up to 96fps, the Canon C100 Mark II does full 1080/60p, and the camera that many of us have right in our pockets – the iPhone 6 – can shoot at up to 240fps!

For the most part, this is great news – the more tools we have access to as filmmakers, the better. That said, the fact that many of us have been deprived of high frame rates for so long is starting to create an overuse of slow motion content, much like we saw with the

overdone shallow depth of field that was occurring when the 5D MK II first came out.

Now, let's go over five things you should consider before you choose to shoot slow motion:

1. You Need More Light

If you haven't shot slow motion before, you probably aren't anticipating just how much light you need in order to get a decent exposure on your image. Shooting overcranked means that your frame rate increases — and your shutter speed does too.

Following the 180 degree shutter rule, if you're shooting at 96fps, then your shutter needs to be at around 1/200th of a second. This will drop your exposure significantly.

This isn't such a big deal if you're shooting outside in the middle of the day. But if you're planning on shooting an interior or a night exterior, you're going to need a lot of light... and you need to know how to use it.

2. It's Easy to Overdo It

One of the easiest ways to annoy your audience is to overdo slow motion. Often footage looks great in slow motion, but that doesn't mean *everything* needs to be shot that way. If you're not careful, you can fall into a pretty bad trap. Like most stylistic choices, less is more when it comes to overcranking. Use it sparingly if you want to be tasteful.

3. It Might Not Be Right for Your Project

Many shooters go a little bit crazy when they buy their first camera that has the ability to overcrank. Not only do they overuse the effect, but they use it on projects that don't call for it. While there may not be any hard and fast rules on this, slow motion generally works really

well in music videos, some commercials, and in small doses in narrative films.

Unfortunately, many filmmakers end up using a ton of slow motion in documentary projects or narrative films. Obviously, there's a time and a place for slow motion in a doc or fictional film, but more often than not, it just isn't the right choice. In other words, don't use it just because you can... use it if it's the right storytelling device for your project.

4. The Image Quality Will Be Diminished

No matter what format you're shooting on, you're likely going to diminish the quality of your image significantly by shooting slow motion. The reason behind this is simple math.

Typically, cameras have a set data rate that they record to per second. When you increase the amount of frames per second, you are spreading that data very thin by stretching it over many more frames.

Even on the RED DRAGON (which of course shoots RAW), capturing certain frame rates means that the minimum compression ratio required is increased significantly. This doesn't mean that you can't capture a beautiful slow motion image, but it does mean that you need to be especially careful about how you capture your image so you retain the highest image quality possible.

5. Storage Requirements Can Go Through the Roof

This will vary from camera to camera, but generally higher frame rates require far more data/storage than standard frame rates. Certain lower-end cameras are able to keep the data rates about the same even when shooting overcranked, but most cinema cameras chew through cards like crazy when shooting at high frame rates.

Everything You Need to Know About CF Cards



Shooting on Compact Flash cards? Let's take a closer look at everything you need to know.

A CF card (CompactFlash) is a small memory card used in many modern camera systems. CF cards are durable, fast, and portable, making them a great option for professional photographers and filmmakers alike.

How to Read a CF Card

When it comes to CF cards, or any memory card for that matter, there are two important things to consider: size and speed. On a CF card, storage size is usually prominently displayed on the front. At this point in time, CF cards come in a wide variety of sizes, from 4GB

to 512GB.



Most CF cards display the read speed (the speed at which a computer or device can get information off the card) on their face. This is important, but for filmmakers or photographers the number that really matters is the write speed (the speed at which information can be written onto the card). The write speed is always slower than the read speed. However, nicer cards typically have a write speed that is closer to the read speed.

CF cards don't always write at the same speeds either. So be sure to check both the minimum and the maximum read/write speed of your card. Just because your card can write up to 95mb/s doesn't mean it can sustain that write speed for an extended amount of time.

Card read speed is usually displayed in either MB/s or "x". It is more helpful to get the CF read speed written out in MB/s, but you can easily convert speeds shown to MB/s by dividing the "x" number by 6.6666. For example, if a CF card has a speed of x1000 on the outside, it will have a read speed of around 150MB/s.

$$\frac{\text{"X" NUMBER}}{6.6666} = \text{MB/s}$$

On most modern CF cards you'll see a small clipboard with a number. This refers to the minimum/guaranteed write speed we talked about earlier. If you're a filmmaker, this number is incredibly important because it is the speed at which a camera can write to the card indefinitely. Your needed card speed will all depend on the resolution, codec, and the camera you're using.

For most non-RAW HD circumstances, a minimum read speed of 20MB/s should do the job. As of right now, some CF cards can reach

write speeds of up to 155MB/s. However, as 4K and RAW recording becomes more prevalent, the need for faster CF cards will increase.

Most CF cards also display what UDMA class they are a part of on the outside of the card. These classes are directly related to card speed. CF cards are backwards compatible, meaning you can use a UDMA 7 card on any camera that takes a CF card. However, just because a camera accepts all CF cards doesn't mean it is optimized to get the most of that specific CF card. If you're wanting to use a newer CF card on an older camera, make sure you update the firmware so you can use the maximum write speed.

How CF Cards Work

Practically, CF cards work via 50 pin holes that connect inside a camera or CF card reader. These pins are definitely the biggest downside to using CF cards over portable storage cards, because all 50 pins must line up perfectly... and sometimes they bend, requiring maintenance to your camera or card reader. If this does happen to you, it's not the end of the world. A small screw driver should be enough to bend the pin back into place... but obviously, use caution.

Once connected, a CF card is completely straightforward. Just format the card and record. CF cards use either FAT32 or exFAT formatting, making them cross-compatible between Windows and Apple products.



Compact Flash vs. SD Cards

There is a lot of debate over which memory card format is better: SD or CF. Both SD and CF cards have their advantages and disadvantages. SD cards tend to be much cheaper than CF cards, but CF cards tend to be faster and more durable than smaller, fragile SD cards. SD cards are easier to misplace or damage, but if you keep your memory cards in a memory card wallet (as you should), it shouldn't be an issue.

As of right now, there aren't many significant technical differences between SD and CF cards, so it really comes down to preference.

If you're going to be shooting in rough conditions, CF cards might be the way to go. If you shoot more casually, SD cards might be better.

CFast Cards

CF (CompactFlash) cards should not be confused with CFast cards, which were created to be the next step in CF card evolution. As of right now, CFast cards are, as the name implies, faster than regular CF cards. However, they are much more expensive than their CF counterparts. For instance, A typical 60GB CFast card costs about \$400. For that price you can get a 256GB CF card.

Currently, it's impossible to say whether or not CF cards will be replaced by CFast cards. However, some newer cameras like the Blackmagic URSA are already accepting CFast cards instead of CF.

The Future of Compact Flash Cards

It seems like CF cards are here to stay for at least a few more years. The CF Association are theorizing that cards could reach a storage size of 144 petabytes, or 144,000 Terabytes. Only time will tell... but for right now, CF cards are a safe bet for photographers and filmmakers alike.

Which Brand is Best?

There's definitely a lot of debate as to which CF brand is better. Lexar and SanDisk are the largest brands, and more people tend to use them. But other brands like Kingston, Transcend, and Komputer Bay are all very legitimate alternatives.

Why You Shouldn't Always Be Shooting RAW



With RAW shooting cameras so readily available, many filmmakers are opting to shoot RAW as much as possible. Although there are some huge benefits to RAW image capture, there are also some major downsides. RAW isn't always the best choice.

There is no denying that a RAW image will almost always look better than the same image captured with a compressed format. Just like shooting RAW still photos (as opposed to JPEG), RAW video delivers a final image that has maximized dynamic range, detail, and overall image quality. If you're reading this book, chances are you know very well just how beneficial the RAW format can be.

However, no matter how great RAW is, there are many instances where it isn't the right choice and I decide to shoot straight to ProRes, or to another compressed codec. Throughout this post, I

want to touch on some of the reasons why you might NOT want to shoot on raw, since most of us already understand the many benefits of capturing a raw image.

Limited Camera Choice

Many shooters make the mistake of believing that they need to shoot raw in order to achieve the results they are looking for – specifically when it comes to narrative. This unfortunately leads them to limit their camera choice severely by eliminating many

other great camera options than may not shoot raw. This can be particularly problematic in a number of scenarios, one of which being low-light shooting situations. For example, you might want to shoot a scene for your film at night using available street light, which in itself is a difficult task.

If you don't have a lot of experience with many RAW shooting cameras (let's use the RED Epic as an example in this case), you might not realize that most of the current raw cameras that are on the market don't perform well in low light. So if you were to go out and rent an Epic to go and shoot your night scene, you might end up with some really grainy and unusable footage. Yes, it will be raw, but it will likely look terrible. Conversely if you were to shoot on a camera like the Canon C300, you would likely be able to get much better results even though the camera itself isn't nearly as powerful, and is recording to a heavily compressed format.

The key takeaway when it comes to camera choice. The ability to shoot raw should never be your number one concern unless you are shooting something very specific that absolutely needs the additional flexibility of raw. Having the ability to shoot raw when you need it is great, but if it is going to mean that you are choosing a camera that limits your shooting options in other ways – it's never going to be the best choice.

Massive Data Requirements

Any raw camera is going to require a lot of storage, which can become very costly and cumbersome to deal with. While some cameras (such as REDs) will shoot to a compressed raw format, many others (like the BMCC) shoot uncompressed raw, and either way the file sizes for any given raw clip are going to be very large.

When you consider the amount of storage that you need not only to store your dailies, but also to make backups of everything – you're looking at a pretty big expense and a much more involved post process. You might feel like these particular issues aren't a big deal for you, and maybe they aren't...but it's worth pointing out that a huge amount of television series and feature films that shoot on the Arri Alexa (which can shoot raw or ProRes), opt to shoot ProRes in order to streamline their workflow. Most professional DPs have no problem shooting to ProRes, even though it's a compressed format since they know how great that image can look and they are confident enough in their skill set to not have to rely on raw to save them in post.

Color Grading Is A Must

If you plan to shoot RAW, you need to plan for a pretty involved color grading session. Chances are, even if you are shooting to ProRes or any other compressed format you are going to be color grading to some degree, but when shooting raw the overall workflow becomes more dense.

Raw can be immensely helpful when dealing with a blown out window, or any number of other situations that were difficult to shoot on the day of. But in many cases you simply don't need the power that raw offers. When an experienced DP hands off a ProRes project you'll likely be able to color grade it a lot more easily than when an inexperienced DP hands off a project. The reason of course being that the experienced DP has lit and exposed their image in a way that calls for a less intensive color grading session, and therefore needs to rely less on the raw image format.

Conclusion

RAW is a great format. However, there are some major considerations when it comes to shooting raw including the limited

camera options you have, the big data requirements, and the need for a more involved color grading process. There is something to be said about shooting with a camera that is simple to use (especially on a small scale shoot) and will allow you to stay light on your feet and not miss critical shots as a result of becoming bogged down with the raw format. You need to approach your choice carefully.

Three Tips for Dealing With Rolling Shutter



DSLR video has improved dramatically over the last few years, but rolling shutter is still an issue. Deal with it using these three tips.

No one likes the look of rolling shutter artifacts. They're a pesky side effect of shooting on DSLRs (or other cameras using CMOS sensors) and have the potential to ruin otherwise fantastic footage. Rolling shutter issues can plague footage in any number of ways, but most often by causing a horizontal skew when whip panning, or the "jello effect" when shooting on long lenses (or handheld).

Rolling shutter skew is simply a result of the speed at which a frame is scanned and captured on a CMOS sensor. Unlike global shutters, which capture an entire frame all at once, a rolling shutter will scan

the frame from top to bottom, leaving room for visual artifacting in the frame.

In other words, the top and bottom points of any given frame are not captured at the exact same moment, which is why images can appear skewed under certain circumstances.

You might wonder why more manufacturers don't use global shutter sensors on their cameras. There are a number of reasons for this. In a nutshell, there's usually a tradeoff in terms of performance between rolling and global shutters. A rolling shutter has issues with

skew and distortion, but can have better low-light performance and dynamic range.

On the other hand, the global shutter may never be able to achieve the same DR as its rolling shutter counterpart, but it would perform much better for handheld work, action scenes, and visual effects work.

VFX shots in particular can be very challenging to deal with when working with footage suffering from rolling shutter artifacts. For a VFX artist to do their work best, they need to be able to accurately track footage and match 2D/3D elements to the source footage – which can be a huge challenge when the source material isn't stable enough.

But even if you aren't doing VFX work or shooting action sequences, you still need to be careful when shooting on a camera that is prone to rolling shutter problems. A handheld shot using a long lens can turn into complete jello under the wrong conditions, and the skew associated with any number of shooting situations can be a huge distraction in the editing room.

The good news is that there are ways to offset the rolling shutter issues associated with many CMOS sensors. Here are three of the simplest ways to work around it:

1. Use a Rig

This first point applies most specifically to micro-jitters, which can be an issue with nearly any camera, but can be exaggerated by rolling shutter.

Using any sort of stabilizer or rig will always be your best bet when it comes to minimizing micro-jitters. Obviously a tripod or monopod can work perfectly in most instances, but things get a bit trickier for

handheld work. As you might imagine, using a shoulder rig is one of the best ways to eliminate rolling shutter (or at least reduce it significantly), but it needs to be set up just right. Rigs that are heavier but still well balanced are an absolute must for even the most basic handheld work.

Alternatively, you might want to consider a small gimbal-based stabilizer like the Movi M5 or a device like the Nebula 4000. Or, if you are unable to use a rig for any reason, the next best thing would be to use a stabilized lens. Any lens with built-in image stabilization will decrease rolling shutter artifacts substantially, but a well-balanced rig is always going to give better results.

2. Know Your Angles

Sometimes knowing how not to use a tool is just as valuable as knowing how to use it. Every camera has its limitations, whether in the areas of dynamic range, sharpness, detail, color accuracy, or otherwise. If your particular camera struggles with rolling shutter, then sometimes the best option is to work around its limitations and avoid shooting in situations where the camera is going to have issues.

One example of this might involve shooting a moving train. If you were to point your camera at a train that is moving horizontally from screen left to screen right, the image would be very skewed, even if you weren't moving the camera at all. Just like a whip pan, the sensor would be unable to read the entire image at once and would therefore cause a horizontal skew in the image.

While you're on set, the only option you have (other than shooting on a different camera) is to change your angle. Instead of shooting head on, you could opt to shoot from a 3/4 angle or any number of other positions that would help you avoid the skew entirely. It may

feel frustrating that your creative choices are limited, but knowing your limitations will always help you get the best results and avoid issues down the road.

3. Fix It in Post



The phrase “fix it in post” has become a cliché at this point, but when it comes to rolling shutter, sometimes it actually is the best option. Depending on the severity of the rolling shutter artifacts, you may be able to fix the image during post-production by using any number of different plugins for various NLE systems or compositing software. There are dozens of options out there, so I would recommend doing a quick google search to see which tools work best for your camera and software combination.

With all of that said, I would never rely on fixing your rolling shutter in post. The best results will always be achieved by avoiding rolling shutter artifacts in the first place. But if you are in a sticky situation, it’s great to know that there are some editing tools that can help you deal with these problem shots.

Cinematography Tips For Horror Filmmakers



Horror is a very specific genre that calls for some unique lighting techniques. These five cinematography tips will make just about any horror film more stylized and effective.

Horror films are all about tone, texture, and mood. Unlike many other genres that rely more heavily on other elements (dialogue, plot points, etc.), great horror films are all about style. That's not to imply that a great horror film shouldn't also have excellent dialogue and a great plot, but rather that those elements often take a back seat to the immersive mood and experience that a great horror film delivers.

The two most important elements in creating that mood are sound design and cinematography, the latter being what we're going to

focus on here. Unlike lighting a comedy or drama, more rules can often be broken when shooting a horror film, and in many cases that translates to a more effective final product.

If you plan on shooting some horror material in the future, then this chapter is for you. The five cinematography tips listed below will serve as some fundamental guidelines that you can follow throughout your time on set.

1. Shoot Through Things

Some horror filmmakers are drawn to extreme closeups, but doing the exact opposite can be far more effective. Rather than always filling up your frame with your actors faces (just because it looks intense), challenge yourself to go wider.

Imagine a scene where an actor is sitting alone in their kitchen. An extreme closeup on their face may show us some added emotion, but a wide shot taken from outside the house (looking in) could be far more powerful.

Not only are you showing the isolation of the character, but you're also creating a voyeuristic and unsettling feeling by shooting through a pane of glass, which is a technique that can be very effective under the right conditions.

2. Underexpose

As DPs, we have it drilled in our heads to always expose perfectly. We have more tools than ever (both in camera and otherwise) that enable us to nail our exposure. Though, in some cases, that isn't what's going to serve the story most effectively.

On a horror film, underexposing can be extremely effective as it'll leave more areas of the frame in the shadows and create a more mysterious feeling.

Although you could technically expose normally and just color grade your footage to darken it in post, the end result won't be quite the same. You want to actually light your scene in a way that feels organically underexposed, and bring that out even more in the grade.

Don't push things too far though, or you won't be able to bump it back up in post if needed. About a stop of underexposure is all you need to set the tone.

3. Use Haze

Using a tasteful amount of haze (or fog) can add a lot of texture to your scene. This is one of the oldest tricks in the book, but it's still used on nearly every set (and for good reason). There's absolutely no substitute for the look and feel that haze can bring to your scene, and it's especially effective when it comes to the horror genre.

Use a hazer or fog machine to add just a touch of haze to your scene, and be sure not to go overboard. A little bit of haze will go a long way, and much like underexposing, it can really help to set a unique and mysterious mood to your scenes.

4. Don't Be Afraid of Colored Gels

I almost always avoid using colored gels when shooting, unless I'm using them to correct the color temperature of a light (for example, balancing tungsten to daylight). That said, if I'm ever going to use them, it's on a horror film. That's one of the only genres where I feel they can work exceptionally well.

Red gels in particular can be really effective for horror, as the color red can inherently make your viewers feel unnerved. Avoid using colored gels in the way that a photographer might (such as on the rim light) and instead use them on your key.

Let's say you've got a scene that takes place in a dark hallway of a club. If your key light has a red gel on it, it will bleed over the faces of your actors and create a really stylized look. Again, know when to use this and when not to. If you mix colored gels with regular lighting (or natural light) you may just wind up with a strange looking image.

5. Find Unique Angles

The most obvious example of a unique angle that works well for horror is the dutch tilt, though just about any unconventional angle can help play into the vibe of your film.

Much like the other tips on this list, you want to use your camera angles to create an unsettling feeling within the viewer. The best way to do that is to create an image that looks off balance. That's why the dutch tilt works so well.

Other examples would be a bird's eye view or a very low angle shot looking up. Both of these are unique perspectives that we rarely see on film, and can really help to jolt the audience into the headspace of the characters.

Always be sure that whatever extreme camera angle you're going for still suits your scene. The last thing you want is to stylize a scene or moment in a way that isn't true to the story.

Cinematography Tip: Use Fog To Add Depth to Your Shot



A little haze goes a long way. Fire up the fog machine to add dimension and depth to your shots!

There's a good reason why we tend to love images with lots of depth, and it has a lot to do with the way we see the world. We see and experience the world in 3D space, and when we watch films and enjoy great cinematography, we want the aesthetic of the 2D medium to feel as three dimensional as humanly possible. This is also why great cinematographers often talk about how their favorite lenses have a 3D feel to them. They're not referring to literal 3D filmmaking, but rather the optics of the lens.

The DSLR revolution has allowed filmmakers of all kinds to use depth of field to easily create depth in almost any shot quite easily.

However, DOF is definitely not the only way to create depth in your image and it certainly isn't an option you can always rely on. For example, if you're working in a cramped space and aren't able to shoot on a long lens, it simply may not be possible to achieve the depth you need based on your optics alone.

Arguably one of the best ways you can achieve depth (outside of your camera/lens choice) is to use a hazer or fog machine. The slightest bit of haze in a room can add a tremendous amount of depth to your scene, as it will create a large variance in the aesthetic between the foreground and background.



On the same note, you definitely don't want to go overboard with the fog because it can become cheesy very quickly. In fact for this technique to work well, you shouldn't really see it at all – you just want to 'feel' it in the image. So the next time you're stuck using a small sensor camera, or you're shooting in a tight space and just can't get the depth you need, try adding a bit of haze. You'll be surprised to see just how effective it can be.

How to Shoot Gorgeous Documentary Interviews



Beautifully shot documentary interviews are vital to your film's success. Get the best footage possible with these tips.

Years ago, most documentaries were synonymous with lower production quality. They were typically shot on lower-end video cameras and with less involved setups. There were, of course, those documentaries that went against the grain and strived for higher production value, but they were few and far between.

Over the last 5 to 10 years though, that has changed. The average documentary now looks just as good as many narrative films. This is largely thanks to the fact that documentary shooters are able to have access to some of the same cinematic tools as narrative

filmmakers, but also because the documentary genre in general has been morphing.

The point is – if you are setting out to shoot a documentary today, the bar has been raised. To secure distribution, you are going to want to deliver the best creative product across the board... and your approach to documentary interviews is one of the most important components to consider.

There are many ways you can increase production value on a doc, but for the purposes of this article, let's focus on interview footage.

In many documentaries, interviews account for 50% of the overall screen time — and they are also one of the few environments on any doc shoot where you have a lot of creative control. For those reasons and more, you want to maximize the quality and substance of your interviews. Below are three simple ways that you can increase the quality of your interviews.

1. Use a Slider

Sliders are your best friend when it comes to documentary interviews. We've all watched documentaries where the interview footage was just dull. More often than not, the root problem of those interviews comes down to camera movement. Even a well-composed and well-lit shot will only sustain the average viewer's attention for so long, which is why most interviews are covered up heavily with b-roll.

That said, there are times when you want to linger on an interview and really see the person as they are speaking — especially in more emotional moments. This can make things tricky in the editing room. You end up having to decide between cutting away to b-roll to make things more visually interesting or staying on the interview shot, but losing momentum in the pacing. This is where sliders come in.

The most subtle slider move during an interview can make a world of difference. You don't need to have a massive dolly or a really obvious move for this technique to work. In fact, it's better if you don't. Ideally, you want to have a very slow slider move that's just barely noticeable so that viewers are continually drawn in to the footage, but aren't distracted by the camera move.

In order to execute this technique well, you will likely want an assistant there to operate the slider for you so that you can still conduct your interview effectively. Alternatively, there are now

several motorized and automated sliders from companies like Redrock Micro that allow you to automate the process.

2. Shoot in 4K

Shooting in 4K means you can reframe your shots in post, but a lot of people are purists. They approach digital cinematography in the same way that they approach film. That means that every shot is composed in camera the way it is intended to look in the final product, as opposed to simply shooting with the intention that everything will change in the editing room.

With all that said, interviews can be treated differently since the editorial process calls for a different approach. While editing a documentary interview, there will be times when you desperately need a cutting point but simply don't have one. If you shot your footage in 4K, then you have solved that problem by being able to push in on your 4K shot after the cut point, making it feel like you're cutting to a tighter angle.

So even though 4K may still be overkill for many productions, you might still want to shoot your interviews this way to keep your options open in post.

3. Use a B-camera

Building off of the previous point, another really great method for keeping your options open in the editing room involves shooting with two cameras. Depending on who you're interviewing and how comfortable they may be on camera, you may need to do a lot of editing to make their interview feel for cohesive and fluid.

For instance, if the interviewee says a lot of "ums," you're going to want to have the ability to cut away whenever possible so that it doesn't distract the viewer. You could use the 4K punch in method

described above, but an even better alternative is having a second camera angle to cut to.

Most often, a second camera during an interview setup will be placed at a 45 degree angle to the talent to capture an entirely different look. Profile shots can also work really well too, depending on the aesthetic you are going for, as can a tighter framed shot... But all that really matters is that your shot is different enough from your A-camera that the cuts aren't distracting.

Keep in mind that you may also need another camera operator, depending on how you're going to set up your shots and whether or not a slider is involved,

Lighting Tips to Consider Before Shooting Your Next Film



Lighting is the number one factor to take into account when crafting a cinematic image. Follow these lighting tips to get the most out of your shot.

Lighting is one the most most critical components of cinematic design. Proper manipulation of light is vital to delivering the intended sentiment of a scene, and therefore can have a great emotional impact on how your stories are received by an audience.

Everyone knows this, yet so many make really poor decisions when it comes to lighting. One of the biggest issues that seems to plague indie films today is a general lack of lighting, usually as a result of attempting to shoot with high-sensitivity cameras like the Sony a7S or Canon C300.

It's common for filmmakers today to feel that lights are no longer as crucial to the filmmaking process as they once were, seeing as high-sensitivity cameras are able to expose the image properly without the use of a proper light setup, even with nighttime exteriors,

Unfortunately though, this type of corner-cutting never yields good results. Just because an image is technically exposed properly doesn't mean it looks good or that it's the right look for the story. So here are a few key lighting tips to take into account before lighting your next film.

Choose Between Soft and Hard Light

One of the best things that you can do when approaching the lighting setup for any film is deciding whether you want to go for a soft or hard aesthetic. Obviously you can change the lighting setup from scene to scene, but if you want your film to have any sort of consistency, the lighting will largely fall into one or these two categories.



It's pretty easy to make lighting decisions that will help you achieve the look that you have in mind. But the important first step is often overlooked. A lot of indie films end up having no choice but to use hard lighting on their film, as they haven't thought things through enough and didn't budget for powerful HMI lights. Or maybe they didn't spend enough time in pre-production to come up with solutions to combat the harsh sunlight.

In some cases, projects can benefit by going with a hard lighting aesthetic (think *Breaking Bad*) and will intentionally work with direct sunlight and other bright sources to create dramatic shadows. In other cases, diffusion is used to create more forgiving (softer) light sources.

There's no right or wrong way to approach soft vs. hard light, but the big takeaway here should be that you need to define your look early on. Only then will you be able to take the necessary steps needed to execute your look.



Use Practical Lights for Interiors

Just because you don't have a big lighting budget doesn't mean that you can't light your film. The benefit of high sensitivity cameras (like the Canon C300 or Sony a7S) isn't so much that they can shoot in no light, but rather that they excel in low-light situations. Those two scenarios are very different. What that means is that if you need to

shoot your film without a proper film lighting kit, you can certainly get away with that – but in order to maintain a visually pleasing look to the film, you’re going to at least need to know how to use practical lights to craft the image.

If you don’t already know, practicals are any lights that actually appear in the shot or on the set. These could be overhead lights, desk lamps, floor lights, or any other typical light that you might find in your average interior location.

A whole lot can be done with practical lights to shape the mood of your scene. In many cases, they are preferable to film lights, as you can set things up in a way that gives your actors more flexibility on set, allowing them to have more freedom to improvise and be less specific with their marks.

In order to really nail practical lighting though, you can’t just simply show up and expect the lighting to work for your needs – it still takes a lot of effort. You’ll want to get various types of household bulbs in varying strengths to use in your fixtures. And just like you would with film lights, you’ll need gels, black wrap, and other tools to help you control the output, color temperature, and spill of the practicals.

LED Panels for Night Exteriors

Night time exteriors are probably the most poorly executed type of setup on most low budget indie films. This is especially true of films that attempt to shoot on ultra-high-sensitivity cameras without the use of light. As touched on earlier in this section, just because you don’t need lights to properly expose your image doesn’t mean that you’re going to wind up with a final product that looks good.

You still need at least some light to create the right highlights, shadows, and overall mood in your shot. No matter how clean your



camera may be in low light, there is no substitution for actually lighting your scene properly.

The good news is that if you are shooting with a camera like the a7S or C300, you can easily get away with using a minimal lighting setup (such as battery powered LEDs) and still get great results. If your camera can expose a clean image in a very low-light situation, then that will get you most of the way there. Just be sure to use additional lights such as LED panels to kick in a key light or a rim light on your talent. These panels are relatively affordable and will go a very long way in helping you shape your image.

Five Easy Tips For Nailing Your Exposure On Every Shot



No matter what camera you're shooting with, perfect exposure is the biggest key to achieving a beautiful image. Here are five easy tips that will help you get it right every time.

Whether you're shooting to a compressed format or to RAW, nailing your exposure in camera will improve the look of your image and save you hours (or days!) in post-production. The tips below are especially relevant when shooting with cameras that suffer from low-bitrate recording.

Use an EVF During the Day

Outside of using critical exposure tools (which we'll get to soon), one of the most important factors when it comes to exposure is being able to trust your eye. Unfortunately, most cameras and

monitors are unable to compete with bright light sources, such as sunlight, which can make monitoring a huge challenge during day exteriors. Although it may seem like you're getting an accurate visual read on your image, you're probably judging your overall exposure incorrectly. The only way to combat this is by using an EVF.

If you have a camera that has a strong EVF built right in (like the C300), then things are quite simple for you. Just make sure to use it

over the LCD screen. However, if you have a camera with a poor EVF (or none at all), it's highly recommend that you invest in one.

Understand Your Zebras

Unless you're extremely new to shooting, you've probably already been using zebra stripes to some extent. For those that don't know, zebras can be set to effectively highlight a portion of your image that is overexposed, so that you know when your shot is clipping to white.

It sounds easy, and in many cases it is. However, there are some snags that you need to know about when working with zebras. For example, many shooters expose for the zebras (so as not to overexpose their shot), but then they end up underexposing their talent.

In other words, if there was a lamp in the back of the shot that was blowing out, a lot of amateur DPs would be tempted to expose the image so the lamp doesn't clip... but then the rest of their image ends up being severely underexposed. Always remember that it's okay for parts of your image to clip – at least within reason. Just never sacrifice the skin tones or your talent in general.

Don't Be Afraid of Light Meters

Many DPs still swear by light meters, even if they aren't always mandatory. If you're shooting on a camera that has very limited dynamic range, it would be advantageous for you to use a light meter so that you can properly set your lighting ratios.

We all want cameras with high dynamic range so that our lives can be made easier on set. But the truth is, a camera with 7 stops of DR can look better than one with 14 stops if it's lit properly. It just comes down to making sure that the lighting setup keeps the exposure within those 7 stops. In order to do that well, a light meter is essential.



The Histogram Is Your Friend

I'm often surprised that so few up-and-coming cinematographers really know how to use a histogram, considering that it's one of the most critical on-camera tools that can be used to dial in exposure. While not all cameras have a built in histogram, many do – and I would strongly suggest that you start using yours properly.

The histogram may look confusing at first, but really it's very simple. The histogram simply displays the luminance (dark vs. light) values from left to right, so that you can see where your image falls. If the histogram is all crunched over to the left side, it means the image is underexposed. If it mainly falls on the right side, it likely means the image is overexposed. For most situations you will want it somewhere right in the middle, but there are definitely exceptions to that rule.

Know Your Camera's Quirks

A big part of nailing your exposure is understanding the quirks and differences of your current camera. For example, in the previous point we mentioned that you usually want to have your exposure fall

somewhere in the middle when using your histogram, but that isn't always the case. For example, certain cameras hold detail far better in the highlights, which would mean you might want to 'expose to the right,' or slightly overexpose intentionally so that you are left with the best possible image in post. This is just one of many dozens of examples of camera quirks, but the key takeaway here is that you absolutely need to know your camera and understand how it needs to be treated to achieve the best results when exposing your image.

Four Cheap Practical Lights That Can Work Wonders On Set



Placing an emphasis on lighting is one of the most effective ways to keep your production value high. The four lights on this list will allow you to not only light your film beautifully, but do it on a minuscule budget.

Nearly every indie filmmaker will rent or buy a standard lighting kit for their productions (such as an Arri or Lowell kit). While these types of lighting kits are reliable and versatile, inexpensive consumer lights may also have a place in your production. Unlike traditional lighting kits, practical lights (that can be bought at places like Home Depot or Ikea) are often sold at a fraction of the cost of film lights, since they don't have the same functionality built in. While the lack of functionality can seem like a big downside, you can

often use the quirkiness of these lights to your advantage...and ultimately give your film a distinct look.

It's not just filmmakers on a budget that are known to make use of practical lights either. Many well-established filmmakers (like David Fincher for example) are known for utilizing household lights or work lamps in order to achieve a desired effect. So if you're looking to save a few bucks on your next production, or just want to try something new and different – these lights are for you:

1. China Balls

Nearly every lighting store or home furnishing store (such as Ikea) will sell these china balls, and generally they go for under \$20. They emit a beautiful soft light that can be used as a key, fill, or even a background light and are extremely adaptable. For daytime use, you can switch to daylight balanced bulbs easily, which makes them such versatile and valuable tools much like the work lights above.

They can be mounted on a light stand, used on a boom pole (for run and gun/walking scenes), or rigged up just about anywhere you can imagine. Many film lighting manufacturers now make more expensive “pro” versions of these lights that have a stronger ball (the cheap ones are made of paper), so if you want to use a light like this on multiple shoots, you might want to consider a more heavy duty version.

2. Work Lights

These common construction lights can be bought at just about any hardware store for about \$30, and considering the amount of power that they can generate, they offer some of the best bang for the buck out there. You can buy these lights with tungsten or daylight balanced bulbs which makes them extremely versatile, and their strong output makes them fantastic options for demanding lighting situations such as night exteriors. These lights have been used in countless feature films (even large-scale productions such as Fight Club), and are a must have for DPs on a budget.

3. Energizer LED Folding Area Lantern

These little light panels are a relatively new product and available at nearly any Target, Walmart, or supply store. They are often used for camping, as a means to light up a completely dark area at night. As such, they well-suited for use on a film set. The light quality and fall off from these little panels can be brilliant, and I generally find them

to give a similar aesthetic to shooting with regular LED panels or at times even fluorescent Kinos. Use these as a soft key or a fill light, as they do a great job of illuminating skin tones in a natural way.

4. Clamp Flood Lights

These good old fashioned flood lights have been used for decades by filmmakers and photographers on a budget. They can be bought for as little as \$9 (without the bulb) at your local hardware store, and much like the construction lights on this list, they offer a great solution for inexpensive high power output. You can use a single lamp as a high key (or add diffusion to it if you prefer) or combine multiple lamps to illuminate an entire room. There is a reason why these have been used for so many years, and it’s not just because they’re cheap!

Final Thoughts: Use What You Need

When approaching the lighting setup for any given project, you never want to take a one-size-fits-all approach. Always carefully consider what the stylistic and creative needs are of your project, and what your vision is for the overall aesthetic. From there, you can start to build your kit in a way that is unique and specific to your project.

Tips for Getting Good Shots in a Bad Location



Stuck with a bad location? Here are a few tips for getting better shots when your location is less than ideal.

In a perfect world we would all be able to shoot in whatever location we want and control every aspect of the filmmaking process. Unfortunately, we don't live in a perfect world.

Unless you're working on a big-budget shoot you are likely going to have to shoot in some less-than-ideal circumstances. Thankfully there are a few things you can do to help make a bad location better. Follow these ten tips for getting the most out of every location.

1. Show up Early and Make a Plan

While you should always make it a point to show up early for your productions, it's especially important if you're shooting in a less-than-ideal location. An early arrival allows you to create a plan of attack for how you're going to deal with the various obstacles keeping you from getting great video. This is an easy one.

2. Set Expectations With Clients

Clients are often clueless when it comes to selecting a good location for shooting video. Don't assume that they know what makes a

location good or bad. If your client is insisting on shooting in a specific location, let them know possible pain points that may be associated with that locale. Setting these expectations will help minimize surprises once you're in the editing bay.

3. Moving Blankets



Sound is normally the biggest obstacle to overcome in a challenging location. It's always best to seek out locations away from roads, crowds, and airports. However, if you simply must shoot in a specific location, one tool you can use to dampen echo and outside noise is a moving blanket. The coarse, thick material is perfect for mounting on walls, covering windows, or simply laying on a concrete floor. Unlike acoustic foam, moving blankets tend to be very affordable and versatile.

4. Know the Schedule/Move the Shooting Time

You've been here before...

You begin shooting an interview only to be interrupted by people making noise and constantly walking onto your set. This all-too-common problem can be incredibly annoying. Let your clients know that you'll need time and space away from people. Typically this means shooting in the evening.

5. White Balance for Blue/Orange and Green/Magenta

Most bad locations share a common flaw... fluorescent lighting. Fluorescent lights are bad for multiple reasons: buzzing, flickering, and strangely tinted light. If you simply must shoot with fluorescent lights, you'll likely find your footage more green than normal. On most cameras you can adjust your white balance from blue to orange, but this will not effect the green tint found with fluorescents. On most high-end cameras you can white balance to adjust for blue, orange, green, and magenta deep in the menu. Make sure to adjust both settings if you want an ideal white balance in fluorescent lighting.

6. Filters

In day-to-day life, mixed lighting isn't that big of a deal, but when it comes to shooting video it can be a nightmare. Instead of trying to work with different color temperatures, use colored filters. You can make your video easier to color correct in post by filtering your lights. Get a large roll of orange, blue, magenta, and ND filters and cut them to certain sizes as needed.

7. Bring More Lenses



One of the best ways to stay flexible on set is to have an arsenal of lenses at a variety of focal lengths. Narrative films are typically shot on prime lenses, but if you're shooting a corporate video you can

normally get away with shooting on a good zoom lens. The goal is to stay versatile in less-than-ideal circumstances.

8. Know What's Important

A video shoot is full of choices and compromises. It's important for you to know the difference between what's important and what's not and to discern each in the moment. There's nothing wrong with wanting to make your finished product as nice as possible, but knowing when to draw the line is important for you as a director/producer.

When you're in a time crunch, spend the time fixing things on set that you simply can't correct in post.

What to Know About Shooting With Vintage Lenses



Follow tips when outfitting your digital camera with vintage glass.

Perhaps it's the hip look or the affordable pricing, but there's recently been a vintage lens revival in the photo and filmmaking community. For now, you can still get many lenses for a bargain – but with the recent uptick in popularity, the price of used lenses may increase as well.

