

# Understanding The Basics Of Film-Making

## UNDERSTANDING THE BASICS OF **FILM-MAKING** SELECTED TIPS - 78 PAGES!



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## Contents

Can You Hear Me Now?	8
Finding A Location Or Your Film	10
How Can I Learn Film Making Without Going To School?	12
How To Produce Your Own Film Making Endeavor?	14
So Many Cameras, So Little Time	16
Let There Be Light	18
Film Making Equipment Rental: All That You Should Know	20
The Joys Of Film School	22
How To Make An Entry Into Film Making Industry?	24
What Will My Film Making Crew Expect From Me?	26
What About Film Making And The Internet?	28
What About Internships In Film Making?	30
What Are The Top Five Film Making Producer Skills?	32
Where Can I Go To Learn Film Making?	34
Why Should I Work For Free In Film Making?	36
Finding A Location For Your Film - 9 Easy Tips	39
Fly Filmmaking – A 10 Day Challenge	41
How Can I Learn Film Making Without Going To School?	43
How To Produce Your Own Film Making Endeavor?	46
Promoting Your Film	49
Selecting The Right Camera	52
Film Making And The Internet - Over 10 Benefits	55
Film Making Finance – 12 Points To Remember	58
Internship In Film Making - 7 Easy Ways To Try Your Luck	61
Investing In Film Making	63
Being A Producer – 5 Top Skills Required	66
Los Angeles Film School	68
Film Making – A Booming Industry	71
Working For Free In Film Making - 12 Good Reasons	73

## Can You Hear Me Now?

Audio is one of those things that you have to have for your movie but don't want to really think about. You want it to just magically happen and let's face it, nothing in filmmaking happens "magically". It might look that way but it doesn't. What you need is a good audiophile, somebody that loves to hold a boom with a microphone on the end of it.

You can look for someone talented with sound or you can figure it out yourself. I suggest that you get at least 2 decent remote mics that sync with your camera. While your camera may have sound it is usually really bad. The remote mics can be worn on the body of the actor. These will work adequately but proper mic placement is necessary.

When placing the mic on the talent use your fist with thumb extended up and pinkie extended down in the ol' hang loose hand sign. Place the thumb under the chin and at the end of your extended pinkie is where the mic should be placed. This places the mic close enough for good sound but far away enough from the mouth to prevent popping and sibilance.

If you are fortunate to have a mic with a boom then this is the way to go with group scenes. It is a real pain for a boom operator to handle a boom for an entire day of shooting, but those audiophiles just love this stuff. They will hold a boom for days and love it.

Once you get your sound back in the studio you will need to edit it along with the image. Previously filmmakers had non-linear systems to edit their sound but now you have available non-linear editing. This means that NLE gives you the ability to move sound clips back and forth within the video itself.

Along with recording the dialog of the film there is always sound effects and a soundtrack to provide. The movie would be quite dry if there is no soundtrack or sound effects. Making a soundtrack can be quite difficult unless it is all original work. This is when you might look for music that is already recorded but that could present quite a few problems.

Violating copyright on anything belonging to another artist or their agent that owns the rights to the music, can hold up you up in post-production and keep you from being able to release your film. There are ways around this but only a couple. You can always use music that is public

## **Understanding the Basics of Film-Making**

domain. Any piece of music or image that has not ownership attached to it means that there is no person or organization that has a proprietary interest in this music or image.

The second solution for adding a soundtrack to your film is to simply use original work. This is easy if you happen to have a friend that writes and performs music that works with your film. Many budding composers and musicians are looking for a chance to work with a filmmaker so that they can partner their music making talents.

## Finding A Location Or Your Film

Being a location scout would seem to be the most fun out of all the jobs offered in the filmmaking industry. It seems that it would be a dream vacation to travel and see if a location checks out or not. Believe it or not, headaches abound in securing a location to shoot.

There are many more details involved in securing a location to shoot a film than simply finding the location. There are permission and releases to be obtained from everyone involved. Proof of liability insurance and authorizations of access to the location may need to be obtained. The scout will convince the owner that having a 150 person crew camped out on their front lawn is going to be good fun.

Previously it might have pacified the local authorities if you gave them some small compensation, like a good bottle of whiskey, but these arrangements are no longer available. Now you must have official permission from the local authorities to use certain locations for filming. These releases must be paid for and put on file so that they can be accessed during the shoot. Once the location scout has secured the location they become the location manager. This means they are responsible for parking access and accommodations for the cast and crew.

