



**IP AWARENESS**  
FOUNDATION



# MAKING MOVIES

## Teaching Resource

A comprehensive guide to the film production process and the people who make movies.

This resource features in-depth information on the stages and roles in the film production process. It is accompanied by video interviews with a variety of screen professionals.

Using this resource, students will:

- Understand the stages of a film production
- Gain detailed insights into some of the roles in the production process
- Explore key issues affecting the film industry
- Learn some skills to assist them to make their own films



The crew of Australian film THE LITTLE DEATH (2014)



# Contents

<b>Chapter 1: Film Production stages</b>	<b>03</b>
<b>Development</b>	<b>04</b>
• Getting the rights	05
• The creative team	06
• Lots of expenses, little income...	08
<b>Pre-Production</b>	<b>09</b>
• The start	09
• The middle	10
• The final weeks	11
<b>Production</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Post-Production</b>	<b>16</b>
• Editing	16
• Visual effects, titles and colour grading	17
• Sound	18
• Music	19
<b>Distribution and exhibition</b>	<b>20</b>
• What does distribution involve?	21
• What is exhibition?	22
• Staff who work in exhibition	22
<b>Chapter 2: Film production roles</b>	<b>24</b>
• Producer	26
• Production manager	27
• Production designer	29
• Assistant director	31
• Production runner	32
• Camera assistant	33
• Hair and makeup artist	34
• Vehicle supervisor	36
• Stunt performer	37
• Editor	39
• Music composer	40
• Visual effects supervisor	41
• Distribution executive	43
• Marketing manager	45
• Film programmer	46
<b>Chapter 3: Industry issues</b>	<b>48</b>
• Piracy	50
• Technology	51
• Finance	53
• Sustainable production practices	55
<b>Chapter 4: Filmmaking</b>	<b>57</b>
• Ideas for short films	58
• Ideas for documentaries	59
• Developing your story	60
• The three act structure	61
• Writing a screenplay	61
• Storyboards	63
• Production tips	65
• Post-production tips	66
<b>Glossary</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Links</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Making Movies video links at a glance</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>73</b>





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# CHAPTER ONE

## Production Stages

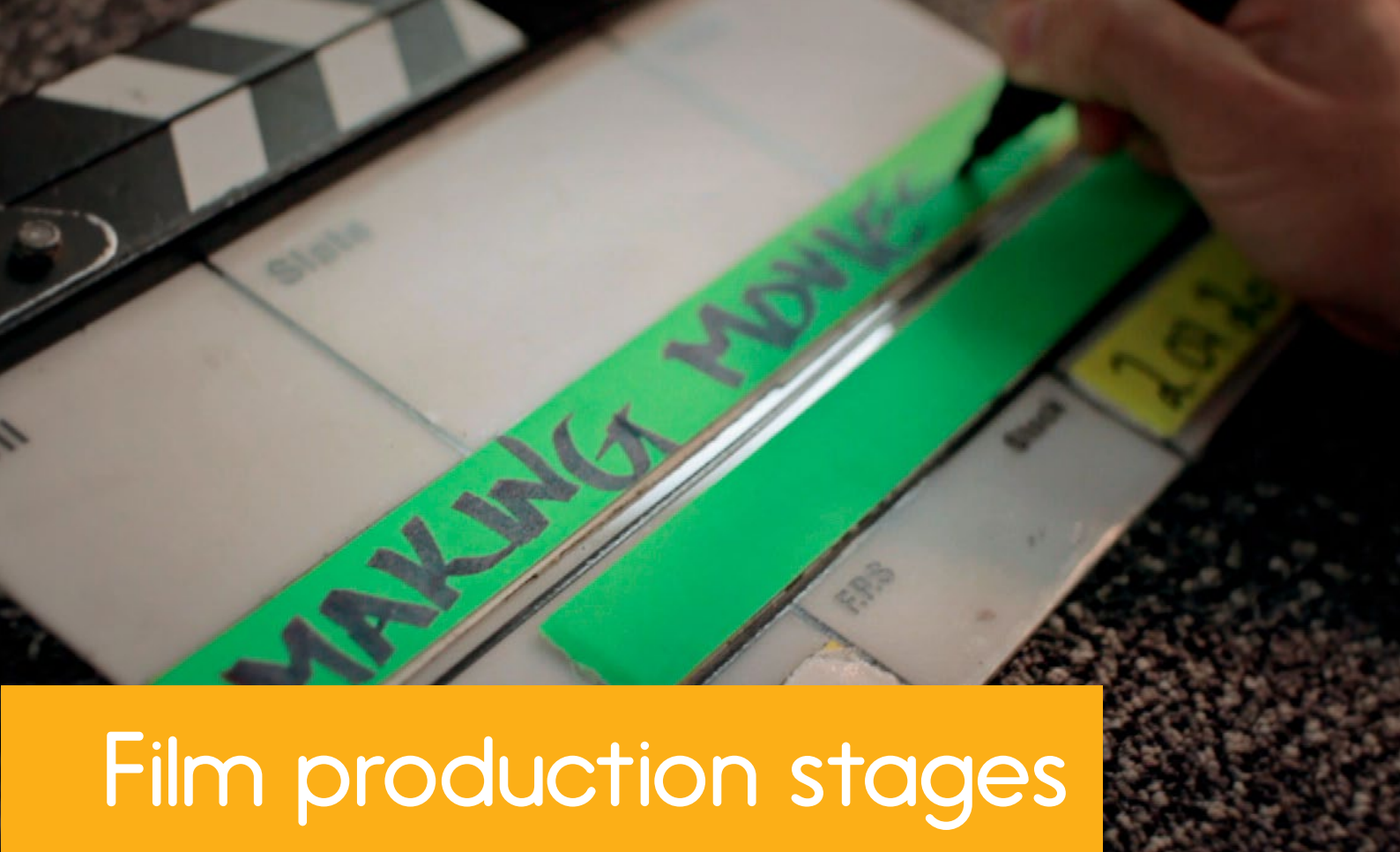
In this chapter students will learn about the stages in the film production process:

- Development: From an idea to a script, to the raising of finance for a film
- Pre-Production: The intricate planning and preparation for production
- Production/Principal Photography: The complex collaborative process of shooting
- Post-Production: The layers of activity to finesse and finish a film
- Distribution & Exhibition: Getting a film to an audience and getting audiences to films



The crew of Australian film THE LITTLE DEATH (2014)





# Film production stages

We've all seen the long list of names at the end of a movie or a TV show but how much do we know about the hundreds of people who contribute to films?

We've all seen the long list of names at the end of a movie or a TV show – these are the dozens or sometimes hundreds of people who have contributed to the making of that film and the “credit list” is an acknowledgement of their contribution.

Content has become quite abundant and it's easy to forget how complex it is to conceive, develop, finance and produce a film or TV show. The media image of the industry - a seemingly constant flow of exciting award ceremonies, premieres and events attended by glamorous, wealthy actors - often overshadows the reality of the uncertainty of the profession, the scarce freelance nature of employment and the many years of hard work required to make every film and TV program.

This resource provides an understanding of the multifaceted process of making film: explaining each stage - from an idea to a cinema release - and exploring a few of the hundreds of jobs involved in the process.

Making a film or TV program can roughly be divided into six stages:

- development
- pre-production
- production (sometimes called principal photography)
- post-production
- distribution
- exhibition

**Writer, director and actress Matilda Brown talks about the stages of film production. [Click here](#) to access a short video interview.**



# Development

Development is the process of getting from an original story to the point where a film or TV project is ready for financing and production.

This stage in the filmmaking process will take, on average, three to four years. In some cases, it has taken a lot longer. It took ten years for director Scott Hicks to turn an idea he read in a newspaper article into the Academy Award®-winning film *Shine*.

Movies originate from many sources. Some start with an original idea by a writer who spends years, often unpaid, getting a script to the stage where a producer agrees to come on board to move the project forward. *The Rocket* originated this way when writer-director Kim Mordaunt developed the script with producer Sylvia Wilczynski.

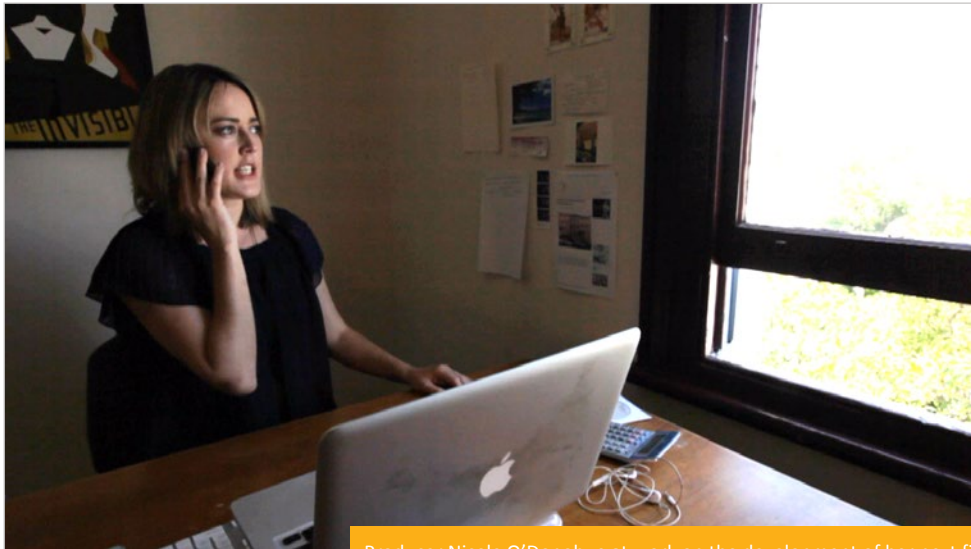
Filmmakers can find inspiration for their stories in a range of different places - including real life stories (*Shine*, 1996), books (*Red Dog*, 2011), stage plays or musicals (*The Sapphires*, 2012), comics (*Man of Steel*, 2013), theme park rides (*Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl*, 2003) or even toys (*The Lego Movie*, 2014).

As the script progresses, a development team starts to form. This usually consists of the writer, a director, and one or more producers. They will need to have a strong belief in their idea because they have to make dozens of other people believe in it to finance and produce the movie. Those investors in turn will need to believe that the film can attract audiences in their tens and hundreds of thousands and more.

“Not one person in the entire motion picture field knows for a certainty what's going to work,” wrote screenwriter William Goldman in *Adventures of the Screen Trade*. “Every time out it's a guess and, if you're lucky, an educated one.” This is one of the key issues in the film industry – even though a great deal of money needs to be spent to make a film, there are many variables that will affect its success – from the script, the cast and the director to the music, the chemistry between actors and many other factors. It is difficult to predict how a film will turn out, making film production a high-risk industry.

## Getting the rights

Every published, performed or created work is covered by copyright that belongs to the original creator or the owner of the work – books, newspaper articles, comic strips, plays, musicals, songs, theme park rides. The producer must acquire the rights to produce the movie by paying a fee to the original creator.



Producer Nicole O'Donohue at work on the development of her next film.

Chain of title is the series of links that establishes the legal right of the producer to make the movie, and to distribute it. Here's what happened with the film *Rabbit Proof Fence*:

- Christine Olsen, a scriptwriter, reads Doris Pilkington Garimara's book about her mother's childhood experiences and contacts the publishers, UQP, to apply for the film rights. She is advised that all interested parties must submit 3-4 pages on how they see the film as part of their application.
- Christine wants to meet Doris but because of Doris's busy schedule the only way they can meet is if Christine drives her to the airport. Doris supports Christine's application to write a screenplay based on her book. Christine signs an agreement with the publishers to write the screenplay, taking out an "option" to make a film from the book.
- Having written the **screenplay**, Christine rings Director Phillip Noyce in the middle of the night in LA, which makes him direct his office to have nothing to do with her! His office reads the script and likes it, but it takes them months to convince Phillip to read it.
- Phillip and Christine **co-produce** the film. Executive Producers are brought in to raise the finance for the movie based on Christine's script.
- The strength of the original story and Phillip Noyce's strong track record enables the **executive producers** to raise the finance and Phillip and Christine co-produce the movie, with Phillip directing.
- Throughout the process, Doris and Christine hold onto their **copyright** - Doris for the book and Christine for the original script - which allows them to receive some payment for their work when the film is made.

Time is of the essence. The initial agreement – and option fee – will usually allow the producer three years to raise finance for the movie. This puts pressure on the producer to exercise the movie rights within the time frame, or face additional fees to renew the agreement or lose the option – making all their

work in those three years worthless. Scripts generally need to be reasonably advanced before investors will get involved.

With options signed, the producer prepares a campaign to put the movie together, working simultaneously on a number of fronts.

The script is the blueprint of the story, based on the original work or idea, and is usually between 90 – 120 pages long. It describes every scene in the film. Eight or ten drafts of the script will be written as development proceeds. A single draft can take weeks or months; it's incredibly difficult to get a script right – finding the right tone, pace, character motivation and development, story arc and dialogue as well as creating tension, humour or mood. This is a costly process that involves high levels of skill and lots of time.