Whether you are new to vintage lenses, or just interested in learning more about them, here are ten things you should know.

1. You Can Use Vintage Glass on Your Camera

Using simple adapters, you can adapt vintage lenses to a variety of modern lens mounts including Micro 4/3, Canon EF, Nikon F, and

Sony E. These adapters come in a variety of prices, some for under \$10.

2. Vintage Glass Is Cheaper Than Modern Glass

If you compare a vintage lens to a modern lens, you'll find that most vintage lenses are much cheaper. For example... an Olympus OM 50mm f/1.4 can be picked up for around \$90 on eBay, compared to a comparable new Canon lens which goes for \$400.

3. Most Vintage Lenses Have External Aperture Control

If these vintage lenses didn't have external aperture control, it would be very difficult to use them in modern productions. This is

due to the camera's inability to communicate with the lens. However, when you have external aperture control, you can change the f-stop with a simple wheel turn.

4. Most Vintage Lenses Can Be Easily De-Clicked

De-clicking a lens can be an extremely scary process, especially if you're trying to de-click a modern lens. Thankfully, vintage lenses don't have the same build as modern lenses. Vintage lenses are usually held together by easy-to-access screws, making them simple to take apart and de-click. You also don't have to worry about damaging computer components inside vintage lenses.

5. Some Vintage Lenses Have Awesome Distortions.

While it may not be ideal for shooting modern projects or weddings, the distortions created by shooting on vintage glass can be incredibly stylish and unique. Vintage glass usually has more chromatic aberrations and the focus can be a little soft... but if you're wanting to get the popular 'Instagram/hipster' look, vintage glass is perfect.

6. Vintage Lenses Can't Autofocus on Your Camera

Because your modern camera wasn't designed to communicate with old lenses, you will (probably) not be able to use the autofocus feature. There are a few exceptions with vintage Nikon F mount lenses, but even then it can be difficult to get the old autofocus parts to function correctly. This makes it difficult to use vintage glass in a photography context, but this shouldn't be a problem for film or video projects.

7. You Can Add Gear Rings to Vintage Glass to Make Them Cine-Lenses

The internet is full of adaptable gear rings that can make any lens a 'cine-lens'. All you need to do is buy a simple gear ring kit and secure

it around your vintage lens. The whole process should take about an hour, but the investment is definitely worth it.

8. Most Vintage Lenses Have Some Vignetting... But in a Good Way

Distance and size aren't always perfect with vintage glass, so you can expect to see vignetting with most older lenses. While some would argue that vignetting is a bad thing, it can sometimes create an interesting effect. This is particularly helpful if you are trying to get a vintage look with your lens, but it all depends on your personal preference.

9. Buying Good Adapters Is Crucial When Using Vintage Lenses

While you may be able to pick up a cheap adapter for \$10 on Amazon, that doesn't mean it's a good adapter. Every millimeter matters when adapting for vintage lenses. So, if an adapter was cheaply made, it could potentially have focusing issues or mess up your camera. Be sure to do your research and go for quality when you're picking a lens adapter.

10. Some Vintage Lenses Are Coming Back

If you've been following the Petzval lens, then you've probably seen the amazing footage and images it can create. In short, the Petzval lens was a vintage lens from the mid-1800s that has recently been recreated for the modern user. Instead of having to buy an adapter, the Petzval lens comes natively in both Canon and Nikon lens mounts.

Five Tips For Capturing Better Low-Light Footage



Full-frame DSLRs unlocked the potential of shooting in extremely low-light situations by delivering great results at high ISOs. However, the vast majority of DPs today are not shooting full frame and need to think outside of the box when it comes to capturing images in low light.

Over the last few years, DSLRs and other digital cinema cameras have improved by leaps and bounds. The average camera today offers better codecs, more video functionality, higher frame rates, and other essential improvements that have proved to be invaluable for so many shooters out there. One area that hasn't improved as dramatically across the board is low-light performance.

While it might be true that cameras like the Sony a7S or the Canon C300 have given us remarkable low-light performance, the fact of the matter is that these cameras are the exception not the rule. The

average DSLR or cinema camera today will not perform well in extremely low-light situations. In fact, many cameras today don't necessarily offer any better low-light performance than their predecessors. For instance a Lumix GH4 (which is a fantastic camera), is not great in low light. It would undoubtedly be outperformed in a low-light shooting situation by even a first generation Canon 5D MK II.

Take better low light shots! Follow these five tips for success...

1. Always Shoot at ISO 800 or Below

Every camera is different and will inevitably have variances when it comes to ISO performance. As a general rule of thumb, it's recommend that you shoot at a maximum ISO of 800. Even cameras that can shoot cleanly at ISO 1600 or 3200 will still never perform as well in terms of image quality, color depth, and dynamic range as they would at a lower ISO.

In an ideal world, you always want to shoot at your base ISO (which is your camera's native sensitivity level), but some cameras have a very low base ISO (let's say 200 or 400) which wouldn't be practical for shooting in low light. Most cameras today will produce nice results up to ISO 800 or so, even if they have a base ISO that is significantly lower. So no matter which camera you're shooting on, try to avoid bumping up your ISO too high. Yes, your image is going to be darker than you might like in some circumstances, but the other tips on this list will help you overcome those issues.

2. Invest in Extremely Fast Lenses

This one should be a no brainer, but it needs to be stated here. Why? Because so many shooters attempt to shoot in low-light situations with slow glass. If you want to keep your ISO at 800 or below, and don't have any additional lighting to help with your exposure, you absolutely need to let in as much light as possible so that your sensor has something to read.

If you don't already have lenses that are at least an F1.4 (or preferably even lower), then you will need to go out and get at least one or two so that you are covered in extreme situations. This is especially true if you are shooting on a smaller sensor camera like the Blackmagic Pocket camera (with its super 16mm sized sensor), since the sensor size of your camera is directly related to low-light performance. There are relatively affordable lenses today that can

shoot at F0.95 (like the Voigtlander lenses), so make sure to do some research and pick up the best glass you can.

3. Shoot From Farther Away

One of the issues with shooting in low light is that you will often encounter focusing issues since you're likely going to be shooting wide open on very fast lenses. A full frame camera with a 50mm f/1.2 lens will produce a razor thin depth of field. This means that if one of your actors moves even an inch or two in the wrong direction, your shot will be out of focus.

One of the biggest giveaways of a low-budget production is when all the night footage drifts in and out of focus, as it's obvious that the filmmakers were shooting so wide open that they had trouble following the action. The best way to remedy this is by shooting from farther away so that your actors fall closer to the infinity focus range.

Once you hit infinity focus, everything from that point on will be perfectly sharp. If you can step back far enough while still keeping your framing right, you'll have a much easier time with focus and you may not need to pull it at all. Alternatively, you could use a wider lens that hits infinity at a closer distance than a long lens.

4. Choose the Right Location

When you're shooting without lighting (whether during day or night), you need to spend extra time scouting your locations and prepping for the shoot. You don't want to just assume that you'll have enough ambient street light in a specific location to give you the results that you need. Until you actually go out there with your camera and see how the light reads, you'll just be guessing.

When you take the time to do a proper location scout/tech test and see what you're working with, you'll know right then and there

whether or not your results will be useable. And if the light isn't registering on camera the way that you thought that it would, be thankful that you caught the issue early and find another location. Certain streets/blocks are going to be better lit than others, so do your homework and make sure you know exactly what you're getting yourself into.

5. De-Noise in Post

If you followed all of these steps and your footage is still a little bit noisy or grainy, take your best shot at improving the shot in post. There are an abundance of post-production tools out there that are designed to clean up your footage and reduce grain — many of which are truly remarkable. Neat Video is a great plugin for noise reduction. Other software like Adobe After Effects or DaVinci Resolve will have noise reduction tools built right in.

Also – don't sweat it if you need to de-noise your footage. It doesn't mean that you didn't shoot properly. Some cameras just don't pick up certain luminance levels as well as others, so even if you follow all the right steps you may wind up with some grain.

Shooting With a Shallow Depth of Field



Give your video shots greater dimension! Follow these tips for shooting shallow depth of field.

Shallow depth of field places the focus on one part of your image, while other areas in the frame are out of focus. A lot of video newbies struggle with creating selective focus in their videos. Follow these tips to give your video shots shallow DoF.

Creating Shallow Depth of Field

1. Open Up Your Aperture

The quickest way to get shallow depth of field is to shoot with a wide-aperture lens at a low f-stop number. Unfortunately, these

lenses are expensive. Instead of spending thousands of dollars on wide-aperture zoom lenses, try looking for prime lenses instead. They tend to give you a much wider aperture at a much lower cost. Plus, having a zoom lens isn't as important with video as it is for still photography.

2. Use a Telephoto Lens

Telephoto lenses have a much more shallow depth of field than their wider counterparts. This means, generally, an 85mm lens will have a more shallow depth of field than a 50mm lens and so on.

3. Create Distance

Simply separating the distance of your subject from the other elements in your frame will increase background blur considerably. Another consideration would be moving your subject close to your camera. This will give you a psuedo-macro environment and make your background much blurrier.

4. Use a Full-Frame Camera

Full-frame sensors are more capable of producing a shallower depth of field than a cropped sensor. This is due to the fact that to get a 50mm equivalent image on a APS-C sensor you would need to use a 31mm lens – the wider the lens the less blurry the background.

5. Focus on the Eyes

Audiences are extremely unforgiving if your subject's eyes are out of focus. When performing a critical focus, concentrate on the eyes. This is of course not a hard-and-fast rule, but in most circumstances, eyes make great focus points.

6. Use a Monitor With Focus Assist

A portable reference monitor is essential if you want to take your productions to the next level. You need to see your footage in a larger format than the small LCD screen on your camera. One key feature that high-end monitors have over their cheaper counterparts is the ability to display focusing information. Focus grids make it easier to tell if your subject is in focus or not. When you have a shallow depth of field, these become even more important.

7. Use a Follow Focus

A follow focus is essentially a small wheel that can manually adjust the focus of your lens. When working with shallow depth of field, it can be really easy to over or undershoot your focus points if you're simply adjusting the focus with your hand. A follow focus will allow you to make very precise changes in your focus.



8. Use ND Filters

As we discussed above, one of the best ways to get a shallow depth of field is to use a wide aperture. But if you are shooting in a bright environment like the outdoors, then you'll likely have an overexposed image that will be unusable. To fix this problem, try shooting with an ND filter. An ND filter will act like sunglasses for your camera, cutting down the amount of incoming light. This will allow you to shoot at wide apertures even in bright sunlight.

9. Find Your Marks

If you're shooting a film with a shallow depth of field, marking your actor's marks (and your focus marks!) is incredibly important. Most follow focuses allow you to write markers with dry erase markers. However if you aren't using a follow focus, you're still fine. You can use a pencil to mark your focus points on your lens and erase them afterwards. It can be helpful to label your actor's marks with gaff tape.

Five Reasons Why You Should Use a Prime Lens



There are a ton of benefits to shooting with a prime lens. Here are the top five.

To anyone in the photography or filmmaking world, prime lenses give you the biggest bang for your buck. There are many benefits to shooting with primes over shooting with kit lenses.

1. Bokeh

First of all, it's pronounced *Boh-Kuh* not *Bow-Kay*.

Prime lenses tend to have wider apertures than their kit counterparts. This creates a shallower depth of field and more background blur. When objects in the background blur out to form large orbs it's called bokeh. For photographers and filmmakers,

bokeh is a quick way to make your images look more interesting to the viewer.

2. Light Gathering

Better light gathering allows you to shoot in lower light. A larger-apertured prime lens has greater light-gathering power than its kit counterpart. This is huge for photographers because it allows them to shoot at a much faster shutter speed to minimize camera shake. This isn't to be confused with image stabilization, but it is a cheap alternative.

3. Quality

Because kit lenses have many moving parts, but still need to be affordable, they are often very cheap and break easily. Prime lenses, on the other hand, tend to be more durable than kit lenses.

4. Value

As artists, we need to save money wherever we can, and prime lenses are a great place to do just that. Instead of spending thousands of dollars on an expensive zoom lens, try buying a nice prime set instead. You will get all the benefits of the expensive zoom lens at a much lower cost.

5. Size

Prime lenses tend to be much smaller than zoom lenses, making them easier to carry and shoot with. This isn't a huge problem. But when you have limited space in your camera bag, every inch counts.

9 Tips for Shooting Cinematic Footage



Looking to give your footage a high-budget cinematic look? Check out these tips.

There's a lot more that goes into getting a cinematic image than simply buying the right camera. From pre-production to post, every aspect of the filmmaking process works together to create a beautiful end film. Let's take a look at a few ways to create beautiful cinematic footage.

1. Storyboard

Storyboarding is one of the most overlooked yet vital aspects of filmmaking. While you may not be able to storyboard for every project (like, say a documentary), you should always be storyboarding for a narrative film. Storyboarding allows you to get

the ideas from your head onto paper so you can share them with the rest of the crew.

Even if you think you have an incredibly clear vision for your film in your head, you will inevitably run into a point on set where your original creative vision is getting a little fuzzy under pressure.

Take time to storyboard each shot before you arrive on set. You don't have to be the best artist in the world. Just jot down composition notes as best you can.

2. Shoot 24fps

Almost all modern film is shot in 24 fps, however the default for most modern video cameras is 30fps. So if you want to make your footage look more cinematic, you need to be shooting in 24fps. Most modern cameras allow you to at least change between 30fps and 24fps.

If you want to shoot slow-motion footage, you could shoot at even higher frame rates like 60fps or 120fps and slow it down to 24fps when you edit.

3. Shallow Depth of Field

There are very few things as noticeably cinematic as a shallow depth of field. If you're not already familiar with the term, depth of field refers to the portion of the frame that is in focus. A camera like an iPhone has a very wide depth of field, meaning it's very hard to get a background out of focus. A DSLR-style camera can get an out-of-focus background very easily.

If you're determined to get the most cinematic footage possible on a budget, you should definitely look into using a DSLR or mirrorless photographic-style camera instead of a camcorder.

4. Don't Zoom

Zooming is great for shooting a high school football game, not so much for shooting a film. There are very few cases of zooming in modern cinema. Don't believe me? Watch your favorite film and look for the number of times they zoom.

Unless you're watching an Edgar Wright film, it's unlikely that you'll find any zooming shots. Instead filmmakers typically use a technique called dollying in which they will physically move the entire camera towards the subject. The result is a much more natural movement that is pleasing to the eye.

5. High Dynamic Range

Dynamic range refers to your camera's ability to simultaneously record both bright and dark areas. To illustrate the point, think about terrible local news footage. In most of their footage, you'll likely see a reporter standing under direct sunlight with a sky that is completely white. This is incredibly distracting and it will look terrible to an audience in a theater.

Back in the day (5 years ago), cameras with high dynamic ranges were very expensive. But with recent advancements in technology, notably from Blackmagic Design, you can now get beautifully balanced images for an affordable price.

6. Shoot in RAW

You've probably already heard of a term called codec. Essentially, a codec is the way in which your camera packages up your video before it gives it to the computer. Some codecs squish your video files to make them smaller, while others allow for more information and are subsequently larger in size. However, if you want to get the best image possible, you don't want to use a codec at all. Instead you should shoot in a format called RAW.

RAW files are essentially the raw pixel information straight from the camera to the card. Instead of the camera compressing the video image, it will record all of the data to a card. This will result in some pretty large file sizes, but you will have greater control over the color of your video when you jump into your editing software.

7. Dramatic Lighting

Lighting is not as scary as it sounds. While you could certainly spend your entire career trying to understand the subtle nuances associated with cinematic lighting, it doesn't necessarily take an expert to create decent lighting. All you really need is a 5-in-1

reflector and a cheap LED light. Less is more when it comes to lighting a cinematic image. With just a few lights, you can create a beautifully cinematic image.

8. Prime Lenses

If you want to make your footage (and photographs, for that matter) look 4x better, go out and buy a prime lens. Sure, a prime lens doesn't quite give you the flexibility of shooting on a zoom lens, but you probably won't be using that zoom feature anyways (remember #4). Prime lenses tend to be sharper, better in low light, and capable of producing a more shallow depth of field.

Prime lenses can be incredibly expensive (like in the \$100K range) but they can also be incredibly cheap. At \$100, Canon's 50mm f/1.8 is a great place to start. If that's still too much, you can always convert an old prime lens using an adapter.

9. Color Grade

It can be easy to simply want to export your project once you get done editing, but if you want your footage to look really cinematic, you should color correct and grade all of your footage before hitting that export button. There are people who spend their entire careers color grading footage, so don't think this process is easy. Luckily, there are a lot of really easy resources out there for creating cinematic color grades very quickly.

Most notably is Magic Bullet from Red Giant. Using their drag and drop color grading presets, you can very quickly give your footage a stylized look. If your budget is slim, there are also a lot of good free color grading presets out there.

Cinematography Tip: How to Create Soft Diffused Light



Soft light is a fantastic resource for any filmmaker. Let's take a look at ten ways to create soft, diffused light on a film set.

Every great cinematographer has a deep understanding of the way light works. Unfortunately, many indie filmmakers focus way too heavily on the gear and not the actual image they're shooting — especially when it comes to light. Let's take a closer look at lighting and discover a few ways to create a soft, cinematic look.

Hard vs. Soft Lighting

In film, video, and photography, there are two big categories of light: hard light and soft light. You can easily figure out if your light source is hard or soft by looking at the shadows. Hard lights will have

shadows with very sharp edges, whereas soft light will have shadows with soft edges or no defined edges at all.

The thing that makes a light either soft or hard is the relative size of the light source. A small source will be much harsher than a larger source. The best example of this is the sky. On a bright and sunny day, your shadows will be incredibly sharp because the light source that hits you (the Sun) is relatively very small in the sky.

Now contrast a sunny day with an overcast day. On an overcast day, you no longer have a strong single point in the sky hitting your

subject, rather the light is diffused across the entire sky. The result is incredibly soft shadows.

Why Soft Lighting Rules

One type of light source is not better than the other. Both hard and soft lights have their own storytelling purposes in both film and photography. That being said, soft light is much easier to work with than hard light. This is for a number of reasons.

First, soft light doesn't draw attention to shadows as much as hard light. By nature, our eyes are drawn to points of high contrast. If you're using hard lights, your viewer's eyes may be focusing on points in the frame other than your subject. Soft light helps make your subject look as good as possible by minimizing wrinkles and blemishes, which is incredibly important for commercials and corporate videos.

When shooting with hard light, it's not uncommon to have to force your subject to stay in a very particular place. But when shooting in soft lighting, you typically have more freedom for your subject to move around the frame.

Diffusion Techniques

In a nutshell, diffusion changes the relative size of a light source. For example, if we were to place a white sheet between your subject and a floodlight, we would get much softer shadows than if we simply hit the subject directly with the floodlight.

It's important to emphasize the words "relative size" here. While a softbox may produce soft shadows on a human when five feet away, it will likely produce sharp shadows on a car. In ideal soft lighting scenarios, there's a direct relationship between the size of your subject and the recommended size of your source light. As your

subject gets bigger, so should the size of your light source (if you want soft shadows).

Let's break down a few ways to get softer light on set.

1. Diffusion Paper

Diffusion paper is a great option if you want to soften your lighting up just a bit. The "paper" is usually clamped to the barn doors of a light. The result isn't dramatic, but it is subtle enough if you're trying to soften up the overall look.

Some people use wax paper instead of diffusion paper to get the same effect. While this may work with LED lights, you shouldn't use wax paper on a tungsten light as the paper can catch fire.

2. Softboxes

A softbox is incredibly versatile on set, making it a great key, fill, or back light for your subject. The softness of the light produced from a softbox depends on the size of the face. In general, larger softboxes will produce softer light than smaller softboxes.

Be careful when looking for softboxes online. There are a lot of really terrible softbox brands out there that target indie filmmakers. These lights break easily and have horrible color casts. I recommend using a simple Lowel softbox kit if you're just starting out.

3. Umbrellas

Umbrellas are similar to softboxes in that they are usually attached to a light source. Depending on the type of umbrella you are using, you can either shoot through the umbrella or bounce light off the umbrella onto your subject.

Some umbrellas are made up of a white cloth and others are made up of a metallic material. Both are good and both can produce soft light depending on the material and the distance from the subject.

4. China Balls

If you're looking for incredibly even lighting to add to your scene, a china ball is a great place to start. They're incredibly cheap and the light they produce is just the right kind of soft. The only downside to working with china balls is the fact that they are hard to mount. But if you're willing to work with them, they can give you nice soft light for very little money.

5. Silks/Scrims

A silk is typically placed on a separate stand between your subject and your light source. Silks can be large (up to 20 ft. x 20 ft.) or small. You will normally hear silks referred to by the size of the metal frame around them. Common sizes include 4x4, 6x6, 8x8, and 12x12.

If you're on an indie budget, you don't necessarily have to buy a "professional" silk to get a similar light effect. Most of the time you can get away with just suspending a white sheet or shower curtain between your subject and the light source. Be sure to bring lots of sandbags when using silks. If the wind catches your silk just right, it might fall and hurt somebody!

6. 5-in-1 Reflector Diffusion Screen

If you don't already have a 5-in-1 reflector, stop reading this article and go buy one. There is no lighting tool more essential to indie cinematographers than a 5-in-1 reflector. The inside of a 5-in-1 is made up of a light diffusion fabric that can be used to cut light from a bright light source. They can be mounted to a c-stand or held when

you're in a pinch. I often use these diffusion screens when outside in direct sunlight.

7. Bounce Light Off the Ceiling or Wall

If you're working in a boring office space or home (or if you've simply forgotten your softbox) you can always bounce light off of the ceiling. This technique essentially turns the entire wall into one big soft light. I typically use this technique if I want to light an entire room evenly. Just keep in mind you'll need a powerful light if your room has tall ceilings.

8. Shade

If you're shooting outdoors and looking for soft light, try to find some shade. Instead of diffusing the light, shade will completely cut off the main light source. Instead of being lit from the sun, your subject will be lit by light bouncing off of objects from all around you.

One thing to look for when shooting in the shade is blown-out backgrounds. Because your subject will be out of direct sunlight, there's a really good chance that your background will be incredibly bright. Just keep this in mind when framing up your shot. There's also the chance that your lighting may change while shooting in the shade, so it's best to shoot in the shade if you're shooting a short scene.

9. Windows

Another option for getting soft light is to put your subject near a window. Windows produce incredibly bright and soft light and it's not uncommon for photographers to use this light to their advantage. Filmmakers are a little more limited when it comes to window light, as light could possibly change as the day progresses.

But if you need soft light quick, a window is a quick and easy way to do it.

One thing to consider when shooting near a window is color casts. Lights in your home are typically tungsten balanced (orange) while sunlight coming through a window is typically daylight balanced (blue). In order to avoid shooting in mixed lighting, you may want to invest in a CTO daylight conversion filter to place over your window.

10. Book Lighting

There's another popular lighting technique that's been making its way through the filmmaking world called book lighting. Book lighting is essentially a double diffusion technique that always uses at least one silk. The trick with book lighting is to not have the physical light source pointed at your subject. Instead your light will bounce from one source and then hit a silk. The result is a very soft glow. Book lighting should be used if you want the softest light possible. Keep in mind: setting this up can take a while.

3 More Creative Practical Lighting Methods



Practical lighting is becoming more common than ever thanks to the low-light abilities of modern digital cinema cameras. Here are a few of the most effective practical lights that are sure to add character to just about any image.

Many well-known Directors and DPs have turned to practical lights over the years as a means to stylize and enhance their work.

In years past, it was relatively uncommon to use practical lighting on a film set as a means of achieving proper exposure. In fact, it was much more common to simply use practical lights as a method of motivating light that was actually coming from a traditional film lighting source. Today however, practical lights are more useful than

ever as the increased sensitivity of digital cinema cameras allows for practicals to be used in a more powerful way.

Practicals are of course “regular” lights that can organically appear in a shot. Examples might include a street light, a desk lamp, or even a fire. Virtually any light source that’s not a traditional film light can be considered a practical light, though some are more effective than

others. Below is a short list of three practical lighting sources, and how to use them most effectively.

1. Fluorescent Ceiling Fixtures

Many offices, parking garages, and industrial buildings have fluorescent ceiling lights, and they can make for some of the most useful practical light sources out there. The quality of light from these types of ceiling lights is very similar to what you might achieve with a kino-flo, but of course with the added benefit that they can be shown in the frame.

Typically when using fluorescent ceiling lights as practicals, it's best unscrew or remove certain bulbs as a means to shape and control light. Doing so allows for an even textured lighting to fall throughout the scene, giving the actors a lot of wiggle room to move freely during their performance.

In addition to their quality of light, fluorescents also look fantastic on camera. Low angle shots that reveal the ceiling will look great as the fluorescent tubes glow in the background and add depth to the shot.

2. Car Headlights

Headlights are extremely powerful light sources and can be hugely useful in a wide variety of shooting scenarios. A great way to use them is to backlight actors with them, and then use a bounce to push some fill light back onto their faces.

They can also be used as a key light, but remember that if the car isn't in your frame, you'll at the very least want to establish it in a master shot. Otherwise the extremely bright lights will look out of place and may disorient the viewer.

Also, don't be afraid to add diffusion to your car headlights to soften them and bring down the overall light levels. Even if the lights appear

in your frame, the diffusion won't likely be noticeable at all, especially if you're shooting at a relatively shallow depth of field.

3. Candles

Ever since Stanley Kubrick used candle light to illuminate Barry Lyndon, filmmakers everywhere have been trying to emulate that look. In Kubrick's day though, he needed to film on a custom F0.7 lens in order to get enough exposure to shoot this way. Filmmakers today have things much easier.

Assuming you've got a relatively sensitive low-light camera, chances are you can get away with using only candle light if that's the look you're after. That said, you may not want to rely solely on candle lighting for your scene, as that can cause other headaches on set.

An alternative option would be to use a small space light to bring up the ambience in the room, and then use candles to shape the rest of the light in the scene. The quality of light and natural flicker effect from real candles simply can't be replicated perfectly with any other tool on set or in the color suite.

How to Creatively Use a Reflector on Location



Utilize these tips to creatively use a reflector on location to capture the right lighting for your next production.

On every major production set, cinematographers and videographers utilize reflectors to help enhance or dilute light. The same creative practices that these large-scale productions use can be replicated by you using a standard collapsable reflector or reflector panel that won't kill your budget.

There will be times when you're on location and you only have natural light around you to work with. Or there will be instances where you have lights available, but their output is more than you

need. Let's look at ways to take advantage of this light by learning how to creatively use a reflector on location.

As a Key Light

A key light is your most crucial light. It clearly highlights the form of your character. Now, if you find yourself on location with nothing but natural light, you can use a reflector to generate the key. What you'll want to do is place your talent with their backs to the sun. You can now use the reflector to bounce the sunlight onto their face, thus creating a key light.

Utilize It as a Diffuser

Sometimes when filming you'll find that you might have too much light. In this case you'll want to diffuse that light so your character isn't harshly lit.

If you're working on location using natural light, then you can use the translucent side of your 5-in-1 reflector and place it between your character and the sun to diffuse it. This will cast a nice smooth light across your character versus a harsh light.

Adding Shadow or Negative Fill

Another way to use a reflector creatively is to use it as a shader. There have been countless times on various sets where the natural light is great, especially later in the day, and your character is getting a great key light on the side of their face. But then you notice that there is a reflective light on the other side of the face and you would like that to be darkened with a shadow.

For this you'll want to use the black-facing side of the reflector and situate it between your character and the reflective light source. Once this is done, you should see that your character has a nice even shadow opposite of the key light.

Create Rim Light

Rim light is almost as crucial as the key light. It's used to separate the character or subject from the background, giving your shot depth. In order to get this type of lighting with a reflector, take a 300k light, point it straight up, and use the reflector at an angle to bounce that light onto the subject. The light is now diffused enough that it doesn't create a sharp edge light and it backlights the subject in an even manner.

A Kaleidoscope of Color

What if you need a variation of color that moves in the lighting of your shot? You can use a reflector for that too by attaching color gels to the surface of the reflector and bouncing the light from the sun or a light onto the subject. This could be used in situations where the lighting calls for a need of multiple colors, such as simulating the flicker of fire on a character's face.

Essential Gear for Product Videos



Shooting a professional product video is surprisingly easy — if you have the right gear. Here's everything you need.

While many professional videographers shoot product videos in super boring and ugly rooms, you don't want your finished video to look anything short of perfect. Let's take a look at some of the most important gear to bring to any product video shoot.

1. Reflectors

The most important item to have on a product video shoot is a 5-in-1 reflector. Reflectors serve as multi-tools on set because they can do a number of different jobs, including:

- diffusing light
- reflecting light
- flagging light
- absorbing light
- makeshift backgrounds

Reflectors allow you to shape the way your product looks on camera. There are a lot of DIY reflector tutorials out there, but all of

them are impractical. Reflectors are inexpensive enough (around \$15) that there's really nothing to prevent you from buying your own.

2. C-Stands

C-Stands are especially important when shooting product videos. Even more than most commercial work, a product video will require subtle changes in lighting; you might need to add additional reflectors or even a backlight to your subject. Between holding up the background, lights, and reflectors, it's not uncommon to need six or more C-Stands on a product video shoot. Make sure you have plenty when you arrive on set.

3. Soft Box

There's a time and a place for harsh lighting. Product videos are not the time nor the place. If you do a lot of product photography, owning a soft box is a must. A soft box makes it a lot easier for you to light your scene; it will soften shadows, eliminating visual distractions. One way to approach product lighting is place two soft boxes around your subject (one to the left, one to the right) and then add in smaller lights to stylize the scene.

4. Macro Lens

A macro lens has a very short minimum focus distance that allows you to get really close to your subject. As you can imagine, this is imperative if you are shooting a product video. The most popular macro lens on the market is a 100mm f/2.8. This lens, found across multiple brands, is perfect for shooting small objects.

While not technically a macro lens, if your subject is a little larger you should use a 50mm prime. This will allow you to get wide and not distort your subject in the camera. And, frankly... you really should have a 50mm prime in your lens bag anyways.

5. Tripod

The importance of a good tripod can't be overstated. While you'll typically find the best luck with a fluid head tripod, you don't have to spend hundreds of dollars to get a decent set of sticks. There are a lot of good, affordable tripod options out there, if you just take the time to do your homework. One of my favorite brands is Magnus. While their tripods will only last about three to five years, they are super smooth, especially when you consider that they're friction head.

6. External Monitor

Details are everything in filmmaking and video production. This is especially true for product videos. On a narrative set, you might be able to get by with a focus that's slightly off. But if your focus is even a little off on a product video shoot, you're going to have to reshoot. This is why an external monitor is super important. An external monitor will allow you to see your finished footage the way your audience will see it. Good external recorders will allow you to see your focus points and find any overexposed areas.

7. Backgrounds: Paper > Cloth

Nine times out of ten, your background for a product video will be either solid white or solid black. Normally when you're shooting a video with a solid background, you want any distracting background creases or wrinkles to be minimized. This is especially important for product videos. Any distracting background blemishes will distract the viewers from the actual product being featured.

It is recommended to use rolls of paper rather than cloth when working with solid backgrounds. Paper rolls are consistently smooth and solid, perfect for product videos. Plus, if you accidentally stain the paper, you can just cut it off and roll out some more.

Fun Fact: If you want your product videos to have a little reflectivity, place a solid piece of glass down over your table top.

8. Gaff Tape

Okay, so maybe gaff tape doesn't necessarily fall into the 'gear' category, but it's still an incredibly useful tool on any film or video set. Gaff tape, as you can imagine, can serve many different roles on set. It can hold down loose background pieces, keep your products steady, set actor marks, hold reflectors steady, and much more.

While you will have to fork over a little extra cash to get gaff tape over other kinds of tape, it's absolutely worth it. Gaff tape doesn't leave residue behind.

9. Lazy Susan

If you've ever eaten at a fancy Chinese restaurant, then you probably have experience with a Lazy Susan. In a nutshell, a Lazy Susan is a small tabletop that spins in circles. If your product photography requires you to shoot all 360 degrees of the featured product, this is a must — especially because you can't move your camera all the way around your subject without getting lights and crew members in the shot.

All you really need to do is place a piece of solid-colored poster board over a Lazy Susan, tape it down, and then have a crew member (or yourself) give it a spin. It's actually pretty easy to use and the results look fantastic.

10. Slider

Good product commercials have one thing in common: movement. It doesn't matter how good your lighting is, if the footage is boring, nobody is going to want to watch it. The slightest movements will go a long way when shooting product videos. This is where a slider

comes into play. When coupled with a decent rotating head, a slider can add a lot of visual interest to an otherwise boring video.

11. Wood Panels (Fake Wood Table)

Typically when you see product videos with 'hipster' table tops, the table top isn't actually real. It's typically a wooden panel that's been put together to simulate a real table. This helps with storage space and allows you to light the scene more easily.

All you really need to do is get a few pieces of plywood and an assortment of wood stain. Simply stain one side one color and the other side another color. Now you have two different table tops without having to store two different tables. Of course, this method doesn't work if you need the actual table legs in the shot. But for most shooting scenarios, this set up will work great.

Three Tips For Lighting Product Shots On A White Backdrop



Shooting product shots on a seamless white backdrop calls for a very specific approach to lighting. Here are some tips on how to get it right next time you're in the studio.

Many cinematographers and shooters mistakenly assume that shooting product shots is simple. They often feel that, because they're effectively shooting a still object, they'll be able to get good results with their eyes closed — even if they have little or no experience in that realm.

The reality, of course, is that lighting product shots is as complex as anything else. Each product will have its own unique challenges and needs to be approached as its own entity. At the same time, there

are some universal principles that come into play when shooting just about any type of product.

If you regularly shoot commercial content, there's a very good chance at some point you're going to need to step up to the plate and deliver clean product shots. Here are some crucial lighting tips to take into account when you get there.

1. Always Use Soft Lighting

Commercial and product photography is all about beauty, and we all know that soft light is far more conducive to a beauty shot than hard light. This is true across the board, whether you're shooting products or talent.

While there may be some exceptions to this rule (depending on the type of product you're shooting), you're almost always better off using soft light sources. This will not only help you get more pleasing results on the product itself, but will also help you control the spill on the white background, which can save you a lot of time on set.

2. Use Flat Lighting if Necessary

If you come from a cinematic background, you probably have it drilled into your head that you should never light a scene so that it appears flat. Film is all about finding pockets of light and shadows to add dramatic effect, and flat lighting of course does the exact opposite of that.

With products however, you generally aren't trying to dramatize anything. You're almost always trying to capture the most realistic and neutral version of the product that you can, and in order to achieve that end result, flat lighting may be critical.

I typically recommend lighting your product shots very evenly with one source directly in front or overhead (depending on your product) and two additional sources — one on each side of your background. This will help you to not only achieve a very flat look, but also will help you to avoid shadows, which can become problematic when working with certain types of material.

3. Know When to Backlight

There are many scenarios where a backlight isn't necessary when shooting products on a white seamless, but in some cases a backlight can actually be very helpful. For instance, if you're shooting a light-colored product against white (or a transparent/clear product) and needs it to stand out more obviously, backlighting is a great solution.

That said, you need to be careful with how and where you place your backlight to maintain the consistency of a polished, neutral look. A singular backlight placed above and behind the product is usually an optimal location, as placing your backlight off to one side or another might throw off the symmetry.



04 AUDIO

A FILM IS 50% WHAT IS SEEN AND 50% WHAT IS HEARD. UNFORTUNATELY, MANY FILMMAKERS DON'T PRIORITIZE AUDIO. THIS IS A MISTAKE. AUDIO MAKES YOUR FILM IMMERSIVE. WITH A FEW SIMPLE ON-SET CONSIDERATIONS, YOU CAN PROFESSIONAL QUALITY AUDIO WHEN YOU GET IN THE EDITING BAY.

Five Tips for Planning Your Audio in Pre-Production



Capturing great audio begins before hitting 'record'.

Having low-quality audio in your film or video is a quick way to lose credibility in the eyes of your audience. Instead of simply taking audio into consideration once you get on set, you should prepare to make your audio amazing before production even begins. Let's take a look at five ways you can plan out your audio approach during pre-production.

1. Go Scouting

Location scouting is one of the most important aspects of the pre-production process. As a filmmaker, you've probably already developed an eye for finding good locations, but it's equally

important to develop an ear. Keep the acoustics of your location in mind. Does your voice echo loudly in the room? Is it in a highly-populated area? Along with the room acoustics, you need to be able to control other audio related factors like the air-conditioner or a humming refrigerator.

What ambient noises can you anticipate? If you're shooting in a large building, you might not be able to turn off the air conditioner using a thermostat on a wall. For this reason, it's important to have a location contact that can help answer your location-related questions.

You should also be mindful of things like proximity to airports, fire stations, and bus routes, as these things might not be heard during location scouting but can definitely be picked up by your microphones. It's also important to look around and see if there are any construction projects going on; construction noise is a setback that can be disastrous for location sound. You don't want to be surprised by ambient noises once you get on set.

2. What Does the Shot Demand?



Top-notch wardrobe has the ability to add a greater sense of believability to your film, but when picking your character's clothing it's important to consider audio. For example, silk clothing is notorious for being difficult to mic, so you might consider using a boom mic instead of a lavalier. You may even want to change the wardrobe to accommodate.

It's also important to think about the action in your scene before you arrive on set. Will the actors be walking and talking? If so, will their backs be to the camera while they're talking? How much are they going to move? Asking these questions before shooting may also speed up your production time. Instead of showing up on set and deciding what mics to use, make an educated decision before you arrive.

In order to do this, you'll need to have your audio person involved in the pre-production process. This admittedly adds another layer of complexity to the whole process, but it definitely pays off in the end.