Sometimes unusual arrangements are made in order to use a location. Stephen King's "Rose Red" was filmed at Thornwood castle in Lakewood, Washington. This castle was brought over from Europe, brick by brick, and rebuilt on sea shore of American Lake by Chester Thorne. Chester Thorne was one of the founders of the Port of Tacoma. Initially while it was a good location, the castle needed to be returned to its old grandeur. The production and location managers struck a deal to refurbish the castle.

The result was that almost \$800,000 of renovations were performed on the castle. The restoration work done to the castle can be seen at Thornewood castle's website. The work done was in exchange for the use of the location once it was finished. The owners of the castle in exchange for the use of the location received \$800,000 in renovations. I am sure they thought it was a good deal. This case exemplifies the lengths to which producers will go to in order to secure a good location.

## **Understanding the Basics of Film-Making**

Location scouting was previously done at a time when the digital technology was not available to the location scout. Scouts were required to travel to the actual location and they usually ended up using Polaroid shots for their reference. Now there are location agencies that can give you virtual tours of locations and the scouting can truly be done online. All you need to do is put in a request for locations on the Internet and you will find scads of listings for location scouting agencies.

Now for those of you that are producing your own independent films, you will have to use your wits to secure your locations. If you are using your own house or apartment it will be no problem but if you are using a location that doesn't have general public access you will need to secure releases from the owners of the facilities you want to use.

## How Can I Learn Film Making Without Going To School?

This site can put you in touch with a course that will teach you film making without going to school. This DVD course is taught by 15 Emmy, Telly, and Cine award winning Hollywood film maker Jason J. Tomaric. He spent over 2 years developing this ideal film instruction course. He uses his film- "Time and Again" as a case study for the 5.5 hour interactive DVD that will take you through the entire film making process.

He has taught at film schools throughout the nation, including the New York Film Academy, and Ucla, and will take you to the set of his film. Your instructors will be the professional film makers who worked on the film. There is certainly no boring instruction on this DVD set, and you will be shown how to make a Hollywood caliber movie on a very small budget.

The advice and guidance you will glean from this DVD series is easy to follow, and no serious student of film making should be without it. Everything the novice film maker needs to know can be found on this series. These quality production values are available to anyone who has ever wanted to be a film maker.

You will learn everything about directing, casting, writing, cinematography, producing, editing and much more. This set includes a CD-ROM with all of the storyboards, scripts, industry resource guides, and contracts. There is even unabridged footage that you can practice editing at home. You will also receive in-depth interviews with cast, crew and other important people on the film.

First you will watch the film "Time and Again", and then move on to Disc 2. This has over 30 chapters in 5 units over 5.5 hours. These cover the film making process from start to finish. Disc 3 contains the actual script with notes from the director himself. You will also receive templates to use for your own projects.

The Producer's Notebook is a tool that will show you the paper structure you will need to make a great movie on a small budget. This includes:

- \* Directors notes and Shooting Script.
- \* Storyboards.

## **Understanding the Basics of Film-Making**

- \* Contracts with crew, cast and locations.
- \* Breakdown of the scenes.
- \* Call Sheets.
- \* Camera Logs
- \* Industry resource guides from, Panavision, Apple Computer, Arri, Audio-Technica, Lowel, Matthews Studio Equipment on lighting, editing, camera gear, and more.

You will also receive a 270 page Production Manual, full of tips you need to know, diagrams, resources, tricks, and charts. This manual will tell you everything you need to know about film making, and covers everything from insurance, acting, directing, editing, distribution, fund raising, and budgeting.

If you want to know more about this great DVD on film making, or you would like to order the DVD set you can find it all at: [Filmschoolondvd.com](http://Filmschoolondvd.com). You will learn film making from the best and never need to set foot in a film school. Better yet, you will learn at your own pace how to become a great film maker.

## **How To Produce Your Own Film Making Endeavor?**

You may want to start out by producing your own film, if you are up to the task. It is a great burden to take on a project, especially when you are new to the business. If you can accomplish this, you will have a film you can show to display your commitment to a film making career.

Once you decide to produce your own film, you will need the resources to make your movie. A film grant is one way to get the funding for your film, but it can be difficult to get this type of grant. You will need to know how the process works when applying for a grant. There are different types of film grants, money, equipment, room and board, film, music, producing, screen writing, directing or a combination of any or all of the above.

Each grant giver has certain guidelines you must meet to qualify for their grant. Quite a few of them want you to produce a documentary of some type. Many of these grant projects have been given awards and are shown on television because they are so inspiring.