Writing teams for US studio films tend to be bigger than those for Australian films. A US script might have contributions from many writers who have particular skills, such as someone skilled in action scenes or another who writes great dialogue. Experts in the film's subject matter may also be involved, such as a doctor for any medical information or an historian for period dramas.

## The creative team

At this stage, the producer will start to find the key creative team such as:

- A director suited to the subject of the film, and with a good track record and reputation.
- A distributor who is in tune with the movie, and has successfully handled the release of similar movies throughout Australia.
- Actors who suit the roles and whose previous films have attracted audiences and good box office revenue.

If elements like music, design or cinematography are integral to the success of this particular film, the producer may also try to secure the right people for these roles as they could assist in making the film attractive to potential investors.

The sales document or prospectus is designed to attract investors who will pay for the film to be made. It contains an outline of the project and explains why it will be a successful movie. It will list the key creative crew and possible cast attached to the project and each individual's filmography.

This document will include a detailed financial plan showing how much the film will cost and where the money will come from.

A medium-budget Australian movie, considered to be in the \$6 million to \$10 million range, usually involves a number of investors, such as:

- An Australian distributor who will guarantee the movie a release in cinemas.
- An overseas sales agent who will sell the movie worldwide to overseas distributors.
- Federal and state government screen funding agencies.
- A TV or cable network that will screen the movie after its cinema and DVD release.

- Private investors who may agree to support the film for a range of reasons but always in the hope of good returns.

Once the script is finalised, a first assistant director is employed to prepare a preliminary shooting schedule. This document "breaks down" all the scenes in the script and re-arranges them into what will be shot on each separate shooting day. Films are never shot in script order - the schedule will try to maximise the use of locations and cast so that the crew doesn't have to spend more time than necessary packing up, moving locations and setting up.

The schedule notes all the elements that will be needed for each day, such as sets, locations, cast, extras, picture vehicles, animals and special equipment.

The producer then employs an experienced production manager for several weeks, to prepare a preliminary budget based on the script and schedule. The budget identifies in great detail all the costs of the film. This shows the investors that the script can be produced for the amount of money the producer is intending to raise.

## CREATING A BUDGET...

Every element of the script has to be budgeted. Here's an example.

Mrs Poulos alights from a bus, which drives off. Her neighbour, young Liv, also gets off at the same stop, and sees that Mrs Poulos is having trouble carrying her shopping. She's broken her ankle skiing, she's wearing a moon boot, and she's using a walking stick. Liv is going to help her.

For this screenplay, the budget would reflect fees for cast and crew, and also, for that day, the cost of:

- bus and driver hire
- a traffic plan to ensure the cast and crew are safe, as well as normal traffic on the street
- local council fees for processing permission to film
- traffic controllers and equipment
- hire of the moon boot and walking stick
- hire or purchase of costumes and props
- parking for the trucks and for crew cars
- catering and portable toilets
- caravans so the actors can change into their costumes and be made up.

## Lots of expenses, little income...

At this point, a great deal of time and money has been spent:

- to acquire the rights to make the original work into a movie, plus the cost of lawyers to secure these rights,
- to pay the writers for each script draft,
- to pay the first assistant director and the production manager,
- to create the materials to promote and market the film to investors, key creatives and potential actors, including documents and perhaps a teaser trailer
- to run a production office.

Research from 2007 into six Australian feature films showed their average cost of development was \$258,002.

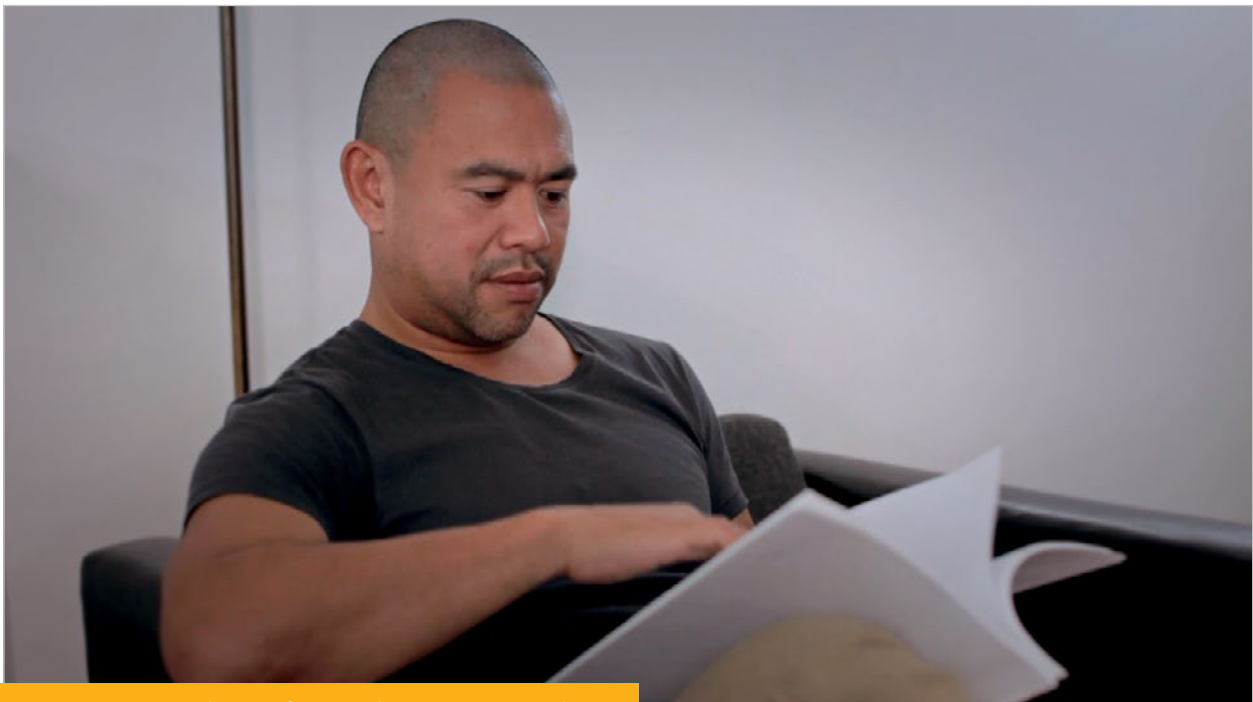
During this long development period the producer is often unpaid, and the movie's development may be interrupted when he/she has to accept other work to pay for normal daily expenses, as well as the cost of keeping the development process on track.

The producer may have to attend a number of international film markets, such as Cannes, to secure investment from international partners. Travel may also be required to persuade the international agents for well-known actors that their clients will benefit from appearing in the movie, at a price the producer can afford.

Finally, months or maybe years later, all is agreed, all is in place, and the many parties involved can sign the PIA (Production Investment Agreement) - a huge pile of contracts including:

- agreements that confirm the chain of title for the rights and the script
- agreement that confirms the involvement of director and contracts with lead cast
- contracts that confirm which financing body will provide how much money and on which dates, and – very importantly – how the profits from the movie will be shared among the producer and the investors once it has been released.

When all the signatures are on the page, it's time to start pre-production.



Troy Lum, managing director of Hopscotch, perusing a screenplay.





# Pre-Production

Once a film has been financed, pre-production starts. Planning the shoot is a process which involves a number of departments working collaboratively.

As the funding for a film is secured, the producer starts to work with the heads of department, such as the cinematographer, who leads the camera department and the designer, who heads up the art department, to finalise who will be involved in their teams.

Early in pre-production a casting agent is also employed to start finding actors for the supporting roles. While this is happening, the writers and directors polish the final draft of the screenplay. The production manager finds office space and equips it with furniture, phones and internet. The first assistant director refines the shooting schedule to work around the availability of the lead actors and locations. Meanwhile the location manager is scouting for locations and confirming their availability.

Many of these people work with each other to weigh up the look of a location against its cost within the budget. The perfect location may be in a distant location, but moving an entire film crew is very expensive. Valuable shooting time is lost during the move to another place because the crew and cast are paid for the time it takes to travel elsewhere. Other costs include accommodation and travel allowances.

## The start

Filmmaking is primarily a freelance industry where individuals are employed for the length of the project only, sometimes only a matter of months. Many crew members will have had a gap of weeks or even months between productions. Sometimes they work on commercials or TV shows, but sometimes they need to take other jobs - in cafes, driving cabs or doing office work.

The length of pre-production is related to the complexity and budget of the film. In general, pre-production is given the same time as the shoot. A medium-budget Australian film will shoot for about ten weeks, so that will be the time allocated to pre-production.

Pre-production usually begins with a production meeting, during which the director takes the team through the script scene by scene to communicate his or her intentions in great detail, and to answer the crew's questions.

Briefings with the production manager then take place for all heads of department, so each department knows how much money they can spend in their specific area – props, costumes, locations, camera equipment.



During pre-production, the production department creates all the props for the film.

Auditioning and casting will occupy most of the director and producer's time for the next few weeks, now that the departments are working on their script breakdowns and costings. They have briefed a casting director who has put out a call to local actors' agents about the roles available. The casting director has made a list of recommended actors whose showreels will be viewed online.

A pre-production schedule is prepared by the production manager and the first assistant director, to cover the next ten weeks. It reflects what everybody needs to do, and when. As the director's input is required in so many departments, the schedule must reflect all meetings necessary for decisions and progress to be made. It is issued on paper to everybody, and reproduced on a big whiteboard in the production office for general reference as well. Being a schedule, it will change, and all changes have to be communicated promptly to everyone involved.

## The middle

The early weeks of pre-production are busy for every department. Each week everyone meets to go through the script and cover any changes, discuss the schedule, and then work through every shooting day in detail to resolve questions and issues.

The heads of departments start to engage their own teams to work on the project according to their suitability and availability.

Here's an overview of what some key departments will do in these weeks:

### Production department

- Keeps up the flow of communication to all members of the team: contact lists, schedules, script amendments, meetings, location surveys
- Identifies and negotiates fees and issues contracts for all crew and cast members
- Books flights and accommodation, equipment, vehicles, equipment trucks and cast caravans
- Sets up workplace safety systems and arranges the production's insurances
- Tracks expenditure and projected expenditure

### Locations

- Find and confirm the locations with the production designer and director
- Arrange permission for any work to be done, for example painting a room
- Arrange council, police and traffic permissions for exterior locations

*“The heads of departments start to engage their own teams to work on the project according to their suitability and availability.”*

# CASE STUDY: THE HOBBIT

During the production of *The Hobbit*, director Peter Jackson maintained a video diary which detailed the immense effort that the production team went through during the shoot. The first video, [The Hobbit: Production Diary 1](#), looks at what the production team was doing in the days leading up to principal photography, as Peter Jackson takes you on a tour of the costume department, sets and does walk-throughs of the set with members of the cast.

## Assistant directors and continuity

- Refine the shooting schedule as locations and cast availability are confirmed
- Continuity person times the script to be sure it's not too long or too short
- Arrange and supervise cast for costume fittings and makeup meetings
- Supervise any cast training required, for example horse riding, sports, music tuition

## Director of Photography

- Breaks down the script to establish camera and lighting requirements
- Works with the director, art director, costume designer and production designer to determine the visual style of the movie
- Accompanies the director on location surveys in order to plan the best shots for the shoot
- Selects and confirms camera equipment
- Carries out technical and creative camera tests

## Production designer and art department

- Meet with the director and other key crew to set the visual style of the movie
- Break down the script to identify sets, set dressing, props, vehicles, animals, etc
- Design sets and any building work required at locations
- Liaise with stunts, special effects and visual effects teams
- Research, cost and buy or hire set dressing and props; make any special props required
- Identify any copyright clearances that need to be obtained – signs, brands, photographs

## Special effects, stunts & visual effects

- Break down the script to identify stunts, special effects and visual effects requirements
- Meet with director and first assistant director to establish the safest and most cost-effective ways to achieve results
- Cast and brief stunt doubles, arrange stunt equipment, possibly modify vehicles
- Liaise with safety supervisor on all aspects of stunt and SFX work

## Actors

- Research the role
- Consult with the director
- Learn lines
- Rehearse
- Learn new skills if required such as horse riding or playing the piano
- Costume fittings and makeup and camera tests

## The final weeks

As the shoot approaches, pre-production becomes more hectic. More crew have been employed as the pace speeds up, and by the last week prior to the shoot all cast and crew members are involved in the preparation. Rehearsals are taking place. Final costume fittings are done. The camera team assembles and shoots tests – the cast in costume and makeup, technical lens tests, visual effects backgrounds.

In the final week, the director and key crew visit every shoot location for a technical survey, to be sure all the requirements are in place. The first assistant director issues the final schedule. Production arranges the final production meeting and safety briefing. The call sheet - an organisational document which lists who is required on set when - is issued and distributed for the first day of shooting.



# Production

Every film shoot is different. This is one of the things that makes the film industry so incredibly exciting but so very difficult...

To provide a more practical insight into a film shoot, we've created an imaginary scenario that is based on some assumptions:

- The shoot will be ten weeks long
- Shooting will occur five days each week
- All the locations are in the metropolitan area so no "travel time" is required
- Two of these weeks will be night shoots with the crew working between 5pm and 5am

Day 1 involves shooting a birthday party for one of the characters, Liv. This is not the first scene in the script, films are seldom shot in script order. The schedule is based on a number of other factors including availability of locations and actors. This scene will be shot during school holidays so that the child actors and extras will be more easily available. Shortly before the shoot there has been a script change – as a surprise, Liv's brother Ben is going to bring along his horses and give the guests rides.