3. Invest

Indie productions are notorious for having incredibly bad audio. It doesn't matter if your image is immaculate... if the audio is bad your audience isn't buying it. If you're serious about your project, it's important to invest in quality audio equipment.

Online rental houses like BorrowLenses, LensRentals.com, and LensProtoGo all offer microphone and audio gear at affordable prices. If you're needing the equipment for an extended period of time, inquire about a discount.

Good audio investments don't end once the shoot is wrapped. It's equally important to invest in your audio during post-production. Instead of using low-quality music, spending a fortune for original composition, or using copyrighted commercial tracks (which could put you in legal hot water), consider high quality production music.

4. Hire a Professional Boom Operator/Sound Mixer

Sites like Mandy.com and ProductionHub are great resources for locating audio specialists in your area. This is a key crew member, so don't fall for letting a friend or family member be your on-set audio person. Filmmakers and video pros often get caught up in the visuals of the production and the audio takes a back seat.

Capturing audio on set is more than just holding a boom pole. Professional sound recordists will have experience using field mixers, know the proper ways to mic talent, and can work in tandem with the director of photography.

5. Make a Plan

Making a detailed plan is imperative for streamlining the production process. If you are creating storyboards before you shoot (which you should be) take the audio into consideration during this process. The audio recorder and video editor will be appreciative when you hand them a detailed storyboard with audio notes. Always schedule time to record natural sound while you're on location.

Picking up several minutes of natural sound from every location is important for preventing choppy audio in post. Be sure to record additional natural sound every time the audio environment changes (for instance, if an A/C unit kicks on). This is really important for preventing choppy audio in post.

How to Capture High Quality Audio for Low Budget Films



Reducing background buzz and hum when recording location sound can be a challenge! Follow these three simple tips to get cleaner location sound on your next shoot.

Want to drive yourself crazy? Try removing audio buzz or hum during video editing. Isolating bad audio frequencies without distorting dialogue or intentional on-camera sound can be a frustrating challenge.

It's always best to get the cleanest on-location sound instead of attempting a post-production fix. You'll save yourself time at the end of your project and will likely have a better sounding product.

Three common sources of on-location background buzz and hum are:

- Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning Systems
- Lighting
- Refrigerators

The following on-location sound tips will address each of these problem sources and how to minimize their effect on your audio.

Play Weatherman

A/C units may be the #1 culprit for picking up bad background audio. They rumble, hum, and can really muddy up an audio track. To top it off, they're erratic, turning on and off at random intervals (leading to irksome shot inconsistencies). The only way to ensure that you don't get A/C hum is to kill the system while you're shooting. Of course, nobody likes burning up under hot production lighting.

Luckily, there's a trick that will help keep your crew cool. As soon as you arrive on set, radically adjust the heater or A/C unit. Let the unit overcompensate. If it's hot out, turn the air conditioner on blast. Freeze the room. In cold weather do the opposite. Then, when you're ready to start rolling, turn off the unit.

Blankets and a Step Stool

What about the times when you can't control the A/C unit? Big office buildings are notorious for this.

Don't worry. There's a trick for this situation, too. You can soften the A/C unit hum by covering up vents with blankets. Professional sound blankets are ideal, but if you're on a budget or in a pinch, even your standard blanket or comforter could be a satisfactory replacement. The step stool allows you to access high or hard-to-reach vents.

If you have buzzy ballasts from location lighting, obviously the first line of attack is to turn them off. Lighting that stays on all the time (such as emergency lighting) may require you to physically remove the bulb while shooting. The step stool also aids with this.

Freeze the Keys

Refrigerators can't be easily moved out of a location, so it's best just to turn the power off while rolling on set. With the door shut, a

refrigerator can stay cool for a while... but you don't want to forget to turn it back on!

How can you make sure you remember to turn it back on? By placing your keys in the refrigerator when you unplug it. There's no quicker way to get banned from a location than to leave behind a refrigerator full of spoiled food!

Audio Tips for DSLR Filmmakers



Treating audio as an afterthought is a huge mistake. Up your sound game with these audio tips for DSLR filmmakers!

Although many filmmakers know just how critical great audio is to the success of a film project, it's still one of the most overlooked aspects of the filmmaking process. This is unfortunate, as poor sound quality can hinder all of the other elements that we work so tirelessly on. In the end, nothing else matters if the sound quality is poor.

Whether it be distracting background noises that have been picked up (such as wind or cars passing by), or poorly recorded dialogue, these issues greatly affect the overall viewing experience and

absolutely must be dealt with in order to achieve any sort of success with a film project.

So for those of you DSLR filmmakers out there who are looking to up your game with regards to audio, here are a few key tips to get you started.

Don't Rely on Your DSLR

First and foremost, remember that there's no correlation between your camera's ability to capture a great image and its ability to record great audio.

DSLRs are not designed to capture professional quality audio, no matter how many manual controls or functions they may have. The internal limitations of your DSLR can never be compensated for by using better external devices (such as a high quality shotgun mic), as the camera's limitations will always be the bottleneck as far as sound quality goes.

Your DSLR may have manual control over levels or a headphone jack, but that doesn't mean it's going to record great audio. It simply means that it's somewhat competent at recording audio in a pinch or can be used to record reference audio. Always use an external device (whether it be as simple as a Zoom H6, or a more complex mixer/recorder) in order to achieve professional-level sound.

Scout Locations

Do your field research! This is by far the cheapest available method for achieving great sound. It costs you absolutely nothing to devote a few days during pre-production to go to your various locations and do some audio tests. You might feel this isn't necessary, but when you get to set and realize that you're shooting in the middle of a flight path, you're going to wish you scouted that location properly.

The scout itself can be very simple. Just go to your location at approximately the same time of day that you're going to shoot and start looking for red flags. If you're shooting on a rooftop, make sure the wind isn't out of control. If you're in a field, be aware of the background noise created by crickets, birds, and other wildlife. If possible, bring your sound recordist with you and actually do tests with your equipment to see what noises you're picking up.

Doing this costs you nothing but a bit of time upfront, and it could potentially save you a ton of time and headaches both on set and in the ProTools suite.

Always Record Room Tone

For those unfamiliar with the term, "room tone" is essentially the ambient sound of a room. Room tone is always recorded on professional sets so that the audio editor has scene-specific background noise to work with if they need to patch over any sound issues in their ProTools session.

Location audio professionals will typically record room tone for every single location they are covering in order to pick up the general hum and subtle noises present in every room. For example, if you were to record room tone in a 'silent' kitchen, you would inevitably pick up the sound of the refrigerator buzzing, maybe a door creaking in the background, a slight hum from the lights on in the room, etc.

Room tone is usually recorded at the end of every scene for 30-60 seconds while the entire cast and crew stands silently or after they've cleared the room. Why is this important to your sound quality as a whole? As touched on earlier, you typically use room tone in post to help blend together multiple takes of audio so that there's a consistent bed of sound that seamlessly melds together all of the dialogue and ADR tracks.

You can also use room tone to match ambient sounds when you shoot multiple takes of the same scene and there are differences in the background noise. For example, if in one take the air conditioner goes on and in another it turns off, you will want to use room tone (of the air conditioner on) to keep the sound of it present in the entire scene.

Final Thoughts

For top-tier production value when making a film, it's vital that you pay as much attention to your film's audio needs as you do its visual

needs. If you can be one of the few micro-budget filmmakers that actually prioritizes sound, you will certainly reap the benefits of going the extra mile.

Pristine sound adds another dimension to your film and ups the production value in ways that the camera will never be able to. Understanding your camera's capabilities, doing sound tests in each of your locations, and recording room tone for every scene are three of the simplest things you can do to vastly improve your film's sound quality.

How to Pick the Perfect Music for Your Video Projects



Sound shouldn't be overlooked! Discover how to choose the best music for your video projects.

Finding the right music for your video project can be a challenging process – especially when a client is involved! Follow these tips to find the perfect music for your video projects.

Define the Music Early

This is important: look for your music before you finalize an edit! You'll be one step ahead if you determine your music choices early on in the production process. Planning ahead will allow you to:

1. Get your client's music approval early on. The last thing you want is to finalize an edit and have a client come back and ask for a music change.

2. Utilize the music in your editing pace. Cut to the music to drive energy while cutting against it to create tension. Make thoughtful choices about how you use music within your video edit.

3. Stay within budget. Nobody likes production surprises... especially when it comes to money. Licensing music early could curtail the chances of a budget issue later.

Some editors prefer to create a very rough cut of an edit and try different music tracks underneath to see which might work best. Once a track is decided upon, they can clean up the edit to match

the music. It's a useful approach, but must be done early on in the post-production process.

Set the Tone

This is an easy one: The tone of your video will typically dictate the style/mood of the music tracks that make the cut. Unless you're intentionally trying to use music to play against the action (like a classical track under a fight scene), it's best to find a track that enhances the feeling of your scene. Consider your target viewer... what's their age and background? Whereas a corporate executive may not identify with hard rock or hip-hop, this may be a perfect style choice for a younger audience.

Royalty free music libraries like PremiumBeat give you the option to search by mood or genre, making it easy to find tracks that evoke a certain emotional response.

Music Throughout or Bookends?

Depending on the type of video project, you may find that music simply isn't needed throughout. Montages and demo reels typically dictate end to end music, but a corporate video or film may actually benefit from sporadic music or a bookended approach.

In many cases, music can actually be more powerful when it is used intermittently; it can better accentuate a point or climax in the video. If music is forced throughout, the viewer may get fatigued. Allow for some breathing room and don't forget to let the environmental and background sound help shape the audio of your project.

If you're going with a bookended approach, it may be a good idea to pick one music track (or theme) to open and close the video – especially on shorter video projects.

Vocals or No Vocals?

Montages often use tracks with vocals... and in most cases it may be best left at that. Vocals under dialogue or an interview can be distracting and off-putting. If you choose a vocal track for your project, you have another matter to consider: Do the words support what's happening in the scene? Good non-vocal tracks can convey the same emotions without words and are usually a safer bet.

Avoid the Duration Traps

Don't be tied to the duration of your music! Instead, cut it up to work best with your video. The typical cadence of a commercial song (verse, chorus, bridge) may not flow with your edit.

Instead, loop parts of the track in your editing app, bringing in a chorus or emotional climax at just the right time. Cut them together with the full track version to tailor the audio to your visuals.

Real Instruments



Beware of music that uses MIDI or digitized instruments and effects. These tracks may sound corny and cheap. Instead, ensure that the tracks you're using feature real, organic instrumentation. To the trained ear (and even the untrained!) a highly processed digital

keyboard often doesn't hold a candle to the organic sound of a baby grand piano.

Additionally, the right instrumentation can contribute to the message of your video. As an example, regional music can be effective in creating the feeling of a certain locale. For instance, traditional Asian or African music may be well-suited if you're profiling such a location in your project.

Music Library vs. Original Composer

Depending on the scope your project, you may be considering either using tracks from a royalty free music library or hiring an original composer to score your video. Budget is the biggest consideration here – original composition doesn't come cheap. Additionally, having a composer score your project is a time and labor intensive process.

Royalty free music provides a low-cost, high-quality alternative.

Whatever you do, avoid using copyright or commercial tracks in your video projects. Despite your client's insistence, using a Coldplay track in your video is cost-prohibitive to license and can put you in legal hot water!

As a last point, pick your music with intention and make it an important part of the process. The perfect track has the ability to drive your editing decisions, engage your viewer, and enhance all the feelings of your video project.

6 Microphone Pickup Patterns You Should Know



Don't pick the wrong mic! Find out when to use certain microphones by learning these six essential microphone pickup patterns.

A film is only as good as its audio. While it can be easy to get captivated by the visual side of a film, audio should be high on the priority list of any director or producer. Bad audio can quickly turn off an already distracted audience, so it's important to pick the right mic for the job. Let's take a look at six essential microphone pickup patterns that every filmmaker should know.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution when recording audio on a film set. You will likely want to bring a good assortment of lavs and shotgun mics to accommodate different shooting scenarios on set.

1. Omnidirectional



Perfect for: interviews, moving subjects

Omnidirectional mics are the easiest to understand. Simply put, omnidirectional mics record audio from every direction. Typically you will want to use an omnidirectional mic when recording audio that you can't control very well (like ambience, a press conference, or a moving talking head). Omnidirectional mics are the most flexible mics, but they are also the noisiest. It's certainly a balancing act when on set. In a filmmaking context, you will almost exclusively see omnidirectional pickup patterns in lav mics.

2. Cardioid



Perfect for: documentary recording, weddings, events

A cardioid pickup pattern is a highly flexible pickup pattern that is great for all-purpose use. Cardioid microphones come in all shapes and sizes. A cardioid mic, while slightly directional, should not be confused with a hypercardioid or supercardioid mic. Cardioid mics will still pickup background noise if they are not in a controlled environment.

3. Hypercardioid (Mini-Shotguns)



Perfect for: on-camera mics, documentary recording, and instrument recording

A hypercardioid pickup pattern is a directional pickup pattern that is great for isolating audio. While you may find some lav mics with hypercardioid pickup patterns, you'll typically only see this pickup pattern in shotgun mics. While every brand is different, the biggest difference between a hypercardioid mic and a supercardioid mic is how much of the rear and side noise is picked up. Hypercardioid mics are typically used for instrument recording.

4. Supercardioid (Shotgun)



Perfect for: reality television, scripted content

Supercardioid mics are the most popular types of microphones for indie filmmakers because they give users the ability to isolate audio while still allowing for a slight margin of error. Supercardioid pickup patterns are typically only found in shotgun mics which are used on boom poles or mounted to the top of a camera. It should be noted that a supercardioid pickup pattern does pickup some audio from behind the microphone. So if you mount a supercardioid mic to your camera, you'll need to keep your operating noise to a minimum.

5. Lobar (Unidirectional)



Perfect for: narrative film, controlled sets

While there is technically no such thing as a true unidirectional mic, a lobar pattern is the most directional pickup pattern you can use. While it may be appealing to a filmmaker to get a microphone with a lobar pickup pattern, you should seriously consider how difficult it will be to use a lobar microphone.

The only microphone that can have a lobar pickup pattern is a shotgun mic, so you'll almost always need someone to assist you when operating a microphone with a lobar pickup pattern. If your boom pole is typically operated by a careless PA, you might want to opt for a supercardioid mic instead, as the pickup pattern will be more forgiving.

6. Bidirectional (Figure 8 Pattern)



Perfect for: podcasts, radio interviews

A bidirectional microphone is a mic designed to pickup audio equally from the front and back of the mic. Typically, bidirectional microphones are used for radio interview recording or podcasting. You will probably not find much use for a bidirectional microphone on a film set, but they can sometimes be used as a backup mic for talk shows when placed on the hosts desk.



05 FILM PRODUCTION

ORSON WELLES SAID, "A WRITER NEEDS A PEN, AN ARTIST NEEDS A BRUSH, BUT A FILMMAKER NEEDS AN ARMY." IF YOU'VE SPENT ANY TIME ON A FILM SET, YOU CAN ATTEST TO THIS. THERE'S NO PLACE MORE EXCITING, FRUSTRATING, AND ALIVE THAN A FILM SET. IT'S ALL ABOUT ARTISTS FROM EVERY FIELD FIGHTING TOGETHER TO CREATE SOMETHING AMAZING.

How to Direct Scenes Containing Minimal Dialogue



Master one of a film director's most important skills: Directing scenes that contain minimal dialogue.

It may sound like a cliché, but the old adage of “Show, Don’t Tell” is as relevant today as ever. As filmmakers, most of us understand the notion that film is a visual medium and therefore the best stories are often told by tapping into powerful visuals. However, many filmmakers fail to actually put this ideology into practice and their films run the risk of lacking depth.

There are countless incredible films that have an abundance of dialogue, and the style or genre that you like to work in may call for more heavy dialogue scenes. Regardless, knowing how to direct scenes with minimal dialogue will inevitably improve your results

not only in the more textural moments in your film, but also in the verbal moments too. When visual cues, metaphors, and powerful imagery work together – the end product can really shine.

1. Imagine your Scenes as Dialogue.

A huge challenge for many filmmakers is conceptualizing and writing material without a lot of dialogue. More often than not, the dialogue-free scenes in films end up being nothing more than transitional moments with very little inherent value unto themselves, with the exception of helping to glue together other pieces in the film.

The mistake that many filmmakers are prone to making is not conceptualizing their dialogue-free scene in the same way they would a verbally driven scene.

It's a good exercise for filmmakers to imagine dialogue in a scene that doesn't have any and then ask themselves a few questions: What do I want to tell the audience? How does this move the story forward? What new character info do we get from this? Basically, ask the same kind of questions you would consider when writing a dialogue scene. Once these questions have been answered, coming up with concepts for visuals that can illustrate them becomes much easier.

You're no longer just thinking about arbitrary images, but rather meaningful information in a visual format.

2. Don't Overdo Coverage

In film, a lot of the time less is more. This notion applies very obviously to shooting films without a lot of dialogue, yet this is one area where many filmmakers go very wrong.

Inexperienced directors will often feel like they need to build up a certain moment and overcompensate for the fact that it has no dialogue by over-covering the scene. They will get a dozen angles that they don't really need and actually prevent the viewer from focusing on some of the important visual cues in the scene.

3. Find Symbolism.

Every shot that you show in your film needs to be important and relevant to your story or characters or both. While it may be relatively simple and straightforward to direct a dialogue-free scene that's simply progressing the story, it's more difficult to execute well on the character level. In order to really tap into something emotionally powerful, your visuals need to have symbolic and

metaphorical meanings that ideally are subtle enough to hit the viewer on a subtextual level.

It's amazing how powerful subtext is to the average viewer, and many dialogue-free scenes that make use of symbolic or metaphorical imagery are able to convey far more to the audience than any amount of dialogue would be able to. Always look for ways to add meaning to your scenes through the use of objects, colors, wardrobe, props, or any other vehicle that may allow you to do so.

4. Break Up Important Moments.

Another big trap that filmmakers tend to fall into is trying to cram too much information into a single nonverbal moment. For example, the filmmaker might want to convey a detail about one of their characters.

Let's say that the character is a recovering alcoholic that relapses. The filmmaker might decide to create one long visual scene that somehow shows the character being tempted by alcohol and then giving in. But placing too much information in one scene like this can feel very cheesy and soap-opera like in many ways. The better option is to break up the moment and tell it in two or three pieces.

By planting seeds for the audience and leaving "breadcrumbs," your viewers will be led to their own conclusions about your story and characters — and that will give your film a deeper meaning to them. In the example above, if you were to show a few moments leading up to the character starting to drink again (let's say, having wine spilled on them, watching their boss drink in front of them, etc.), you are able to nudge the audience to the conclusion you want them to draw without being too forceful.

5. Show More Character

When in doubt, always focus on your character development when working with nonverbal material. The most interesting and dynamic character information can be portrayed best in scenes without dialogue, so always take advantage of this fact.

Ask yourself what you can show your audience in this dialogue-free scene, moment, or film that you wouldn't otherwise be able to in a scene with other characters. Maybe you choose to show your main character alone and give insight into who they are behind closed doors. Whatever choice you make will work, as long as it's centered around conveying character detail in an interesting and visually motivated way.

Tips for Being an Awesome Production Coordinator



To succeed as a production coordinator, you need the patience of a director, the organizational skills of an assistant director, and the knowledge of a producer. No problem, right?

Thriving under pressure, being able to multitask, and playing well with others are just a few of the necessary skills you need to succeed as a production coordinator.

It's a demanding job and certainly not a perfect fit for everyone. But for those that work well in this type of environment and are heavily self-motivated, working as a production coordinator can be an excellent career move.

It's the natural progression away from PA-ing and into AD-ing, and eventually into producing. If you're considering a career move and

think you're up for the challenge (or already work in this demanding position), these tips will make your life easier both on the set and off.

1. Communicate Impeccably and Lead Your Team

Communication and the ability to take charge and lead are the most critical qualities for you to have as a PC. Throughout every phase of the filmmaking process (and especially during pre-production and production), you are the point of contact for most of the crew - and that is a massive responsibility to have.



Having likely come from a PA background, you may be accustomed to feeling like you should simply do your job, stay quiet, and get out of the way. This mentality needs to change drastically as you step into this new position, as your role is now more in line with that of a producer than it is a production assistant. And just like a great producer – communication and leadership are key.

2. Stay Organized and Stay Ahead

Your ability to organize and stay a step ahead of things is what you were hired for above all else, so make sure to prioritize these aspects of your job. It's often assumed that producers do most of the dirty work on and off set, but in reality it's often the production coordinators doing a lot of the heavy lifting – even if they aren't getting credit for it.

The bottom line: organization is key. Even the slightest organizational misstep can lead to disaster during production. If you're filling out the call sheet, a single typo that places a talent's call time later than it should be could ruin an entire day on set – and cost



the production thousands of dollars in overtime or reshooting expenses.

There are an infinite amount of issues that could arise as a result of poor organizational skills, so always be sure to stay detail oriented and triple check everything you do before sending it out to the team – otherwise you could be out of a job.

3. Know your Role

A production team is naturally set up as a hierarchy, and it's crucial that you know exactly where you stand in the chain of command. Although I mentioned earlier that being a production coordinator in many ways is like being a producer, you still need to make sure those lines aren't blurred. Many production coordinators make the mistake of overstepping their boundaries during production as they grow to realize their importance on set.

As production coordinator, you report directly to the production manager, while also taking the lead on overseeing the production assistants and assistant production coordinators. For those of you that have already worked in this capacity, you understand that

there's a lot of juggling involved to do this well, and you are often required to wear many hats.

There are times when you need to take on roles that are outside of your usual production coordinator responsibilities, and that is perfectly okay — as long as you are being guided to do so. In other words, if you need to handle something that the production manager is passing off to you, that's great – just don't overstep your boundaries and do it before it's asked of you or it will reflect very poorly on your set etiquette.

Final Thoughts



Not everyone is cut out for the role of production coordinator. It is a demanding, high-pressure job that requires a very particular set of skills, namely the ability to execute tasks with just the right balance of patience and tenacity. Over and above a concrete knowledge of film production from A to Z, you must be a great communicator and leader, remain ahead of schedule and completely organized at all times, and understand the boundaries of the role in which you work.

This can sound like a difficult position to fill, and truthfully it is a big challenge for many. But if you're willing to stick with it and make yourself a productive member of the team, things start getting easier very quickly.

Honing Your Craft: Find Your Voice as a Director



A big issue that plagues some indie filmmakers is their lack of identity. Many independent films can end up feeling like a parody of someone else's work, ultimately leading them to be flops both commercially and critically.

If you watch enough movies, you should be able to tell the work of Aronofsky from Spielberg simply based on their directorial style and the trademarks that they leave on each scene.

These are filmmakers that spent decades honing their craft and understanding what they wanted to say and how they wanted to say it. They found their voices long ago, and ultimately their work has become extremely identifiable as a result. If you (as a director) want to get the most out of yourself creatively, one of the most important things you can do is develop your directing style so that your work can speak for itself.

While it might take a long time to get where you want to go creatively, in this section we'll explore three powerful steps you can take to find your voice as a director.

1. Watch More Movies

One of the biggest red flags of a director that hasn't found their own voice is when their taste in movies is all over the place. Don't misunderstand wrong – there's nothing wrong with binge watching movies across every genre; You can learn something from any movie no matter how far off from your own taste it may be.



Nonetheless, if you simply like watching movies, but aren't particularly drawn to one genre, director, or style – then that may be the first sign that you haven't found your vision or style as an artist.

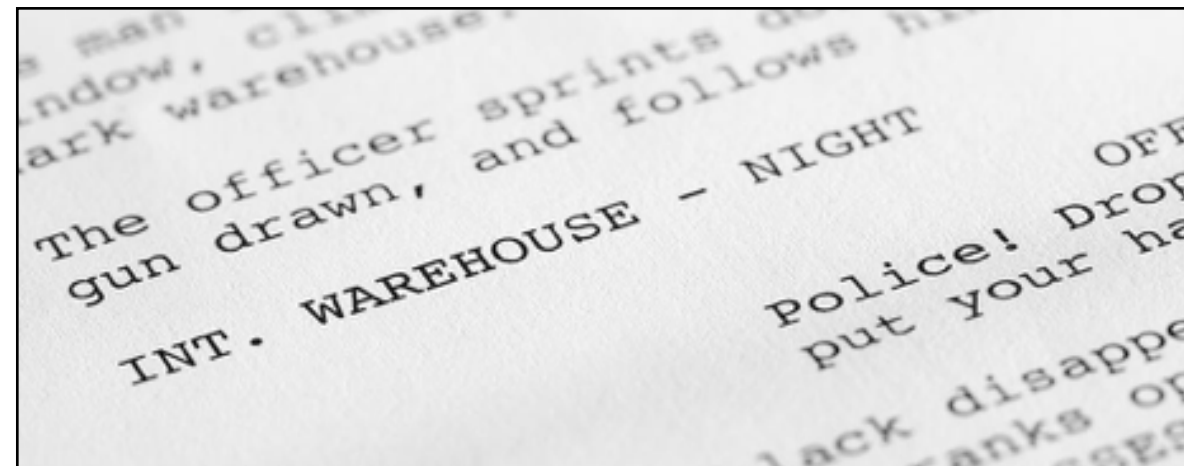
If this sounds like you, watch loads of movies (one or two a day) for as long as you can. Completely saturate yourself in films. After a short while, some of them will get stuck with you. There will be those films that nag at you, that you want to go back and watch, or that inspire you to make something yourself.

Chances are, whatever films are drawing you back to them will be in a similar genre or will deal with similar subject matter – and that may very well be the first step in identifying the films that you are best suited to direct and that you really want to make.

2. Understand How to Tell a Story With No Dialogue

Everyone wants to be the next Tarantino or Sorkin. A lot of indie films these days are busting at the seams with heavy dialogue, yet there is often no substance to what is on the screen. There is no distinct style in the way the dialogue is being delivered.

While you might be more inclined to direct heavily dialogue-driven films, you need to challenge yourself to tell stories without dialogue if you want to maximize your talent. This may seem counterintuitive,



as your strength may be as a writer. But the fact of the matter is you aren't doing yourself any favors as a director by resting on your laurels as a writer.

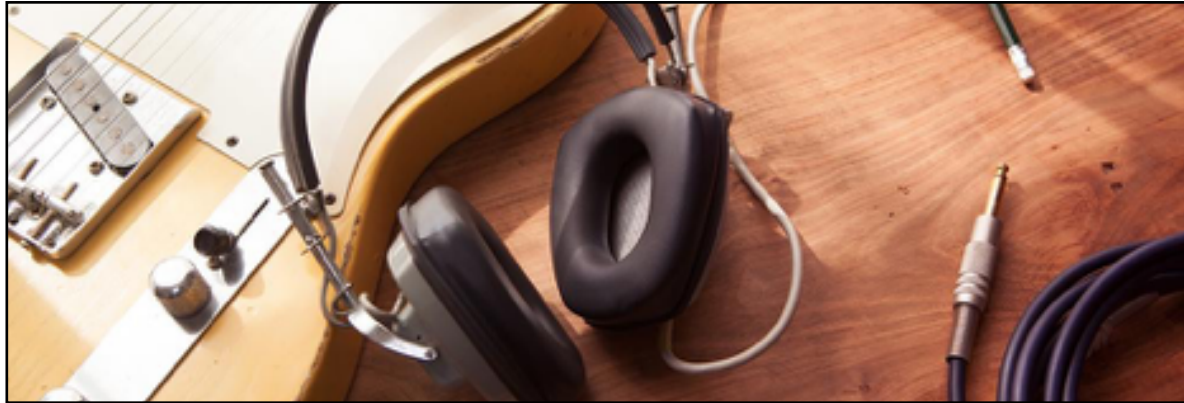
If you really want to develop your directorial style, try shooting a test scene or a short film with little to no dialogue at all. When you go back to your heavily scripted material, your work will improve dramatically.

Imagine a musician that isn't very good at playing guitar, but can write great songs. This person would always be held back by the fact that they can't express their art form to the fullest, much in the same way that a director is held back when they don't know how to direct with images.

Just remember, filmmaking is a visual medium. And as the adage goes – show, don't tell. It's in the subtleties of camera movement, framing, and other visual choices that your directing style will really come out. Be sure to embrace that as much as you can.

3. Tap Into Your Music Taste

There are a lot of similarities between film and music. It's no coincidence that the type of music that filmmakers love is often in the same vein as the films they create. Take Tarantino for instance. It



would be hard to deny that his musical influence isn't obviously put front and center in so many of his films. As a result, the tone of his movies is largely centered around his taste in music.

The Tarantino example might be the most obvious, but the same could be said for nearly any auteur that has really found their voice. It's why Spielberg has worked with John Williams for so long and why Fincher has stayed with Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross.

A big part of developing your style as a director is understanding your taste in music. After all, 50% (or more) of the viewing experience is dependent on the audio. Music guides the viewer's emotional experience.

And by the way... if you aren't a big music fan, that doesn't mean you can't find your voice. Perhaps your style is simply best served with sound design or natural backgrounds. Whatever the case may be, understand yourself on a creative level (musically speaking) as it is very much related to who you are as a storyteller.

Tips You Must Know Before Shooting a Multicam Production



Multicam productions have become more popular than ever, thanks to the extremely low cost of camera gear and easy integration into video editing apps. Even still, many producers attempting multicam for the first time aren't able to get it right.

While the thought of setting up a multicam shoot can be daunting to producers and directors who have never done it before, knowing how to do it right has some massive benefits. Not only do multicam setups help keep costly time on set to a minimum, they can also provide creative freedoms that aren't otherwise offered by single camera environments.

For instance, if you are directing a comedy and want to allow your actors to improvise, a multicam setup would be ideal so that you can

catch all of the spontaneity, while also having enough coverage to cut together the scene cohesively in post.

Whether you're interested in shooting multicam as a means to keep your budget down, to give you actors more freedom, or you simply have no other choice, let's go over a few considerations for getting started with multicam shooting.

Camera Placement

The very first thing you need to address with your multicam set up is the placement of your cameras themselves.

If you want to achieve professional level results with your shoot, you need to make sure that you are optimizing your coverage. In other words, if you are shooting a scene with two actors and you have three cameras on them, you probably want a close up on each actor, and then a wide/medium master shot. Obviously you can get creative with your multicam setups... just make sure you're never doubling up on coverage, regardless of the creative choices that are made.

Lighting

The manner in which you approach your lighting setup also needs to change drastically from what you may be used to in single camera situations.

When shooting with one camera, your setup naturally only matters for the particular angle and take that you are executing. When you go in for coverage you can make small adjustments to your lights (such as walking in a key or fill) as needed. Everything changes with multicamera lighting.

The easiest way to get the look that you're after while maintaining visual consistency is by setting up your lights much in the same way that a stage play or a sitcom is set up. To clarify – we're not suggesting that you make creative choices that will make your final product look like a play or sitcom, but rather that you make rigging and logistical choices in that same way.

For example, lighting from above (by rigging lights to a ceiling or grid) would be hugely preferable over lighting using traditional stands. The reason of course being that when rigged to the ceiling, the lights are completely out of the way and you can shoot in nearly any direction that you want. Lighting your set this way will inevitably take more time up front – so be prepared for some extra time pre-

lighting – but in the end it will completely balance out, as you'll save loads of time once you start rolling.

Matching The Cameras

The problem of mismatched cameras is one of the most common issues on multicam setups, particularly on low budget indie films.

In many instances, small productions don't want to rent two or three identical cameras, so they mix and match various cameras that they have access to in order to supplement their multicamera setup.

Mixing cameras can lead to serious problems. In an ideal world, you want every camera to be the exact make and model, or at the very least the same brand. For example a Canon 5D MK II and a Canon 7D will match a lot better than a 7D and a Lumix GH4, since Canon and Lumix use completely different firmware and color science.

Even if you are shooting on identical cameras, you still need to be extremely diligent when it comes to your settings (camera profiles, shutter angle, and white balance). Any slight difference in your camera settings can cause some big headaches in post.

Final Thoughts

Shooting multicam isn't right for every project, but when time is of the essence and budgets are low, it can be a fantastic way to save money and allow you to move quickly without sacrificing quality.

In order to do it right, you need to place your cameras strategically, have a rock-solid lighting setup, and make sure that you are using cameras that match as closely as possible.

How to Shoot Dynamic Video Interviews



Take your video interviews to the next level with these fifteen tips.

Shooting an interview can be one of the most challenging aspects of the filmmaking process. As video producers and filmmakers, we've grown accustomed to controlling every aspect of the filmmaking process, but an interview setting contains a lot of uncontrollable variables that make it somewhat unnatural to shoot.

If you've ever wanted to take your interview skills to the next level check out the following tips for shooting dynamic interviews.

1. Research and Preparation

Good research is the key to getting a great interview. Anticipate what direction you'd like the interview to go – do research on your interviewee and be well-versed on the interview's subject matter.

Through your research you'll learn what you don't know. Surprise responses may be the interview 'gold' you need to make the story compelling and unique. What has the on-screen talent said in the past about the subject? What have they not said?

Similarly, you should find that asking open-ended questions will elicit better, more interesting responses.

2. Outline

While there is definitely an uncontrollable element to every interview, it's important to have a solid outline for what you need cover. It doesn't need to be complex, just enough to help you get an idea for how you want the story to progress.

One interview tactic is to start the questioning with safe and easy questions. This will make the interviewee more at ease and create a "safe" interviewing environment. Wait to ask the "hard" questions once the interview cadence and atmosphere has been set.

3. Location Scout

As with any film shoot, location scouting is critical. Yes, this means physically going to the location ahead of the shoot date. What type of lighting does the environment provide? Is there electrical power? Is there any ambient noise? What other problems can you anticipate? You don't want to have any surprises on the shoot day.

4. Pack Extra Batteries and Memory Cards

There's no way to know exactly how long an interview may run. You don't want the limitations of your batteries or memory to cut an interview shoot short, so make sure you pack plenty of both.

5. Communicate With Your Talent Before the Shoot

Communicating with your talent before the day of the shoot is a great way to minimize surprises on shoot day. You don't want to show up on set the day of the shoot only to find that your talent has worn a bright green striped shirt. It's for this reason that I always send my talent a checklist with what to expect, clothing considerations, and contact information.

6. Pick a Style

You need to define a creative style for your production before you can pick the right equipment and questions for your interview. Will the interviews be flatly lit or have dramatic lighting? Will the interviewer be seen on camera as well?

Whether you're emulating a style you've seen or coming up with your own style formula, you need to make sure that the look is clearly defined and communicated to the rest of the crew before the camera rolls.

7. Use a Professional Sound Recordist

Bad sound is a quick way to lose the attention of your audience. Have a person on your crew who is solely responsible for recording and monitoring on-set audio. The audio is arguably more important than the video in an interview setting

8. Questions

Just as you should have at least a rough outline of how you'd like the interview to proceed, you should also come up with a list of possible interview questions.

Although many producers/filmmakers choose to share interview questions with the "talent" ahead of the shoot, we warn against it. If the interviewee has the exact questions before the shoot, they'll likely pre-formulate their responses. This can quickly make an interview feel uninspired and boring. Instead, just send over a broad list of topics you'd like to discuss.

You'll likely want to record the interviewers questions as well, even if they won't make the final cut. This is useful for the editor who can use this audio to know what each question is about. It's also a good idea to mic up the interviewer. If this isn't possible, having the sound

of the questions recorded to the on-camera mic is better than nothing.

9. Repeat the Question in the Answer

Try to have your talent repeat the question in their response. For example if you ask, “What is your favorite color?” and their response is “green,” it doesn’t give the editor much to work with.

A better response would be “My favorite color is green.” Then the editor has a complete thought, which makes the story easier to craft.

10. Control the Pace

Thinking of your interview as a conversation is a great way to make your subject at ease, but there are definitely some dissimilarities between an interview conversation and a normal conversation.

First and foremost, in a normal conversation humans tend to talk over one another. While this may work for normal conversations, it is incredibly difficult to edit an interview if the host is talking over the subject.

It’s also important to control the pace of the interview, as subjects tend to rush their answers when being filmed. Control the pace by setting the pace. Talk in a calm and slow voice and your subject will be more likely to mirror you.

11. Decide on Eyeline

Will the subject be looking at the interviewer or the camera? Make this a conscious choice and relay it to the interviewee before shooting. It can be very distracting to have the subject’s eyeline change throughout the interview. If you want the subject to look at the person asking the question, it is important for the interviewer to maintain eye contact throughout. This will force the interviewee to keep this connection.

If you would like the subject to look into the camera, there are several products that will superimpose the interviewer’s face over the lens. These devices are designed to work like a prompter and can make the interview conversation more natural. One of the more popular models is the Eyedirect.

12. Multicam



If you can, shoot with more than one camera. Having at least two cameras will make editing much easier. For example, if your subject has to pause a sentence to sneeze, you can cut the sneeze out by switching to the other camera at the edit point. Shooting multicam will also protect you if one of your cameras fails.

13. Don’t Stop Recording

It’s best to keep the cameras rolling to catch any candid comments that might be useful in the final edit, even after the interview is over. At the very least, it gives you a little pre/post roll so you can more easily edit.

14. Interview B-Roll and Nat Sound

It’s always a good idea to record quick b-roll type shots of your interviewee, in case you need them to cover up edit points. If you are only working with one or two cameras, you can capture this footage at the start or end of the interview. Typical pick-up shots include

asking the interviewee to nod on camera (good reaction type shots), as well as getting close-ups on hands.

Be sure to grab a minute or two of the natural sound of the room before shooting (without anyone talking). This is important for covering up edit points. Record the natural sound again if the sound in the room changes throughout the interview.

15. Communicate with the Interviewee

Don't simply start picking up and saying goodbye at the end of your interview. Communicate what you are planning to do with the interview footage and when they can expect to see the final video. I've even heard of some people watching the interview with the guest after the interview is complete. It's a good way to find out if all of the questions get answered.