The purpose of these grants is designed to help film makers who are unable to get other funding. Others do not have the money to get into a good film school, but they have the talent. These grants create great film makers as well as wonderful films. Some grants allow film makers to get regular funding in the future, after they have shown what an excellent film maker they are.

When a grant funder is considering a project to give to, they look for the passion the film maker has for the project. This is the most important point of consideration when reading a grant application. The film maker will carry this passion and dedication throughout the film making process, no matter how long it takes to finish the film.

The Guerilla Filmmaking Grant was designed to encourage creative, resourceful filmmaking for artists working outside of the "Hollywood industry". Twice a year they award \$1000 to produce, shoot, and edit a feature length film. The film maker has control over the look, feel and content of the film. A DVD release of the movie is included. The film maker keeps all rights to distribution. They also include Marketing Advice to help the film maker distribute and sell the movie. All film rights are retained by the film maker. Anyone in the world that is thinking of producing an English language feature film may apply for this grant.

## **Understanding the Basics of Film-Making**

You need to go to <http://www.mediadarlings.org/filmgrant/> to check out the entire grant process of this grantor. You will find all of the information you need, and all of the guidelines you must go by to apply for this Guerilla Filmmaking Grant. If you have any questions you can contact them.

There are many places an independent film maker can apply for. Just type filmmaking grants into your favorite search engine and you will see what I mean.

## So Many Cameras, So Little Time

Without the camera there is no film, no movie to make. If you start making film on a regular basis you will learn to capture image with a number of different cameras. You will have your favorite but there will be many different ones that you have to hold. At a certain point using film became all but obsolete and digital took over. The introduction of the digital camera made capturing image infinitely easier.

Film cameras are good to work with in the beginning because they teach you how to use a lens. You learn about depth of field and how to push and pull focus plus a variety of other things that you will use when directing the camera. I like to think of using actual film as more organic. The image is a bit hazy and lacks that artificial crispness that a digital image can have. However there is no denying that digital is immediately gratifying.

In the beginning digital was no match for film, but the technicians tweaked it until they developed cameras that are amazing. Film has been relegated to high art and now we have no second thoughts about shooting in digital over film. The costs of processing are totally absent when you use digital to shoot. Getting your film developed was so expensive that in many cases it was prohibitive, but now there are completely acceptable digital cameras in a variety of cost ranges.

Find a digital video camera and a tripod to work with. You will need a tripod with fairly thick legs for sturdiness and a good fluid head for panning. Also before you buy your tripod, make sure that the camera releases from the tripod easily and quickly. You will want a camera that has a good battery system for remote shooting.

There are, any number of great digital cameras out there. You should be able to find a decent camera to shoot action between \$500 and \$800. If you can manage to scrape together \$1,000 a good camera is the Samsung VP X220L camcorder with wired external lens. This camera has a neat compact body and it is very durable. A testament to this fact is that this camera was used in the Jack Ass show.

Do some product research, buy your camera and start shooting. Handle your camera so you know just how to pan and focus with the equipment you will be using. Play it back and see how

## **Understanding the Basics of Film-Making**

it handles different lighting levels and shutter speeds. Check out how it focuses automatically and practice a bit of manual focusing.

I suggest that you start carrying a camera and building an image bank. An image bank will give you basic generic images that you will need to use as cutaways and various other functions in your film. Learn to look at things through the lens. Direct and build different scenes in the frame and shoot them in still photography first. Before you start production of the actual film, practice shooting with your new camera. You can shoot your crew and the talent. Shoot anything that moves until you get it down.

## **Let There Be Light**

Filmmaking involves incorporation of different elements to transform the story script to a live story on the screen. Among the technical elements -- sound, lighting and editing -- lighting has a special role. In the theatre the audience sees the motion picture accompanied by the synchronized sound track. All visual impressions on the viewer depend on proper lighting arrangements.

Although one can choose from among a variety of lighting kits available in the market, but with some basic understanding, you can also assemble a working light kit using some commonly available and affordable components. From your local hardware store you can buy lights with metallic reflectors that are used in repair workshops. These can be hung anywhere using the attached clips and easily moved. You can use bulbs of desired wattage and color in them.

The other very useful item is extension cords; you must have a good stock of them. You need them almost everywhere but most particularly for lighting. You may also like to have an adjustable, say 3-leg, stand. These may be used to mount lights using clips or for light diffusers. Having a white board to balance white light while filming will be another useful thing to do. These can also be used as reflectors to bounce light on some object.