The call sheet has been prepared by the second assistant director, approved by the first assistant director and the production manager and distributed to all crew and cast. It gives maps and directions for getting to the location, and details about the shoot day.

Before the day, specific preparations have been made for this shoot:

- The art department has prepared the set, including a marquee for the party, a fenced area for the horses, and has hired a food stylist to prepare the food.
- Production has approved the horses and wranglers recommended by the art department. They have held a meeting with key crew, wranglers, stunt coordinator, stunt double and safety supervisor.
- The location manager has ensured the house owners are happy with all the arrangements, and has prepared a traffic plan for local council and police, as some of the action will take place on the street outside the house and traffic will be interrupted.
- Production has organised refresher riding lessons for the actor playing Ben, and ensured that an experienced rider is cast as his friend.
- The unit department has set up areas out of sight of the set, in an adjacent paddock, where the equipment trucks can park, and where the horses can be held when not required on set. This is also where the cast vans, the makeup and wardrobe caravans and the catering truck will park, and where cast and crew will be served breakfast and lunch.

Film crews are fed on location in order to save time. Given the enormous number of people, animals, vehicles and equipment on set, every minute of every day costs money and, if people were allowed to wander off set to get lunch, precious time might be lost getting them back. Not all locations are near to available food and it is more time and cost effective to feed everyone on the set.

Here's a breakdown of what a shooting day might look like:

**0600.** A white truck lumbers into the paddock. The unit manager steps out, goes to the back of the truck and fires up the generator he's been towing. The generator will power the catering truck and the makeup, wardrobe and cast caravans. In a few minutes other members of the Unit team will arrive with those vans, and the caterers will arrive to start cooking breakfast.

**0630.** The makeup and hairdressers arrive next, grateful for a coffee from the urn that had been switched on as soon as the unit generator was running. They set out their equipment, ready for the earliest cast members who have been picked up from home by the assistant directors. The wardrobe department arrive and prepare the costumes for the day's shoot.

**0645.** From about half an hour before call time, the whole team assembles. The essential vehicles arrive: trucks containing equipment for the lighting and grips, a silenced,

truck-mounted generator to power the lamps, trucks carrying the camera equipment, the sound gear, the art department equipment including furniture and props. The unit team guide the trucks to pre-determined parking as close as possible to the shooting location, to minimise cable runs and to maximise work time.

**0700.** The director arrives and the cast go to set for a quick, quiet final rehearsal of the scenes for the day.

**0715.** As other crew members arrive, everyone converges around the catering tables for breakfast. Last minute information and instructions are exchanged.

**0730.** "Thank you, ladies and gentlemen," calls the first assistant director, "we're ready for a block-through!" The director, cast and crew make their way to the set. During the block-through, the actors again walk through the scene as the director indicates the camera positions. The director of photography talks through the lighting and the camera moves with the gaffer and grip. Cast and crew check their positions so that no action will be obstructed by equipment and camera moves can be carried out smoothly. When the block-through is finished, the cast return to makeup and wardrobe, or rest in their caravans until the director is ready for them on set.

The first assistant director consults with the director, gaffer, grip and sound recordist to confirm the most efficient

## A DAY ON THE SET...

**Call time:** 7.30am

**Scene number:** 25

**Story day:** 10

**Set:** Liv's house, exterior.

**Location:** Jones St, Smithville.

**Cast:** Liv, her mother, her father, her two aunts, Mrs Poulos, Ben, Ben's mate.

**Extras:** 20 x school friends; 6 x parents.

**Vehicles:** family car, Ben's 4WD, double horse float.

**Animals:** 2 x picture horses, safety horse.

**Stunts and doubles:** stunt supervisor; stunt riding double; 3 x horse wranglers.

**Additional crew:** 3 x additional assistant directors; traffic control; safety supervisor; nurse.

**Additional equipment:** camera crane.

shooting order for the individual shots. They would usually shoot a master shot of each scene first, so that the action is locked, and then shoot closer shots from different angles. Each time the camera position moves, the lighting and other equipment is readjusted to maximise the impact of the shot and ensure continuity.

The first set-up is confirmed, the lighting team move in, and the grips team lay tracks for a dolly shot. We are ready for the cast. A technical rehearsal takes place to check the action in relation to the camera moves and the lighting, and the cast do a “stumble-through”. The Focus Puller measures the distance from the lens to the actor’s face for each part of the shot to ensure the actor is always in focus.

**0800.** The crew is ready to shoot, capturing shots of the arriving party-goers first; one or two takes for each is all that’s required. The first dolly shot begins, thoroughly rehearsed for action, performance and camera moves. The rehearsal pays off, the long and complex shot is achieved in one take. The director is happy with action, performance, camera movement, lighting and sound. The morning moves quickly. Under the direction of the first assistant director, shooting continues throughout the morning as the crew painstakingly record all the shots required for the party.

**1130.** The first part of the party, the “Party Table” sequence, has been shot and most of the extras are released to go home. The cast and crew will now work on the horse scenes, and with fewer kids around it will be safer and more efficient. The team spend an hour setting up the next scene – one of the horses is scripted to gallop off with its young rider.

**1230.** Lunch is always a highlight of the day. Fifty people served a three-course meal from a full kitchen mounted on the back of a truck. Over lunch, the director and first assistant director discuss the call sheet for the next day, consulting with the producer and production manager who come to set for lunch, their best opportunity to talk about any problems that require attention. By the end of lunch the new call sheet is emailed to the production coordinator in the office, who will publish the call sheet and book the cast, crew and equipment for the following day. They will also need to get everything prepared and ready for “rain cover” – planning a completely different day of work if the weather means that they are unable to shoot exteriors.

**1315.** Straight after lunch, the director, cinematographer and gaffer go to the second set of the day, the horse paddock, and set the equipment for the afternoon’s scenes. Shooting resumes.

Off set, the crew is focused on different aspects of the shoot. The location manager visits the next day’s location to check that the owners are ready for the shoot. The production department is taking care of administration: costing emerging plans, booking security and additional equipment, arranging travel for interstate actors and many other issues.

They will also have regular meetings with the production accountant where cost of resources is assessed, and any necessary adjustments are made to the production plan. The budget is finite so any “overages” will need to be offset with savings.



Assistant director Killian Maguire on set.



Stunt performer Ingrid Kleinig preparing for a daring stunt on location.

Investors are kept informed on a daily basis about the progress of the shoot. Is the film on schedule? Is the film on budget? How does it look? Is it living up to expectations?

**1600.** By the end of the afternoon, the horse scene is completed. Cast are wrapped, they change out of their wardrobe, take off their makeup and sign off.

It's been a good day. Twenty-five set-ups have been achieved by the time wrap is called. However, that doesn't mean work is over for many of the crew. The [data wrangler](#) carefully labels the day's hard drives, and the runner takes them to the facility where post-production will take place. The equipment is returned to the trucks where it is cleaned and put away carefully. The second assistant director retrieves the walkie-talkies to recharge the batteries overnight and

ensures that the next day's call sheet is handed out to all cast and crew. The art department pack up all the furniture and props brought to the location. The producer, director, cinematographer and editor will sit down and look through everything they have filmed that day and assess whether it works technically as well as creatively. Technical aspects under consideration include camera focus, framing and lighting. The creative aspects they consider might include the chemistry between actors or how emotional moments work.

**1700.** The unit manager takes a last look around the location, starts up his truck and rolls out into the gathering night. Day 1 is completed. Only another forty-nine to go!



# Post-production

Post-production is a complex and highly technical process that involves the collaborative effort of many professionals.

The last day of shooting is generally the last day of work for most of the crew. Some may have a few additional days to return rented or borrowed equipment, furniture, props or costumes; to dismantle sets and clean out locations or sound stages or to finalise paperwork. From this point, the administrative, financial and practical elements of post-production are handled by different people. The producer and director, however, continue to manage the creative and commercial aspects of the film until it is delivered to the distributor.

The creative and technical team must be clear at the start of production about the film that they are making:

- Creatively: the genre, the style, the intended audience, the expected classification rating, and
- Technically: live action, visual effects or animation, high or low-budget, running time, cinema or video release

During pre-production, all these elements are made clear to all members of the team. Creatively, the film is in the hands of the director and producer and the goal needs to be communicated to cast and crew alike. The technical meetings in pre-production will set standards and communications pathways as the digital information is passed down the line from image acquisition to edit to sound mix, music and finally to the DCP (Digital Cinema Package) ready for cinema release.

The age of celluloid film running through the camera on sprockets is over. Almost all movies are now shot and post-produced digitally. Images are encoded as digital files by the cameras. On set, a data wrangler takes the content from storage media and transfers it digitally to the editors. He or she also checks that the files are correctly saved and labelled. These hard drives are the equivalent of the film negative in earlier days, and it's equally disastrous if they are lost, damaged, re-formatted or over-written.

At the post-production house, the data on the drives is transferred to the servers that will hold all the images and sound from each shooting day. These servers also contain any other data, such as sound or music, which is generated during post-production.

## Editing

The editor has been working throughout the shoot, reviewing each day's footage as it comes through, and giving feedback to the director. The feedback is mainly on creative issues, confirming that they have the shots that tell the story, but may also be about technical issues that need to be addressed, such as soft focus or a microphone boom in shot.



The footage for the day is assembled in the order it was shot, with the synchronised sound, into the “rushes” or “dailies”. The rushes are then downloaded to DVDs and sent to the producer, director and heads of department, or they are put online on a protected site where they can be viewed by these same people, and others who have been authorised, for example the director of photography and the production designer.

The process above continues throughout the shoot until the editor has an assembly or rough cut of the film in script order. At the end of the shoot, the director usually takes a break of about a week for a well-deserved rest, and to clear his or her head before post-production begins. The director will be involved during the months of post-production work, and the producer will be involved beyond that.

It’s worth noting that producers and directors are usually paid a fee for the entire period of work – regardless of the length of time and even if the time is extended. On low-budget Australian films, it’s common for the film to run out of money and, to get it completed, these people often put their fees back into the budget. Why? They are hoping that, by adding value to the production budget, the film will be better, get a good cinema release and make more money – which will either flow back to the key creatives or will result in them getting their next film financed.

The rough cut is done by the editor in collaboration with the director. They select the very best version of each shot, choose the way it intercuts with shots around it, and vary the duration of each shot to make each scene as powerful as possible. They may re-locate scenes from script order, even substantially restructure the movie.

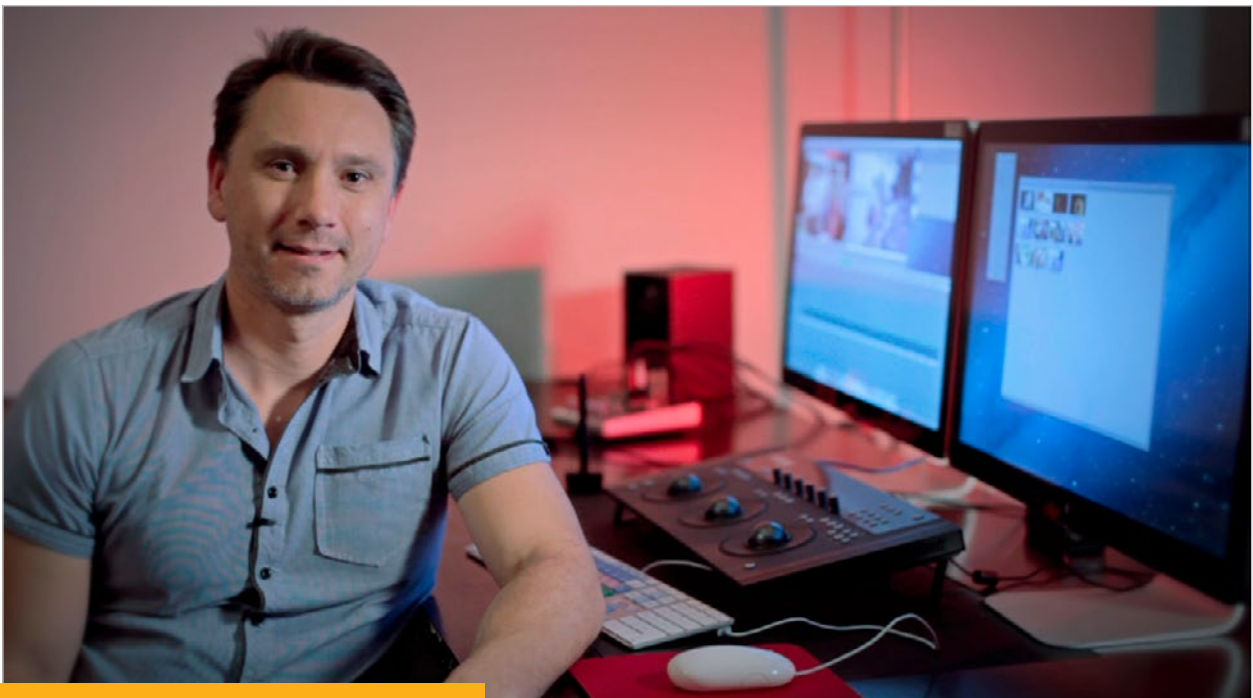
As part of this process they may decide to do additional shots, called “pick ups”, or record additional dialogue. All the changes strengthen the meaning and impact of the film. The producer has an initial viewing of the rough cut two or three weeks before its scheduled completion, and usually becomes more closely involved in refining the work until the fine cut is produced.