Three Reasons You May Want to Forget About Film School



Film school is a controversial topic amongst filmmakers. While some of the best filmmakers are formally trained, others skipped film school and got their education on set. It could be argued that film school simply isn't the best option for creatively minded individuals.

From a very young age, the importance of receiving a formal post-secondary education is ingrained in us. We're told that by going to school and specializing in something, we're going to land better jobs and make more money. Unfortunately, this type of advice is often coming from people who aren't even remotely in touch with the entertainment industry. They don't necessarily understand the benefits of choosing a different path.

With filmmaking, your level of formal education may have no bearing on your level of success. In fact, some of the most successful

filmmakers didn't attend film school or dropped out to get a head start in the industry by working from a very young age. Count James Cameron and Christopher Nolan as two of the greats that never sat in a film school class.

That said, there are some personality types that benefit from a more structured creative environment and who are best served by going to film school. It could be argued that they are the exception, not the rule. A lot of creatively minded people learn best on their own terms

– by actually getting their hands dirty and learning the ropes in a real world environment.

Probably the biggest benefit of going to film school is the fact that you are able to meet peers who may later be collaborators. Outside of that, anything you can learn in film school can be learned on a film set (and then some).

Even if you're volunteering on a film set, you're a heck of a lot better off financially than you would be if you were spending thousands of dollars in tuition fees. The reality is that film school will not get you a job – networking will. If you want to reap the benefits of film school as a means to network, then certainly go for it.

But if you're on the fence about film school in general, be sure to read through these three reasons why film school may not be the right path for you.

1. Film School Can Give You a False Sense of Confidence

In film school, you can truly be led to feel that you can do no wrong. This obviously differs from school to school and is largely dependent on your instructors. But for the most part, recent grads often have a hard time adjusting to the real world of filmmaking based on confidence alone. While in film school, you're going to be writing/directing your own projects all the time, and although this may sound great, it doesn't represent what real life is going to be like.

"The real trouble with film school is that the people teaching are so far out of the industry that they don't give the students an idea of what's happening." - Brian De Palma, Director of Scarface

It's a harsh reality check when you go from directing your own work consistently to becoming a PA on a large set, where your opinion is not typically welcomed. A lot of filmmakers have a really tough time

in their first working year after graduating film school as a result of the false confidence they developed in themselves.

This isn't always going to be the case, but it's a fairly common issue for filmmakers who want to try their hand at climbing the ladder on large-scale productions.

2. On-set Experience Is Far More Valuable Than Classroom Training

Some film programs offer some really great in-class training with regards to directing, cinematography, editing, and other aspects of the craft. That said, no matter how good the training may be in any given school, it will likely never come close to the training you will pick up on a real film set.

There are so many intangible skills you can learn on a real set (including how to deal with people and how to handle problem situations) that you simply won't be exposed to in a controlled environment.

Don't think that just because film schools might simulate film sets for you that it comes close to the real thing. It doesn't. One way or another, you're going to need to learn by doing — and by making mistakes on a real set.

It's up to you whether or not you jump in with both feet right away or give yourself the buffer of film school before playing in the big leagues.

3. You Can Spend That Money Making a Movie

Many film directors (Quentin Tarantino included) have stated that there's something to be said about skipping out on film school and using that money to make a film.

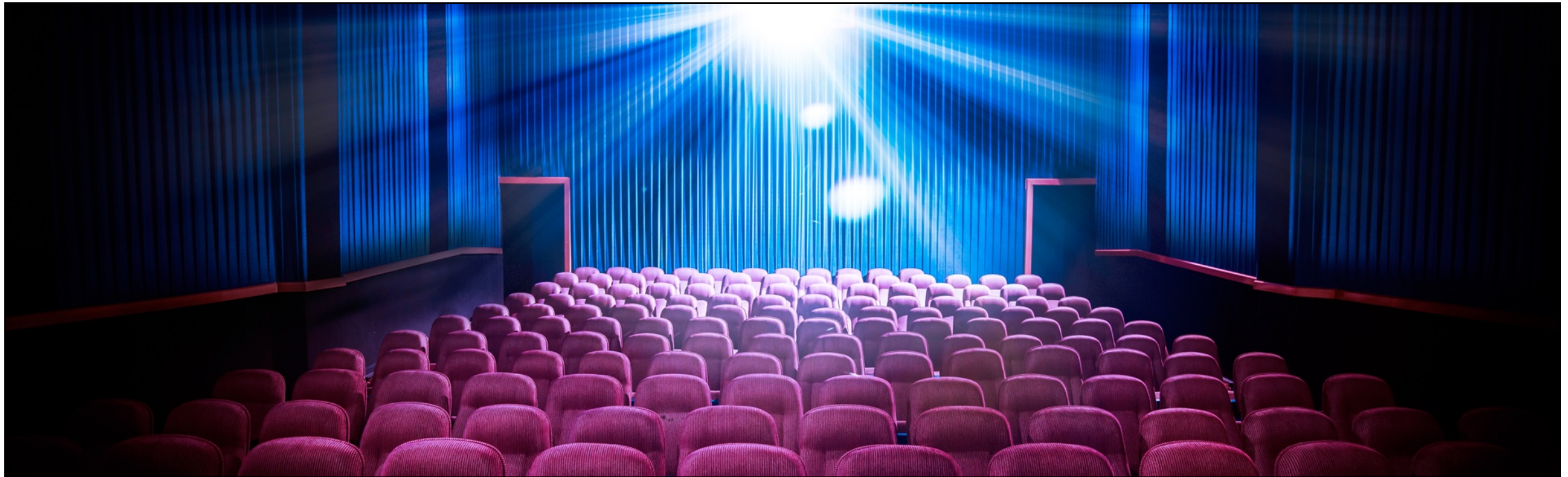
When people ask me if I went to film school I tell them, 'no, I went to films.'
– Tarantino

It's not uncommon for a film school to cost more than \$20,000 per year, plus the cost of room and board if you're living out of town.

Assuming you are in a three to four year program, you may be talking about \$50 to \$100k in overall cost, which may just land you a PA job at the end of the process. Imagine what would be possible if you were able to spend that money on a film instead. In a far shorter amount of time, you would be able to learn by doing – and end up with a finished product which can be used as an asset for your career.

There is no substitute for making your own movie as a means to develop your craft. When you do it in the real world, as opposed to within the comfortable confines of a film school, you might just be able to do it a whole lot better.

How to Adapt Your Feature Idea Into a Short Film



Filmmakers are often faced with the challenge of reworking a feature film screenplay into a short film. Here's the best way to go about it.

One of the most common approaches to feature film development today involves writing a feature length screenplay and then shooting a short film based around it. The idea behind this approach is that the short film will act as a proof of concept and essentially show potential collaborators what the director/producer team is able to do stylistically, even on a small scale.

Although many filmmakers seem to understand the importance of adapting their feature-length material into a short, many of them aren't able to actually execute in an effective way. The reason being that features and shorts are in some ways completely different art

forms, and an idea that works well as a feature doesn't always work as well as a short film... Or vice versa.

1. Tell a Small Story Within the Greater Story

The optimal length for most short films is 10 minutes, which means you have very little time to tell a complex story or explore a lot of character detail. The number one mistake that filmmakers make when it comes to adapting their material, is trying to cram way too much information into a ten minute short. Having just developed a feature length screenplay idea, many filmmakers feel very close to their material and it's hard for them to leave out important

moments, characters, or ideas from the short version of their story. But the reality is you need to lose 90% of your feature in order to make an effective short.

Rather than thinking of how you can trim down your 110 page script into 10 pages, think about one of the small stories that you can tell within the larger story at play. Maybe you want to tackle the catalyst moment from the first act, or show the first time that two characters meet. You might even want to shoot a short prequel that would take place before the first scene of the film. As long as the slice of the story that you are telling can be executed in ten pages or less, you're headed in the right direction. But the second that it feels like you are forcing a bigger story onto the page, it's time to rethink your idea.

2. Focus on Character.

Although you might not be able to explore the extent of your feature idea in a short, you can explore your characters very deeply. Characterization and character in general can be conveyed far more quickly and effectively than plot through the use of powerful imagery and short concise visual scenes. You should be taking advantage of that when making any short film (but especially one based around a feature), because you are trying to show potential investors, collaborators, actors, etc. what the characters are made of.

So rather than focusing too heavily on plot, ask yourself what short film you can make that will give insight into who the lead character of your story is on a fundamental level, and everything else will fall into place.

3. Show Off Your Style

One of the best opportunities that you have as a filmmaker is your ability to show off your personal and artistic style in a short film. In many cases, this is far more important than plot (at least in the

context of a proof of concept), and can benefit your overall process immensely. Chances are, if you're chatting with development executives, producers, talent, or anyone else that you might want to involve on your film, above all else they want to understand your style and abilities.

Story is always important — but they will probably already know the feature-length story you want to tell to an extent, and may have already read your screenplay. The short film gives you an opportunity to really show them what you're made of and let them start to visualize how your script will translate to the screen.

4. Be Careful About Adapting a Single Scene

The most common solution that filmmakers come to when adapting feature length material is shooting a single scene from their film. Rather than creating a short film that can stand on its own, filmmakers will often pick one of their favorite scenes from the screenplay and just go out and shoot it.

The truth is that any scene is part of a greater sequence, and that sequence is part of an act which has its own arc, and is part of the greater story as a whole. For that reason, most scenes don't have a concrete beginning, middle, and end to them in the same way that a sequence or act would in a film, and therefore don't translate that well as is to the short format. They might be fun to shoot and a good experience for your actors, but the goal of really representing your film as a whole can get lost when going down this path.

Final Thoughts

Short films are challenging enough to create as it is, but the process is even more arduous when you're adapting feature material. Almost every filmmaker at one point or another falls into the trap of attempting to tell a story that is way too big for a short format. The

end result always suffers from excessive dialogue and exposition, unfocused scenes, and a general lack of style and tone.

Shorts should never be thought of as an abbreviated version of their feature counterparts, but rather as supplementary material to them. You want to be able to approach collaborators with your feature script and a short film that gives a glimpse into the style, character, and tone of the project. But at the same time, you don't want to overwhelm the viewer with so much information that it turns them off of your project entirely.

Tips for Shooting in Low Light



Check out these tips for getting great low light shots.

As any filmmaker or video pro will tell you, shooting in low light can wreak havoc on the image quality of your shots. But rest assured, you don't have to own a RED EPIC to get great low-light footage. Follow these tips the next time you have to shoot in low light.

1. Increase Your ISO

You may have heard that shooting in a high ISO is bad. This is true, but only up to a certain point. Yes, shooting in an ISO so high that the image becomes unusable is bad, but depending on your camera, you may be able to push your ISO with good results. Newer cameras

are increasingly capable of shooting at high ISO numbers with relatively low noise. With modern software you can minimize the grain associated with high ISO as well.

2. Use a Faster Lens

By far the best thing you can do to get better images in low light is to get a "faster" lens. This means getting a lens with a wider aperture. While faster lenses are generally more expensive than their slower counterparts, you can still buy fast lenses for a very low cost. For example, you can get a brand new 50mm f/1.8 Canon lens for around [\\$100](#) on Amazon. I also recommend adapting vintage lenses

to work with your modern camera. I was able to find a fully functional 50mm f/1.4 Olympus OM lens for \$70 on eBay.

3. Use a Tripod and Slow Down Your Shutter Speed



You'll be able to lower your shutter speed to allow more light by shooting on a tripod. For example, if you're shooting in 24fps you are likely shooting at a shutter speed of 50. By shifting your shutter speed to 24, you would essentially double the amount of incoming light – but camera shake would normally make it too shaky to use. Using a tripod can make camera shake nonexistent, making it possible to shoot at longer shutter speeds.

4. Shoot in 24fps

Try to shoot in 24fps if possible. In slowing down your frames per second, you will increase the amount of light captured in each frame. The difference may not be incredible, but a simple jump from 30fps to 24fps will increase incoming light by 20%.

5. Shoot in RAW

Shooting in RAW doesn't make your image look any brighter in-camera, but it will make brightening up your image in post a lot easier. RAW images allow for more versatility when editing than compressed images. Even more, Adobe's Canon RAW editor has

built-in noise reduction technology that can help you take grain out of your footage.

6. Bonus: Buy an a7S Camera

If you plan on shooting a lot of low-light footage, the Sony a7S or a7S II is leading the pack in low-light capabilities. With ISO capabilities of over half a million, you can shoot in virtually complete darkness. What's even more astonishing is the lack of noise.

Nine Tips for Stabilizing Handheld Footage



Sometimes you just can't shoot on a tripod.

Heading to the set or into the field without a tripod? Getting beautiful handheld shots can be a difficult challenge – the recent influx of camera stabilizers and Steadicam equipment is a testament to that. Thinking out your approach to handheld shooting and taking several of the approaches listed below can significantly minimize camera shake.

1. Use Two Hands

One of the easiest ways to minimize shaky footage is to use two hands instead of one. Even if your camera is too small to be held by two hands, find a way to use both. This can be holding your wrist or

simply holding one hand around another. Adding the extra hand will essentially take your camera from being on a monopod to a bipod.

2. Keep the Camera Close

Holding the camera away from your body will severely increase camera shake. Most people make the mistake of holding the camera like they would if they were taking pictures, near their eyes. But for shooting video you want to hold the camera near your chin and close to your body. By resting your elbows on your chest and holding your arms parallel with your body, you can create a “cocoon” that will make your footage more steady. This technique is certainly

dependent on where your display screen is relative to your face, but for most DSLRs this should work perfectly.

3. Use a Wall

Leaning on a wall is a great way to keep your footage steady. By simply putting your weight on a wall, you can create a sort of tripod between your two legs and the wall.

4. Bend Your Knees and Float

When moving with your camera, the best way to minimize vertical shift due to walking is to think of your camera as a cup instead of a camera.

If you apply the same physics of a full cup to your handheld camera, you'll quickly find the camera shakes much less. Remember to relax!

5. Keep Movements Simple

While handheld footage does give you the freedom to preform elaborate camera moves, these moves can make your footage incredibly shaky. It's much more advisable to keep your camera moves simple. Unless the shot calls for it, you may get a better result by keeping your camera stationary.

6. Move Your Axis

When panning and titling, try pretending that your camera is rotating around an axis in front of the camera. This will help you avoid the foot shuffling that occurs when you simply rotate in place. In moving your axis, you'll quickly find more natural and fluid movements. Think of your movements as being arcs rather than pivots.

7. Use a Wider Lens

It might seem like common sense, but try using a wider lens when shooting handheld. While telephoto lenses might offer a shallow depth of field, they are incredibly difficult to keep steady, even with an image stabilizer. If you must have a telephoto shot, I recommend standing completely still and not moving at all.

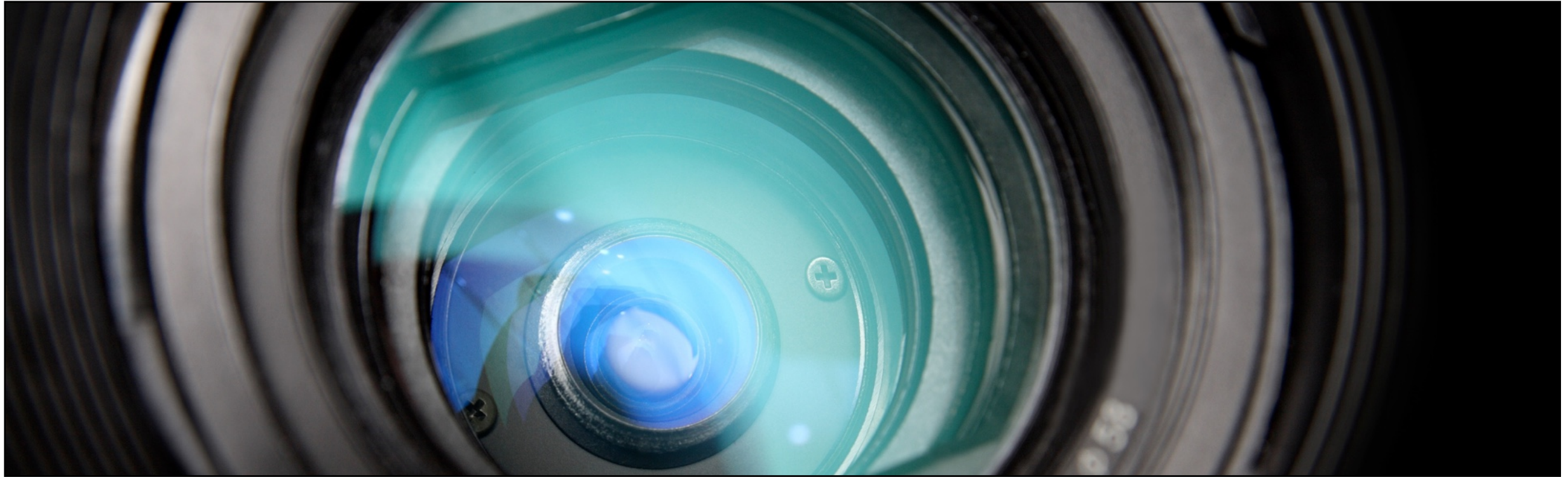
8. Minimize Focusing

Adjusting focus is one of the biggest culprits of shaky footage. Because you have to bring your hand to the front of the camera, focusing completely negates any effort you're making to stabilize your footage. Try keeping your focusing to a minimum. In most cases, moving your body is much steadier than moving your focus.

9. Fix It in Post

It's always better to shoot the footage right on location instead of fixing it in post. If you can't, the warp stabilizers built into After Effects and Premiere Pro make it extremely easy to stabilize shaky footage. Of course, mileage may vary depending on the shot.

Easily Forgotten Things to Check Before Hitting Record



Run through this checklist before you shoot.

Whether you're shooting a corporate video or a feature film, there will always be a million things to consider before hitting record. Between actors, crew members, and producers, you can easily forget a vital camera setting in the chaos of it all. So before your next big shoot, here are five things you need to keep in mind.

1. File Type

Picking the right file type essentially comes down to two factors: size and quality. If you want the best quality possible, then you want to shoot in the most uncompressed format possible. Unfortunately, with increased quality comes increased file size – so you'll need to

ensure you have enough record media to shoot on (cards, drives, etc).

If you're not doing all the production and post work yourself, be sure to have a conversation with the team about file type before shooting. Often the video editor will prefer one file type over another.

It should also be noted that some cameras don't remember the file format you shot on last. So if you use a new card or replace a battery, you need to go into your settings to make sure nothing has changed.

2. Picture Profile

A picture profile is the way in which your camera will record the colors of your image. While your image may “pop” if you’re recording in a high-saturation profile like portrait or landscape, it is generally advised that you shoot flat in-camera. Shooting flat means an unsharpened, undersaturated, and less-contrasted modification of the standard picture profile – allowing for more versatility when manipulating the video image in post. When shooting in a compressed format, it’s even more difficult to manipulate the image in post, so you better make sure you’re recording in the color profile you want.

3. Specks on the Lens

Now a clean lens may seem like a no brainer, but how often do you actually clean your lens on set? It can be extremely easy for a small speck to land on the lens during production and go unnoticed. If you’re using a small display screen, a speck in your shot might not be seen until you’re in the editing bay – and by that time, it’s not an easy fix. Make sure you are regularly cleaning your lens on set with a microfiber cloth or lens brush to avoid this problem.

4. White Balance

White balance can be easily adjusted in post if you’re shooting in RAW. However, if you’re shooting in a compressed format, you can’t change the white balance as easily. Make sure your white balance is correct for your scene. If you don’t white balance correctly, you can end up with inconsistent coloring.

The worst thing you could possibly do is set your white balance to auto. On most cameras ‘auto’ tells the camera that it can change the color cast during recording – meaning your image can go from blue to orange in the same shot. This will make it even more difficult to fix

in post. Save yourself the headache and check your white balance every time the lighting changes.

5. Formatting

Each time you put a new card into your camera, it needs to be formatted. Most cameras can do this in-camera. If you shoot on large cards, it can be easy to forget to format before beginning a shoot – but not doing so can mean you have multiple shoots or projects on the same card, which can be a real mess in post.

Create a solid system for shooting/importing/formatting. Perhaps you format your cards immediately after you import them or right before you shoot on them again. Whatever your preference, stick to it to minimize confusion.

Tips for Shooting Video on a White Seamless



Recreate the iconic look of the popular Apple product videos with these nine tips!

Shooting on a seamless white background is an incredibly popular way to draw attention to your subject while minimizing distractions. There are a number of different steps you can take to get this look. Here are nine of them!

1. Use Paper Instead of Canvas

A common mistake among new photographers and videographers is to use a cloth canvas when trying to get the “seamless” look. Unfortunately, cloth tends to crease up and it can be very difficult to get all the wrinkles out. Instead, try using a paper backdrop instead.

Paper is much easier to keep wrinkle-free and it can be easily rolled back up and stored.

2. Light Your Subject and Background Separately

If you want to get a 100% seamless white background you need to think of your lighting in two different stages: the background and the subject. By separating the lights used on your subject and your background, you can minimize shadows and hotspots in your image. Obviously this requires you to use (at least) two separate lights to light your scene, but the added control is well worth it.

3. Distance Your Subject From the Backdrop

By separating the distance between your subject and your background, you make it easier to minimize falloff from different light sources. If you think about it, the background works like a giant white reflector. The more space you put between your subject and the backdrop, the less light is going to bounce off that reflector and hit your subject. Having a great distance between your subject and the background also minimizes your risk of having shadows hit your backdrop.

4. Use a Light Meter for the Background

When working with with a seamless backdrop, a light meter can really come in handy. One trick is to properly expose the background then move your aperture 1.5 stops higher to make it blown out. Overexpose it and you run the risk of creating white feather edges around your subject.

6. Use the Histogram and Your Eyes

Histograms may be a quick useful tool, but there is no alternative to simply using your eyes to judge the scene. A histogram can't tell you if your scene is evenly lit.

7. Flag Your Lights

Spill suppression is incredibly important when working with a seamless background. You don't want the light hitting your subject to hit your background and vice versa. This is where flags come into play.

By flagging light, you can control the direction of a light, which gives you much more control over the scene. If you're short on professional flagging equipment, a few clamps, a light stand, and some white poster board will do the trick. Flagging light away from your lens is also a great way to prevent any unwanted lens flares.

8. Use a Production Monitor With Exposure Peaking

A production monitor is a worthwhile investment, as they can accurately tell you if your background is consistently lit. Recording tools such as the Ninja Atmos also have exposure peaking and focus peaking built in.

9. Use Diffused Light on Your Subject

To get the "Apple" look, you'll want your subject softly lit. This will mean using at least three lights... one for your background and two for your subject.

Tips for Shooting a Period Piece on a Shoestring Budget



Period pieces are usually out of reach for low-budget filmmakers, but these five tips will open up the possibility of setting your story in a different era.

It's tempting for many filmmakers to write scripts that take place in a completely different time period. After all, period pieces open up so many possibilities for telling new stories that just wouldn't be relevant or possible when set in modern times. Unfortunately, many of these same filmmakers are hit with a big wake-up call when it comes time to actually produce their film, as they realize just how expensive it's going to be.

When you're crafting a period piece, everything is more expensive. Not only do your hard costs skyrocket (wardrobe, locations, set dec, etc.), but a lot more time and effort is needed in other areas of the

production as well. During pre-production for example, you (and probably your art director/production designer) will need to thoroughly research the time period in which your film is set in so that you can portray it accurately.

Even in post-production, things can get tricky. Depending on how good or bad your locations, you may need to do set extensions or other VFX work to help sell the setting that you're trying to emulate. Not to mention, more extensive and specific color correction is often required to really help craft the feel of your world.

With all that said, there are ways to make great period pieces even when dealing with limited budgets. Your options certainly won't be as extensive as they would be if you were working with Hollywood-level funds, but that doesn't mean it's not doable.

If you're willing to take into account the five tips outlined below, you might just be on your way to making your next period piece.

1. Choose Simple Locations

The look of your film will ultimately be determined by the locations that you choose. If you choose the right locations, your work is going to be a lot easier both on set and off. However, if you make less than desirable choices, you might not be able to pull off the look you're going for and the entire project could fall short.

My rule of thumb with locations on low-budget period pieces is to always go simple. If you're shooting an exterior shot at the beach, on a farm, or in the forest, chances are there isn't a whole lot of set dec that will need to be done. The same can be said about a vintage home or train station (that hasn't been restored).

These are just a few examples of course, but the point is that you need to look for locations that work for you "as is." Chances are you don't have the budget (or research) behind your project to create something from scratch, so look for locations with no discernible giveaways of modern times and you're off to a good start.

2. Get Your Wardrobe Sponsored

Wardrobe is one of the best ways to add production value and realism to your period piece. At the same time, it can be very costly. Vintage wardrobe items can be really rare and hard to find and the price can be prohibitive for many filmmakers. That said, if you're willing to knock on some doors, you might just get it for free.

If you team up with the right stylist, they might just be able to work some miracles for you. Typically stylists have relationships with brands and can pull some really amazing options for you, usually at no cost (since the items are loaned). Rather than spending your wardrobe budget on actual items, invest in a good stylist and it can pay off big time.

3. Props Are Everything

Without some key props, you won't be able to create a realistic world to set your film in. The good news is that you don't necessarily need a lot of props, but just a few key props that can become focal points. For example, if you have the budget to rent a vintage car for a couple of days and can use it to capture all of your driving scenes, your production value just went up immensely. Much like the wardrobe solution above, you don't always need to spend an arm and a leg on props. The car example might be somewhat costly, but many other vintage props can be bought or rented for very little if you're willing to do some digging around.

4. The Right Music Is Critical

Your locations, wardrobe, and props will get you most of the way there when it comes to production, but post is really where it all comes together.

One of the easiest, most effective, and inexpensive ways to add to the realism of your period piece is through the use of authentic music. By licensing some period specific music (not just for the score, but also for background music, radios in the scene, etc.), you can really shape the tone of your film and compliment all of the visuals.

5. Learn How to Color Grade

Color grading can be a very expensive part of your process. In many cases, it should be left to a professional.

With that said, if you have a knack for color and are willing to do some of the legwork yourself, you can make a huge impact on the visual feel of your film with color alone. In the same way music will add a layer of period-specific polish to your film, so will the color. Whether you're doing something obvious (like black and white) or more specific (like a 60s technicolor look), the color grade will truly bring all of the elements of your period piece together and will inevitably make it feel far more authentic.

Tips for Traveling Filmmakers



Sometimes working in film means hitting the road or taking a flight. We've put together five big tips to make life easier for traveling filmmakers!

Being a filmmaker has its advantages and disadvantages. For instance, many filmmakers have the opportunity to travel, which is a plus. Of course, the downside to this is the fact that you have to pack a ton of expensive gear. With all of that in mind, check out this list of handy traveling tips for filmmakers.

Also, before we get started... traveling as a filmmaker isn't just flying from state to state or country to country. No way. Travel can also mean packing your gear into your car and heading out across the country. Because of this, we're going to cover some tips for both flying and driving. So, buckle up. Let's get rolling.

1. Never Check Your Camera and Lenses When Flying

When flying, never trust the airport to handle your camera and lenses. Instead, utilize the ability for carry-on and bring these pieces of equipment along with you.

It's okay to check in tripods and other gear, just be aware that if you use a Pelican case, it's automatically going to get flagged at the airport. Be sure to leave enough time for this inevitability. Also, it's wise to have a checklist of all your gear. A simple Excel spreadsheet will suffice.

2. Be Sure You're Insured

No, this isn't a plug for State Farm or AllState Insurance, but it should be. In reality, no matter if you're traveling or just filming locally, you need to have your gear insured.

For insurance, you have three lines of defense. The first is homeowner's insurance. That's right... if the equipment is yours and you own a home, then whatever is in that home is covered. Of course, there are loopholes in this and the insurance company will use them.

Next is to have insurance as a small business, especially if you own a production company — but this might not work for everyone.

Your third option is to go with a company like Front Row Insurance. Companies like this have been in the business of insuring gear for a long time. Just beware of imitators, and reach out to fellow filmmakers to find out who they've used and their experiences.

3. Scout Your Location Ahead of the Travel Date

With the entire world readily available at your finger tips, it's exceptionally easy to be completely prepared for a filmmaking trip. Use Google Maps and Google Earth to scout locations. Doing this in advance will save loads of time when you finally get on the ground.

Also, be sure to know your environment and what you are shooting and then plan accordingly. Understand the lay of the land before you arrive and the distances between locations. Utilize available public transportation instead of renting cars. Your bottom line will thank you.

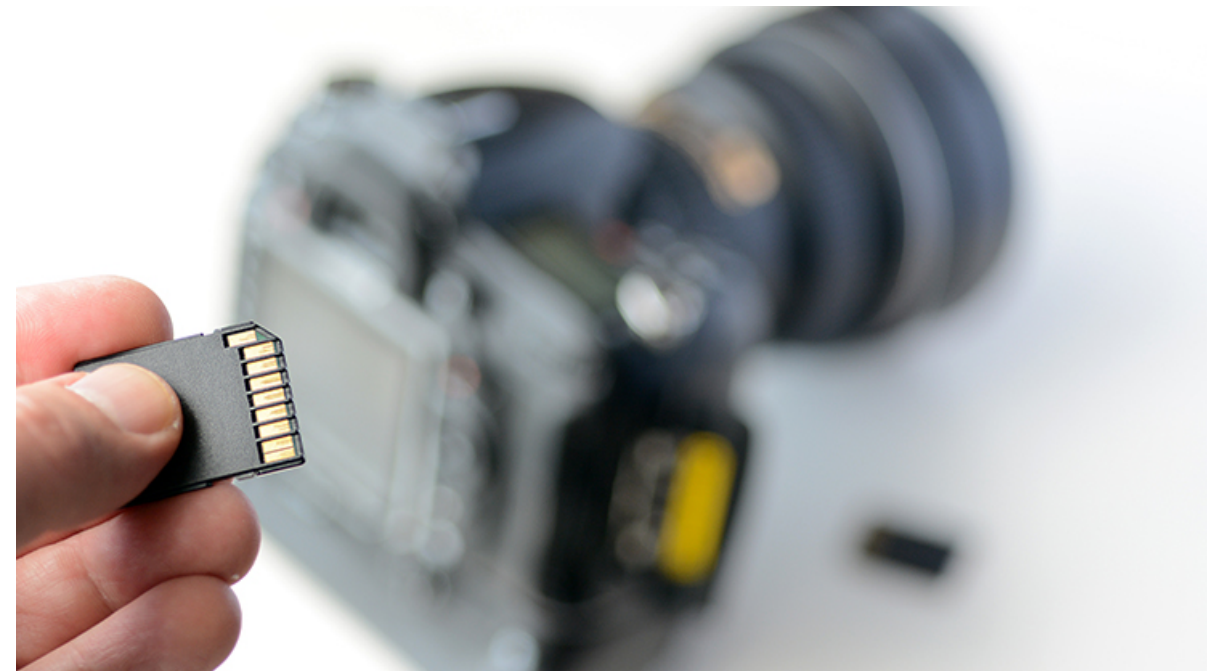
4. Bring Extra Batteries and Storage Media

Be sure to pack extra storage options and batteries. Sometimes the closest town or village ends up being an hour away — and even then

the local stores might not have what you need. Plan ahead and be overly cautious. Don't count on there being a Best Buy nearby.

5. Make Sure Your Documents Are in Order

While this tip is primarily for those traveling abroad, it's of vital importance to every filmmaker. Your passport is key to you becoming a filmmaker abroad. But you also need to be fully aware of the travel alerts and warnings of your final destination, as this may require a little more documentation from you. This documentation may include, but is not limited to: passport, travel visa, immunization records, and medical information.



4 Tricks to Keep Track of Memory Cards on Set



Managing your memory cards can help you avoid formatting and deleting any footage prematurely. Here are four simple ways to keep track of your memory cards.

When working on a rushed shoot, it can become difficult to keep track of your footage. You need to know which cards have already been used and which memory cards need to be dumped/backed up. Keep track of your memory cards with these four easy tips.

The first thing you need to do before arriving on set is to make sure all cards are formatted and ready to go. Make sure you format them for the right camera as well. For example, on smaller sets with DSLRs, SD cards and CF cards should be formatted for the camera. If you are using a mix of cameras, make sure you format the card again before shooting.

Lock the Card

If this is an available option (usually on SD cards), you can easily lock the memory card after shooting. This is literally the easiest thing you can do — and yet many people never do.

The lock is actually a mechanical switch that prevents you from overriding any footage. Remember to turn the lock off after you have dumped your footage. You will not be able to use the card until the lock switch is pushed back up.

Mark the Plastic Case

If you are using single clear card cases to manage your cards, mark the back side of the case with an X.

Put the card in face up, and you can clearly read the size of the memory card. After you shoot, put the card back in face down so the X covers the face of the card. That will mark that the card has been used.

Use a Case and Face Cards in the Same Direction

One of the easiest and most-used techniques is to use a card case for all memory cards. Before arriving on set, put all of your cards face-up in a case. After shooting, simply put the card back in the case, this time face-down.

This gives an instant look at your available memory. Not only do you know which cards you have used with a quick glance at the cards that are still face-up, you will know exactly how many gigs you have left.

Put Gaff Tape on the Card

For larger memory cards that don't have locks on them, simply put a piece of gaff tape over the connection points after you have used it.

Gaff tape is preferred because it won't leave any residue on the card. It will easily come off, and the cards info sticker won't be damaged.

All four of these simple tricks are incredibly easy to do and will save you so many headaches. Be sure you implement some sort of management system and make sure everyone handling the cards knows the protocol.

Also, be sure to use checksum verification when dumping your cards. Always make sure everything was copied properly. Don't just drag

and drop your footage. You can download DaVinci Resolve for free and use the clone tool to safely dump your footage.

Cinematography Tip: Why ‘Day for Night’ Is a Horrible Idea



Thinking about converting your daytime footage to nighttime footage? Think again.

‘Day for night’ is the process of making daytime footage look like it was shot at night by either using a filter, post-processing, or both. While there are some examples in modern cinema of good day-for-night conversions, usually day for night will only give you poorly colored footage that isn’t very cinematic. Let’s take a look at why day for night is a bad idea and offer a few creative alternatives.

1. You Can’t Shoot the Sky

One of the biggest differences between shooting at night and shooting in the daytime is the sky. Shocking, right? The daytime sky is, for the most part, almost always going to be overexposed — even

if you are underexposing your subject. This means you will need to avoid the sky if you’re trying to shoot a nighttime scene during the day. It will be solid white, which will greatly reduce your creative flexibility. Sure, you could tint your footage to tone down the white sky, but a real night sky doesn’t work like that.

In most shooting circumstances, the sky at night will be brighter on the horizon and very dark in the actual sky. If you’re shooting day for night, there’s really nothing you can do to simulate this nighttime occurrence other than do a lot of post-processing which will take forever and likely look terrible. We’ll discuss this further below.

2. Shadows Will Look Off

One of the biggest problems with day-for-night conversions is the shadows. As you probably already know, shooting in direct sunlight during the daytime is generally a bad idea. Your subject will get some very unflattering shadows — specifically raccoon eyes. Moonlight normally doesn't work like that. When it does, it still looks strange on camera.

There will be other weird lighting occurrences that happen in the daytime that don't occur during the night, like harsh reflections and possible lens flares. On the flipside of this, you'll also have to worry about portions of your subject being overexposed. You'll have to crush the whites in post in order to fix this.

3. The Color Cast Will Look Terrible

Color is really where day-for-night conversions start to fall apart. At its core, a day-for-night conversion is either a dark blue filter that's put directly in front of the camera or a post-processing technique where you give your footage a dark blue tint.

However, no matter how you do it, dark blue footage is not what nighttime footage looks like. There are a lot of colors at night, not just blue.

4. It Will Take a Lot of Time in Post

In light of all of the hurdles we've mentioned above, the biggest challenge to making day-for-night footage look convincing is the post-processing. There's a lot of work that needs to be done to do 'good' day-for-night conversions. A good conversion will:

- Do a blanket color grade/correction
- Track and replace the sky

- Rotoscope various silhouetted elements to avoid awkward edges
- Selectively track and level distracting elements
- Add the film's specific cinematic grading features

Even after you do all of this, you're still going to be hard-pressed to make your day for night look convincing. Even the best After Effects teachers out there have a hard time making convincing day-for-night conversions.

Just Light the Scene

Who said you can't light a nighttime scene? Audiences are very easy to trick when it comes to lighting. Most people in the audience won't ask where that soft fill light is coming from. Instead, they'll focus on the content of film or video as long as the lighting is close.

By using a dim light and a sensitive camera, you can generally get good cinematic footage at night even if it doesn't make a lot of sense. A simple battery-powered LED should do the trick in these situations.

Learn the Lingo: 15 Weird Filmmaking Terms



From cheeseplates to dead cats, let's take a look at some strange filmmaking terms.

When it comes to filmmaking, there are a lot of strange terms. Learning the lingo is a rite of passage that every filmmaker has to go through. Let's take a look at some of the stranger filmmaking terms out there and figure out what they mean.

C-47

Other Names: CP-47, 47, Peg, Ammo, Bullet

On a film set, a C-47 is simply a clothespin. The origin of why it came to be called a C-47 is somewhat fuzzy. Some say it was named after the C-47 airplane because of its versatility. Others say they were named after the bin in which they were stored. No matter the origin,

a C-47 is one of the most-used tools on a film set. Typically they are used to clamp filters to the barn doors of lights, but they can also be used to hold up fabric or prank unsuspecting crew members.

Juicer

Other Names: Electrician

No, a juicer isn't a kitchen appliance or muscular person. In film, a juicer refers to an on-set electrician. A juicer is one of the most important roles on set, as there's typically a lot of power required to operate all of the various pieces of equipment associated with shooting a film.