The final item in your tool kit will be a light diffuser. It is some sort of thin white see-through material. You shine light on this material from one side and the diffused, or shall we say, "spread", light comes from the other side and shine the object. With this technique the object does not appear too bright or "hot".

You must keep in mind that light is not always white and it has different colors. Normally you discover it when you begin to use the camera. For instance, if you shoot at night in a room that has tungsten bulbs light, your film will have yellowish tint. Likewise, fluorescent light gives greenish cast. If you are shooting outdoors, the light effect will be blue, particularly if you are shooting in a shade.

If you want an impressive natural light effect, shoot just when the sun is about to set. The light at this time gives a wonderful Carmel colored glow. However, you only have few minutes to complete your shot before the sun sets. Still, if you are smart and keep everything ready, you

## **Understanding the Basics of Film-Making**

can take great shots. You may want to use this time for your filming activities, particularly during late part of the spring or in summer months of the year.

You may also like to learn the basic 3 point standard lighting set up which is the standard technique employed by professional camera man and photographers. As the name suggests, you use three lights for different purposes: the first or main light shines the object; the second light erases the shadow of the first light; and a third light is used behind the object for adding dimension on the object. You adjust the lights until you get the desired result you want. This basic three-point light technique is used extensively in different variations. So, you may want to practice with this technique and see for yourself how it works.

Natural light is always better. Keep in mind that light at noon is a bit too harsh and causes shadows under the nose and eyes of the object giving them appearance of being tired. To offset this undesirable effect, you will need to set up lights on the ground down below. But then it creates another undesirable effect -- ghostlike appearances used in suspense movies which is something that you may not want in your shot.

Well, this is just a pep talk on importance of lighting in the filmmaking. Better enlighten yourself on lighting by taking some production classes to get hands on training.

## Film Making Equipment Rental: All That You Should Know

The moment you are done with the preliminaries and have finalized the budget for your film making project and chalked out a schedule to complete it, the first thing you should worry about is the equipments that you will require to produce your film. You need to shop around for the film making equipment rental houses and their prices. It will be useful to prepare a list of rental houses. Further, there may be equipments that require reserving ahead of time so that you have them when you need them.

Some of the vendors may offer you a complete package while others may not be so generous. But if you are sure about what equipments you will need, you will able to get to the right vendor.

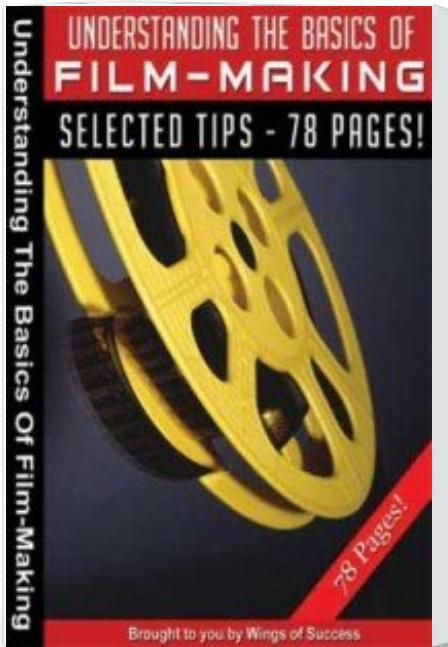
While you are talking to the vendors ask them specifically whether they can supply the desired equipments at the dates you require them. Don't forget to brief them about your project and kind of equipments you will need. Because the vendors often have the latest information on newer equipments that you are unlikely to know.

You will be booking some equipment in advance -- it is referred to as a hold. You don't pay for an equipment while reserving it, Keep this in mind. It is quite possible that your equipment is reserved by someone else, i.e., it is on hold. In such a case, if you wish, you can reserve it from a future date, provided the vendor assures you that he will give you the equipment by the date you need it. Also ask the rental house if you can place a confirm order. They will now contact the person who has reserved the equipment and ask him to either confirm the order or else withdraw his hold.

You should know it very clearly that when you confirm your order, you are required to pay rental right from the date you reserved it. It does not matter that you are not going to use the equipment immediately from the date of hold. In case there is change in your plan, do contact the rental house at your earliest so that they make suitable arrangements with some other customer.

The equipment you have rented has already been used by several other users, so you should test it well before shooting your film. You can't find fault with the vendor, in case you waste your energy and time with faulty equipment. Even if the equipment was fine when you got and tested

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