The fine cut is then shown to the distributor and investors. Further tweaks are often made before the film is finally approved. To an inexperienced eye this version of the movie still looks very rough – there are no sound effects, some temporary music, no graceful fades or dissolves, and the colour may look uneven. This is, however, the final form of the picture edit, and other post-production processes can now begin.

## Visual effects, titles and colour grading

Visual effects are increasingly used in movies produced today. Digital image acquisition gives filmmakers a powerful new tool, with the images manipulated in specialist facilities by highly creative personnel. With these tools, the visual effects team can:

- create period backgrounds
- replicate stunts – actors leap, fly, crash through walls
- place action in remote locations
- fill a sky with helicopters
- put thousands of extras into a scene
- create imaginary characters and environments
- animate objects
- make a tear run down the cheek of an actor who couldn’t cry on the shoot!



Film editor Jason Ballantine in his edit suite.

*Hundreds of specialists are involved in the creation of visual effects, each with their own particular expertise and using sophisticated computer technology.*

Many movies are scripted to contain extensive visual effects. During pre-production of these movies, there will be substantial consultation between the visual effects team and the shoot crew. Computer pre-visualisation is usually created before filming starts to ensure that every element that is shot fits the visual effects requirements. The colours of sets, vehicles, animals, costumes and makeup, for example, have to be chosen to stand clear of bluescreen and greenscreen backgrounds. Lighting and camera moves will be carefully planned to allow for the visual effects post-production. Check out this example from [The Great Gatsby](#).

Hundreds of specialists are involved in the creation of visual effects, each with their own particular expertise and using sophisticated computer technology. That's why visual effects-driven films, like *Avatar*, *The Hobbit* and *300* can be very expensive to produce (and have a very long list of credits at the end of the film).

As post-production continues, the visual effects shots are sent through to the edit team and incorporated into the cut of the image so that the sound and music teams can tailor their contribution.

Titles and credits are prepared by the post-production house and sent through to sound and music in the same way.

Colour grading is the process of matching different shots taken on the same location in a single scene and requires skilled personnel and powerful computers with specialist software. It takes place once the visual effects are all inserted into the cut of the movie, for some of the following reasons:

- establish a desired look and mood of shots
- compensate for variations in light on actual shooting days, especially when a sequence is shot over a few days
- match live footage with visual effects footage

## Sound

After the image is locked, or while it is being refined, work has started on the soundtrack of the film.

Additional dialogue recording, called ADR or post-sync, takes place to either replace dialogue that isn't clear enough in the location recording or to add off-screen dialogue that will make the story or the mood of the film more powerful. It's a skill that actors are trained to acquire. In a small recording suite, the image is projected with every frame numbered and shown on the screen. The actor has the new or replacement dialogue, and records the words in synch with the projected image. The new dialogue is cut into the existing tracks by the dialogue editor.

**IN FOCUS:** Read about how the sound designers on *Godzilla* [created a language](#) for the film's creature.

The dialogue editor works for many weeks to cut the recorded dialogue to fit the images in the fine cut. He or she may replace lines from one take with lines from another better take if it improves the clarity of the sound, and cuts in the recorded ADR. Extraneous sounds, such as aeroplanes and passing cars, will be removed from the soundtrack if they are clear of the dialogue.

The sound effects editor enhances the soundtrack with:

- Atmosphere. There is no such thing as a silent location. Every room, every location, has its own particular sound which is laid down in a bed below all the other sound that we hear in a specific set or location.
- Foley effects. The original sounds captured during shooting are often muffled by noise or are unconvincing. Fist fights, for example, are usually staged by stunt actors and therefore do not have the sound of punches landing. Crashes and explosions are often added or enhanced during post-production. These sounds are recorded in a small studio using an unlikely set of objects – for example, a watermelon being split open is a valuable sound in a violent fight scene!
- Sound effects libraries are held by all sound post-production houses, and are used widely to add layers of meaning to scenes.
- Additional location recording may be required to capture specific sounds.

The sound mix will combine all these sources, and the music into the soundtrack. A highly skilled sound crew operates a mixing desk with many digital tracks to combine these elements into a convincing soundtrack. The equipment and software is very similar to that used in music recording studios, but here the projected image is driving the mix, not the artist or band's performance.

## Music

Music for a film can come from a range of different sources. In some cases, the music might already exist. Musicals and films that feature soundtracks of existing songs are a good example. In some cases, if singing or dancing is involved, the music will be recorded during pre-production. Although some music might appear to be recorded on location, performers are often performing to a pre-recorded track.

It is more usual to record a movie score in post-production.

Music for films is often recorded by musicians - everything ranging from a lone whistler to a full symphony orchestra - or by composers using a combination of digital instruments and live recordings. If live musicians are used in post-production recording, they will sometimes perform with the movie projected into the recording studio, similar to the process for ADR.

In all of these cases, copyright is an important consideration. There are two types of music copyright: the rights to the composition and the rights to the performance. A music supervisor is an essential crew member on films today. He or she suggests appropriate music to the director, and once selections have been made, researches the ownership of the

music, lyrics and if necessary the performer, and negotiates the licences and payment required to use the music in the film. The music supervisor also arranges the studio and payment to the musicians if the music is recorded live.

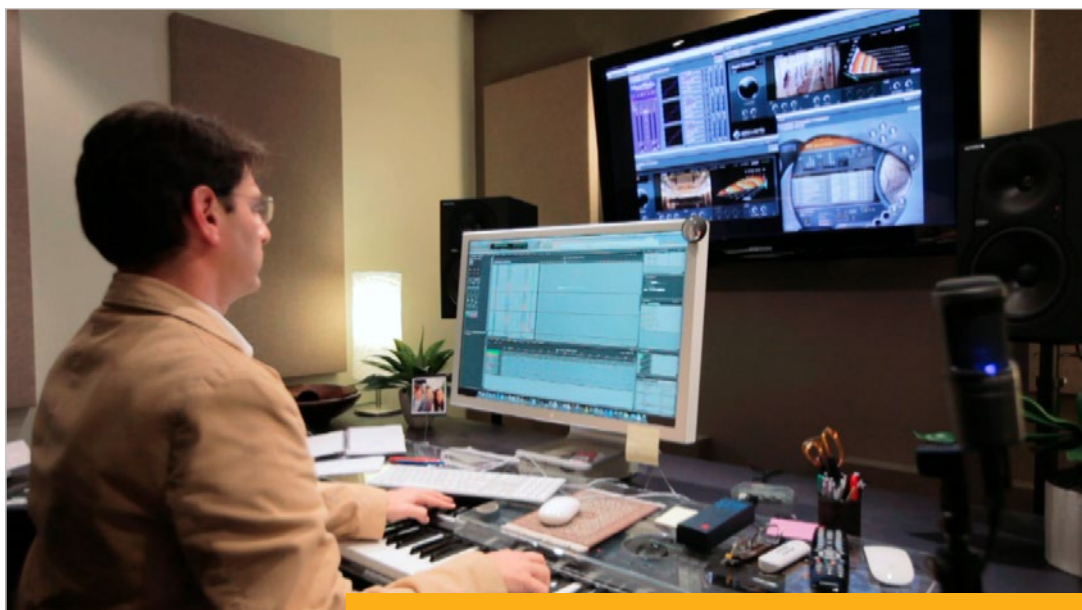
**IN FOCUS:** Composer Henry Jackman talks about the [process of writing music](#) for *Captain America 2: The Winter Soldier*.

When the image is finally assembled in digital form, with the visual effects, colour grade, titles and credits included, the final mix is added. The material is ready for the final stage, the creation of the Digital Cinema Package (DCP).

The DCP is a collection of digital files used to store and convey digital cinema image, sound and data streams. The files contain streams that are compressed, encoded, and encrypted, in order to reduce the huge amount of required storage and to protect from unauthorized use.

The package is held securely as a master, and from it, copies are created and sent to the various people who require them, including:

- The producer who will make copies for investors and the National Film and Sound Archive who keep a copy of all Australian films.
- The distributor who encodes the drives with protection data and sends them out to exhibitors. The distributor also provides copies, as required, to television stations, airlines and any other customers to whom the movie has been sold.
- The international sales agent, who will make copies for sale under the terms of agreement with the producer and investors.



Composer Guy Gross working on a composition for his latest project.



# Distribution and exhibition

Distribution and exhibition are a vital part of the film production process which sees a film reach audiences.

Distribution is the process of getting a finished film in front of an audience. The distributor negotiates with exhibitors to screen the film in cinemas and handles the marketing and advertising of the film to ensure that as many people as possible know about the film and go to see it. Generally, distributors are attached to the film at script stage where, based on the quality of the idea and the team that intends to produce the film, they will commit to ensuring that the film will get a cinema release.

Filmmakers unable to find a distributor at production stage may still be able to raise the finance to make the film and, on completion, will then seek to find a distributor who will be willing to put up the money to promote and market the film to the public and negotiate with cinemas to screen it.

Most films are created to screen primarily in cinemas. This is called theatrical distribution. Films can also be distributed via the internet, television, home, on physical media such as DVD and Blu-ray or a number of non-theatrical forms such as in-flight movies, schools, film societies or special interest groups.

For most filmmakers, screening their films theatrically is their ultimate goal: where they have an audience enjoying the experience as it was designed to be seen - in a dark space, on a big screen - concentrating only on their film and on the

highest possible technical equipment available. And even better, the audience has *paid* to see the film.

Thousands of films are made around the world every year, but less than 5% make it into cinemas.

Once all aspects of the post-production process have been completed, the finished film is delivered to the distributor, who handles sales and marketing of the film, working closely with exhibitors to maximise box office revenue.

In Australia, the distributors aligned with the Hollywood studios are called 'the majors' and mainly distribute the big Hollywood studio films. Although they are often best known for their big budget blockbusters, they are also involved in the production and distribution of smaller films and co-invest with local filmmakers in many countries around the world, including Australia. Films such as *The Great Gatsby* and *Tomorrow When the War Began* were made by local production companies in partnership with Hollywood studios.

There are also independent film distributors who are not involved with one production company or studio, but who partner with different companies – either at script stage or when the film has been made – to promote and distribute films.



Distributors travel to film festivals and markets like the Cannes Film Festival, the American Film Market, Sundance and the Berlin and Toronto Film Festivals and many others to buy distribution rights to films. When distributors develop their own material or become involved with films during the production stage, as investors or co-producers, this is referred to as 'having skin in the game'.

## What does distribution involve?

Film distributors manage two critical aspects of the film production process. They negotiate with exhibitors to get the film into cinemas and manage the marketing strategy and campaign, including advertising and publicity, to maximise the audience that will go to see the film.

A distributor's staff consists of executive management, sales and marketing teams and administration. Distributors communicate and work with important stakeholders to maximise the success of the film, including exhibitors, media, advertising agencies and the cinema-going public.

When the key sales and marketing people have viewed a film, they are better positioned to devise a distribution strategy by considering the following:

- How much money can the film realistically take at the box office (in order to determine how much money can be spent on marketing)? Distributors usually set box office targets with a low-end and a high-end.
- How much money should they spend marketing the film? This is usually called the ad/pub budget because it is mostly spent on advertising and publicity.
- How many cinemas do they ideally want to screen in? Wide release is the typical pattern of a blockbuster and pins huge expectations on the opening weekend. Limited release often has modest expectations and then expands if the film connects with audiences.
- What classification will the film receive, such as G, PG, M, MA or R18? This can impact box office potential.

One of the first priorities is to agree on the optimal release date for the film. Distributors take into account what films are being released by other studios and often time their releases to coincide with school holidays, related calendar events (such as Valentine's Day or Xmas), film festivals or major award ceremonies.

The marketing of a film is a crucial part of its distribution. When thinking about marketing, the distributor asks:

- What target audience does the film appeal to? Distributors try to identify the age range of the target audience, any gender skews and socio-economic status so they can market most effectively.
- What is the best way to reach the audience?

- What is the positioning statement for the film? A positioning statement is the agreed message used when discussing the film with media or exhibitors which includes a description of the film and the genre it falls into, e.g. romantic comedy, mockumentary, epic drama, biopic or special effects blockbuster.
- Is there a particular Australian angle to capitalise on? Sometimes the media responds particularly well to local stories, for instance if the film was shot in Australia, as with *The Great Gatsby*.
- Is the film likely to be nominated for or win prestigious awards or get excellent reviews?
- Will the film generate positive word-of-mouth and benefit from a broad promotional screening program? Or a carefully targeted screening program?

One of the key responsibilities of a film distributor is to produce or provide a trailer and poster, often referred to as a one-sheet, that exhibitors can use to market to cinema audiences. For Hollywood studio films, these materials are often created by the studio, but in the case of Australian films, the distributor works with the film's producer to generate these vital marketing elements from scratch.