Martini

Other Names: Martini Shot

A Martini, or Martini Shot, is the final shot before wrapping the set for the day. It's supposedly called the Martini shot because the next shot would be taken out of a glass, aka post-wrap drinking. It's also been said that in the early days of Hollywood, stars would begin their post-wrap party a little early and start drinking martinis during the last shot. When you hear the term martini said on set, it brings about as much joy as a couple of real ones.

Stinger

On a film set, stinger refers to a single extension cord. A stinger refers to any size of extension cord. Typically on a film set, stingers will be black instead of the bright orange cables found at local hardware stores.

Legs

When a filmmaker is talking about legs, they're typically talking about the legs of a tripod. On most professional tripods, the head and the legs can be easily separated. Professional tripod legs are usually made out of carbon fiber, as they are light, tough, and good in extreme conditions.

Sticks

Sticks is another word for tripod on a film set. If someone were to say grab the sticks, they would be referring to both the legs and head of the tripod.

Baby

Other Names: Baby Stick, Baby Legs

A baby on a film set is a small set of tripod legs. Tripod legs come in all shapes and forms, but if you are wanting to put your camera extremely close to the ground, you'll want to go lower than what most standard tripod legs will allow. To do this you will want to use a baby, or small tripod legs, to get low-angle shots.

Strike

Other Names: Striking

To strike on a film set simply means to turn on a production light or series of lights. While it is less common in modern filmmaking, every now and then you might hear someone yell "striking" when turning on a light. However, some argue that it is much better to simply say "mind your eyes, light coming on."

Cheeseplate

A cheeseplate is a metal plate with holes designed to serve as a multipurpose utility bracket for various film related accessories. While cheeseplates come in all shapes and sizes, they are almost always used to create camera rigs. The holes allow the user to mount screw-based devices easily.

Abby Singer

Abbey Singer refers to the second-to-last shot at a specific film location. It was named after Abbey Singer, a famous production manager who would alert his crew two shots before the set needed to be collapsed.

Cookie

Other Names: Cucoloris

A cookie is a device used to mask light patterns onto a background. Cookies can come in all shapes and sizes, but they're almost always placed on a stand separate from the actual light source. They're called cookies because their hole patterns look like a chocolate chip cookie.

Run and Gun

Run and gun is a term used to describe a style of filmmaking with very little production equipment besides a camera. Run and gun is typically used in documentary-style filmmaking, as filmmakers aren't always given the luxury of a controlled set. With cameras quickly progressing in dynamic range and sensitivity, it is becoming increasingly popular for indie filmmakers to utilize a run and gun approach to their craft.

Dead Cat

Other Names: Wind Muff, Mic Cover

On a film set, a dead cat is a fuzzy cover that goes around the end of a boom mic to block out wind distortion. The name fits the accessory perfectly, as its furry exterior makes it look just like a dead cat. Rode currently sells a 'Dead Wombat' that is slightly larger than a traditional dead cat.

Clapper

Other Name: Film Slate, Clapboard, Slate, Clapperboard, Slapperboard, Time Slate, Board

A clapper is a board used for syncing and identifying a shot in post. A clapper is most notably the most iconic accessory on any movie set.

Typically a clapper will have a place to write the scene, take, and shot with some other information like production title, director, and DP.

Keeping a Long Dialogue Scene Visually



No matter how great your writing, heavy dialogue scenes can begin to feel boring. Here's how to keep things interesting on those long takes.

While shooting a one or two page scene with lots of dialogue might be fairly straightforward, things get much more complicated when you get into lengthier page counts.

For instance, when you're shooting a conversation between two people sitting at the dinner table... If you were to cover it in the traditional sense (a wide and two close-ups) you'd run out of steam after a minute or two in the editing room pretty quickly, and things will likely start to get pretty boring. However, if you can follow at least one of the tips on this list, you'll be in much better shape.

Move the Camera

A roaming camera (whether handheld or on a steadicam) will always hold the viewers attention better than a static shot. Just as it's important that you choose the right type of camera movement for your scene, it's also important to choose the right movement for your audience. With long dialogue scenes, always look for ways that you can move that camera, whether it's panning back and forth between your actors, circling your talent, etc. to keep your audience visually stimulated.

Move Your Actors

If you're hellbent on no camera movement at all, either because it doesn't work with the mood you're setting or it's technically impossible, then consider moving your actors instead. Say for instance you're shooting the dinner scene as described above and it's six pages long. Why not have one of the actors get up at the two page mark and walk to the kitchen to get something? Whether the other character follows or not, you now have a new background and new angles on both characters and have subsequently added more dimension to the scene.

Cross the Line

Those of you that went to film school have had it drilled in your heads to never 'cross the line' (which is of course the imaginary axis the camera sits on), but rules are made to be broken. Assuming you don't want to use a roaming camera and want your actors to stay static, crossing the line is a great way to completely change the perception of a scene by simply capturing reverse coverage. If there's a beat in your scene where the tone or pace changes, consider using a cutaway shot to bring you across the line and then shoot the remainder of the scene from the other side. If nothing else, it will keep things interesting and let the viewer subtly know a change has occurred.

And there really is no better way to understand the craft of shooting a heavy dialogue scene than by watching great films by some of the masters of dialogue. Filmmakers like Quentin Tarantino and Richard Linklater are notorious for their use of dialogue, and both employ a variety of techniques to keep the viewer stimulated. In particular, I recommend watching *Inglourious Basterds* and *Before Sunrise* (by each respective auteur) for some inspiration.

Film Societies: What Do Those Abbreviations Mean?



ACE, ASC, DGA. What do those letters mean? Here's a look at the most popular film societies.

Have you ever taken notice of the letters that appear after names in movie credits? Those post-nominal letters indicate a society or union that person is a member of. Here are the most well known film societies and organizations, particularly those you will see listed in opening and end credits.

American Cinema Editors — A.C.E.

American Cinema Editors (ACE) was founded in 1950 and is officially defined as an honorary society of motion picture editors. The society should not be confused with the Motion Picture Editors Guild, the union organization under I.A.T.S.E.

The objectives and purposes of the American Cinema Editors are to advance the art and science of the editing profession; to increase the entertainment value of motion pictures by attaining artistic pre-eminence and scientific achievement in the creative art of editing; to bring into close alliance those editors who desire to advance the prestige and dignity of the editing profession.

The organization votes members based on their professional achievements and their commitment to editing motion pictures. Membership requires a sponsorship by two active members, as well

as minimum of five years of editing experience on features or television.

The ACE has published the Cinema Editor quarterly magazine since 1951 and celebrates achievement with the annual Eddie Awards.

American Society of Cinematographers — A.S.C.

The American Society of Cinematographers (ASC) was founded in 1919. The goal was to advance the art and science of cinematography and build a collaborative environment for cinematographers to share ideas and techniques.

The organization is not a labor union or guild, but an educational, cultural, and professional organization. Membership is extended by invitation, exclusive to those who have demonstrated outstanding ability as a director of photography.

The ASC credit first appeared in the title sequence for the 1920 western film *Sand*, shot by Joe August, ASC. That same year, the organization began publishing *The American Cinematographer* magazine. The ASC is also the publisher of the *American Cinematographer Manual*, commonly known as the filmmaker's bible.

The best work is celebrated annually with the American Society of Cinematographers Award for Outstanding Achievement in Theatrical Releases.

British Society of Cinematographers — B.S.C.

The British Society of Cinematographers (BSC) was first conceived by Bert Easey, the head of the Denham and Pinewood studio camera departments. Officially formed in 1949, the society aimed to mirror the previously established American Society of Cinematographers.

The BSC instituted four objectives:

1. To promote and encourage the pursuit of the highest standards in the craft of Motion Picture Photography.
2. To further the applications by others of the highest standards in the craft of Motion Picture Photography and to encourage original and outstanding work.
3. To cooperate with all whose aims and interests are wholly or in part related to those of the society.
4. To provide facilities for social intercourse between the members and arrange lectures, debates and meetings calculated to further the objects of the Society.

Cinematographers working both in the United States of America and the United Kingdom can be members of both the ASC and BSC, often seen with both designations in credits.

Casting Society of America — C.S.A.

The Casting Society of America (CSA) was formed in 1982, originally known as the American Society of Casting Directors. The society is a collection of the best casting directors in film, television, and stage.

CSA began publishing a monthly newsletter in 1983. Since then, membership has grown tremendously, with CSA members based in the US, Canada, Italy, Australia, and South Africa. The CSA celebrates achievements with the Artios Award, named for the Greek "perfectly fitted."

Directors Guild of America — D.G.A.

The Directors Guild of America (DGA) is a craft union representing directors and members of the directorial team working in film,

television, commercials, documentaries, news, sports and new media.

Founded as the Screen Directors Guild in 1936, the group merged with the Radio and Television Directors Guild to form the DGA in 1960. The union offers the DGA Award for Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Feature Film, which has nearly predicted every winner of the Best Director Academy Award.

This union is one of the most well known organizations, but members do not use the DGA suffix in any credits.

Producers Guild of America — P.G.A.

The Producers Guild of America (PGA) represents television, film, and new media producers. Originally formed as the Screen Producers Guild in 1950, the union has since merged with the Television Producers Guild and American Association of Producers. The PGA celebrates with the Producers Guild Award, originally called the Golden Laurel Awards.

The PGA first introduced the post-nominal letters in 2012, allowing approved producers to add the designation. Unlike other societies and organizations, the mark does not indicate membership in the Producers Guild. It only certifies that a producer performed a major portion of the producing on a given motion picture.

The mark is licensed on a film-by-film basis, meaning any producer who has previously used the mark is not automatically able to continue using the designation.

Writers Guild of America (East, West) — WGAE, WGAW

The Writers Guild of America is a combination of two labor unions. The Writers Guild of America East (WGAE) and the Writers Guild of America West (WGAW).

The WGAE was founded in 1912 by a collection of book, magazine, and drama writers. The WGAW was founded as the Screen Writers Guild in 1921 in Hollywood. In 1954, five writing unions formed the WGAE on the east coast and WGAW on the west coast.

Like the DGA, these unions are some of the most well-known organizations, but do not use any designations in the credits.

5 Tips For Shooting Unscripted Reality Content



Shooting unscripted reality content can be amazingly challenging, but these tips will help any unscripted set achieve better results.

On the surface level, reality television appears to be an easier medium to shoot or DP than traditional scripted content. After all, most reality shows have a relatively low production value and don't involve complex lighting setups. However, unscripted television poses all sorts of other challenges both on set and off, and so DPs that plan to work in reality need to learn how to approach their work in a different way.

It's quite common for first-time reality DPs to completely drop the ball and be replaced before their first week is up. This happens for many reasons — a big one being their inability to keep up with the

speed of the crew. So for those of you that are looking to shoot unscripted reality content in the future, be sure to follow these five tips to ensure you're coming to set prepared.

1. Flexible Gear > Cinematic Quality

It's very common for new reality DPs that have a background in film work to lean the wrong way when it comes to camera choice on a reality series. While you might have it drilled into your head to always opt for the highest quality camera you have available to you, most shows simply shouldn't be shot on a RED or ALEXA.

More often than not, cameras such as the Canon C300 MKII or Sony FS7 are the best choice when shooting reality television. While these may not offer the same quality as the ALEXA that you shot a feature on last month, they'll allow you to work much faster and with minimal crew support. The same goes for GoPros, DSLRs, and other cameras with a relatively small footprint.

2. Light for the Space

Unfortunately on most reality sets there's just not enough time to "light" every single shot in the same way that you would on a narrative set. And even if you do have the time, reality shows are typically not supposed to look lit, which means you need to ignore a lot of what you know about narrative lighting when working in reality.

I typically recommend lighting the space in a general sense, as opposed to creating specific setups for each shot. Using space lights or china balls will help bring up the ambience inside a room without locking you into a specific area in which you need to shoot. This means you can easily flow from one shot to the next without having to make time-consuming lighting changes.

3. Minimize Equipment

Although your primary lighting may involve space lights or other sources that are out of the way, you'll still have some additional lighting gear to manage. For instance, you might have some LED panels that you walk in for OTF shots, or some extra C-stands and flags for light control.

The more gear you have, the slower you'll move on set. Reality shows tend to move quickly and are often under-crewed, so do yourself a favor and have only the gear that's absolutely essential with you on set. This will help you move between set ups much faster, and

ultimately let you get more coverage — which is incredibly valuable on reality sets.

4. Use Free Run Timecode

Every show will be shot differently and have its own technical needs. That said, in most cases you'll be at a huge advantage by using free run timecode on your camera, as opposed to slating and using record run.

With multiple cameras on standby at any given time, there's simply no easy way to quickly slate up before each take — at least on most reality sets. Instead, sync up your cameras beforehand and use free run timecode so that all of the cameras stay synced throughout the day. This will allow your editor to painlessly sync all of the cameras together and start cutting as quickly as possible.

5. Prep for Audio

Most narrative DPs have little to no experience with audio, but in the reality world it's quite common for you to need to do double duty. Although your show will likely have a dedicated sound department, the nature of a reality set is very unpredictable and some circumstances may even require that you record audio yourself, straight to the camera.

Chances are you won't be required to bring any audio gear to set, but at a bare minimum you should understand the manual audio controls on your camera like the back of your hand. You need to be ready to plug in an XLR and set your levels in mere seconds on a reality set, otherwise you may risk missing an important moment or take.

The Four Advantages of Digital Over Film



When digital cinematography first hit the scene, most pro DPs wouldn't go near it — and for good reason. It wasn't until recently that digital cinema cameras not only offered a viable alternative to film cameras, but in some cases an even stronger option. Let's look at some of the advantages of digital over film.

There's no question that film is still the gold standard to which all digital formats are held to. It still delivers a type of character that is beautifully flawed and organic in a way that digital never will be. But even still, there are some instances where digital is simply the better choice. Here are just a handful of examples of when that's the case.

Low Light

Filmmakers that came up during the digital revolution very much take for granted the low-light capabilities of digital cameras. Standard film stocks often are rated anywhere from ISO 100 to ISO 800, with 1600 and 3200 being options as well (although less common). That said, just about any professional digital cinema camera (or DSLR for that matter) can shoot at much higher settings with far cleaner results.

There is simply no film equivalent to cameras like the a7S II or the C300. There is no film stock that will allow you to shoot without any lights and still get noise-free results. Naturally, shooters that need to work with limited lighting are going to be drawn to digital formats.

2. Cost and Time On Set

Even if you've never shot on film, chances are you're well aware of the costs associated with going down that path. While film cameras are cheaper than ever to buy (or rent), film stocks and processing are still quite expensive and very prohibitive for low-budget filmmakers.

And even in cases where an indie production is able to scrape together enough budget to shoot on film, there can be other ramifications while on set. More specifically, productions will be need to shoot at a lower ratio (perhaps only getting two or three takes per shot) in order to conserve their film stock.

3. Turnaround Time

Many of us have taken for granted the fact that there is virtually no turnaround time when processing your digital dailies. In some cases, productions now will even opt to have an editor working on set who will create assembly cuts of scenes as the rest of the crew is still shooting.

It goes without saying that this certainly isn't the case with film. When shooting on film, it will take several days (or weeks) to get your processing/scanning done, and only then will you be able to move ahead on the edit. Not to mention, if there are any issues with the footage, you will need to schedule a pickup day. Unlike digital, you wouldn't have been able to know on set.

4. Longer Takes

Many directors today have come around to the digital format simply because it allows for long (or virtually unlimited) record times. Again, this is something that digital shooters without film experience very much take for granted. Veteran filmmakers, however, can't deny the fact that having the ability to record indefinitely opens up a lot of creative possibilities.

A standard 1000 foot roll of 35mm motion picture film will only give you about 11 minutes, which isn't a whole lot. This isn't always going to be an issue, considering that the vast amount of takes on any given productions will run less than 11 minutes. But for directors will a specific type of approach on set, this can be a negative.

9 Tips for Shooting Video in the Rain



Shooting video in the rain is a tricky proposition. Here are a few easy tips for getting it done.

Mixing water and electronics is never a good idea. If you absolutely must shoot outside during a rainstorm, there are a few things you can do to make sure that your equipment doesn't get ruined. Let's take a look at a few different ways you can protect your gear from the elements.

1. Get a Rain Cover

The best thing you could possibly do to protect your gear from the rain is buy a rain cover for your equipment. There are a lot of professional options out there, and most of them feature a few adjustable ties that can fit snugly around your camera.

You will, of course, be limited in your ability to adjust focus and view your footage on the camera, but when you're shooting in the rain, this is just one of the limitations you'll have to deal with.

2. Improvise a Rain Cover (If You're in a Pinch)

If you've left your rain cover at home, it's not the end of the world. There are plenty of DIY options out there. The most popular option is to place a Ziplock bag around your camera and cut a hole out for the lens to stick through. You could even put gaff tape around the lens hole to keep it from opening more.

If you don't have a ziplock handy, you could always use a trash bag which can double as a poncho to keep you (relatively) dry.

3. Use a Lens Hood



A lens hood is a simple plastic cover that fits over the end of your lens. They are specially designed to keep out of the field of view. Traditionally, lens hoods are used to protect your lens from bumps and sunlight, but they can also work as a cover to keep rain off the front of your lens.

You can pick up a lens hood for about \$10 online. I highly recommend getting one for all of your lenses, just in case.

4. Don't Clean Lenses With Your Shirt

Water on your lens is super annoying. Not only does it completely ruin your shot, but it also leaves smudges if you try to wipe it off with a microfiber.

If you have a significant amount of water on your lens you can lightly dab with a t-shirt. After you dab your lens, use a microfiber cloth to wipe off any remaining residue.

5. Prepare for Bad Audio

Audio is almost impossible to work with in the rain. This is for multiple reasons:

- Rain is Noisy – Even the best unidirectional mics will have an impossible amount of background noise.
- Rain is Dangerous for Audio Equipment – It goes without saying, but anytime you mix electrical equipment with water, bad things are going to happen. This is especially true with microphones. No matter if you use a boom mic, lav, or video mic, you're going to run the risk of ruining your mic if it gets wet.
- Rain Limits Your Audio Options – There's really no good way to work around rain when it comes to audio. If you use a boom, it's going to get soaked. If you use a video mic, it's going to get hit by rain drops and be unusable. The best option in the rain is a lav mic, but even then you run the risk of getting a lot of unnecessary ambient noise.

So if you need to shoot in the rain, there's a good chance you'll have to do some ADR work in post. It's also even more necessary to record field noise when shooting in the rain, as there's a chance that you can use the Capture Noise Print feature in Audition to minimize some of the ambient noise produced by the raindrops.

6. Wipe Off Your Gear Afterwards

Most professional gear is water resistant, meaning it won't immediately ruin if it gets wet. But even water resistant equipment can get compromised if water is left on it for a long time.

If you simply stick a wet lens into your pack, you run the risk of water sitting on the internal electronics in your camera. This could easily degrade them over time.

7. Use Battery-Operated Lights and Keep Them Safe

If you need to use lights during a storm, you can't simply plug them into an electrical outlet. That would be a major electrical hazard. A

battery-powered LED light inside a large plastic ziplock bag is usually enough to light a basic set.

There are a lot of battery-operated LED light options out there. One of the best brands for casual productions is Yongnuo. They create super-cheap LED lights that take Sony batteries. You can pick one up for as little as \$60.

8. Silica Gel

Moisture can be an absolute disaster for cameras, especially if the moisture gets inside your lens. The easiest way to suck moisture out of your camera bag: silica gel, the same kind found in shoe boxes. You can pick up a pack of silica gel bags for about \$7 online.

9. Avoid Shooting in the Rain

It's always best to avoid rain when you can. If you're shooting a documentary, then you may have no choice. But for narrative film, you'll always want to control your environment by simulating fake rain. There are tons of tutorials out there on the subject. You can even use a water hose if you're in a pinch.



06 POST-PRODUCTION

SHOOTING THE FILM IS JUST THE BEGINNING. IT'S IN POST-PRODUCTION THAT A FILM TAKES SHAPE AND BECOMES ALL THAT IT CAN BE. FROM EDITING TO COLOR GRADING, THERE'S A SEEMINGLY ENDLESS NUMBER OF THINGS YOU CAN DO TO MAKE YOUR FILM BETTER IN POST.

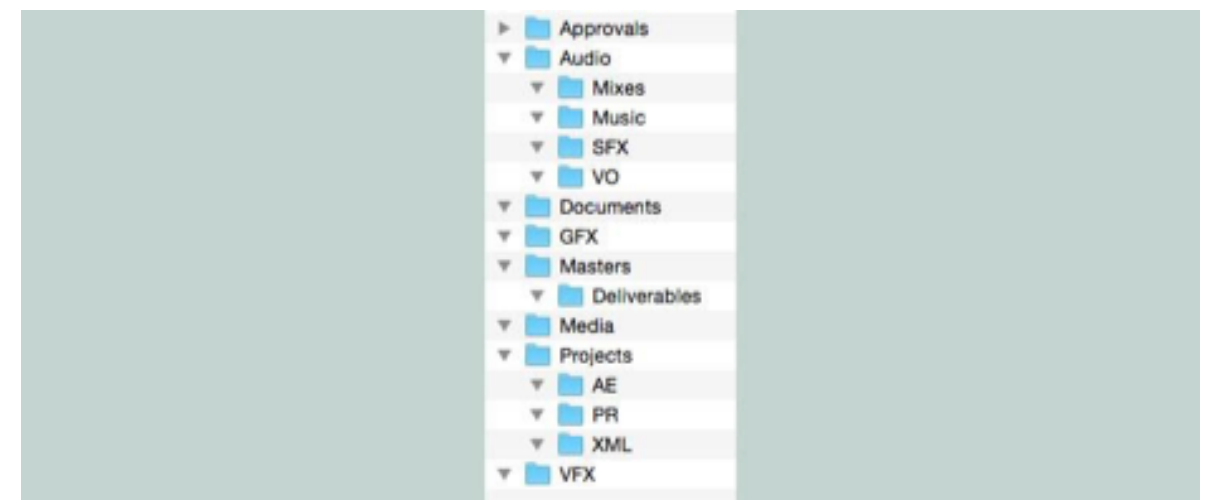
Video Editing Tip: Organize Your Hard Drive the Easy Way!



Keeping your assets organized in your NLE is vital, but now you've got to organize your hard drive! Here's a great way to do it.

Keeping your project nice and organized when editing is essential – you never know who you might have to hand the project off to, or if you might have to come back to it much, much later.

If it's not organized, headaches and cursing ensue. Keeping things organized outside of the NLE – on your hard drive or server – is just as vital for passing off a project or archiving it. Here's a look at one potential project organization setup that is great for organizing projects.



Approvals

This folder is for non-final versions that are ready for the client to look over (usually .mp4s in my case).

Audio

There are 4 folders inside the Audio folder:

- Mixes: for mastered & mixed .wav or .aif files
- Music : raw stock or original music
- SFX
- VO

Documents

Put scripts, interview questions, project briefs, casting notes, etc. in here.

GFX

This folder is for any non-footage elements like logos, images, pre-rendered lower thirds, motion graphics, etc.

Masters

Directly inside the Masters folder is where I put the master .mov files – ProRes 422 HQ typically.

There's also a subfolder called Deliverables. This folder is specifically for non-archival delivery formats needed, like H.264 for web, ProRes or XD Cam for TV station delivery, .m2v/.ac3 files for DVD, etc.

Media

Some people prefer to keep their media in a different place/drive than their projects. If you like to keep it all together, put it in this Media folder, organized by “Reel X” folders to separate card/shoot days.

Projects

This is for all project files, including Premiere/Avid/FCPX/After Effects, Motion, Cinema 4D, Flash, Audition, Soundtrack Pro, etc.

It's also good to add subfolders for each program (like PR, AE, FCP, FL, C4D, and so on) plus an XML for any XMLs created for program interchange: FCP -> Premiere/After Effects, Premiere -> Resolve, etc.

VFX

This folder is distinct from the GFX folder – This should be used for any footage elements like green screen passes, background plates, or non-mograph output from After Effects or Motion (like speed changes, and logo blurs).

How To Increase Your Editing Speed Dramatically



As editors, we are always looking for the best way to tell a story. In most cases, the best possible version is only found after many passes of editing. Luckily, there are many things you can do to increase your editing speed significantly and get to the finish line faster.

Editing, like any other part of the creative process can be both highly enjoyable and immensely frustrating. When things are going well, it's an extremely rewarding experience that allows us to finally see our projects come to life. On the other hand, it's possible to get into slumps when editing (especially early on in the process) that can prevent us from finishing on time.

As with any creative process (editing included), the best way to get to the finish line is by having a mold to work from.

You always want to challenge yourself to get better results and to tell your story in the most efficient and effective way possible. Many times, this means that you will need to go through many different iterations of your edit – which is completely fine. In fact, it's encouraged.

You might have a general idea of what your film is going to look like, but truthfully you will never really know until you can watch a finished version. For this reason, try to get a first rough cut of your project completed as quickly as possible. After all, if the edit is going

to change so drastically throughout the process anyways, you are better off getting the first pass done sooner than later (even if it's flawed), so you at least have something to work from.

You don't want to spend too much time finessing edits and smoothing over cuts on a first pass of anything, since you are likely to lose just about all of that hard work.

Here are some tips for getting through your edit faster, so you can start to focus on the revisions more effectively.

Organize Like Crazy

Organization may not exactly be the sexiest part of the editing process, but if you do your legwork up front and actually set up your project file properly, you will be able to work way faster once you're actually in the thick of things.

Organization includes everything from creating proxy files (so that you can edit quickly, even from a laptop) to logging and labeling all of your footage properly. The last thing that you want to do is get halfway through an edit while on a roll and then have to stop for 20 minutes to go and look for a clip. Organize your footage like crazy and you'll thank yourself later.

Don't Worry About Audio Edits

Your audio is going to sound pretty bad during the rough cut of your film. Obviously if your sound recordist did their job properly, the actual audio itself will be high quality. But in the context of your edit, it may not sound great at all. Certain takes will be louder than others, there will be gaps where no room tone is placed, sound effects will be missing, and loads of other issues will arise.

It will be tempting to start finessing your audio so that it sounds far more clean, especially if you have to show your producers a cut —



but, seriously. Don't do it. No matter what, it's going to get redone, and let's face it – you're probably not that proficient with post-audio. So leave it to the pros and do what you do best – edit! Even if it means having to listen through some crappy audio during the rough cut/assembly stages.

Avoid Going Through Every Take

Depending on how you (or your director) shot the project, you may have a ridiculous amount of coverage to go through. Frankly, you simply don't need to. Some editors like to go through every take first and do 'selects' where they will place their favorite clips in a timeline, but in many cases that's a waste of time, considering you aren't going to use 90% of that material.

Instead, go through the edit intuitively. Ask yourself, "what comes next?" By doing this, your edit will feel far more organic and will move much more quickly.

Learn Your Keyboard Shortcuts

If you haven't already started editing with keyboard shortcuts, then drop what you're doing and learn how to edit that way now. On a really small project (like a 30 second commercial) this may not be as much of a factor, but when dealing with a substantial short or feature film, you can save a lot of time by not juggling the mouse and keyboard so much.



You wouldn't believe how much time you actually spend physically moving between mouse and keyboard when editing, not to mention the fact that keyboard shortcuts are in themselves much faster than 'drag and drop' mouse editing.

Use Placeholders

Sometimes you're on a roll when editing a scene or sequence, but then you hit a wall. Something's just not working creatively. Maybe you can't find the right temp track to use, or there isn't a good enough transitional shot to bring you into the next act. Whatever the issue may be, if you start to get stuck on something trivial – just move on.

You don't want to waste an hour of your precious time trying to finesse an edit or work on a scene that just isn't gelling. Instead, don't be afraid to just drop in a placeholder (which could simply be a title card, explaining the scene that will go there) and move on. After getting through a few more scenes and maintaining your momentum, it will be a lot easier to go back to that placeholder and figure out what you want to do there, since you'll be looking at it with fresh eyes.

Five Reasons to Get a Color Grading Control Surface



A control surface is an essential piece of gear for professional color correction. Here are five good reasons why.

Though this is no secret to seasoned professionals, many aspiring colorists don't realize the inherent value that a color grading control surface will bring to their work. After all, many professional software packages can be used without additional hardware.

The DaVinci control surface maps many of Resolve's functions to dedicated buttons and knobs, making grading a breeze. However, its hefty price tag is out of reach for many. Luckily, third-party surfaces from Tangent, JL Cooper, Avid and newcomer OxygenTec harness much of the DaVinci panel at a fraction of the cost. With fewer

buttons and dials, you'll be scrolling through menus to find the parameter to change, far from a deal breaker to many.

No matter which model you choose, a control surface is an essential aspect of getting any job graded and delivered on time. Let's take a look at several specific reasons why any surface is a must for the serious colorist.

1. Speed and Multiple Actions

The biggest and most obvious advantage to using a color grading control surface is speed. With dedicated knobs, buttons, dials and

wheels set to specific functions, muscle memory quickly develops as you learn your panel. When you get fast enough, color grading is no longer frustrating... it's actually fun! You'll be wondering how you ever did good work without a panel for this reason alone.

Speed isn't just about jumping to specific commands to alter your image. When coloring, it's helpful to adjust several parameters at once to see how the image reacts. This will enable the colorist to experiment with a wide range of looks to gauge a favorable client reaction.

2. Trust Me, Your Work Will Improve

Working with a panel enables an organic relationship with your images. By controlling the color wheels, you'll intuit where the image wants to sit. The physical nature of working with your hands will also prevent you from processing every job in the same way.

Using the color wheels and dials allows for finely-tuned adjustments that are difficult to articulate with a mouse. Many times in session, colorists will push the slightest change in the hue of a skin tone to satisfy the client. The software color wheels inside Resolve are small, making these kinds of moves cumbersome.

3. Stave Off Carpal Tunnel

The ergonomic layout of every panel provides minimal strain for long grading sessions. If you try to grade a longer video you'll quickly understand the pain-limiting possibilities of a control surface.

4. Execute Actions from Other Applications

Since the control panels are dedicated instruments for Resolve, button presses continue to interact with the application regardless of what's in focus. If you're browsing the Internet, you can save your

project or scroll to the beginning of the timeline to play the cut for a client if they walk.

5. Client Perception

When engaging a new customer relationship, you have to instill immediate confidence in your clients so they are confident their project will be handled professionally. Purchasing a panel is one way to forecast this. By owning a control panel showing your clientele you're serious about the craft. What's more, a monetary career investment now will pay off in huge ways in the future. In time, better work and more prestigious clients will follow, overshadowing the panel's initial cost.

Consider a Control Surface Today

A writer's control surface is a keyboard, which is fast since every letter is mapped to a specific key. Similarly, a colorist doesn't want to click around on the screen when a gestural input is available. The nuanced nature of color benefits from having a device that is attuned to these subtleties.

Film Trailer Editing Tips



No matter how great your editing skills are, cutting together a film trailer is an art form and it requires a very unique approach.

Trailers play a vital part in the success of any independent film. Not only because they help to generate buzz for the film once it's ready to be released, but also because they can help secure a release (or distribution) in the first place.

It's not uncommon for a distributor to commit to a film without actually seeing it in its entirety. At film markets, distributors, sales agents, and other industry pros don't always have the time to watch films in their entirety before making an offer or securing a deal.

Naturally, they have to rely on the trailer as a means to represent what the film is capable of. But regardless of whether you want to

cut a great trailer as a means to lock in a distributor, or simply to promote the film's release – it's critical that the trailer you cut is impeccable. A bad trailer can absolutely ruin the success of a film and there is really no excuse not to be able to cut a strong trailer from a feature film. All it takes is a little practice and some attention to detail.

On Hollywood-level feature films, the editor of the film obviously isn't cutting the trailer. It's going to a dedicated editor, usually working at a post-company that only focuses on trailers and promos. The reason being that trailer editing calls for its own

distinctive approach. On your indie film, you may need to edit the film and the trailer yourself based on budgetary limitations, and that's perfectly fine. You just need to treat those two parts of the process as independent projects and tap into different skill sets to get the job done. That can be done in a straightforward way by following these five film trailer editing tips:

1. Only Use the Best of the Best

If you are cutting down a 100 minute film into a 2 minute trailer, you have no reason to use anything but the absolute best footage. This may sound like a no-brainer, but many indie filmmakers are afraid to use their best material in the trailer, as they don't want to give anything away. You don't need to give away major plot points or the twist at the end of your film, but don't be too precious with your material.

Remember that the best footage will draw the biggest audience, so make sure that every last shot and scene that you show represents the best the film has to offer.

2. Prioritize the First Half of the Film

Although you can certainly get away with using scenes from any part of your film, focus primarily on the first half. In most films, Act 1 and Act 2 contain the best trailer moments. Act 1 is the setup, so naturally you are going to want to include enough scenes from there to help ease the viewer into your story.

And the beginning of Act 2 typically focuses heavily on the premise of your film – or the hook that's going to sell tickets. You want to give away enough of your film that it accurately represents the story, but not so much that the viewer feels like they've seen it all. That's why focusing on the first half is usually a good rule of thumb.

3. Understand the Format

Not all trailers are created equal. There's certainly some room for creative flexibility in the cutting room. You can always break the rules or use a less-traditional method for getting your vision across.

One example of this might be to take a single moment or scene from your film and let it play out. Rather than showing the whole picture of what the film is about, this strategy is all about creating a mood or texture that teases the audience without giving away many story details. The infamous first Cloverfield trailer is a perfect example of this technique.

There's really no one specific format or formula that works best for trailer editing, but you do need to identify which approach you want to take before you start cutting. If you go in blindly, it would be like shooting your film with no script. Know which format works best for your trailer, and choose your scenes and moments wisely so that they fit within those parameters.

4. Use Multiple Music Cues

Two and a half minutes might not seem like a lot of time, but in the context of a trailer – it can be a lifetime. Assuming you have cut together a wide variety of material and your trailer has some sort of arc to it, it's going to need more than one music cue to bridge together each beat.

Think of your trailer as a miniature film. Would you use the same music cue for your entire feature film? Probably not. So why use a single cue for your trailer, which is essentially a short film in itself? You don't need to go overboard, but using two or three cues tastefully to help guide the different beats in your trailer can be very helpful.

5. Keep the Logo Short

This is a small but important point. Always keep the production company logo up front as short as possible – or don't have it at all. Having 15 seconds of a logo up front (from a company that no one has ever heard of) can come across as unprofessional. If you want to include your logo, that's completely fine. But limit the screen time to a couple of seconds at the most so you can get into the meat of your trailer.

Four Tips on Integrating Action Cam Shots With Cinema Footage



Embarking on a multi-camera video shoot? Here are four tips on how to ‘trick’ your audience by effectively mixing GoPro shots with cinematic footage.

GoPro has come a long way since the first version was released back in 2004. Until the last few years, the pint-sized cameras were used sparingly (if at all) in Hollywood and professional productions. But that all changed with the GoPro HERO 3 & 4 series. In fact, GoPros were the go-to camera for documentary films like 2012’s ‘Leviathan’, which used GoPros almost exclusively to capture a commercial fishing boat at sea.

Now these nearly indestructible cameras are being fitted to just about everything, giving the audience a point of view we’ve never

had before. But the thing to remember: cinematographers don’t simply strap the GoPro to just anything and let it go. They plan and test certain shots to ensure the cams are being used effectively.

Here are four tips that will allow you to integrate your GoPro footage with cinematic footage:

1. Coverage

Whether shooting for sports, nature, documentary, or feature film, you’ve got to have a group of shots that give a sense of space that

you can cut to, also known as coverage. With this in mind, many filmmakers are using GoPros, specifically in actions sequences.

Having the option of several angles in post-production allows the editor to find footage that will cut seamlessly with the main cinema footage.

2. Film Flat

The GoPro has a setting called Protune. The adjustments that can be made here are minimal, but really effective. You can adjust white balance, ISO, sharpness, and exposure. On top of this, you can set the color to flat which captures more shadows and highlights detail. A flat image can be matched to your cinema footage through standard color grading processes.

3. Narrow and Wide

When setting your format, whether it be 1080, 2.7k, or 4k, you have choices. These options allow you to capture video in either a narrow, medium, or wide angle. Using a narrow or medium angle will allow you to mix your footage more seamlessly with cinema footage (Camera A), but even using 4k with the wide angle will work in many cases. As Wolf Creek 2 cinematographer Toby Oliver said...

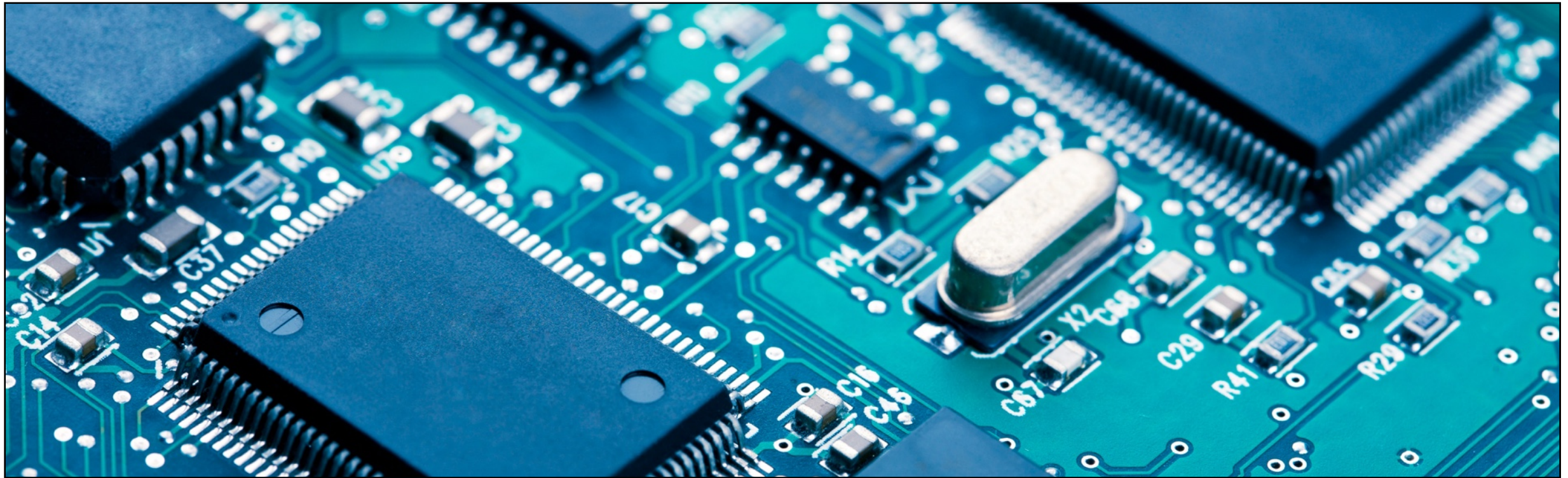
“If you have a 4K file in post you can zoom in to find a tighter frame and lose the fish-eye feel, without sacrificing resolution.”