Paid advertising falls under the umbrella of marketing and includes things like TV commercials, billboards, online banner ads, radio commercials and social media buys. The major distributors spend millions of dollars each year on advertising and often have large ad agencies taking care of their business.

The publicity department is responsible for dealing with media outlets to generate maximum positive editorial around a film's release, taking into account the target markets that have been agreed upon for the film. This includes:

- Issuing press releases to communicate news, such as the confirmation of a release date, announcement of an upcoming publicity tour or advice on box office results.
- Handling requests for interviews with talent. 'Talent' usually refers to the actors in a film, but can mean anyone connected with the film who can be used for publicity purposes, such as the director or writer.
- Liaising with studio publicists in LA to negotiate access to talent at junkets held in the US. A junket brings a film's stars and director together with key media from all over the world for one big day of interviews before the film opens.
- Managing logistics, including transport, accommodation, entertainment and security for publicity tours.
- Dealing with the media which includes negotiating interviews and arranging red carpet premiere access during publicity tours.
- Negotiating with television, radio, print, digital and social media to generate editorial and reviews.

Film merchandise such as t-shirts, CDs, key rings and other material is often provided by the Hollywood studios, or sometimes produced locally, to use for prize giveaways.

Distributors work closely with the exhibitors' marketing departments to collaborate on local area marketing ideas and campaigns, such as targeted group booking pitches and grassroots activity. To promote a film that features some impressive displays of martial arts, for example, it would be useful to contact karate, taekwondo and hapkido schools and clubs to let them know the film is coming and might be of interest to their members.

## What is exhibition?

Exhibition is the retail end of the film industry. It involves screening films to audiences in cinemas. The exhibitor doesn't only sell tickets, popcorn and ice-cream. They sell the experience of going to the movies including the size of the screen, the seating, the high-tech projection and sound equipment, upscale premium viewing options and the atmosphere of the film experience.

Film exhibition is fiercely competitive. There are far more films than available screens. It can be challenging for distributors to negotiate exactly what they want from the exhibitors, who are juggling offers of films from many distributors and face tough decisions about which films to prioritise.

The sales managers and key staff from distribution companies, sometimes referred to as 'film bookers', spend a huge amount of time and effort developing relationships and maintaining regular communications with exhibitors. They deal with everyone, from the programming departments at major exhibitors to the owner-operated twin cinemas in small towns.

Exhibitors understand audiences very well as that is the lifeblood of their business. They have direct access to cinema patrons once they are through the doors and have unique opportunities to communicate with audiences.

As in the retail environment, where department stores host a wide variety of different products from different manufacturers and put them together in a particular way to create a shopping experience, exhibitors have the final say about how promotional material is screened or displayed or arranged in their cinemas.

The exhibitors decide how many posters or banners to put up of a particular film and where to put the big, increasingly complex 3D cardboard structures called standees that the distributors pay for and produce. Cinema foyers provide extremely valuable promotional real estate to get a film's poster, or trailer or flyers in front of audiences and the distributors spend a lot of time and money vying for space and exposure.

## Staff who work in exhibition

There are a number of people who work in the exhibition of films.

- **Programmers.** These are the people who make decisions about which films will screen at their cinemas and negotiate with distributors on the financial arrangements for profit-sharing. They are invited to attend screenings of every film they are offered so they can make their decisions about where they think the film will work best in their circuit, if they program for a cinema chain. Once they agree to program a film, they decide on session times, although negotiations with distributors often include things like a commitment to a minimum number of sessions per day.
- **Marketing staff.** Cinemas employ marketing staff who work closely with distributors on specific film campaigns, candy bar promotions (branding of drink and popcorn cups, deals where bonus promotional items are offered with candy bar product bundles, etc). These staff also work on marketing campaigns designed to attract cinema patrons to choose their cinemas over their competitors. The cinema chains all have loyalty and reward programs, special deals that they market to seniors, 'mums with bubs', schools or to attract group bookings.
- **Front-of-house staff.** These include ticket sellers, candy bar staff, ushers and security. One of the jobs front-of-house staff do is to arrange the list of what's showing on the cinema's marquee. Ushers collect tickets as patrons go into the cinema and once a session has ended, they tidy up garbage that has been left behind in readiness for the next session.
- **Technical staff.** Many are still called projectionists, but very few cinemas actually project 35mm film these days. Most cinemas are now digital and screen films via digital cinema packages (DCPs). The distributors arrange for DCPs to be provided to the exhibitors (once terms are agreed) along with KDMs, or 'digital keys'

*"Exhibition is the retail end of the film industry. It involves screening films to audiences in cinemas."*



Claire Gandy is a film programmer for Dendy Cinemas.

that are programmed to unlock the DCP for the agreed screenings of the film.

- Merchandising/display staff. When elaborate displays are required, that may involve specialised equipment like cherry-pickers to hang banners from ceilings, cinemas employ people to do this. Front-of-house staff usually manage the simpler displays like putting posters into lightboxes and erecting standees when they are not making choc-tops.
- Administrative personnel. This includes people who handle payroll so employees can be paid; human resources and accounts.
- Maintenance. Lots of things can go wrong or need to be fixed at cinemas so they often employ maintenance people either full-time or part-time. They may be required to repair curtains that get stuck, or seats that are broken by patrons.
- Cleaning. Once all sessions are over for the day, the cleaners come in to pick up rubbish left behind, vacuum carpets, clean up any sticky spills on the carpets, empty bins and clean the cinema toilets and offices.

Both the exhibitor and the distribution company earn a percentage of the box office receipts, the money taken from ticket sales at the cinema. The distributor share can vary – film by film, week by week. In the first instance, this will need to cover the money spent on promoting and marketing the film – the premiere, the cost of getting actors to come to Australia, the posters, ads on buses and at bus stops, TV ads, websites, social media sites, making a trailer and the cost of getting the trailer and the final high-quality digital version of the film itself onto hundreds of screens across the country.

After the marketing costs are recouped, the distributor will also earn a fee for distributing the film that will hopefully go some way to paying for their staff and overhead costs. The remaining percentage of the box office revenue is distributed amongst the film’s investors according to the amounts stipulated in the original production investment agreement. As you can imagine, the film will need to earn a reasonable amount at the box office before the distributor and the investors can be paid.

## A SNAPSHOT OF FILM EXHIBITION IN AUSTRALIA

- There are about 2,000 cinema screens in Australia.
- An estimated 95% of this total have converted to digital projection.
- Australia has several large cinema chains as well as a strong independent cinema sector throughout the country.

– Provided by National Association of Cinema Operators Australasia, June 2014.



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# CHAPTER TWO

## Production Roles

In this chapter students will learn about some of the hundreds of different roles in the film production process and gain a better understanding of the skills required for various jobs and the collaborative nature of the process from:

- Detailed notes outlining the workflow of each crew member through the stages of production
- Video interviews with a variety of screen professionals including footage of them at work and on a film set
- Links to a range of online articles, video clips and websites to broaden the scope of information and the variety of research tasks for students



The crew of Australian film THE LITTLE DEATH (2014)







# Film production roles

There are a number of professionals who work on the production of a film, from the development team to the front-of-house staff who sell you tickets.

Most often when we read about films and television, we read about the people in front of the camera. In this chapter of 'Making Movies' Resource, you will learn about a few of the many and varied roles on a film production and what each role entails. You will meet some film practitioners, discover how they got into their job and how they find work in an essentially freelance industry.

An enormous range of skills is required across a film production - many can be studied at tertiary level whilst others are best learnt on set. The one motivation shared by most film people, however, is a passion for what they do.

Ask most people on a film set why they are prepared to work long hours, often in highly pressured situations, up against weather and technical hiccups and they'll tell you they don't do it for the money.

A 2014 screen sector survey by Australian trade publication Screen Hub, confirmed this with the following insights:

- Average annual earnings for Screen Industry people is \$69,000, compared with average annual earnings of \$77,000 for all Australians.

- The average weekly hours per week of all people employed in the Screen Industry is 41.67 hours, compared with the national average of 33 hours per week.
- 53% of all people employed in the Screen Industry work longer hours than the national average of 33 hours.
- Only 7.5% of people working in the Screen Industry are driven by money, while 73% of people working in the Screen Industry state that passion is the key career driver.

Filmmaking is a hugely collaborative process – the many roles on a film set interconnect and depend on one another to achieve the best possible film. This chapter offers an insight into some of these roles and includes a detailed explanation of the following: producer, production manager, production designer, assistant director, production runner, camera assistant, hair and makeup artist, vehicle supervisor, stunt performer, editor, music composer, visual effects supervisor, distribution executive, marketing manager and film programmer.

**A series of 3-4 minute interviews for each role is available to [view here](#).**

*“The job of a producer starts years before the audience sees the movie and continues for years after the film has been completed.”*

## Producer

Are you passionate about movies? A creative thinker? Financially savvy and a good deal-maker? A terrific leader? If so, you'd probably make a pretty good producer.

There's a reason that, when films win the award for Best Picture, it's the producers who receive that award rather than the director. And there's a reason that the public, who often know the names of directors - like James Cameron, Peter Jackson or Baz Luhrmann - seldom recognise the names of producers - like Jon Landau, Carolyne Cunningham or Catherine Knapman. Producing a film isn't a job for someone looking for the spotlight – that's usually focused on the director and the stars of the movie.

The job of a producer starts years before the audience sees the movie and continues for years after the film has been completed. A team comes together to write, cast, develop and finance the film. As producer Rosemary Blight (*Clubland*, *The Sapphires*) notes: “The roles are relatively simple at this early stage: the writer writes, the director thinks about cast and supports the writer, and the producer, ever the optimist, flies around the world trying to find money and friends for the film. Once the film is funded, the pressure is on the director, and the producer is forced to take a step back. The director's job is to encourage the cast and crew to excel beyond expectations, and it's a producer's job to create an environment that allows the director to reach beyond himself or herself to create a great work.”

It's the producer's job to deliver the film on time and on budget to the investors – particularly to the distribution company who are going to secure a cinema release and promote the film. And not just any film, but the great film that was promised when they were developing the script.

Producers usually have great organisational skills, an understanding of finance and excellent interpersonal qualities, often describing themselves as a mix between a drill sergeant, banker and psychiatrist.

During development and pre-production, the producer oversees the process required to get the movie into production. This involves:

- Locking in the contracts required to secure the rights to the script, the finance for the film, the best possible director and lead actors.

- Consulting with the director, hiring the heads of department, such as the director of photography, first assistant director, production designer and editor who give creative input to the director.
- The producer and director jointly choose the key cast for the movie, usually with input from the distributor and sales agent.
- As development proceeds, the producer monitors key decisions including the schedule, locations, actors, sets and costumes, deferring to and encouraging the director's creative vision within the available funds.

During the shoot, the producer works hard behind the scenes. Producers usually know every crew and cast member by name, and have an especially close relationship with the production office team, which includes the production manager, production accountant, production coordinator, production secretary, runners and location manager.

The producer usually spends a good third of each day on set, watching the shoot, listening to concerns that may arise and encouraging fine work from all the cast and crew.

Off set, the producer reviews dailies to ensure the shots will assemble logically into the scripted scene, that the performances are effective, and that the technical standards are being maintained.

Back in the production office, the producer consults daily with the production manager and the production accountant to refine the budget and allocate resources, which might include people, equipment, material, facilities and time.

The producer has lots of daily tasks that most of the crew hardly see. They liaise with investors, distributor and sales agent, arranging stills and the electronic press kit, approving upcoming sets and costumes, refining post-production detail, keeping the lead cast happy and planning the wrap party and the t-shirts.

Sometimes troubleshooting is needed – encourage a nervous cast member, counsel a junior crew member whose work isn't up to scratch, reassure a location owner that their property won't be damaged. And if it is, deal with insurance claims. They do all of this and are a sounding board for the ideas of the director.

During post-production, the producer performs a number of tasks, including finalising all the details from the shoot, keeping the budget and schedule on track and planning the publicity strategy with the distributor.

The producer is still creatively responsible for the delivery of the film and views intermittent cuts with the director and editor, suggesting necessary changes. The producer oversees the full range of post-production elements: visual effects, colour grading, title sequence and end credits, music, sound mix and the soundtrack.

During the final stages of post-production, the producer assembles and delivers the mountain of documentation required by investors, distributor and sales agent.

Even when the film has been delivered, the work of the producer continues as they liaise with the distributor about the film's release and monitor the financial returns as they start to come in from ancillary sales: airlines, TV networks or hotels. Incoming revenue then must be allocated to the investors on the terms agreed in the production contracts.

This period can often appear to be the glamorous part of the filmmaking process: there are film premieres to show up to, festival screenings and awards ceremonies (hopefully) to attend. But these events can also be hard work as the producer tries to raise the profile of the film and get the attention of potential cinema-going audiences. The producer by this stage is often trying to find finance for the next film, currently in development.

The work of a producer on a single film never actually ends as they continue to service the film, even if there is little income from it. They distribute any income, including DVD sales and video on demand, to the investors and provide them with reports on the film's earnings. They give access to the masters when cast and crew need to make show reels of their work or when asked for footage by the media. They also deal with requests from students, researchers, obscure festivals honouring the director...anyone who is interested in the film.