In films such as 2013’s ‘Into the Mind’, the crew used the GoPro HERO 3 alongside RED Epics and utilized both the narrow and wide-angle feature. By using the GoPro they were able to capture intimate timelapses as well as in-your-face action sequences. While the wide-angle lens will usually reveal the GoPro’s presence to the audience, limiting its use can be extremely effective and work alongside cinema footage without issues.

4. Let’s Clean Things Up

Another way to effectively integrate GoPro footage with cinema footage is to run post processes other than grading. For example, the GoPro footage shot in ‘Need for Speed’ was run through an After Effects plugin called Dark Energy by Cinnafilm. This plugin allows for noise and film-grain reduction or additive. Dark Energy was used specifically to clean up the GoPro footage and to bring in the natural-grain look that’s closer to the Canon C500 and ALEXA footage that was shot for the rest of the film. Currently though, Dark Energy is only available as a plugin for the Windows version of After Effects.

Tips For Optimizing Your Computer for 4K



Video editing in 4K? Here's a few technical considerations for optimizing your machine.

Last year I made the switch to shooting and editing videos in 4K. I quickly realized that in order to work efficiently in post, I would need to do a major computer upgrade to handle the increased file size of the 4K video format.

From my own experience, I've compiled four crucial technical considerations every video editor should make before making the jump to 4K video.

Lighting Fast Storage

For internal memory you want a solution that will process data quickly. These days an SSD is your best option. SSDs have no moving parts, so they are less prone to failure and are quicker than traditional hard drives. It's worth noting that different drives have different transfer rates. A drive that can effectively do this is the Samsung 1TB SSD which runs at 540MB/s. You'll need to shell out more than double the money for a SSD, but it's worth the investment for pro users.

Expand Your Brain

You don't have to go crazy with your computer's processor, but you want one that is solid and can run multiple tasks with relative ease. Intel is currently in both Mac and PC. With Intel you have two clear cut choices: the Intel i7 and the Xeon e5. (Info Current as of 2016)

You can go either way here. Both the Xeon e5 and the i7 will give you the processing power you need to get the job done. The Xeon e5 is rated just a little better than the i7 and packs a little harder punch — but it's also around twice the price.

Boost Your Memory

There's one thing above all else to consider when editing and running software like Premiere Pro CC, Avid, and FCPX: memory.

Programs like those listed above use up a lot of memory to process your work, especially if you're processing and rendering high-resolution video. Boost the RAM memory to increase your processing power. You'll rarely see a professional editor with less than 16GB of memory in their editing computer.

Max the Graphics

Graphics are just as important as processing power and memory when building a computer for video editing. Processing 4K will require a lot of GPU (Graphics Processing Unit) so you'll want to find a solution that gives you at least 1GB of memory.

Remember: the only Macs that you can upgrade after the fact are the older Mac Pro Towers 2008-2012.

Dissecting the Hipster Look



Take an ironic look at 'hipster' style color grades.

With Instagram being over 5 years old, I think it's safe to say hipster-style photography and filmmaking are more than just a fad.

Although a 'hipster look' can add some style to your videos, many filmmakers don't think through their color grading process any deeper than simply adding a preset. In the following section we'll take a deeper look at the characteristics of an Instagram/hipster color grade, how it mimics the look of some analog film, and demonstrate a potential workflow for achieving this look.

What is the Hipster look?

Instead of simply telling you what makes up the hipster look let's take a look at a few examples.

1. Vignetting

Most (if not all) hipster color grade photos feature vignetting in some form or fashion. Sometimes vignetting is created simply from the layout of elements in your scene and sometimes it needs to be added in post.



2. Crushed Blacks



Most hipster-style images feature more detail information in the midtones and highlights and less in the black parts of the image. This is known as crushing the blacks.

3. White is Grey

Hipster photography typically maps the white parts of the image to be more grey. This often results in hipster grades making the image darker than it originally was.



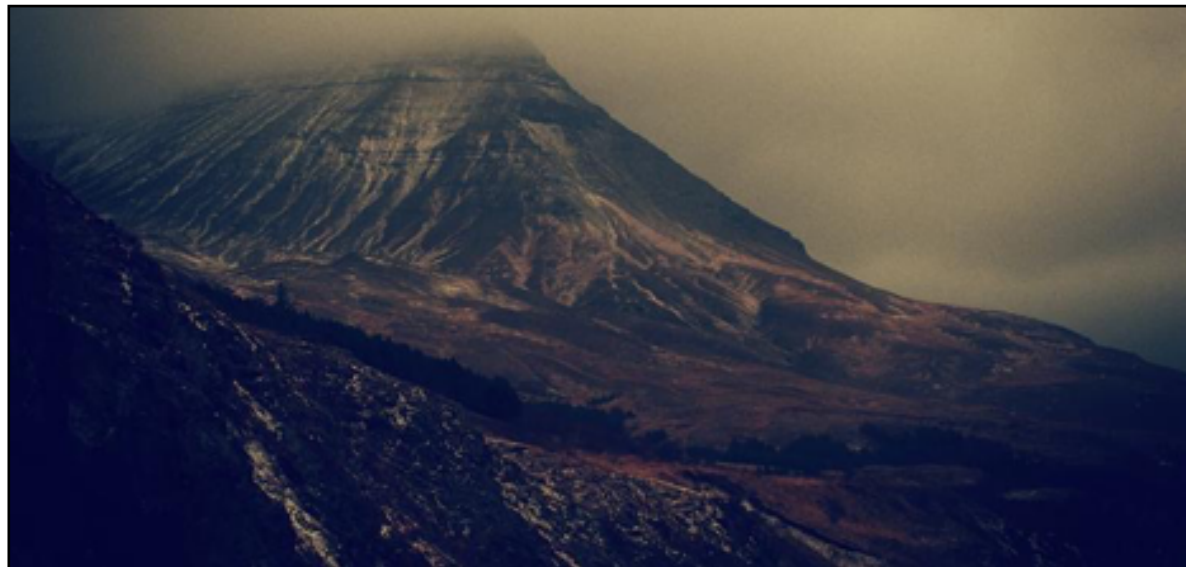
4. Blacks are Dark Grey



After the blacks have been crushed, they are usually lifted to become dark grey instead. This makes the entire image look more 'milky'.

5. Blues in the Darks, Yellows in the Lights

Most hipster grades feature more blues in the darker parts of the image and more yellows in the lighter parts of the image. Keep in mind that these are usually subtle tweaks that complement the image, not take away.



6. Desaturation



Most hipster photography/filmography doesn't have vibrant colors. This is probably because hipster grades try to emulate film, which is simply not as vibrant as digital, especially if it has time to decompose.

The most vibrant parts of hipster images tend to be the yellows and the magentas.

7. The Image is Soft

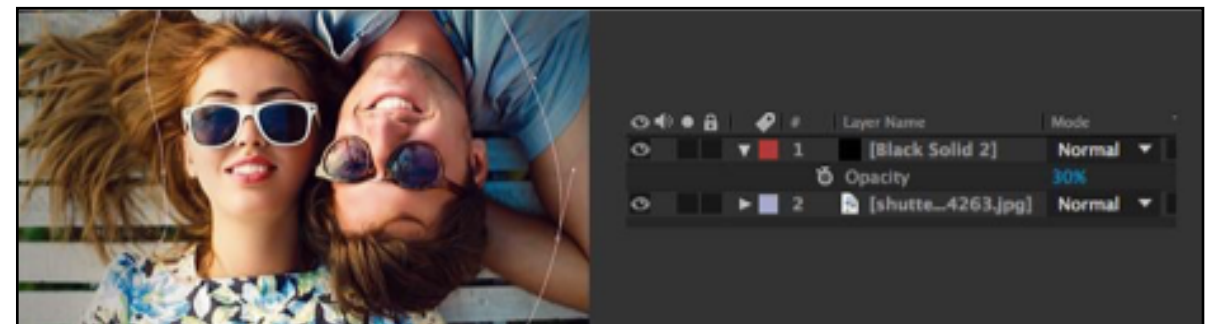
As you probably already know, digital cameras tend to be much sharper than film cameras. Sharp video isn't common in most hipster color grades, as it makes your image look too mechanical. You can fix this by adding small blurs and noise to your images.



Hipster Grading in Action

Now that we've broken down what makes up a hipster grade, let's take some of the things we learned and apply them to an actual photograph in After Effects.

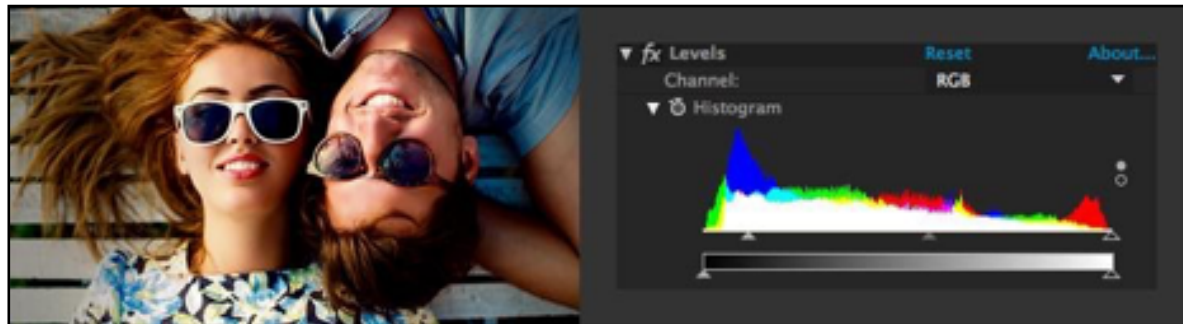
1. Create a Vignette



The first step is to add a vignette to the image. In this particular case, it seems like there is a lot of brightness in the left area of the frame and a little too much attention being drawn to the guys arm. To fix this problem we will create a new black solid and drop the opacity

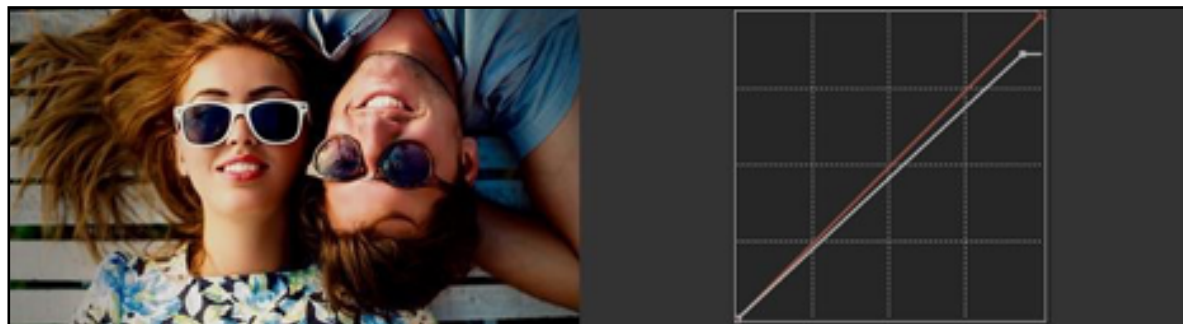
down to 30% so we can see our image underneath. You don't have to make your vignette an ellipse. If you prefer you can use your pen to feather it out until you get a well balanced image.

2. Crush the Blacks



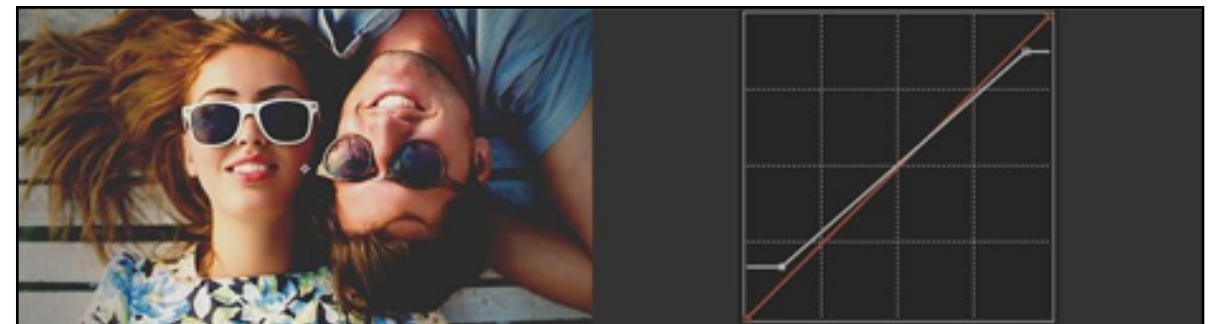
Create a new adjustment layer and add a levels effect. After Adding the levels, grab the left arrow and drag it to the right until the dark parts of your image are crushed. Also, make sure your adjustment layer is positioned over your vignette.

3. Adjust the White Point



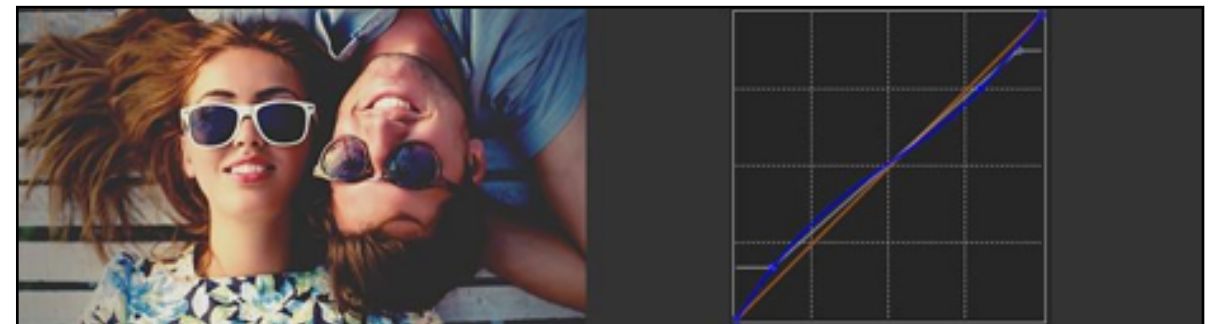
Now add a curves effect to your image. Bring down the white points so they are light grey instead of white. You can do this by simply drawing the top right corner of the RGB curves bar down and to the left.

4. Adjust the Black Point



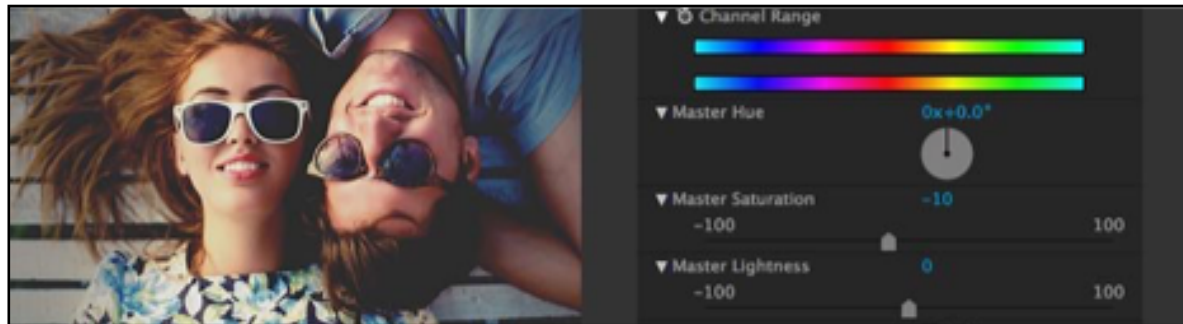
Now do the opposite for the black parts of the image. Grab the bottom left point in your curves effect and drag it up and to the right. This will make your black points a shade of grey rather than simply black.

5. Adjust the Blue Curve



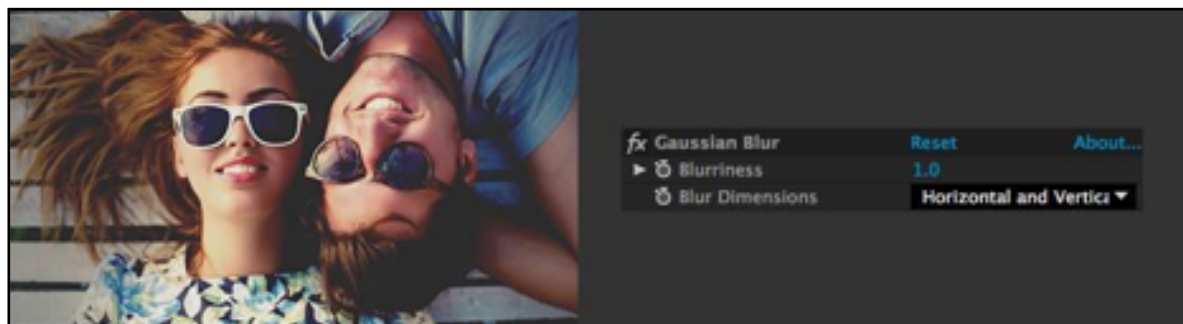
You can add yellows to the highlights and blues to the darks by adding an "S" curve to the blue channel. To do this simply click the dropdown box that says RGB and select blue. Now you can adjust the curves to create a backwards "S" shape in the image.

6. Desaturate



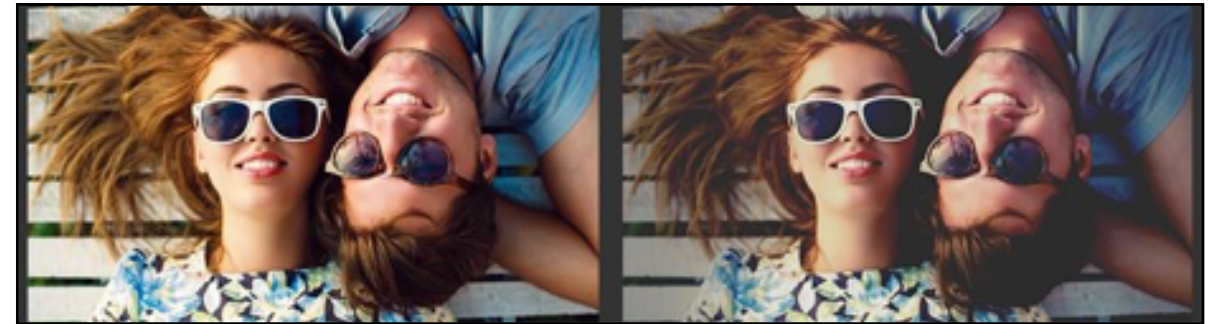
Next add in the “Hue/Saturation” effect to the adjustment layer. Bring down the saturation point just a little. A number around -10 works nicely.

7. Soften



Most digital images tend to be sharp and mechanical. You can fix this by simply softening the image just a little. Adding a gaussian blur and setting the blurriness to “1” will work just fine.

There you go! Using just a few simple observations, you can create a hipster-style image in no time. Try playing around with these different effects to get different results. Adding things like grain and light leaks can give your images a hipster look as well.



This is, of course, just one example of how photographers and filmmakers give their images a hipster style.

How to Find Your Story When Cutting a Documentary



The process of cutting together any type of feature-length film can be crazy. But it doesn't have to be.

In a lot of ways editing a documentary is much more difficult than a narrative. Documentaries find their voice in the editing bay, so if you're looking to craft an engaging story there's a few things you must always do. Here are a few essential tips for finding your story when cutting a documentary.

Insane Organization

Since shooting ratios on documentaries can be ridiculously high (sometimes 100:1 or higher), staying organized is one of the best ways you can make your job easier throughout the editorial process. The vast majority of editors understand that it's important to have

an organized project file with bin, shots, and takes labelled appropriately. But in order to really stay on top of things, the organization needs to extend beyond the project file.

Files and folders should be organized just as well on your hard drives in order to avoid offline media and workflow issues when sending your project out for sound/color/VFX. I also recommend organizing and logging all interviews as meticulously as possible within your project in order to streamline your process for recutting interview segments later on. For instance, you might want to add markers to sequences with synced interviews in them and label

each marker with the interview topic. It will take some more legwork up front, but can save you hours and hours of sifting through footage later on.

Plan Ahead, Then Work from Instinct

Although it's tempting to wait until you're in the editing room to start conceptualizing the exact edit and flow of the story, putting in the early legwork will pay dividends when you jump into the edit.

It's usually best to work with the director and crew before shooting in order to insure that the film is being shot with editing in mind. Similarly, you should then be able to go into the edit knowing the director's exact vision. It's typically not possible for the you, the editor, to be present for all the shooting, so let the director know what you would like from the shoot – the good takes, the blown takes, b-roll, etc. This will be immensely helpful when you start logging footage.

Based on how good the on-set notes are, and how much time is allotted for the edit, it's often worthwhile to do a rough paper edit. Working with a director in this stage will make the edit go smoother, as you'll have a clearer idea of their vision based on the footage that was captured. It's also useful for knowing what still needs to be shot. Get those Post-It-Notes ready and map out a rough story structure.

Once you get into your editing app, there's no exact formula for cutting a documentary. One popular approach is to cut the bulk of interviews together first as a starting point and working out from there. If you've gone through the footage and one particular moment really sticks out to you – maybe consider cutting that first, and then working the other scenes around it, assuming it's a pivotal moment.

Or maybe you have a vision for a beautiful opening montage and are able to build out the first act completely sequentially by starting

from square one. Tackle the material that speaks to you and inspires you the most. Doing so will lead to further inspiration once you start hitting the next few scenes and sequences.

Get a First Cut Done Quickly

If you've ever cut together a feature documentary before, you know very well that the final cut often looks nothing like the first cut.

Documentaries typically have far more revisions than narrative films. Since there's so much footage to pull from, each revision looks that much different. The point being that your first cut doesn't need to be perfect... it's going to change immensely anyways.

The first cut is really just a mold at which you can start chiseling away. It's better to have that mold ready sooner than later so that you can tear it down, rebuild it, and do it all over again, as opposed to trying to make that first cut perfect and then becoming frustrated when it needs to get recut.

Even if you believe you can make a near-perfect first cut, your director, producer, sales agent, or whoever else might have a say in the process may very well feel differently.

The best thing you can do is get through your first cut as quickly as possible (which, by the way, also forces you to work on your instincts) and then start refining things from there.

5 Ways Music Is Misused In Films (and How to Do Better)



Music can drive your story and enhance the message of your film, but the process of marrying the two is often underestimated.

Music can literally make or break any narrative film, commercial project, or documentary purely by the way it's used. Music can evoke powerful emotions in the viewer.

Many years ago it wasn't unusual for an offline editor to complete the entire picture edit with no music at all, but it's become quite common for editors to work with existing music cues or temp tracks. This can be an extremely efficient way to work... if you know what you're doing.

Unfortunately, many editors fall into traps and ultimately don't make the most out of their ability to cut to music.

1. There's Wall to Wall Music

In some rare cases, films can benefit from having a musical score playing from wall to wall. That said, this is usually a terrible idea and one of the most common music-related faux pas found in indie films – particularly in short-form content. Like any other creative element, music needs to be balanced in a way that allows for contrast. When there's a constant stream of music playing, there's no breathing room to allow the viewer to sink into a different mood and then appreciate the musical score when it comes back in again. Instead, the music simply becomes background noise. Any potential

emotion that may have been evoked as a result of the score becomes diminished by its over-usage.

2. The Cues Don't Match Each Other

Editors today have amazing access to vast music libraries that allow them to pull beautifully composed scores into their project files with only a few clicks of the mouse.

The issue, however, is that some editors don't take enough time with the music selection process and end up choosing cues that don't seem to gel at all. If you're an editor that's going to be purchasing or licensing music online, you need to think like a music supervisor.

Don't simply purchase tracks like you're making a mixtape — curate them like you're creating an album. It's completely fine to mix and match different genres and styles, but you always need to find some sort of common thread (whether it be the instrumentation, style, mood, etc.) that binds them all together. If not, your final piece may feel unfocused and uninspired.

3. The Music Contrasts the Pacing of the Scene

Being a good editor comes down to understanding pacing. This is true not only of the pacing of *edits* within a scene or sequence, but the pacing of the music as well. It's always surprising to see how many editors have a great understanding of pacing (and place a huge emphasis on it during their picture-editing process), but don't take that same level of care when it comes to the music.

The viewer suffers when a beautifully edited scene gets destroyed with a poorly chosen music cue that completely contrasts the pacing of the scene. In some cases, it can be a strong stylistic choice to create a contrasting musical effect. For instance, an extremely slow-paced cue might underscore a fast-paced action sequence, but it just doesn't work in the vast majority of scenarios.

4. The Length of the Cue Isn't Right

When working with pre-existing cues, it's common for an editor to pick a cue based on the overall sound, but not consider the length of the cue itself.

The fact that a cue might sound right for any given scene is a great starting point, but there are many other considerations that come into play to ensure that it will truly work for the scene — the biggest of which is duration. Having a cue that's too long isn't typically a huge issue, as it can be faded in or out as needed to compensate for length... but having a cue that is too short can become problematic.

One of two things will happen when editing to a music cue that is just a bit too short: 1. The cue won't cover the entire scene and may drop off at the wrong point, or 2. The editor may be tempted to shorten the entire scene to match the cue. Both of these scenarios can be problematic, so it's critical that you always ensure the duration of your track is sufficient above all else.

5. The Musical Theme is Too Repetitive

The final issue common among films with soundtracks is the repetition of a theme. While it can be a nice technique to have a recurring theme in a film (musically speaking) and have it drift in and out during different moments of the film to help anchor things, it really only works well in certain instances. More specifically, in order for this technique to really be effective, there's a definitive limit to how often the same cue can be used. So many indie films make the mistake of using the same cue over and over again, which inevitably makes it feel really tired, really fast.

The other consideration is that even films that use a repeated musical theme well will typically change that theme slightly each time it comes in. These films might change up the instrumentation,

key, tempo, or other variables to ensure that the musical theme feels fresh each time it's used.

How to Pick the Right Tone, Shots, and Music for Trailers



Inception horns or no Inception horns? Creating an awesome trailer is an art form and much more difficult than it looks.

If you've spent hundreds of hours working on a film, it makes no sense to skimp when it comes to editing the trailer. There are a lot of things to remember when cutting trailers.

Let's take a look at how to create a good trailer and the role of music at a fundamental level. So whether you're looking for royalty free trailer music or simply want to learn more about cutting trailers, here are a few tips for your next big trailer project.

Step 1: Watch the Film

As with most editing, the best way to start editing a trailer is to sit down and watch the entire film first. In doing so, you'll be able to get

a better idea for the type of material with which you will be working with. While you can certainly get an idea of what the film is about by scrubbing through, you won't catch the subtle nuances that make for a great trailer that can be found when watching it through as an audience member.

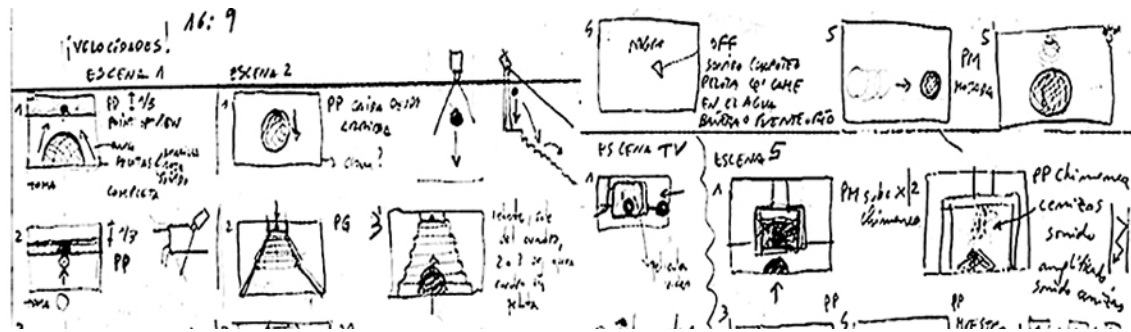
One way to do this is to watch the film and set markers in the timeline at points in the film that would make for a good trailer shot. To help with this, most NLEs will allow you to set markers on the fly during playback. Even if you spent countless hours already editing the film, it's best advised to review the film once you're ready to put

yourself in “trailer mode.” The secret here is perspective. Don’t view your film as an editor during this phase, view it as an audience member. Ask yourself:

- What is going to make people excited?
- Is there something that people haven’t seen before?
- Do any shots have shock value?
- What will draw the largest audience?

Music should not be a big consideration at this point. This phase is all about figuring out what your trailer can be.

Step 2: Define Your Narrative



4. Plot Introduced

Unless you just so happen to have your plot spelled out in the film, this will be the hardest part. In a nutshell, you want to explain the plot while building up your audience's excitement.

5. Hook

The last goal of your trailer should be to leave your audience wanting more. This is done by creating a cinematic hook. There are many ways to do this. From visually stunning montages to a funny one-liner, it just depends on what you want your audience to remember.

Step 3: Figure Out Your Trailer Style

There's no right or wrong way to create a trailer, just like there's no right or wrong way to structure a film. But you should make it your goal to appeal to the biggest audience possible. At the end of the day, the trailer needs to convince your audience to see your film. While not every trailer will fall into one of these categories, most film trailers can be defined as one of the following:

Teaser

A teaser is much different than a traditional trailer. A traditional trailer explains the plot through a narrative structure, but a teaser is more like a taste of what the entire movie will be like. Teasers are typically extended clips from a film with light transitions between them. A teaser can be a great way to keep your audience excited during the post-production process.

Standard Narrative

As stated earlier, a "standard" trailer is a trailer that follows a traditional trailer story arc: Introductory Scene, Establish a Setting, Introduce Characters, Define the Plot, and Hook the Audience.

Music-Driven Trailer

Having great music in your trailer is a must. Sometimes music can be the thing that drives the trailer, rather than the other way around. Lots of care needs to be given when looking for the right music for your trailer.

Complex Narratives

Trailers don't need to have the same narrative structure every time. At the end of the day, a trailer is simply a tool to get butts in seats. Sometimes a traditional trailer structure simply won't do and you will need to venture into something a little more complex. Just remember, when working with more complex trailers, it's advised to write out an outline.

Many editors will skip defining a narrative and instead find epic trailer music and try to simply insert clips into it. While this strategy isn't horrible, in many cases it doesn't lead to the best trailer possible. Music selection should occur only after you pick how your trailer will be structured.

Step 4: Pick the Music

Picking the right music is one of the most important parts of the trailer process. Ideally, once you get ready to pick the right music, you will have an idea about the type of music that you will want in your trailer. If not, take some time, watch trailers that you like, and get an idea for the type of music you will need.



While it's probably impractical to get a composer to create something for you, there is a great tool out there called (you guessed it) PremiumBeat.com. PremiumBeat has thousands of songs that are perfect for trailers — and the best part is PB has sections and playlists already set up to help you find the best royalty free music for your trailer.

Remember: you want to pick music that plays into the narrative structure of your trailer. So if your trailer takes time to get to the hook, you might want to lay off the Inception horns.

Conclusion

At the end of the day, a good trailer is all about getting an audience excited to see your movie. While there are many different ways to do this, the concepts outlined in this article should be a great jumping off point.

The Hidden Stories Behind Weird Post-Production Terms



Ever wonder where some of those strange post-production terms came from? Here are some origin stories you might not know.

The industry is full of strange and confusing terms that make sense only to those who use them everyday. Have you ever wondered where all these strange terms came from? Let's take a behind-the-scenes look at the origin story behind those weird post-production terms.

Keyframes

In modern animation applications, a keyframe designates a value at a certain point in time. These modern day applications can interpret the data between keyframes so you don't have to. This is called tweening, and it's a recent advance in technology.

In the golden days of animation, every frame had to be drawn by hand — but it wasn't the job of lead animators to draw every frame. Instead, more experienced animators would draw only the 'key' frames in a scene and more inexperienced animators called "inbetweeners" would create the drawings between the key frames.

For more information regarding early animation techniques, I highly recommend checking out 'The Illusion of Life' by Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston.

Masks

In post-production, masking is the process of designating a portion of the frame to not be affected by a given effect. In Photoshop you might use a mask to only blur out a background and not your subject. In After Effects, a mask can be used to help with compositing 3D elements. But the history of masks goes back much further than Photoshop. In fact, the term is derived from physical masks which literally block portions of your face.

Masking has long been used in fine arts as a way to shield portions of a canvas from being affected. In fact, masking tape found its name because it was used to mask out certain objects that weren't meant to be painted. Today masking has evolved to become an essential part of a digital artist's workflow and it all started with physical art.

Feathering

In modern software, feathering is essentially the smoothing out of edges. But why is it called feathering?

It actually plays homage to a classic painting technique in which artists would use feathers to smooth out a transition between two colors. Feathering was also used by early photo editors as a way to smooth out ink. Even in modern home painting, some people use feather dusters as a way to smooth out paint color transitions. Feathering continues to be an essential process for editors and motion graphic designers alike.

Matte/Matte Painting

In film and photography, a matte is reference footage used to composite a foreground onto a background. While the history of mattes in film is quite dense, the term matte first originated from the early set extension process known as matte painting. These early

matte paintings were scenes painted on glass using, you guessed it, matte paint.

Over the years, mattes would evolve to become modern-day color keying, but digital matte painting continues to be a process used in contemporary films.

Rotoscoping

Rotoscoping is essentially cutting an object or subject out of a scene one frame at a time by hand. While the process is easier for modern filmmakers, it's still very tedious.

In the early days of film, an artist would use a rotoscope to project a frame onto glass. The artist would then go in and trace the subject by hand. While the process was traditionally used for cartoons, it has transitioned over time to be used mainly for VFX work.

5 Editors That Broke the Hollywood Studio System



As the Hollywood studio system began to crumble, these editors turned a new generation of young filmmakers into household names.

In the late 1960s, the United States of America found itself in a transitional stage. The younger generation had attached themselves to art, music, and film. Young filmmakers were unlike any directors before them. They had grown up with movies and meticulously studied them. By the 1970s, these young directors were breaking box office records.

Names like Scorsese, Spielberg, and Lucas became legendary after this period. Behind those directors were some incredible editors who were also breaking traditional molds. Following the footsteps of the pioneering women in film editing, these women would cut

some of the most praised work in American cinema. They were the editors of New Hollywood.

Anne V. Coates

Anne Voase Coates had dreamed of working in film. Her uncle, J. Arthur Rank, was a founding member of Pinewood Film Studios. His company, the Rank Organization, also controlled Denham Film Studios and the Odeon Cinemas chain. Rank was a devout Methodist, who produced many religious films.

Anne had expressed her desires to work in film, but her uncle had reservations. He attempted to break her spirits by having her cut

many of the religious films he was producing. His hope was that she would lose interest in the industry and return to her work as a nurse. However, Anne found the work invigorating. She fixed film prints of religious short films and sent them on various British church tours.

"There were some wonderful women editors who helped inspire me to go into editing in England. In a way, I've never looked at myself as a woman in the business. I've just looked at myself as an editor. I mean, I'm sure I've been turned down because I'm a woman, but then other times I've been used because they wanted a woman editor." – Film Sound

Her passion landed her a job as an assistant film editor at Pinewood Studios. The first film she worked on was *The Red Shoes* for director Michael Powell in 1948. She worked under editor Reggie Mills, who despite not talking much, taught Anne a tremendous amount of discipline when it came to editing a film. Mills would go on to win the Academy Award for Best Film Editing for *The Red Shoes*. By 1952, Coates would receive her first credit as an editor for *The Pickwick Papers*.

In 1962, Anne V. Coates would work with director David Lean to masterfully edit the epic film *Lawrence of Arabia*. The film was an astronomical success, and the editing techniques used by Coates are still studied and used today.

"I suppose the most challenging film I cut was 'Lawrence,' because we had such a huge amount of film – I believe it was 31 miles! – which gave me an abundance of choices." – Turner Classic Movies

The most famous edit in the film is the literal match cut. The film cuts from the image of a match to the sun over the Arabian desert.

Coates worked seven days a week for four months to complete *Lawrence of Arabia* on time. Her work paid off, as Anne won the

Academy Award for Best Film Editing. *Lawrence of Arabia* was nominated for ten Oscars, winning seven.

Two years later, Anne was nominated for her second Academy Award for her work on *Becket*.

"There are nonlinear small things in my editing sometimes that you might not even have noticed. I started jump-cutting from one place to another quite a lot. When I was editing 'Becket,' the producer, Hal Wallis, said, 'You can't do that. You can't cut from this shot to that shot without a dissolve as they are 50 miles apart.' I said, 'Guess what? I've done it and it works perfectly.' And it's still in the film." – Editors Guild

She received her third Oscar nomination for the 1981 film *The Elephant Man*. The film was a challenge, as producer Mel Brooks didn't want the audience to see the Elephant Man's face until later in the film.

By the 1990s, the changes in the film industry meant that Anne would have to learn an entirely new editing process.