Despite the myth of overpaid producers, the reality is quite different. For their hard work, they receive a pre-determined fee - a small percentage of the total budget. They might also have a share of profit when and if the movie goes into profit. It's definitely one of the toughest jobs in the industry.

[Click here to view interview with producer Nicole O'Donohue](#)

## Production manager

A film producer carries the overall responsibility to deliver a finished film to the investors – one that is true to the creative vision they expect, that will meet the needs of the audience for which it is intended and will be delivered according to an agreed budget and timeframe.

The army of people, and the intricate detail and layers of complexity inherent in ensuring that this happens is the role of a production manager.

The production manager works closely with the producer and director to manage their vision for the project and to try to achieve it within the budget and schedule. The production manager is the pivotal point around which every detail of the project revolves. The production manager is responsible for organising the business, finance and employment arrangements needed to bring the film in on schedule and on budget, and in line with the delivery materials that the investor contracts stipulate. The production manager also has to ensure that the project is carried out safely, and in an environmentally responsible manner.

Because the common pathway to the production manager position is often via the production coordinator or production secretary roles, Australian production managers tend to be women. Although there are a few short courses on production management, it is essentially a position that is learnt on the job.

The production manager usually gets started early in development, once the script is ready to go to the market. The production manager takes a few weeks to break down the script, identifying every element in the film and judging how long it will take and how much it will cost to shoot. Every minute of shooting time has a cost which is determined by the elements in that scene: two people talking alone in a room will be faster and cheaper to shoot than a busy café requiring lots of extras and movement, or in a car travelling through a city. The production manager creates a preliminary shooting schedule and then carefully costs the elements, devising the budget for the film. This is the budget the producer takes to the investors to raise finance for the film, so it is crucial that it is accurate and reflects both the creative intention of the script and the time and place it is to be shot. At this point, the production manager might not work on the project again for months, or years, while the producer raises the finance.

As finance for the project firms up, the production manager returns, perhaps on a part-time basis, to discuss the overall game plan with the producer and director and to manage pre-production. At this point, the budget will be revised to reflect decisions made during financing: in the best-case scenario, the hoped-for amount of money will have been found, in the worst, the script will need to be changed, or cut, to reflect the final investment.

When the shooting time frame is finalised according to the availability of the director and lead cast, the production manager sets about finding a production office and production staff, and confirming essential heads of department such as the first assistant director, location manager and production designer.

Pre-production is the busiest time for the production office, which is headed by the production manager and includes a production coordinator, a production secretary, one or more

runners, the location manager and assistant, the accountant and, if the film is going on location, a travel coordinator. Depending on the scale and nature of the film, there may be multiple people in these roles. The production manager also oversees the unit department, safety and first aid, tutors and chaperones if the cast includes children, and the all-important catering department.

A key relationship at this time is between the production manager and the first assistant director who is doing a further detailed breakdown of the script and establishing a shooting schedule that fits the locations and cast availability, as well as being within budget. As these decisions emerge, the production manager is busy on a number of other fronts:

- **Employment.** With the heads of department in place, the production manager briefs them about the rates, terms and conditions of the crew they will employ, and once crew are approved, does the final negotiations and issues employment contracts.
- **Communications.** Sets up systems to communicate between all departments both off-set and on-set.
- **Occupational health and safety.** Sets up systems and inspections.
- **Budgets.** Each head of department meets with the production manager to discuss the individual department's budget.
- **Accountancy.** With the accountant, sets up the financial structure of the production and the systems that will control and report spending.
- **Contracts.** Liaises with the production's lawyer to set up appropriate forms of contracts for cast, crew, locations and rights clearances.
- **Insurance.** Sets in place coverage appropriate to the production.
- **Facilities.** Selects and negotiates studio space, locations, post-production and VFX facilities.
- **Equipment.** Selects and negotiates camera, lighting and grips equipment, in consultation with the director of photography.
- **Travel and transport.** Sets in motion the vehicle hires, itineraries and accommodation.
- **Casting.** Establishes a description of all cast/actors required for the film and, as actors are confirmed, issues deal memos and contracts and books cast according to the schedules for costume and makeup meetings, rehearsals, camera tests and the shoot.
- **Meetings.** Sets up and manages weekly production meetings, stunt and safety meetings, post-production meeting and specific department meetings.

In the final week before shooting begins, the production manager arranges camera tests and rehearsals, issues the final shooting script and schedule, puts out contact lists and other daily paperwork templates, and issues the call sheet for the first day's shoot.

During production, the production manager and the production office make sure that every element needed for that day's filming is available when required – cast, extras, additional crew and equipment, vehicles, travel and accommodation – and that the information about these elements is communicated to every relevant member of the cast and crew. Once the shoot begins, the production manager's attention is focused on monitoring the progress of the shoot, and the rate of expenditure and keeping the producer, heads of departments and investors informed.

Films are not shot in script sequence but are arranged according to availability of locations or actors or a range of other factors. Moving a film crew from one location to another is time-consuming and costly so preferably, every scene that takes place in a particular location will be shot one after another, regardless of where they occur in the script. However, sometimes access to lead cast is also limited (it's expensive to have Hugh Jackman sitting around in a hotel room while scenes that don't involve him are shot), so that will determine alternative scheduling that might require more crew movement – or second unit crews.

Daily information is conveyed via the call sheet, which is a blueprint for what will happen tomorrow. The call sheet includes:

- where the locations are
- what scenes will be shot
- which actors are required when
- what sets need to be prepared
- any "action" props, such as guns
- specialist crew, such as an armourer
- what time meals will be served and catering numbers

No detail is too small for the call sheet. To make matters more complex, a wet weather call sheet is prepared so that, at the last minute, an alternative location is ready to go if the weather prevents filming outdoors.

To monitor the progress of the shoot, the production team puts together the Daily Progress Report (DPR) which is prepared each morning by the production coordinator. The DPR details what scenes were shot the previous day, any shooting overtime, the hours worked by cast and casual crew, the number of extras called, any additional crew or vehicles that were on set, and how many meals were served to how many people. It also notes any unusual activity such as accidents or injuries, and any long delays caused by weather or equipment breakdowns. The DPR is circulated each day to producer, director, production manager, first assistant director, accountant and investors. It constitutes a daily log of the shoot.

Expenditure is managed in the weekly cost report meeting, attended by the producer, production manager and production accountant. Every dollar spent that week is collated by the accountancy team and the resulting cost report shows the total financial position. Overages in one budget area will need to be offset by underages in another in order to maintain the total budget. For example, if the shooting day went longer than anticipated, resulting in greater costs, the team may need to consider reducing the number of extras called on future days or forego a particular piece of equipment.

Days in the production office follow a steady pattern – check that everyone and everything required for the shooting day is on set and on time, prepare the DPR, deal with arrangements for upcoming days in the schedule, visit set at lunch time to talk to the crew, approve the call sheet for the next day, and at some point view the previous day's rushes. Within that pattern, however, all sorts of other activities may and do happen – sort out schedule changes due to weather, issue script amendments, arrange publicity visits and special photo calls, discuss the art department's copyright clearances, deal with an insurance claim, check progress of the electronic press kit, check that delivery documents are scanned and filed, and speak to the editors to ensure that all is working smoothly at their end.

As the shoot nears completion, the production manager reminds all the crew of what they need to do on or before wrap – clean and return equipment and vehicles, return petty cash floats, arrange for storage or sale of sets, props and costumes. The production manager ensures that there is a final cast and crew list with correct spellings for the credits; confirms forwarding addresses for group certificates, invitations to the cast and crew screening and any other correspondence; checks that delivery documentation has been scanned, filed and packed; chases outstanding invoices from suppliers; arranges to vacate the production office; and hands over any ongoing matters to the producer and post-production supervisor.

Finally, they arrange the wrap party.

The PM is not engaged for post-production – her role is to wrap up all the loose ends of the shoot – shut down the production office and finalise the cost report that shows just how much was spent during pre and production – and how much is left to finish the film! A post-production supervisor is usually employed to manage post, particularly on big, VFX-

driven films that may take longer in post-production than they did to develop.

The production manager's job is one of the most complex, varied and demanding on a film, with much of the smooth running and financial success of the project resting on the production manager's shoulders. However, the rewards of playing so critical a role in the achievements of a film seem to be enough for these multi-talented, behind-the-scenes workers.

## Production designer

The production designer collaborates with the producer, director and the director of photography to establish the visual feel and specific look required for the film – whether sophisticated, grungy, ultra-modern, rustic, corporate, exotic, comic book.

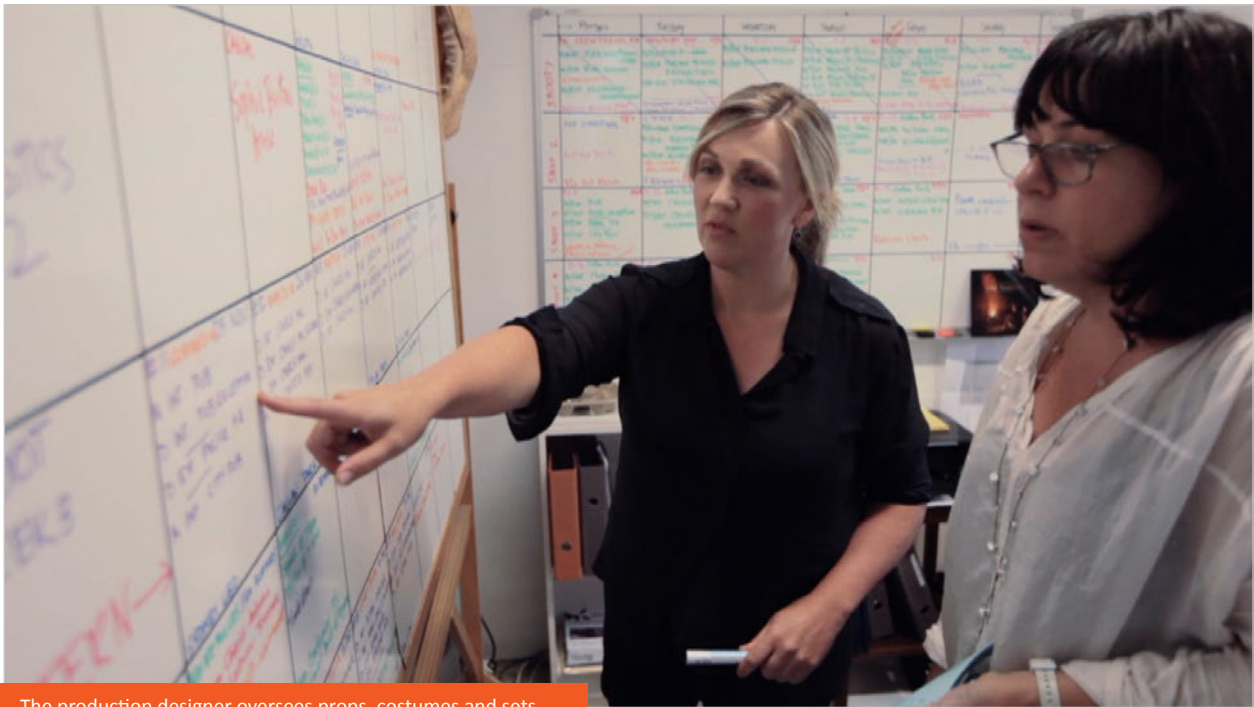
The production designer has overall responsibility for everything on the screen except the locations, the lighting and the actors. They take direct responsibility for studio sets, additional location construction, set dressing, props, action vehicles, animals and weapons. They guide key personnel in other departments such as locations, costumes, hair and makeup, special effects and visual effects to establish a unified visual appearance to the film.

Some, like Catherine Martin (*The Great Gatsby*, *Moulin Rouge!*, *Australia*), undertake both costume and production design.

Some production designers have worked their way up through the ranks of the art department, but most have some formal training in architecture, fine arts or industrial design. Many have undertaken specialist training at the Australian Film, Radio and Television School (AFTRS), or at the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA).

Even before pre-production, the production designer starts a creative collaboration with the director and director of photography. With the script as their guide, they determine the stylistic approach. They discuss other films, posters, comic books, interiors and photographs. They may visit an art gallery together to refine their discussions or undertake some preliminary location surveys. During this time, the production designer begins to collect reference material from books, magazines and the internet in order to refine decisions, and to communicate the visual approach for the film to other crew and cast and potential investors.

*“Production designers oversee sets, location construction, set dressing, props, action vehicles, animals and weapons.”*



The production designer oversees props, costumes and sets.

At this time the production designer starts to bring the art department team together. It is usually the biggest department on the film, and draws on many talents.