"When Frank Marshall and Kathleen Kennedy offered me 'Congo,' they said, 'Well, you have to do it digitally because the special effects system couldn't do it otherwise.' So they had me taught on Lightworks. . . It's just another tool, really. Once I got that in my mind, I progressed faster. And then, when I did 'Out of Sight,' Steven Soderbergh had a sound man who could link up with an Avid [Media Composer] but not with a Lightworks. I moved then from Lightworks to Avid, and I've stayed on an Avid ever since." – Editors Guild

Anne V. Coates is still working in the industry, recently surpassing the length of Margaret Booth's storied career. She just completed the 2015 blockbuster film *'Fifty Shades of Grey.'*

To date she has been nominated for five Oscars, winning one. She has also a member of the Order of the British Empire.

Thelma Schoonmaker

While studying at Columbia University, Thelma Schoonmaker answered a New York Times ad for an assistant film editor. She would cut successful European films to fit US broadcast time standards. In that job, she learned the art of negative cutting.

Schoonmaker then signed up for a six-week filmmaking course at New York University (NYU). It was there she met a young Martin Scorsese. Scorsese was struggling to finish his short film, *What's a Nice Girl Like You Doing in a Place Like This?*

A professor asked Schoonmaker to help Scorsese finish the film, and thus started the legendary Hollywood duo. She would edit Scorsese's first feature film, 1967's *I Call First*, renamed *Who's That Knocking at My Door*.

In 1970, Thelma Schoonmaker edited *Woodstock*, the documentary on the famous American music festival. The film showcased the performers through a series of superimpositions and freeze frames. The film earned Schoonmaker her first Oscar Nomination for Best Film Editing, a nomination rarely awarded to documentary films. (In 1996, *Woodstock* was selected for preservation in the United States National Film Registry by the Library of Congress.)

Even though Schoonmaker earned an Academy Award nomination for her editing, she was unable to join the Motion Picture Editors Guild. To acquire union membership, Schoonmaker would have to first work as an apprentice and an assistant. She refused to do so, and was thus forced to work on a series of small films and documentaries for the next decade.

In 1980, Scorsese called upon Schoonmaker to edit his film *Raging Bull*. Initially she had to decline, due to the fact that she was not a member of the Editors Guild. Apparently her work and friendships over the years played in her favor, as the union was influenced to offer her membership. Schoonmaker finally joined the Motion Picture Editors Guild and got to work on *Raging Bull*.

10 years after her original Academy Award nomination, Schoonmaker was once again nominated for Best Film Editing, this time taking home the Oscar for *Raging Bull*. Schoonmaker went on to edit every single Scorsese film since.

Not only did Scorsese help Schoonmaker achieve success as a film editor, he also introduced Schoonmaker to her husband, director Michael Powell. Powell was the director of the previously mentioned film, *The Red Shoes*. Powell was also a great influence on Scorsese, who had studied Powell's films. After Michael Powell's death in 1990, Scorsese and Schoonmaker would go on to preserve his memory by restoring his films.

In 1991, Thelma Schoonmaker received her third Oscar nomination for her work on Scorsese's *Goodfellas*. Though *Goodfellas* was nominated for six Oscars, only Joe Pesci won an award.

In 1995, Schoonmaker oversaw the Scorsese documentary *A Personal Journey with Martin Scorsese Through American Movies*, which was a part of the British Film Institute's celebration of the first 100 years of film.

Schoonmaker garnered her fourth Academy Award nomination for *Gangs of New York*. Two years later she won the Academy Award for Best Film Editing for *The Aviator*, and two years after that she won another Academy Award for Best Film Editing for *The Departed*. Her most recent Oscar nomination was for *Hugo*.

Thelma Schoonmaker's seven Academy Award nominations for Best Film Editing are the second most nominations in Oscar history. She trails Michael Kahn by one nomination. Schoonmaker is currently tied with legendary editor Barbara McLean.

Dede Allen

Dorothea Carothers "Dede" Allen began her career at Columbia Pictures in the 1940s. She first started as a production runner, eventually working her way up to sound librarian and eventually assistant film editor in the special effects department.

One of her first projects as an editor was the 1959 film *Odds Against Tomorrow*, which was directed by Robert Wise. Wise served as Allen's mentor, often encouraging her to experiment with her editing. Wise was an editor turned director; he edited the legendary masterpiece *Citizen Kane*.

In 1961, Dede Allen edited the hit film *The Hustler* starring Paul Newman. (The film's sequel, *The Color of Money*, was directed by Martin Scorsese and edited by Thelma Schoonmaker.) Dede Allen later collaborated with Paul Newman on *Rachel, Rachel*, *Slap Shot*, and *Harry & Son*.

As the Hollywood studio system crumbled, film editors took on a much more significant role than ever before. Traditionally, editors were studio employees that did not need attribution for their work on any particular film. This all changed in 1967, when Dede Allen became the first film editor to ever receive a solo opening credit on a film. The film just happened to be her most renowned and praised work – *Bonnie and Clyde*.

Dede Allen's work broke from standard Hollywood editing techniques. She implemented the use of jump cuts, or would open a scene with a close-up. It would be the finale of *Bonnie and Clyde* that

would become her most famed use of quick-paced editing. In less than a minute, Allen cuts over 50 times during the ambush scene.

In the 1970s, Allen would often collaborate with director Sidney Lumet, editing his films *Serpico*, *Dog Day Afternoon*, and *The Wiz*. Dede Allen earned her first Academy Award nomination for Best Film Editing for *Dog Day Afternoon*.

Warren Beatty, who had talked to Dede Allen about journalist John Reed during the production of *Bonnie and Clyde*, brought Allen on to edit the 1981 film *Reds*. It took two and a half years for her to finish the film, longer than any other film she had worked on. The John Reed story earned 12 Academy Award nominations, including a second Oscar nomination for Best Film Editing for Allen.

In 1985, Allen edited the John Hughes classic *The Breakfast Club*. She also edited *The Addams Family* in 1991. In 1992, Dede Allen accepted the role of head of post-production at Warner Bros. She would return to editing in 2000 with the film *Wonder Boys*, which garnered her third and final Oscar nomination. Dede Allen died in 2010 at the age of 86.

Verna Fields — "Mother Cutter"

Verna Fields began her film career as a sound editor in the late 1950s and early 1960s, working on films like *El Cid*. By the mid-1960s, she was teaching film editing at the University of Southern California (USC). She would also edit occasional projects, like *The Legend of the Boy and the Eagle* and *Targets*.

In 1968, Fields made her directorial debut with the documentary *Journey to the Pacific*. Verna Fields hired two editors to help her with the documentary, George Lucas and Marcia Griffin. George and Marcia married in 1969.

Impressed with her work as a sound editor on his film *Targets*, director Peter Bogdanovich asked Fields to edit his films *What's Up, Doc?* and *Paper Moon*. At the same time, George Lucas had Verna Fields and Marcia Lucas edit his film *American Graffiti*.

Both *Paper Moon* and *American Graffiti* were nominated for the 1974 Academy Awards. *Paper Moon* received four nominations. *American Graffiti* earned five nominations, including Best Film Editing for Verna Fields and Marcia Lucas.

That same year, Fields began editing the *The Sugarland Express*, the directorial feature film debut of Steven Spielberg. For her skill and attention to detail, Fields became endearingly known as 'Mother Cutter.'

Even though she was surrounded by up-and-coming talent, Verna Fields edited her last feature film in 1975. She worked on Spielberg's next film – *Jaws*. Verna Fields would absolutely go out at the top of her abilities, as *Jaws* is an absolute master class in editing.

Verna Fields won the Academy Award for Best Film Editing for *Jaws*, beating out Dede Allen's *Dog Day Afternoon*.

Following the success of *Jaws*, Verna Fields became the Vice-President for Feature Production at Universal Studios. She remained in that position until her death in 1982.

Marcia Lucas

As previously mentioned, Marcia Griffin married George Lucas in 1969. She worked as an assistant editor on *THX 1138* and *The Candidate*. Marcia Lucas would then collaborate with Verna Fields on *American Graffiti*, earning her first Oscar nomination.

While Martin Scorsese was without Thelma Schoonmaker in the 1970s, Marcia Lucas edited *Alice Doesn't Live Here*

Anymore and served as Scorsese's supervising editor for *Taxi Driver* and *New York, New York*.

In 1977, the world was introduced to *Star Wars*. Directed by George Lucas, the film was edited by Marcia. Not only did Marcia serve as the films editor, she helped rewrite the piece. In an interview with *Rolling Stone*, George Lucas said,

"I was rewriting, I was struggling with that plot problem when my wife suggested that I kill off Ben, which she thought was a pretty outrageous idea, and I said, 'Well, that is an interesting idea, and I had been thinking about it.' Her first idea was to have Threepio get shot, and I said impossible because I wanted to start and end the film with the robots, I wanted the film to really be about the robots and have the theme be the framework for the rest of the movie. But then the more I thought about Ben getting killed the more I liked the idea."

Marcia was also crucial to the film's climactic Death Star finale. To build the tension the original sequence lacked, Marcia had to re-order the shots from the beginning. She told George:

"If the audience doesn't cheer when Han Solo comes in at the last second in the Millennium Falcon to help Luke when he's being chased by Darth Vader, the picture doesn't work."

Her intuition proved right, as *Star Wars* was not only a blockbuster hit, but also a hit with the critics. Marcia Lucas won the Academy Award for Best Film Editing for her work on *Star Wars*.

Marcia would go on to edit *Star Wars: Episode V – The Empire Strikes Back* and *Star Wars: Episode VI – Return of the Jedi*. Those would be the final films she would ever work on. Following a divorce from George Lucas, Marcia has withdrawn from public view and kept to herself since.



07 MOTION GRAPHICS + VFX

SOME OF THE LARGEST ARTISTIC COLLABORATIONS IN THE WORLD CENTER AROUND AWESOME VISUAL EFFECTS. WITH A LITTLE TIME, SKILL, AND CREATIVE INSPIRATION, YOU TOO CAN CREATE AMAZING EFFECTS.

What is Light Wrapping? Tips & Tricks



Let's take an in-depth look at the art of light wrapping in post-production.

If you do a lot of keying, then you're probably familiar with the term "light wrapping."

The concept of light wrapping is easy to understand, but in practice it can be rather difficult to get a perfect light wrap. Let's take a look at light wraps and examine a few easy methods for creating them.

What is Light Wrapping?

Light wrapping is a compositing technique designed to blend keyed-out green screen footage with a background plate. When done

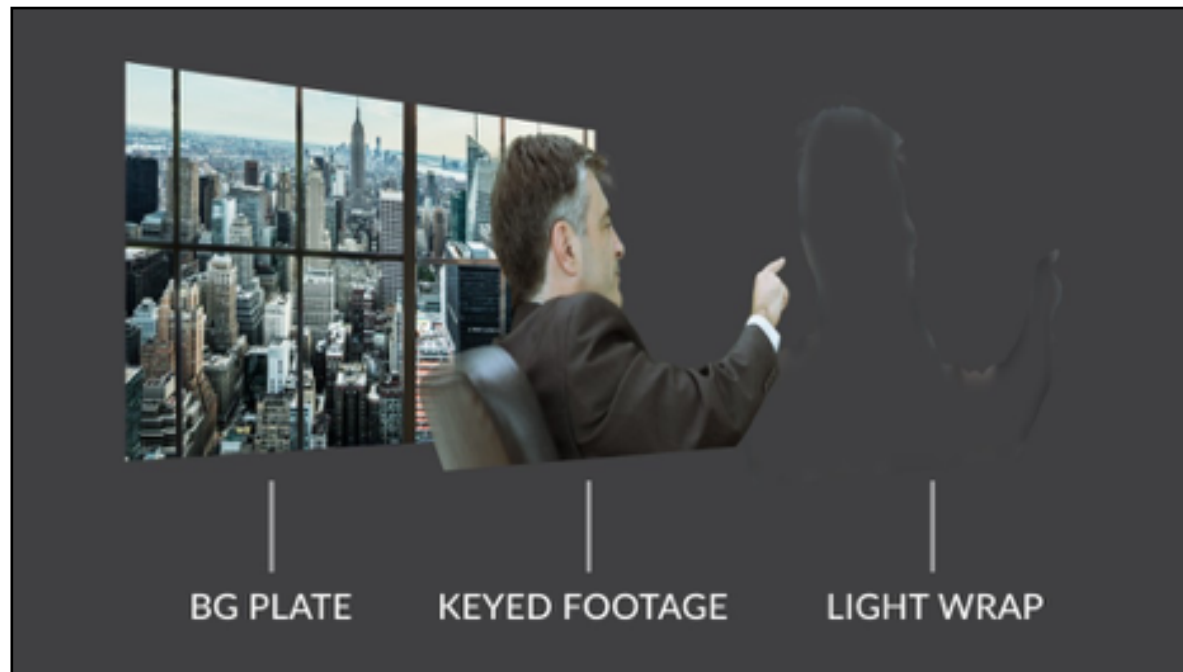
correctly, light wrapping can really help give realism to your scene. If overdone, it can make your footage look soft and unbelievable.

Light wrapping is often performed automatically when using a keying software. However, just like in photography, automatic doesn't always mean better!

How to Light Wrap

In a nutshell, light wrapping works by softening the hard edges produced when keying out green screen footage. By adding in a feathered portion of the background to the edges of the keyed

subject, you can make your scene look more like a composition than a series of layers. Check out the following diagram:



As you can see, light wrapping is a very subtle effect that, when done well, isn't going to be noticed by your audience. The light wrapping layer is merely using the outline of the keyed footage to blur out a small portion of the background.

Light wrapping is used to simulate the ambient light that is supposedly casting light onto your subject in the scene. In some circumstances, like mixed lighting, it can be better to use another layer besides your background layer for the light wrap. Really, it all depends on your scene.

Plugin Solutions

A lot of high-end keying applications have light wrapping built in, including the Keylight software that comes with Adobe After Effects. However, if realistic light wraps are your goal, we suggest you check out the following plugins:

Key Correct

Key Correct is an industry standard when it comes to light wrapping, noise reduction, and any other key-related feature you can imagine. In Key Correct you will find 15 stand-alone plugins designed to help you clean up your green screen keys. The results are fantastic and you can even get a free trial from Red Giant's website.

Price: [\\$399](#)

Borris Continuum: Key and Blend

Serving as a small portion of the larger Boris Continuum Complete, the Key and Blend pack gives users of After Effects, Premiere, FCPX, Resolve, Nuke, Scratch, and Media Composer the ability to preform realistic light wraps with ease. The pack comes with 20 plugins and filters designed to help with the compositing process. Boris is also offering a free trial of Key and Blend so you can use it today.

Price: [\\$299](#)

Easy Tips For Creating an Awesome Title Sequence



Grab your audience from the get-go with a perfectly executed title sequence!

In terms of production value, the difference between a project shot for \$10,000 and one shot for \$1,000,000 isn't all that different any more. Cameras like the RED EPIC DRAGON have opened up the ability for low budget filmmakers to create final products that can rival productions with many times their budget.

Yet, no matter how good the camera tech gets, there are always going to be certain elements that can give away a low-budget film – one of which is the opening title sequence. Most commonly, low budget films make one of two choices when it comes to their opening titles. They will either:

A) Go overboard and attempt to create a heavily animated After Effects style title sequence, or...

B) Keep things simple and overlay text on the edit itself, or on a black background.

Unless you are a professional After Effects artist, I would always recommend going with option B. Attempting to create an elaborate title sequence by yourself will not work 99% of the time and the vast majority of projects simply don't need it. In fact, the current trend today with films of all sizes is leaning towards fewer titles (if



any) up front, and going for a more minimalistic approach with regards to the design.

While there is no such thing as a one size fits all solution for any creative choice, the following five tips which will keep your basic titles looking clean and professional:

1. Keep the Font Small

Awkwardly sized titles are notoriously prevalent among indie films. There is no reason to have opening titles take up half of your screen real estate. Unless you're intentionally going for a certain look, such as block text that covers almost the whole screen, keep your titles nice and small.

The best thing to do is find a size that is just comfortable enough to read without squinting your eyes, but not much bigger than that. The main title card with the film's name is the exception to this rule, and you can always have that title appear much larger so it stands out from the rest. However, for any and all other titles, small is almost

always better – so never up your font size unless absolutely necessary.

2. Choose a tasteful font.

This one is going to sound like a no-brainer, but poor font choices are very common.

It's usually best to now use textured fonts. In other words, fonts that have a grungy or spray painted look (or anything else overly stylized) can look very cheap. Clean and simple fonts will almost always work better.

Keep the following truth in mind: if your film is successful, it will be seen for many years to come. The last thing you want is to get stuck with a font that dates your movie.

3. Don't Animate the Titles

A few years ago, a trend started that involved animating titles to match the picture. So, for example, there might be a shot of a bus crossing the screen, and then the titles might follow along behind it. This fad has largely died off, yet many indie filmmakers are still attempting to animate their titles in hopes that it will add some production value.

Simple is always better. Nine times out of ten you're going to be better off just fading in a static title over picture (or black) than animating it to achieve an unoriginal effect.

4. Use Framing Guides

You can easily tell when an editor hasn't used framing guides with their titles. One title will fade into the next and they will just be slightly off from each other. Or a main title that is supposed to be centered will feel like it's off to one side or the other.

It takes you practically no time to turn on your framing guides and snap your titles to the right position on the screen. Whatever you do, please make sure you don't skimp out on this step.

5. Avoid Drop Shadows

As we mentioned before certain font choices can really date the look of your film. The use of drop shadows can pose the same issue. Drop shadows can look okay in certain circumstances, especially when they are part of the overall aesthetic of the film's brand. However, they should never be used simply because the text needs to stand out more.

For example, if you're trying to put one of your title cards on a shot that has a high-contrast background and the title isn't showing up properly – you might be tempted to add a drop shadow. This is the logical thing to do. But at the same time, it will change the overall feel of your titles. If you absolutely have to use drop shadows, then go for it – just make sure you use them across the board on all of your titles to ensure a sense of consistency.

Understanding Spatial and Temporal Interpolation in After Effects



Temporal and Spatial Interpolation are two distinctly different terms. What do they mean and what purpose do they serve in After Effects?

There's a lot of lingo to learn in After Effects. There's a lot of foreign verbiage – from Frame Blending to Rasterizing – that can be quite confusing to both AE rookies and experts alike. Two terms commonly misunderstood in After Effects are Temporal and Spatial Interpolation.

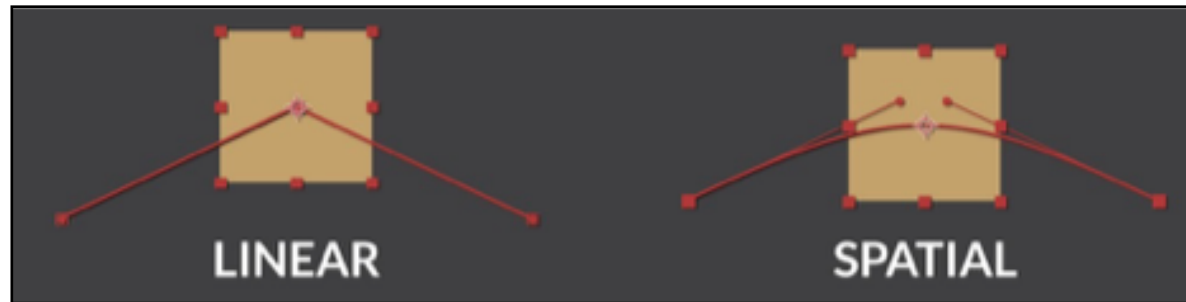
The terms Temporal and Spatial are used almost exclusively to talk about interpolation (the way After Effects processes data between keyframes) in After Effects. However, the two are very different in the way they work.

Temporal Interpolation

Temporal Interpolation refers to the way After Effects processes keyframe changes in time. For example, when you're converting your position keyframes from linear to Bezier or Easy Ease, you are changing the time at which the layer will be at a certain point, not necessarily changing the shape of an object's path.

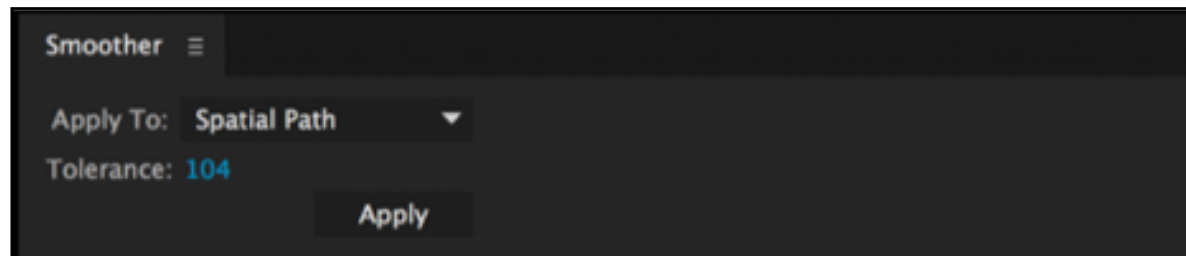
When creating lifelike movements, adjusting the temporal properties are a must. If you're viewing the speed graph in the graph editor, you are viewing a temporal graph – it only deals with changes between keyframes in time, not in 2D or 3D space.

Spatial Interpolation



Whereas Temporal Interpolation has to deal with changes in an object's time, Spatial Interpolation deals with changes in a layer's path shape. When you're talking about smoothing an object's keyframes using Spatial Interpolation, you're talking about smoothing in such a way that harsh path points become rounded.

When to Modify Interpolation in After Effects



Both Temporal and Spatial normally refer to the type of smoothing that you're going to be adding to your keyframes. By using the Smoothing Window in After Effects, you can select your desired keyframes and it will give you the option to smooth using a Spatial or Temporal path. If nothing else, using this technique will help you learn the difference between these two types of interpolation.

Still Confused?

In the end, it's best to think of Temporal as Time and Spatial as Space. Practically speaking, you probably won't need to know the difference between Spatial or Temporal Interpolation to be

successful in After Effects. But understanding the difference between the terms will help your mind become better attuned with the way After Effects processes data, which might help if you want to dive into scripting in the future.

Useful Blending Modes in After Effects



We shed some light on our six favorite blending modes in After Effects.

One of the quickest ways to add stylization to your video or images in After Effects is to use a blending mode. Blending modes (or transfer modes) are “mini-effects” that can be applied to any layer in your composition to make it interact with the layers beneath. Transfer modes can serve as a quick keying utility, a color effect, or even a silhouetting tool. Here’s a roundup of six popular After Effects blending modes.

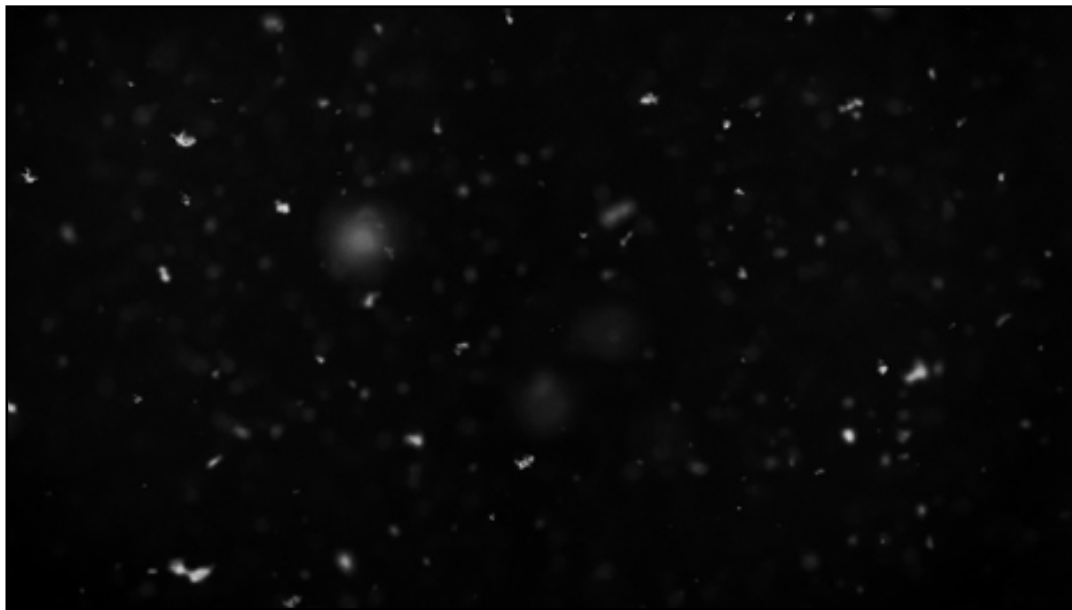
1. Screen

Screen is used to get rid of the dark parts of your image. It lets you composite elements on a black background into your scene. You can use this mode in a VFX context, as VFX elements tend to come pre-or on a

black background. For example, take this image



And put in this snow element...



We can apply a the Screen transfer mode to composite the snow into the final image.



2. Multiply

Multiply is the opposite of Screen. Instead of taking out an image's dark parts, it takes out light parts. Multiply can be used in a lot of different ways, but I typically use it to add grungy textures to my compositions.

For example if we had this image:



and wanted to add this image:



We could simply add a Multiply effect to create a grungy effect.



3. Add

Like Screen, the Add transfer mode leaves only the highlights of the image while removing the dark parts. However, Add goes one step further. Add, as the name implies, adds its color values to the image below causing the image to greatly increase in brightness.

You will typically use this transfer mode to simulate lighting in your composition such as lens flares or light leaks.

For example if we had this image...



And wanted to create a 'Hipster' style light leak we could put this masked out solid layer on top.



Then we could apply the transfer mode Add to create this stylized light leak look.



4. Classic Color Burn or Color Burn

In line with Multiply, the Color Burn transfer modes will darken your image. However, Color Burn differentiates itself in a way that it blends with the background. As the name implies it creates a burned look, making it great for grunge and vintage looks. Highlights are retained when using the color burn effect. Color Burn is typically used to add a dirty vintage effect.

For example if we had this image



and applied this image to the top of the composition...



We would end up with this:



5. Overlay

Overlay changes the color of the mid-tones while preserving the light and dark parts of your image. Overlay is typically used to add stylized elements into your composition. The following example is an image with a green solid with the Overlay transfer modes applied.

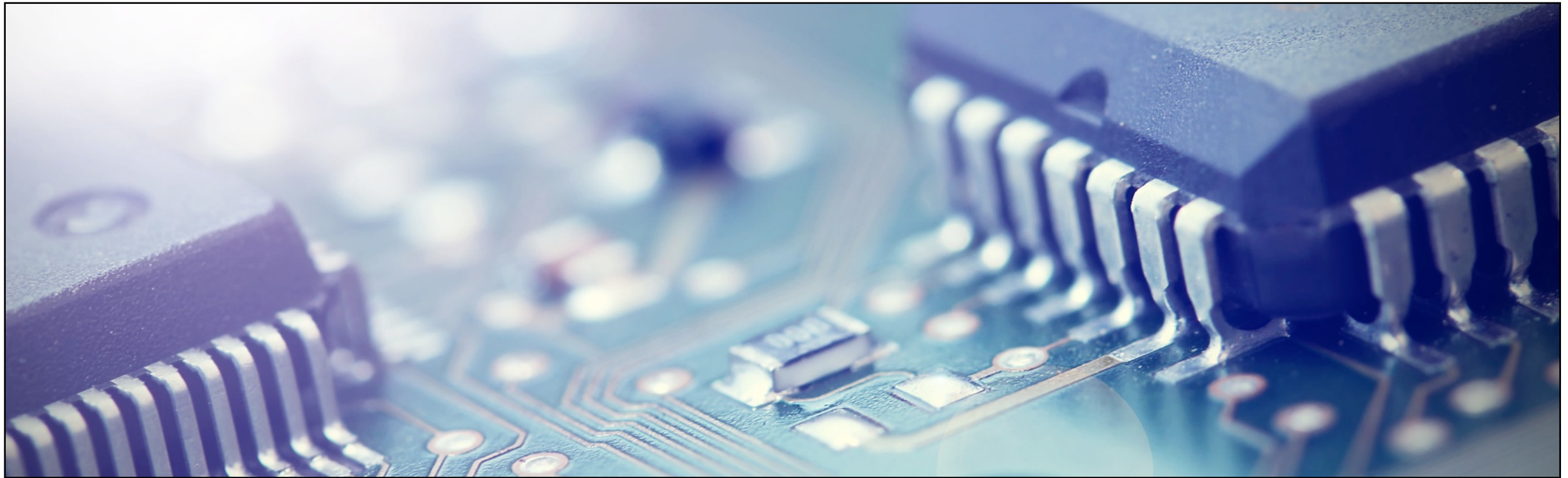


6. Soft Light

Soft Light is very similar to the Overlay transfer mode. However, Soft Light tends to be very subtle whereas Overlay is more noticeable. Here's the same layer on the same image with the Soft Light transfer mode applied instead of Overlay.



Tips for Faster Rendering in After Effects



Sick of slow render speeds? Check out these fourteen tips for faster rendering in After Effects.

Rendering is an annoying (but unavoidable) aspect of the motion graphics process. However, there are a few steps you can take to make your After Effects renders as fast as possible.

1. Use the Right Graphics Card

After Effects is an incredibly intense program for your graphics card. No surprise, right? And while there may be hundreds of graphics cards available for your computer, only a few are recommended by Adobe to run After Effects. Adobe specifically recommends certain GeForce, Quadro, and Tesla cards. You can find

the full list on the system requirements page on Adobe's website. If you're using a sub-par card, you'll likely see an instant render speed increase when you switch.

2. Upgrade Your RAM

If you work day in and day out in After Effects, then upgrading your RAM is the way to go. Adobe recommends at least 4GB of RAM to run After Effects, but you'll benefit from much more than that. It's not uncommon for professional AE users to have 32GB of RAM or more.

3. Use a Solid-State Drive



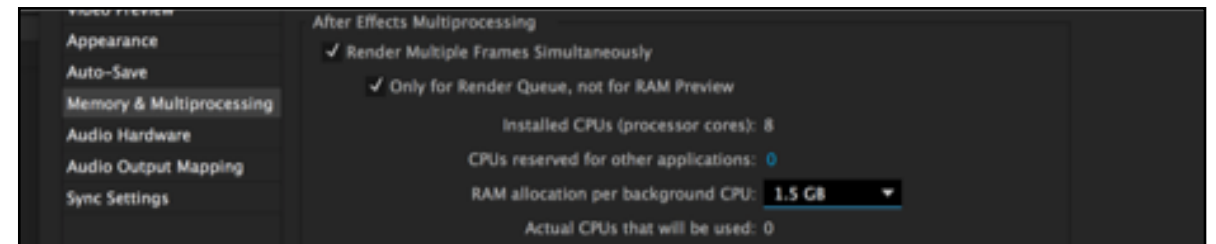
A solid-state drive is a quick way to increase rendering speed in After Effects and the overall speed of your computer in general. If you purchased your internal or external hard drive for less than \$100, it's time for an upgrade. With a solid-state drive, After Effects will be able to load assets, reference the cache, and load effects much faster... all leading to reduced render times.

4. Use Two Hard Drives

When you render your footage to the same hard drive your project is saved on, you are forcing that hard drive to perform two operations simultaneously: read and write. While this doesn't lead to render times that are twice as slow, it does lead to reduced render times. Instead, try using one hard drive to run the program with assets and another hard drive to render the finished video.

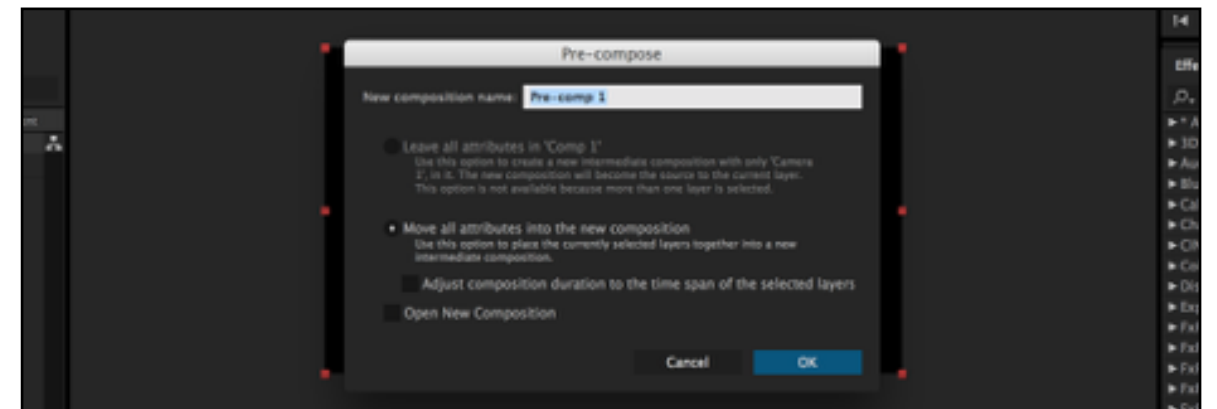
5. Turn On Multiprocessing

After Effects has the ability to render out multiple frames at the same time using multiple processing cores. By default, multiprocessing isn't turned on in After Effects... you have to do it by hand. To do so, navigate to After Effects > Preferences > Memory & Multiprocessing. A screen that looks like this will pop up:



Simply click the check box next to 'Render Multiple Frames Simultaneously' and adjust the settings to your liking.

6. Reduce Pre-Comps



Pre-comps are a funny business inside of After Effects. When it comes to creating an organized and convenient workflow in After Effects, pre-comps are extremely efficient. However, pre-comps aren't always best when it comes to creating fast render times. This is because pre-comps require pixel information to pass through multiple compositions before rendering to your hard drive.

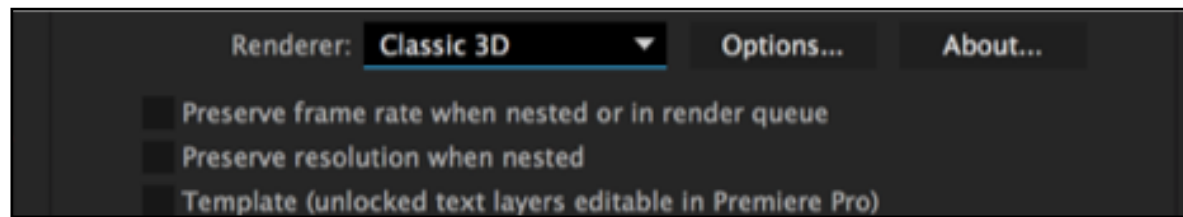
7. Clean up your Compositions

Just because you can't see a layer inside your composition doesn't mean it isn't being rendered by your CPU. So before you send your composition to the render queue, make sure you delete/trim any unused layers inside your composition.

8. Trim Layers Off-Screen

Files that are actually out of the video frame will still take a toll on the rendering time, especially if you are using 3D cameras. If your goal is to optimize render times you need to use the trim feature (option + [or]) to trim your layers up to the exact frame that they will be used in your composition.

9. Turn off Ray-Traced 3D



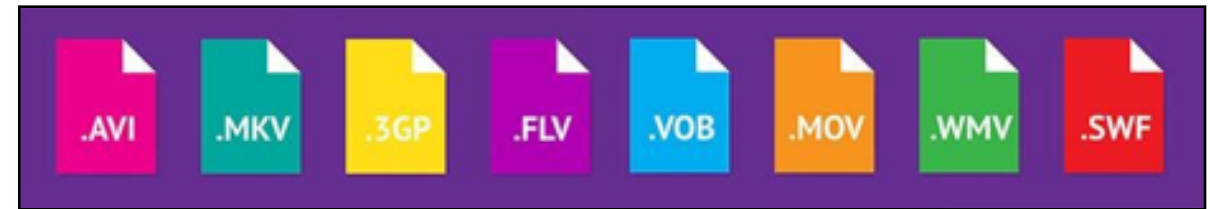
Ray-Traced 3D layers was one of the coolest features introduced into After Effects in CS6. Finally... a way to create 3D models directly in After Effects!

This excitement was short-lived though, as Ray tracing takes way too long to be practical for everyday use. Make sure your composition is set to Classic 3D instead of Ray-Traced 3D before you render. If you don't, you'll see your render time increase by at least double.

10. Close Other Programs

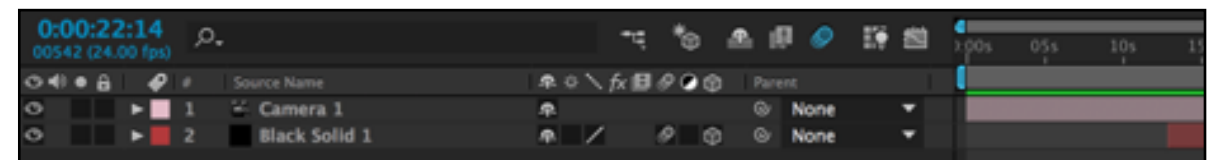
It can be easy to forget, especially when using the Adobe Dynamic Link, but before you render a composition in After Effects you need close out all the unused programs running on your computer. This will free up space for your CPU to run After Effects.

11. Choose the Right Codec



Less compressed codecs like MOV take longer to render in After Effects than smaller codecs like H.264 or ProRes. It's important to ask yourself what your video will be used for once it's done. Will it be on TV or simply embedded on the web? If it's going online, chances are it's going to be incredibly compressed anyways. So maybe you don't need to export your video as lossless?

12. Turn Off Motion Blur, Depth of Field, & 3D if Unused



When it comes down to increasing your render speed in After Effects, you need to ask yourself: will this feature be used in my video? Often you can toggle unused features off to make your render times much faster. For example, if you don't need your layers to have motion blur, you can toggle the motion graphics button to 'off.' If you have a 3D camera, do you really need to have depth of field? Or are you trying to get a 2D flat look? If your layers are set to 3D, is it for a good reason? Could you simulate 3D by scaling down your objects and moving them in 2D space?