- The art director is the production designer’s right hand, responsible for the costing and realisation of the visual brief
- The art department coordinator provides administrative and logistical support and research, and is responsible for clearing any copyrights on brands, signs and graphics
- Set designers create technical drawings to build or modify sets, locations and signs
- The construction manager and a team of carpenters, painters and welders build studio sets and modify locations
- Scenic artists paint **backdrops** and other elements needed for the set. These could be cloud backdrops or a city backdrop to be seen out of a set window. They also paint murals, complex prop pieces and paintings seen on walls to avoid copyright problems.
- Set decorators dress the settings – for example, a home interior with carpets, curtains, furniture and unscripted props or a park with benches, fences and park signs
- Graphic artists create signage, books and posters
- Props buyers hire or buy the scripted props
- The standby props person manages the hand props for actors to use during shooting
- The greens team is responsible for all the plant material used at locations and on sets
- Vehicle coordinators select appropriate vehicles for action and background

- Animal wranglers provide livestock, which may range from one small dog (*Legally Blonde*) to hundreds of horses and great herds of cattle (*Australia*). They also organise transport, food and shelter, harnesses, cages and veterinary services as needed.

The production designer, art director and other members of the art department work closely with other departments on the film. They work with the first assistant director to schedule the order in which sets can be ready, and to prepare wet weather cover, so the crew has a location available in case rain prevents an exterior shoot. They consult with the sound crew regarding acoustics in the various sets. They work closely with the stunt coordinator to ensure sets, props and costumes meet stunt requirements for ease of breakage, repeat props and fireproofing. They also stay in close contact with the visual effects team, to make sure certain sets and blue/green screens are set up in a way that allows digital shots to be inserted during post-production.

In a sense, the art department is always in pre-production. They are always working ahead of the crew to have sets and props ready, locations dressed, and carrying out the specialised tasks described.

During the shoot, the production designer has a watching brief, ensuring that the work of his or her department is achieving the creative intent of the director, and adjusting and modifying plans and activities to reflect changes in the schedule. Feedback from the producer, director, cast, crew, editors and the VFX department might suggest some changes – this character’s suitcase needs to have a secret compartment, this balcony has to be strengthened to hold



The first AD controls timing and work flow on set.

the camera crew for a new angle, a location has fallen through and design aspects of the new location have to be addressed.

Throughout pre-production and shoot, the art director keeps the production designer informed of the budget and design elements may have to be modified to be cheaper or more lavish. Very big art departments have their own separate team of accountants to assist with budget.

The production designer finishes work at the end of the shoot – his or her creative work is done. But the team carries on for a week or two, wrapping the sets, disposing of the materials, returning hired set dressings and props and selling off or donating the remaining items. Traditionally, the production designer will gift a small item from the remaining props to each member of the art department, as a memento of the shoot.

[Click here to view interview with production designer Felicity Abbott](#)

## Assistant director

Feature films of any scale have at least three assistant directors and they often hire casual assistant directors for crowd and action scenes.

The roles of director and first assistant director are clearly differentiated. On set, the director is concerned with the creative effect of action, performance, lighting and camera movement, all of the images and sound that are recorded by the camera. The first assistant director is responsible for the timing and work flow of everything and everybody on set.

The first assistant director is heavily involved with pre-production. They break down the script to identify all the elements that need to be considered in the shooting schedule, and produce a first draft schedule, which will be constantly modified. They also brief the producer, director and all heads of department about elements that are particularly important, such as whether the scene must be shot at sunrise or night.

They make sure the shooting schedule is as cost-effective as possible. They are required to ensure that the shooting schedule provides wet weather cover in the case of rain. They also monitor the director's schedule during pre-production, prepare the rehearsal schedule and create the final shooting schedule.

The first assistant director's job is one of delicate balance. In the producer's eyes, they are responsible for running the set on time and on budget. In the director's eyes, they are responsible for organising whatever is needed on set to realise the director's creative vision.

During production, the first assistant director is always at the director's side, organising the work on set, and fielding the many questions that arise.

They establish a shot list with the director for each shooting day. Within the shoot, they plan out the shots in the most efficient order possible. They might, for example, film actors arriving at the location while grips are laying down dolly tracks for later scenes.

They brief the crew about the order of the day – camera, lighting, grips, sound, art department – so they can organise their work and equipment in detail.

When shooting is about to commence, it's the first assistant director who calls for quiet and final checks. They call, "Roll sound." When the sound department confirms that sound is rolling, they say, "Mark it!" The clapper loader steps into frame with a slate showing the scene and take number. Then, it's the director's job to call, "Action."

During the shooting day, the assistant director will also approve the next day's call sheet before it goes to the production office. They discuss any issues that have occurred with the production manager, such as costuming or catering. They also discuss any issues that involve the creative elements of the film with the producer. Perhaps the director is asking for too many takes. Maybe the lead actor is unhappy with the glasses he's been asked to wear. Or the director has asked for fake tattoos to be applied to the villain, but it's going to take too long to put them on each morning. If the weather is looking uncertain, the first assistant director checks that all the departments are ready to move to the weather cover set or location in the case of rain.

At the end of a well-run shoot the first assistant director thanks all concerned for a great job and heads off to their next gig.

[Click here to view interview with assistant director Killian Maguire](#)

## Production runner

Although the runner is an entry-level position in the film industry, it requires someone with excellent personal and professional qualities. The job can open the door to many other positions on films. The runner is in touch with every

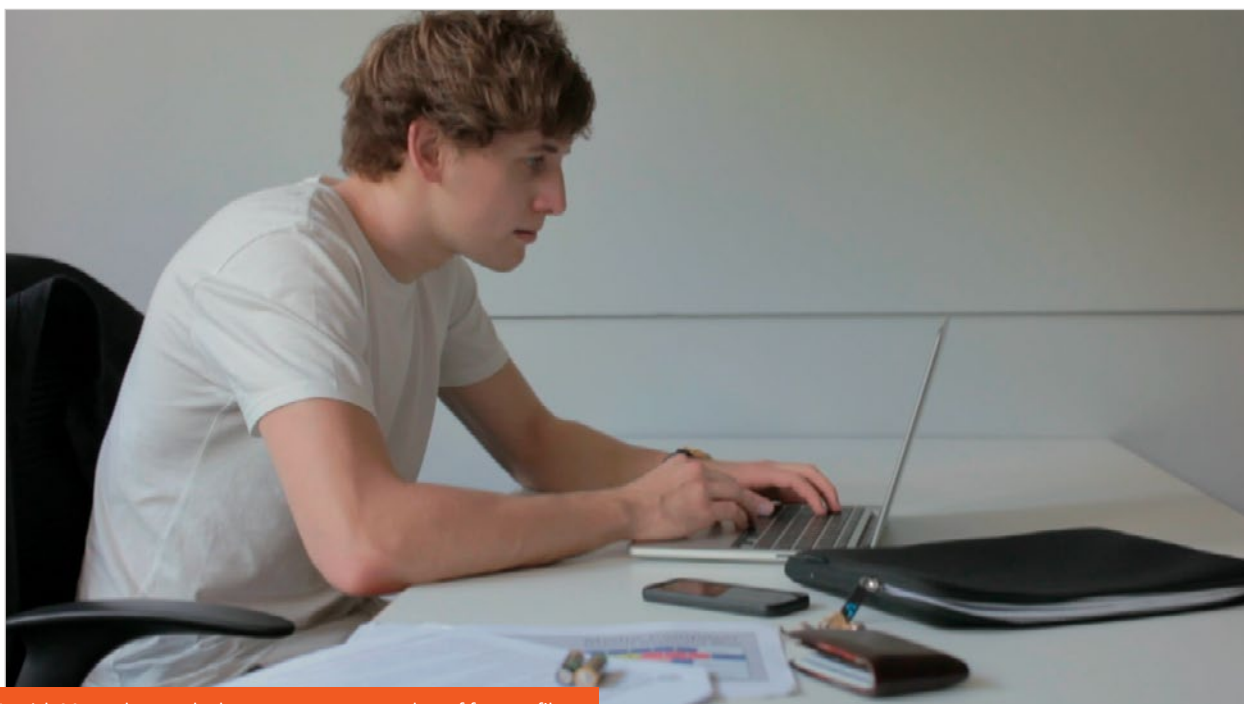
department, and has the opportunity to decide what his or her next professional step will be, and to make a good impression on heads of department and other senior crew who can recommend and hire crew for forthcoming projects.

Many runners enter the industry through work experience, and then move from project to project by developing good relationships with the rest of the crew, and by networking within the crew and in the wider industry. Often they will have some prior experience, for example on student films or short films.

A mid-range feature film employs one or two runners in the production department and another in the art department. The production hires a suitable vehicle for each runner, probably station wagons for the production runners and a van for the art department runner. Runners, however, are not always on the road. They spend a fair part of each day in the production office or art department, helping out with photocopying, preparing and recording postage, doing lunch runs and generally making themselves useful.

In the production department, the runner works at the direction of the production coordinator. Together they work out a plan for the day based on when items are required, and the geography of the city. This plan is often changed by sudden urgent requests, and a good runner is skilled at re-prioritising tasks. The changes are always made in consultation with the production coordinator who needs to know where the runner is at all times.

The runner is one of the first people to start on the film, because the production office has to be running efficiently from the very first day of pre-production. Office furniture has to be



Hamish Mason has worked as a runner on a number of feature films.



set up, office equipment installed and running, keys cut and logged, stationery unpacked and stored, basic kitchen supplies bought. A runner who can help set up computers and get them communicating always makes a great first impression.

In the early weeks of pre-production, the runner's main tasks are to provide support and refreshments for the many meetings and to pick up items that the various departments require, such as additional stationery, perhaps fabric samples for the costume department, always coffee, tea, sugar, milk, biscuits. The location manager may ask the runner to drive to and from an outer-city location, to check distance and driving time. In Australia, union rules stipulate that if a location is further than twenty kilometres from the production office, the crew must be paid travel time.

As the cast is confirmed, the runner's work starts to involve the actors, and a second runner may join the crew at this stage. Actors need to be transported to and from makeup and costume meetings and rehearsals. They may need to be taken to training sessions for their role, such as horse-riding lessons or violin tuition.

In the final week of pre-production, the runner provides support for the camera tests, distributes notices to nearby residents at locations, collects specially made costumes and always keeps the busy production office fed and watered.

The daily call sheet determines the overall shape of the runner's day, but changes usually occur as the day proceeds. The runner picks up cast and brings them to set (not the first actors who go to costume and makeup - they travel with the assistant directors). The runner brings the actors needed second in the day. During the morning, the runner is likely to be picking up and returning camera or lighting equipment hired for the day, or delivering paperwork between set, office and editors.

Although the runner may spend time on set each day, he or she does not have a role in the shooting crew. The reason is that the runner may need to leave set urgently at any stage - to pick up a replacement if a piece of equipment breaks down, to fetch some additional ice or milk for the unit department, to take home an actor whose work has finished before the end of the shooting day.

The afternoon is driven by the demands of the next day's call sheet. The runner may have to provide further support for the location manager with letterboxing or checking directions. At some stage of the day, the runner has to sit down with a pile of receipts to reconcile his or her cash float with the production accountant and get the petty cash topped up. The production team always welcomes support in printing and photocopying the call sheet, and as soon as these are ready, the runner hurries to set with them.

At the end of the shooting day the runner collects the camera cards and hard drives from the data wrangler and takes them to the cutting room, and on the way may drop some of the actors at home.

The main task of the runner during post-production is to wrap the film, and the production office. Time for this is short. The production team, including the runner, only works on the film for one or two weeks after the shoot wraps.

Hired items are checked and returned - walkie talkies, monitors, printers, the photocopier, makeup mirrors, wardrobe racks. The runner may assist with the sale of remaining properties and costumes. He or she also helps the production team scan, file and organise the paperwork that will ultimately be required for delivery of the film. They pass the delivery documentation over to the producer. Finally, the production team will hand over a clean, empty production office to their landlords or the next production.

[Click here to view interview with production runner Hamish Mason](#)

## Camera assistant

Australia has a long and proud tradition of great cinematographers working both in Australia and internationally, including Academy Award® winners John Seale (*The English Patient*), Dean Semler (*Dances with Wolves*) and Andrew Lesnie (*The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*). Most of these talented cinematographers started their career as a camera assistant and worked their way up through the ranks of the camera department.

Like all other departments on a film, the camera department has a hierarchy. The director of photography, usually referred to as the cinematographer, is head of this department. They work collaboratively with the director and production designer to devise and maintain the "look" of the film. The lighting department and the grips work under the direction of the director of photography. The DOP works closely with other departments as well, especially the visual effects department if the film contains a high proportion of computer generated imagery. The DOP is employed for most of pre-production to work with the director.

The DOP selects his or her team very carefully, on the basis of skill and work ethic. Most major films have one, perhaps two camera operators, who physically handle the camera during each shot, while the director of photography has the overall view, usually on a video monitor. Each camera has a focus puller whose primary responsibility is to maintain a sharp image of the subject or action being filmed. This may involve changing the focus as an actor moves from place to place within a shot.

The camera team includes the camera assistant, a video split operator and a data wrangler. During the final week before shoot the team conduct technical and creative tests. Technical tests are carried out on the camera, lenses and filters to ensure everything is working. The creative work can involve makeup and costume tests with the cast, and also tests of any in-camera effects planned for the film. The camera crew needs to pack and ready the camera truck for the shoot and purchase any expendables required, such as tapes, gels or reflectors.

During the shoot, the duties of each team member are very clearly defined so that the workflow is as smooth and accurate as possible.