13. Be Selective with Effects



Not all effects are created equal. Some take more time than others to render. To speed up render times, you need to become very selective about the effects you use. Most effects have been optimized to render across multiple threads on your CPU, but there are a few that will only allow After Effects to use one thread at a time. If an effect only uses one thread it will take much more time to render. These effects are:

- Auto Color
- Auto Contrast
- Auto Levels
- Cartoon
- Lens Blur
- Particle Playground
- Shadow/Highlight

14. Newest Version of AE



While each update to After Effects may not seem revolutionary, Adobe is constantly trying to make After Effects faster and more optimized for users. It is important to install the latest version of After Effects available to you. Sure, back in the day it was a large financial commitment to purchase each Creative Suite update as

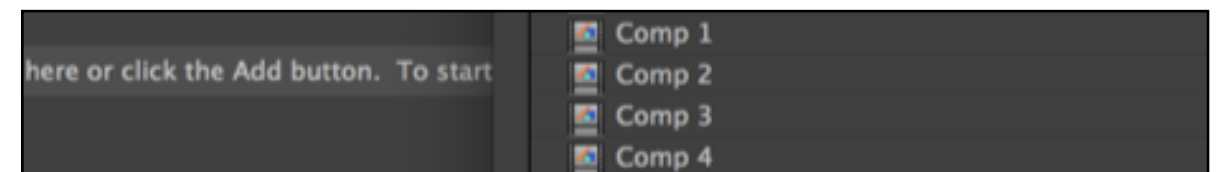
they would be released. But now that the Creative Cloud is prevalent, you should always have the latest update.

Bonus: Use Media Encoder to Export Compositions

One of the biggest problems with using the render queue in After Effects is the fact that you can't do anything else while rendering.

However, this is a "hack" that you can use to render AE compositions and still work on another project using Adobe Media Encoder.

Simply import your AE project into Media Encoder and you will be able to select which composition you wish to export. Because this doesn't go directly through After Effects, you will be able to work on other projects during this process.



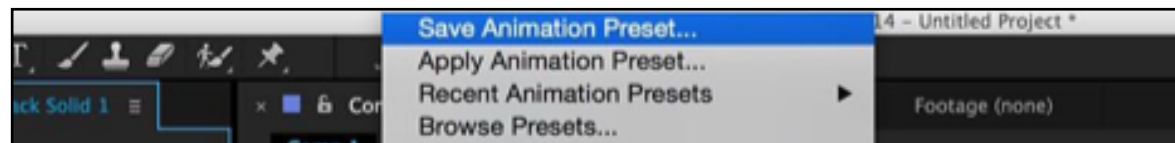
After Effects: Presets vs Plugins vs Scripts vs Expressions vs Templates



Confused about the lingo in After Effects? Let's break down the key differences between presets, plugins, scripts, expressions, and templates in AE.

There's a lot of confusion out there over the different terms used in After Effects... and rightfully so. The terms above are often used online interchangeably, adding to the uncertainty. Let's clear up the confusion.

After Effects Presets



Animation presets are a collection of effects that can be saved for later use. Animation presets are made up of effects (and keyframes in those effects). If you ever create an interesting look on a single

layer in After Effects, you can save your effects as an animation preset and recall them in the future. Expressions can also be saved into presets to give them added functionality. We'll get to that in a moment.

To save a preset in After Effects, simply go to Window > Save Animation Preset with your effect layer selected. You will now be able to see your new effect in the effects browser.

Skills Needed to Create: Basic After Effects Knowledge

After Effects Scripts

A script is a block of code that tells After Effects to do something. Scripts can be used to perform various tasks inside After Effects, from creating layers to batch rendering. Like presets, scripts are usually used to save time in After Effects, but scripts aren't limited to effects only. Generally, scripts are used to perform utility functions inside of After Effects.

Scripts use a coding language called Extend Script, a deviation of JavaScript. Scripts can't be directly written and tested inside of After Effects. Instead, script creators usually use the ExtendScript Toolkit included in the Adobe Creative Cloud. The ExtendScript toolkit can be used to write scripts for most of the programs included in the Creative Cloud, not just After Effects.

Special Skills Needed: ExtendScript or JavaScript

Notable Examples: Dojo Toolkit, Motion 2

Plugins

Plugins give After Effects users extended functionality beyond what is possible inside of After Effects alone. Plugins are created using external code that essentially creates a new software that works alongside After Effects. Some of the most revolutionary tools in After Effects (like Element 3D, Optical Flares, and Trapcode Particular) are all great examples of plugins.

Plugins are difficult to create, so it's unlikely that you will be able to create a plugin on your own without an extensive background in coding.

Special Skills Needed: C/C++, JavaScript

Notable Examples: Element 3D, Trapcode Particular, Optical Flares

Templates

A template is an After Effects project file that is intended for customization. Templates can utilize plugins, as long as the person opening template has the plugin installed on their computer. Any project can be turned into a template... just go to File > Save As and select After Effects Template in the dropdown.

However, it's important to remember that templates can only be opened in current and future iterations of After Effects, not versions from the past. So if you save your template in After Effects CC, you can't open it in After Effects CS6.

Special Skills Needed: Basic After Effects Knowledge


Notable Examples: Retro Titles, Blood Splat Titles

Expressions

An expression is essentially a snippet of ExtendScript written directly into After Effects. Expressions are typically used to manipulate values for a single parameter like color, position, or intensity. Expressions can be used to link values to sliders and checkboxes, making them great for anyone looking to create well-organized templates. Expressions can range from a few words to hundreds of lines of code. It all depends on the functionality.

Special Skills Needed: Basic JavaScript

Notable Examples: Wiggle Expression, If/Else Expression



08 DISTRIBUTION

YOUR JOB ISN'T OVER WHEN YOU HIT THAT EXPORT BUTTON. YOU'VE WORKED COUNTLESS HOURS ON YOUR FILM AND NOW IT'S TIME TO SHARE IT WITH THE WORLD. A FILM'S SUCCESS IS DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE THAT WATCH IT. IT'S TIME FOR DISTRIBUTION.

Five Underrated Ways to Promote YouTube



Check out this list of highly underrated ways to promote YouTube videos. Apply them properly and you might get more eyes on your videos and channel!

Uploading a video to YouTube is just the beginning. The real fun comes when you decide to find ways to get your video in front of a larger audience. After you've applied basic and advanced techniques in boosting your video's ranking in search, try out these valuable (and often underrated) tips to enhance the reach of your YouTube videos.

1) Build YouTube Playlists Around Your Videos

Playlists play an extremely important role in distributing your video content on YouTube. Frankly speaking, playlists need to be in the center of your channel strategy. Why so? Well, playlists make it

significantly easy for viewers to watch multiple videos with no effort at all. Since you hook viewers up for several videos in your playlist, the overall watch time is increased dramatically.

To create successful playlists, be very strategic. You don't need to stuff all your videos in one single playlist. Group videos by topic so that viewers want to watch the videos in one shot. Don't be too self-centered while creating playlists. Create playlists using your own videos and other videos if they fit the topic.

You may want to order your own videos to be at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of your playlist. Playlists need to be optimized with relevant descriptions so that viewers can find them in search. Publish playlists within your YouTube channel. In this way, the playlists will easily reach your subscribers.



2) Collaborate With Other Creators on YouTube

Collaborating with other video creators (especially channels catering to audiences similar to yours) is a proven method to get your channel beyond its regular reach. You'll likely find that video creators are open to testing new content and giving new stuff to their viewers.

So the task is to find channels which work for your audience and reach out to them. What to do next? Guest-starring is one of the most popular techniques. Some other ways that work include: joint hangouts, exchange of video uploads, and links (both in-video and in text descriptions).

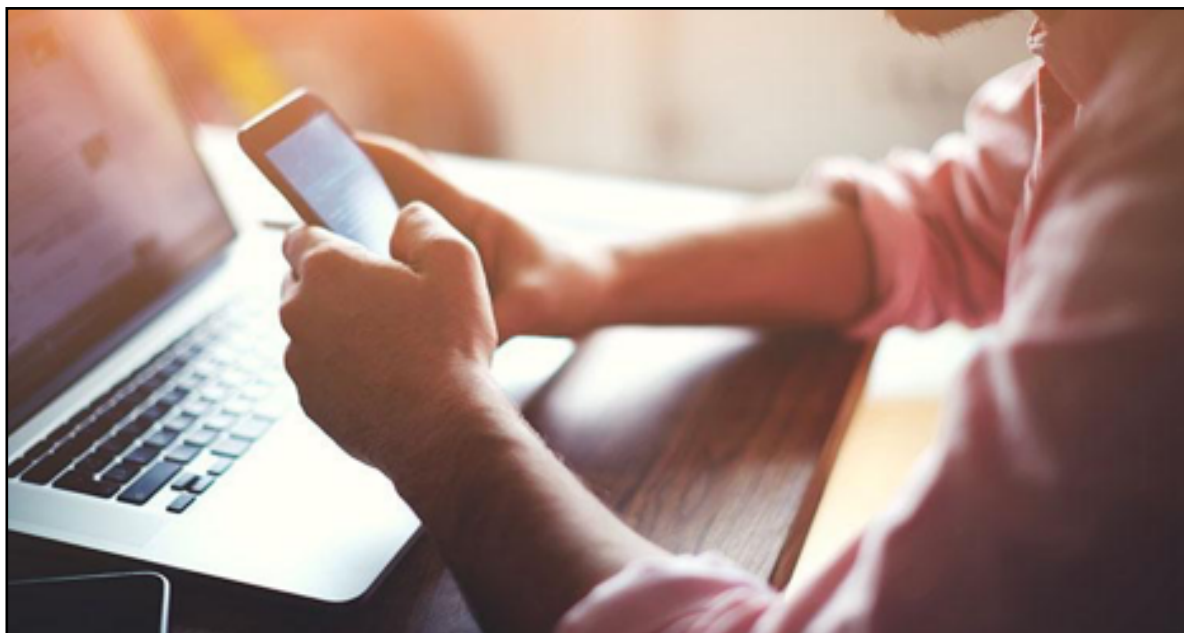


One caveat to bear in mind — After the above cross-promotional events take place, make sure you continue “feeding” your new subscribers with videos on a regular basis. That content will determine if your new followers want to stick around.

3) Promote Your Videos on Friendly Blogs

In the same vein as reaching out to fellow YouTubers, create a circle of bloggers who can help drive video views by embedding your videos into their posts. By the way... this one is really tough! Bloggers treasure the relationship they've cultivated with their readers and will be cautious about any content coming their way.

To start off, track down the sites that embed your videos. How to track them down? Set Google Alerts for your channel name, your video titles, and specific keywords you use in the video descriptions. Contact bloggers with the videos most relevant to their preferred writing subjects. Why not invite bloggers to check your playlists out too?



4) Insert Your Videos in Email Updates

Promoting your content by email does work, even though there are rumors email is dead. Remember that your subscribers provided their emails voluntarily! You've already won their hearts. So give them more news and updates.

If you have a list of email subscribers, send them a message every time you upload a new video. If you send regular newsletters, mention your videos in these emails. Adding a description and an attractive screenshot or thumbnail in the email is usually enough to start getting clicks and, eventually, video views.

5) Use Old Public Relation Promotional Methods

How do PR companies still exist in this digital era? Well, simply put, it's because good old-fashioned PR works. A well-distributed press release containing your video can land you a lot of traffic and views. Talking in public or on the phone and following up with a summary (with your video in it) is also part of the PR game. Presentations at various industry events also fall into this category.

Bonus Tips

Promoting your YouTube videos may seem an overwhelming task. But the more you promote your videos with good results, the more you will want to continue. Here are a couple of bonus tips:

1. Improve your video production.

Get a better camera, improve your sound, add some quality royalty free background music.

2. Create expectations and satisfy them.

Regular production and scheduled publishing – these are two keys to keep your audience engaged. You create an expectation. Make sure you live up to it.

3. Share on social.

YouTube is a massive social platform by itself. But you want to get your videos beyond it through sharing on other social media outlets. And Facebook is not your limit. Consider Twitter, Reddit, StumbleUpon, and LinkedIn.

4. The very last bonus tip.

If you are serious about promoting your videos on YouTube, download the YouTube Creator Playbook and read it through.

How to Avoid Film Festival Rejection



Rejection is a brutal reality in any creative industry. Fortunately, there are steps filmmakers can take to avoid film festival rejection.

Getting into a festival (especially a major) is a huge challenge to say the least. Even with all the competition out there, you still have a shot... you just need to tell your story in a way that is conducive to a festival acceptance. Below, I'll outline my top three reasons that your film might face film festival rejection. Next time around you'll know what NOT to do!

You Submitted a Genre Film to the Wrong Festival

Genre films (horror, sci-fi, etc.) are very often created by filmmakers on a tight budget, as they are typically easier to sell when compared to dramas or comedies. As such, there are staggering amounts of

genre films finished every year and a great deal of them are subsequently submitted to major film festivals. The problem is that there are only a small handful of spots for a genre film at any of the majors. Of course, sometimes it works out. The small 2015 horror film 'It Follows' found acclaim at Cannes and went on to mainstream success.

While it may be true that there are films from every genre at any major film festival (including horror and sci-fi), the truth of the matter is that top-tier festivals often only have a few narrative feature spots open for genre films to be programmed in. If you have

a genre film on your hands, you should be focusing your efforts on genre festivals. This may also increase the odds of getting distribution from a buyer at the festival.

You Submitted a Rough Cut

Most festivals allow filmmakers to submit their films as a work-in-progress cut. This may be fine if you're a well-known filmmaker, as sending in a rough cut can get you on the radar of the programmers. This probably isn't the way to go unless you're a name producer/director. In fact, sending in a rough cut is generally a bad idea.

From the programmer's perspective, there is a massive concern that the story you are submitting will differ significantly from the final cut submitted. And really, why should they take a risk on your incomplete film when they've received tens of thousands of completed, high quality submissions that they can choose to program instead?

This notion applies to films that are not yet picture locked *and* those that are locked but haven't yet had any finishing work done on them. Finishing elements like color correction, sound mixing, etc. have a great impact on how an audience views and enjoys your film. In this case, the audience is festival programmers. They understand the craft of filmmaking, but they have no idea what your film is going to look like when it's done.

You Didn't Submit a Festival-Worthy Film

Festivals, large and small, are fiercely competitive. You may do all the right things, follow all the guidelines available to you, read every book on how to get into festivals, submit a fully polished cut... But at the end of the day, if the quality and substance of your film is anything less than incredible, then nothing else will matter.

We're not just talking about production value or the acting here (which are both extremely important), but rather the overall story and meaning behind your film.

Having a good film isn't enough. It needs to be thought-provoking, timely, relevant, and impeccably produced.

The next time you're upset that your film didn't get into Sundance or Cannes, take a look at some of the films that did and ask yourself why they got in. While you might want to tell yourself it's because the filmmakers knew someone or had some sort of connection – the truth is that their film was probably stronger than yours and a better fit for the festival.

That doesn't mean that your next one won't get in or that you are a bad filmmaker. But it does go to show that you likely still need to hone your craft to the point where your films will be festival worthy. It's totally doable with enough dedication.

Tax Deductions for Filmmakers and Videographers



Make tax season a little less painful with these tax deductions for filmmakers and videographers. It will likely save you money!

Before we begin: We're not Certified Public Accountants, so be sure to consult a CPA to find out exactly what tax write-offs work best for you. Let's kick this off with two pieces of very important advice...

1. Keep Immaculate Records

Keep your records in order and set aside a percentage of every dollar you earn for self-employment tax. We've found that utilizing assets such as Square to send invoices and run credit cards really helps me keep my records tight. Then you tie Quickbooks to a bank account to consolidate all of your records into one place. At the end of the year, all you have to do is send the Quickbooks

documentation to my CPA so she can prepare my taxes for filing. Speaking of CPAs...

2. Hire a Certified Public Accountant

You're going to need help navigating the ins and outs of what can be deducted and what can't. Hiring a CPA will help you save some money in the long run.

Deductions for Filmmakers and Videographers

As we explore these possible tax deductions for filmmakers and videographers, keep in mind that you could end up audited. Be sure

that you can justify your deductions. That point is going to come up a lot as we move forward. Now let's look at some easy ways that deductions can save you some money.

1. Small Items

Any small item that you spend money on for daily production tasks is something you can deduct. Tool kits, dry erase boards and markers, gaffer tape, etc. These are all things you can deduct. You just have to be able to justify the purchase and its use in your daily business.

2. All Computer Related Items

If you purchased a new computer this year, it's deductible – with some conditions. If you use that new computer solely for work, then you can claim the entire purchase price, but only by using a Section 179 Deduction. If you're using the computer for business and personal, that changes how much of the purchase price you can deduct. Your CPA will be able to give you a more concrete idea of what those numbers are. It's not just hardware that can be deducted; software is eligible too. Your Adobe Creative Cloud subscription is a great example of software that's deductible. Just make sure you give your transaction invoices to your CPA in Quickbooks or physical form.

3. Film & Video Production Equipment

Every piece of equipment that you purchase for your work is a deduction during tax season. Did you purchase a new camera this year? That's a deduction. Did you go to B&H Photo and purchase new lenses for that camera? Maybe a penguin case? ND filters? Those are deductions. Or maybe you purchased new sound equipment from Sweetwater. Deduction. Even batteries, memory

cards, tripods, sliders, and stabilizers are deductible as long as they are being justifiably used for your business.

4. Digital and Print Research

As filmmakers and videographers, we are constantly consuming content in order to stay on top of what is going on in our industry. Because of this, you might be justified in deducting the whole cost or a portion of the cost of Netflix, Hulu Plus, Amazon Prime, cable service, movie tickets, industry books, periodicals, and smart phone apps. Again, you have to be able to justify these expenses as something you need for your work. Your CPA will be able to give you a concrete answer on whether you can apply these expenses as deductions.

5. Dining and Entertainment

To deduct dining and entertainment expenses, you need to be able to justify how they relate to your business. More than likely you won't be able to claim the entire amount. When dining with clients or colleagues, I usually claim around 50% of the cost. I'll also deduct the cost of a wrap party for my crew after filming has concluded. Screenings and premiere costs are also deductible. All of these things can be seen as the cost of doing business.



6. Online Presence



All of us need some sort of online presence in order to build our business. Because building this online presence is so crucial to earning a living, you should look at deducting the cost of this presence. Things that could apply here are cloud storage costs (Onedrive, Google Drive, Dropbox), yearly website domain and hosting costs, and online membership costs such as IMDB Pro. Even the costs of website design and development are deductible.

7. Travel Expenses and Conferences

Expenses you incur while doing business outside of your home might fall into the travel expenses category. Whether you're driving for five hours or taking a flight across the country for a film shoot, these are all deductible expenses. Be sure and keep records of everything, including rental cars, taxi rides, and hotels. If you paid for the travel of your crew, add that cost as well. Additionally, if you're attending a conference like NAB or SXSW, you can deduct the attendance costs since they pertain directly to your work.

8. Business Startup Expenses



Keep track of all the costs that you pay out to start your business such as incorporation fees, lawyer fees, and copyright/trademark filing fees. You can even deduct the payments made to your CPA or financial advisor.

9. Printed Self Marketing

In addition to your online marketing, you'll likely want to purchase printed media like business cards, flyers, or brochures. These costs are deductible as well.

10. Home Office Expenses



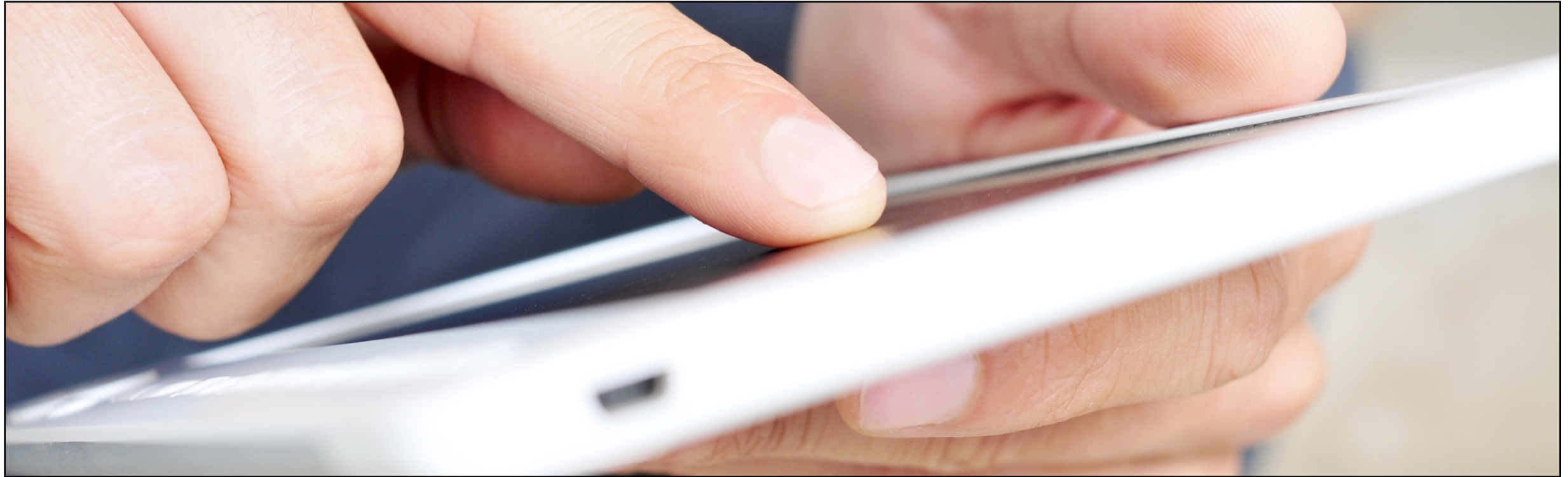
Home offices and editing rooms are loaded with potential deductions, including the actual space you use. Other likely deductions: desks, chairs, lamps, pens, printers, printer paper, ink

cartridges, staples, etc. You get the idea. These may seem like small insignificant purchases, but they add up quickly.

What We've Learned About Tax Deductions

Deductions aren't too hard to decipher, as long as they are legal and pertain to your business. With that in mind, the most important takeaways are: Keep immaculate records and hire a CPA. Talk to other filmmakers that you know – chances are one of them has a CPA that they can recommend.

Get More Views: Ten Basic Tips for Posting A Video Online



What's the point of posting video online if nobody is going to see it? Up your views with these basic tips for posting online video.

There are some very simple things that you need to get right in order to successfully use online video to boost your business, career, or site traffic. Some of these basic dos and don'ts might seem too obvious to mention, yet people seem to get them wrong anyway. These are the ten things I'd consider vital to successfully using video online.

1. Do Make it Shareable

What makes the internet such a great place to put your video is the simple and obvious fact that a whole lot of people can see it. The

chances of this happening are hugely increased by ensuring that your video is shareable through as many avenues as possible.

Ensuring that your video can be embedded on other sites is a simple one-click process, but publishers often seem to go out of their way to make this impossible. Granted, keeping control over your online content might have its advantages (usually advertising revenue – if you have to watch the video on one site only, that site will get all the traffic), but this advantage is vastly outweighed by the extended reach that's gained by allowing the video to spread 'virally.'

2. Add a Call to Action

Hopefully your video will be so good that people will want to do something as a result. A call to action might be as simple as a 'like' or as useful as a share, but do prompt your viewers on what to do next. If you want them to get in touch with you, then make sure it's really easy to do so. If you're hosting your video on YouTube or Vimeo, make the most of the description area to provide all of your crucial information. Incredibly obvious, yes. But it's astounding how often it doesn't contain much helpful information.

3. Add an End Logo and Branding

Make sure your viewers know who made it. This could involve an opaque 'bug' in the corner of the video, which is helpful for dissuading people from ripping your video and reposting it as their own. Personally, I would aim for the best viewing experience for your audience and leave that off. Just add something to the end that also includes a memorable URL.

4. Track Your Stats and Shares

If your online video does find an audience, be sure to keep an eye on the stats, shares, and other places the video ends up. The people who liked this video might like your other videos, products, services, work, etc. Be sure to engage anyone who comments on or shares your work.

5. Use Copyrighted Material – But Only Under Fair Use Guidelines

If you're going to use copyrighted material in your video, make sure you're abiding by the Fair Use principles which most countries have within their legal framework. In the United States, these four factors need to be considered:

1. The purpose and character of the use, including whether such use is of commercial nature or is for nonprofit educational purposes
2. The nature of the copyrighted work
3. The amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole
4. The effect of the use upon the potential market for, or value of, the copyrighted work

If you're so minded, you could add a Creative Commons license to your work in order to help others know how you would like it to be treated.

6. Don't Use Copyrighted Music

This is one of the biggest giveaways that a video has been produced by an amateur filmmaker. Do yourself and everyone else a favor and buy a track from a reputable and high quality royalty free music site, like PremiumBeat. There's plenty of music to choose from.

7. Don't Make it Overly Long.

This is a pet-peeve of mine for online video. The maxim "less is more" is a reliable rule of thumb.

8. Don't Make it for Yourself

Be aware of your audience and make the video for them, not for yourself.

Instead of thinking "How can I communicate what's so great about my work/product/business/idea/opinion?" consider "What is it that people want to know/feel/discover/buy?" The next point is a practical example of this mentality at work.

9. Don't Give It an Obtuse Title

One of the most influential variables to the success of your online video is the title you give it. Think like a member of your target audience and label it in a way that would help them to find it. Think about the kind of search terms that you Google.

10. Don't Give up After the First Go

If you've only just started making and sharing videos online, don't give up after your first attempt. Simply improve as you go. Incorporate feedback and suggestions and emulate the things that you see others doing successfully.

Tips for Promoting Your Indie Film on Social Media



Creating a social media strategy is the key to building grassroots support for your film project.

It's no secret that success on social media can lead to success at the box-office, but social media can sometimes feel unnatural and foreign. Social media marketing is more than just creating a Facebook page, posting images, and hoping for a following. Take the time to develop a social media strategy and see it through. Check out these tips for social media marketing success.

1. Hire a Graphic Designer

Start your social media journey off right by nailing the right marketing message for your project. A graphic designer is a solid investment for creating professional content for your marketing.

There are a lot of good online resources (Fiverr, CrowdSpring, 99 Designs) where you can inexpensively hire good designers.

Professional graphics are a great way to establish the legitimacy of your film before you have any cast or crew onboard. If your production is so independent that you can't afford to pay crew and actors, a good movie poster can get potential crew members excited about your project.

And be honest with yourself. If your Photoshop and design skills are lacking, it's best to leave this work to a professional.

2. Examine Relevant Communities

So you've got the basic marketing materials created: a poster, a logline, a trailer, and a Facebook page or Twitter account. Where's your audience? In order for a social media strategy to be effective, you've got to quickly develop your audience. One way to find people that may be interested in your project is to look online for niche communities that have to do with your film's genre or subject matter.

Doing a horror film? There's a Facebook page with over 1.5 million horror film lovers. There's a Reddit community dedicated to all things horror with a targeted audience of another 50,000 people. Perhaps your film deals with social issues like immigration, medicine, or the environment. Find organizations that focus on these issues. Whatever the genre or subject, there's an online community dedicated to it. Find it! If they can advocate for your project, you'll be exposed to a large group of natural supporters.

Take advantage of Facebook's custom audiences feature to target your postings to a relevant audience.

3. Stay Consistent

It can be easy to get caught up in creating an indie-film and forget about your online fans. The secret to keeping your audience excited is to consistently post news and updates on your production progress. "Consistent" doesn't mean you need to bombard your audience with multiple posts daily. Just set a goal to provide updates once or twice a week. When your production schedule becomes absolutely grueling, there are a lot of good online tools (like HootSuite and Tweetdeck) that can help you pre-schedule your posts. And remember to interact with your followers – social media isn't a one way street!

4. Take On-Set Pictures

Production photos are a great way to generate buzz around your project. Statistics show that posts with photos receive significantly higher engagement on Facebook and Twitter. Photo posts represent 87% of the shared content on Facebook, versus only 4% for link-based posts.

Although you should encourage everyone on your team to take photos, make it the responsibility of one crew member to take a ton of behind-the-scenes shots.

5. Incentivize Your Followers

A recent change in Facebook's policies now allows you to host promotions and collect entries through a FB post. In the same way rewards are aimed at incentivizing Kickstarter supporters, you can generate buzz by giving away promotional items on Facebook that relate to your film. Randomly select a winner or encourage more participation by asking questions.

6. Make It a Collaborative Effort

Who said you have to do social media alone? Encourage your cast and crew to interact with the film's social media online. This can be through sharing posts they find interesting or even posting their own original content. You're busy... there's no shame in asking others for help in this area.

7. Talk to Other Filmmakers

Get people talking about your film by being the initiator. Seek out other filmmakers and comment on their content. Follow film professionals on Twitter and interact. Build support for your film project by supporting the work of others.

Five Tips for Getting Your Indie Film Into Festivals



Prepping your film for a festival run? Consider these five tips for your best chance of success.

Many filmmakers today feel that festivals can be a waste of time. The cost of submitting to lots of festivals can be very expensive and the chances of getting in to any given festival are very small. Not to mention that even in a best-case scenario where your film is programmed at a major festival, it doesn't necessarily mean anything will come out of it with regards to distribution or representation.

All that said, festivals are still arguably one of the best entry points into the film industry if things line up just right, and they are a fantastic way to showcase your work.

Festivals get thousands of submissions and the judges have a very hard time rejecting many of the films that don't get in. So don't feel bad if you've been rejected by festivals before – it's all part of the process. The best thing you can do is refine your approach to give yourself the best odds of getting in.

1. Submit To Targeted Festivals

We all want to have our films screen at Sundance and Cannes, but what about the smaller niche festivals? While the major festivals are certainly worth submitting to, your film might have more success at a smaller festival where your film will truly be able to stand out. A

niche festival will give you a bigger opportunity to rise to the top and create a big buzz.

2. Have a Rock Solid Logline

Festival programmers rely on your logline to help them learn about your film and decipher what programming block and genre it would fit into. In order to give yourself the best possible shot at getting in, you need to represent your film accurately. For instance, if your logline is misleading and makes your film feel like a different genre, it may be sent to the wrong programmer— and it may get rejected for the wrong reason.

More importantly, if your logline is extremely powerful it will also help the programming team understand how they can package and market your film. After all, they do need to fill seats in the theatre.

3. Fill Out Your Withoutabox Profile!

It's surprising how many filmmakers don't take the time to fully complete their Withoutabox profile. For those of you that don't know, Withoutabox is the interface that many festival programmers will see. Much like the logline example given above, your Withoutabox profile is the best way to represent your film to the judges and let them know why it would be a perfect fit for them.

If you can, take the time to write individualized cover letters for each festival. Ultimately, the programmers do read them. Your chances of acceptance can only improve with a detailed Withoutabox profile and tasteful cover letter.

4. Submit, Submit, Submit

Submission fees can be very expensive, but you need to factor them into your budget. If you want to screen at three or four festivals, you need to be prepared to submit to at least twenty. And if money is an

issue, consider contacting festival programmers directly and requesting a fee waiver. Many festivals will offer this to filmmakers on a budget, especially if you explain your case well.

5. Make A Festival Worthy Film

Following all of these guidelines does not guarantee acceptance. If your film isn't quite strong enough, it won't get in. Your film needs to be well-executed on every level and suitable for a festival environment.

For example, if you're making a short film, make it a short film. Don't submit a thirty-minute cut; they won't be able to program your film. Keep things down to ten minutes or so. If you're just writing a new feature screenplay, try to write it with your festival of choice in mind. Different festivals have different preferences for the type of content they are drawn to, so make sure that your film is destined to be a good fit in every possible way.

In Conclusion

Regardless of how strong your film is, you still need to put yourself in the best possible position to get your film programmed by the festival committee.

If you submit a beautifully executed film, a strong Withoutabox profile, and a concise logline to several targeted festivals, you will have a much better shot of getting in.

And when you do get rejected from a festival here and there, don't worry. It doesn't mean your film was bad, it just means it couldn't be programmed.

How to Market Your Film on a Small Budget



No money? No problem. Here are some quick tips on how to market your film on a small budget.

Marketing your film is one of the most important aspects of the filmmaking process. Your film can be the most important independent film of the last decade, but without a good marketing strategy, you're going to hamstring its potential. So, let's look at some simple and easy ways to market your film on a small budget.

1. Create a Marketing Materials Packet

You're going to need marketing materials. This means you're going to need to have a concrete brand for the film. Then you'll want to build your materials from that branding. This includes cover images and profile images for all of your social media platforms, a movie

poster for your film, and the imagery for your website and Facebook page.

There are countless small pieces of material that you'll need. If this is something that you have no experience in doing on your own, try to reach out to a local artist.

2. Utilize the Internet and Social Media

The easiest way to build your audience is to use the internet and its main outlets, those being a personal website and social media

platforms. First, let's create a website for your film. For that you'll want to use WordPress, Squarespace, or Wix.

Next, you want to utilize social media and its many platforms. For instance, use Facebook as the primary launching point, then use your personal Twitter account as a secondary site to keep content rolling. Find out what works best for you. That could be any combination of platforms including Instagram, Vine, Tumblr, etc.

3. Generate Press Releases

Another really important way to market your film is to generate a press release. In the press release, you want to give all of the most important information about your film in a very small sample size. You also will want to speak about yourself as the director and your past successes or other projects you've worked on.

Once you have the press release finished you'll want to send that out to as many media outlets as possible. Also, look for websites or organizations that generate content that's geared closely to your subject matter. That could be anything from Science Fiction to Civil War History. Explore all available options.

4. Create a Series of Trailers

The film production process is a long one, and you want to keep your audience engaged. One way to do that is to create a series of trailers. You'll want to start out with something simple, a short 30-second teaser. It could be as simple as just having some dialogue and a logo reveal. Or you could take a character from your film and build a short trailer using footage that probably won't make it into the film. Just be creative and continue to release trailers as you move through your production process.

Again, the first trailer or two are just to get your audience interested in the project. Release another trailer once you have a bulk of your

principal photography done. Keep it to around one minute long. Finally, when you're in post-production, create your extended and final trailer. This one can be between a minute and a half to just over two minutes long.

5. Get Listed on IMDb

IMDb is a great resource. Whether you like it or not, it gives your film some extra credibility when marketing it. Just note that an IMDB Pro membership will cost you \$20 a month or \$149 for a year. While this can be a steep cost, you are getting some pretty good benefits, such as networking opportunities with millions of other film professionals.

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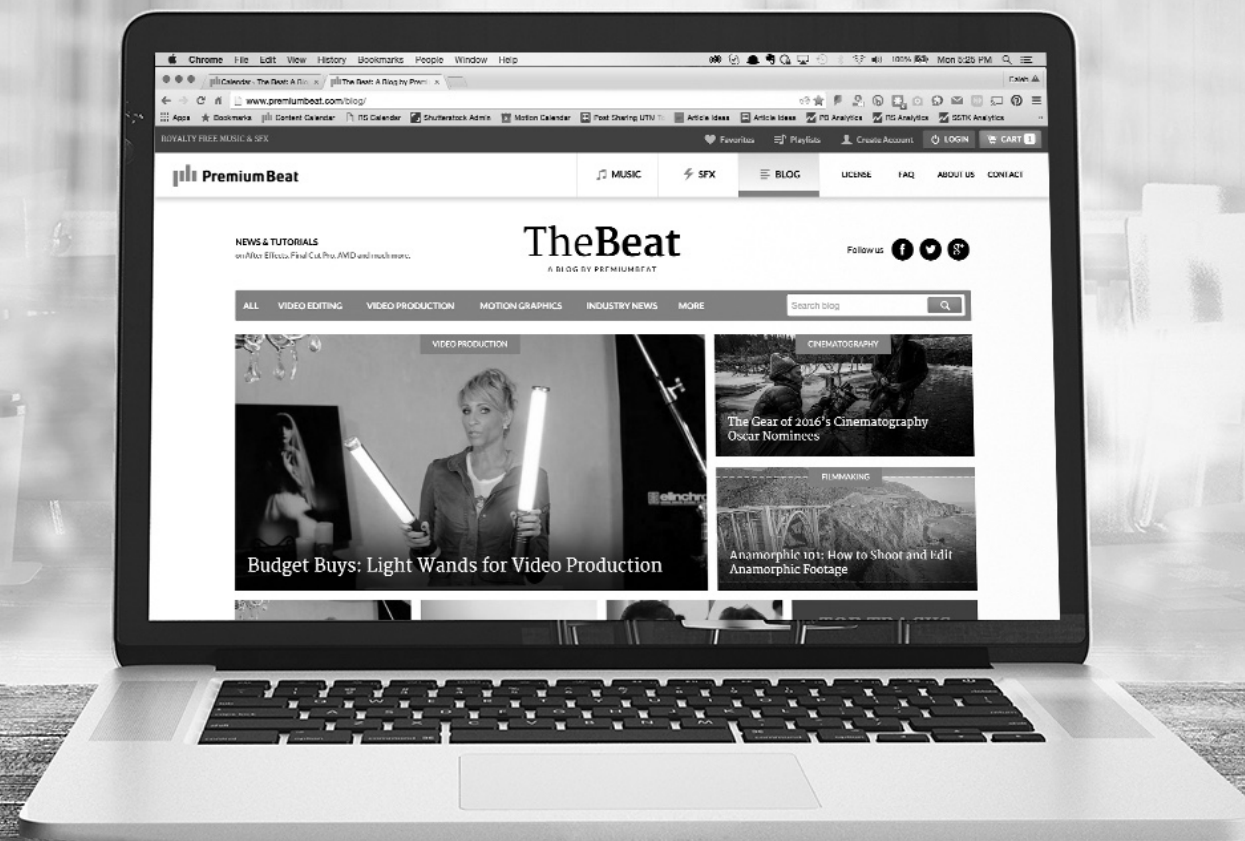


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