Additional casual camera crew may be required for some scenes, such as stunts, large crowds, action scenes or when specialist camera crew are needed to meet the demands of the script, such as underwater photography or steadycam shots.

The camera assistant has two main responsibilities. First, they make sure the required camera equipment is available for each shot and in peak working condition. Second, they mark each shot with a clapper board so that everyone concerned, and especially the editor, can easily locate any given set-up and take.

When they are on set, some of their other duties include keeping track of equipment, putting down marks for the actors to stand on so the camera can be focused appropriately, keeping camera notes and maintaining equipment.

On top of all of this, it is expected that a decent assistant will be able to anticipate a number of those demands before they become problems.

[Click here to view interview with camera assistant Jack Mayo](#)

## Hair and makeup artist

An actor's first hour of the day is often spent in hair and makeup. In many ways, this is one of the most important parts of the day as, with the help of accomplished hair and makeup artists, they begin to inhabit the character who will appear on screen.

The makeup and hair department is usually much smaller than other departments on a film. They work closely with the actors physically and emotionally.

On a very big film, with a larger makeup and hair crew, the main actors may each have their own exclusive makeup artist. Very big stars bring their makeup artist with them from shoot to shoot and a specific makeup artist and hairdresser will be nominated as part of the star's contract.

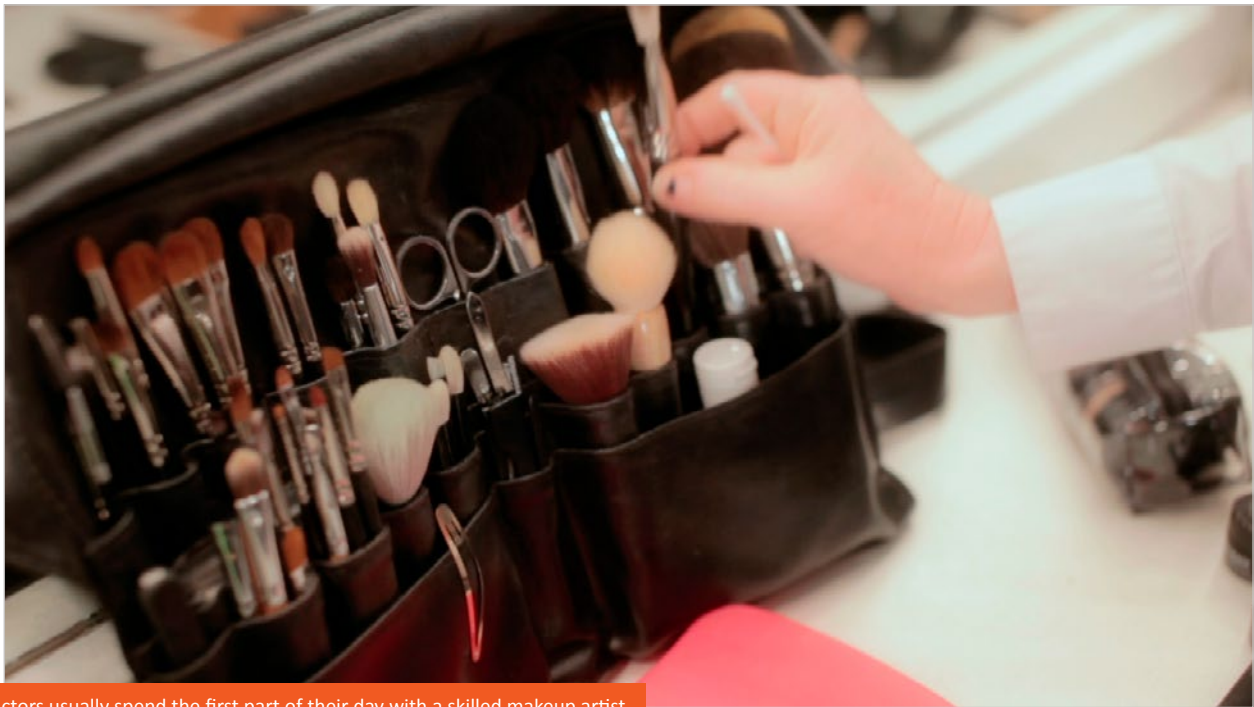
The makeup and hairdressing crew have usually completed an apprenticeship or specialist training, working in salons, before they join the film or television industry. Some people who make the change find it a terrible shock. Like many jobs in the film industry, there is no "glamour"; the hours are long and they often find themselves working in extreme conditions, such as heat or rain.

For those who love it, it's a delight. There's always a new challenge, new stories to interpret and new characters to create. Working with a dedicated team, they are creating a product that will move, excite and entertain audiences worldwide.

The makeup and hairdressing crew start full-time work fairly late in pre-production, but they are sent the script once the job is confirmed. This gives them time to analyse the script, break out its key elements, and begin to explore the characters.



The camera assistant sets up equipment and operates the clapper board.



Actors usually spend the first part of their day with a skilled makeup artist.

If the film is a period drama like *The Great Gatsby* or has a definite visual style, the key makeup artist and hairdresser will do extensive research and planning. In some cases, like *Dances with Wolves*, they may have to do historical or anthropological research.

If they are available, makeup and hair crew may be paid a small fee to attend early script and production meetings to monitor the decisions and start planning. Does a character age over the span of the story? Is there substantial filming in water? Are wigs required for stunt doubles? Will blood and bruises be required for fight scenes? Does the actor need to gain or lose weight?

The key makeup artist and hairdresser start full-time pre-production when casting is confirmed. First they meet with the actors and directors to tease out the nature of the character. At the same time, they break down the script in detail, especially changes that occur as the story proceeds – ageing, injury, hair growth, beard growth – so they can track the exact story day for each scene, and [maintain continuity](#) on hair and makeup.

The makeup artist and hairdresser then have a longer meeting with the actor, who contributes his or her suggestions for the character, based on their interpretation and research. The meeting also covers practicalities such as allergies and preferences, and identifies any preliminary work required. The actor may need salon facials to improve skin condition before close-ups, a hair colour change for the shoot and wigs or hair extensions. All these arrangements and appointments are put in place.

Once the overall style is set, the actors come in for a preliminary makeup and hair session and present some “looks” to the producer, director and production designer. The chosen looks are photographed and kept for reference for the shoot.

In the last week of pre-production the cast comes in for a full makeup session that is recorded in camera tests, for the final approval of the producer and director. The makeup and hairdressing crew pack their specially fitted out caravan and are ready for a very early start on the first day of shooting.

During the shoot, the days have a regular pattern for the makeup and hair team. They are called to set at least an hour and a half before the main crew call, and start preparing the actors in the order that the second assistant director has set out on the call sheet.

As soon as one of the makeup and hair crew has finished with the last actor, they remain on standby on set, keeping an eye on the makeup and hair as the day proceeds and attending to the actors just before each shot when the first assistant director calls for final checks.

Other work may be required for that day’s scenes. A fight scene needs blood and bruises applied, and later scenes with this character will have to show wounds and bruises healing, even if they’re scheduled to be shot before the fight.

On occasion a specialist makeup artist is employed to create, for example, a scarred face or a ghastly wound. These are [prosthetic makeup artists](#). They work closely with the special effects crew and the visual effects team.

Once the shoot is over, the makeup and hair crew give all the reference and continuity photographs to the production department, in case there are any pick ups or re-shoots. They wash their brushes and sponges, tidy up the makeup caravan, pack their kit and go off to replenish their supplies and, like many others on the crew, wait for the next phone call.

[Click here to view interview with hair & makeup artist Bec Taylor](#)

## Vehicle supervisor

The most valuable resource on a film is time. On a modest film, an hour lost on set can cost up to \$5,000. On a big budget film - with a highly-paid cast, numerous extras, a big crew, shot on location, using big lighting and crane rigs – that lost hour can cost a lot more.

The most frequent cause of delay on film sets is vehicle breakdown. On a film with even a moderate number of vehicles scripted, a vehicle supervisor is desirable. On a big film, it is absolutely essential.

The vehicle supervisor is part of the art department, accountable to the production designer for the choice and modification of vehicles, and to the art director for their cost, organisation, transportation and maintenance.

Vehicle supervisors have generally trained in a different field such as motor mechanics or industrial design. They often work their way up the ranks of the film crew through their skills and their understanding of what the job involves. And it can be a huge job. Think of the number of period vehicles required for *The Great Gatsby*, some of them imported from the USA. The *Mad Max* films make massive demands on

the vehicle crew. The *Fury Road* vehicles, for example, were created and modified in Sydney, shipped to Namibia for shooting, then back to Sydney for additional filming.

Early in pre-production, the vehicle supervisor breaks down the script to establish the vehicle requirements and then meets with the director, the production designer and the director of photography. During this meeting, they “cast” vehicles. What type of cars will the characters drive? What colour will they be? Do they need to be modified for stunts? Do they need extra-bright headlights to be visible on film during night shoots? Do they blow up with the bad guys at the end of the movie?

Period films pose challenges for the vehicle supervisor. There are many vintage car clubs, but the owners take great care of their cars. A 1940s ute today won't look like a hard-working farm vehicle of the 1940s. Owners are often reluctant to let others drive the car, transport it long distances, drive it on dusty roads or leave it on location.

The vehicle supervisor works closely with other crew – the production office for scheduling vehicle transport to and from set, the first assistant director for the placement and movement of vehicles, the stunt coordinator for stunt and safety modifications. The grips department is very important - they provide camera rigs and tracking vehicles for scenes that take place in cars. Generally actors don't drive the cars and the grips will hire [low loaders](#) so they can shoot cars that appear to move at the normal height but are in fact being towed.

Although the cast is unlikely to drive the vehicles, the vehicle supervisor may need to train and rehearse the actors so that on screen it appears that the character is actually controlling the car.



Vehicle supervisors manage the picture vehicles on a film set.

Before the shoot begins, the vehicles are all prepped so they are in working order. If cars are to be driven on the roads, stunt assistant personnel have been hired as drivers, or cast to double the actors. Some cars have been purchased because they are needed for a number of weeks or are scripted to be damaged. Other cars have been hired for the day from film car specialists or individual owners, who have been made aware of the shoot date, time and place, or who have been told that a car transporter truck will take the vehicles to location. Based on the shoot schedule, the production department will rent a low loader and tracking vehicle for the scenes where the actors apparently “drive” the cars. If filming is to take place on a public road, traffic controllers will be required. The location manager coordinates a traffic plan with local council and police, and alerts residents to the filming activity.

As with others in the art department, the vehicle supervisor’s daily tasks are determined by the schedule and call sheet.

Consider a shoot a day involving a total of ten modern cars of various kinds, some on low loaders and others as either moving or stationary background vehicles. The vehicle supervisor liaises with the owners, drivers and production coordinator. If driving doubles are required, the stunt assistant personnel arrive early and go to costume and makeup so they can be made to resemble the actors they are doubling.

When the vehicles arrive on location, the vehicle supervisor gives them a last-minute check, and the drivers go through final details with the owner. The first assistant director and the vehicle supervisor set the cars for the first shot, and they rehearse. With all the crew and cast, including traffic controllers and safety officer, fully briefed, shooting can begin.

From time to time, things go wrong, so the vehicles team always includes at least one experienced mechanic, and a support truck with a wide range of car parts, tyres, patches and paints.

Even if all goes smoothly, filming with moving vehicles is a slow process. A simple tracking shot of actors chatting in a car will involve a long string of vehicles – a lead car to be sure the road is clear, the low loader with the “hero” car on its trailer, the tracking vehicle with the director and camera and sound crew and a follow vehicle to warn traffic coming behind. For every take, this convoy has to find an area where it can safely turn around and return to reset the shot.

Just imagine what was involved for the vehicle supervisor for the tank car chase sequence in *Fast and the Furious 6*! It’s little wonder that in this digital age blue screening has become a popular solution to shooting vehicle action. Have a look at this behind the scenes video from [The Great Gatsby](#).

After the shoot, purchased cars are registered as sold or scrapped. If an owner has allowed modifications to a hired

vehicle, these are reversed and the vehicle returned. The vehicle supervisor keeps a record of useful and interesting cars, and people, for future films.

[Click here to view interview with vehicle supervisor Geoff Naylor](#)

## Stunt performer

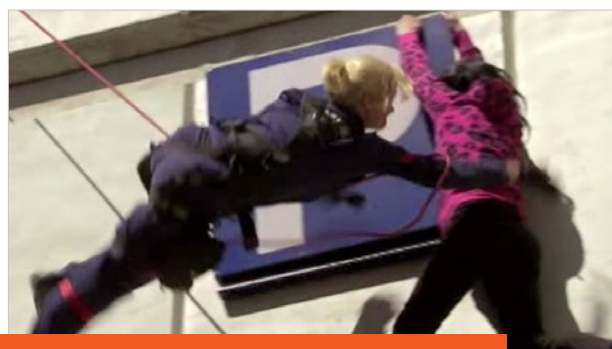
When you see an onscreen actor involved in a fall, an explosion, a gun battle, a crash or a fight, it is more than likely you are watching the work of a stunt performer. The stunties, as they are called, take on action shots that pose risks to the safety of the actor or that need specialist skills or training to undertake.

Because of the high level of risk involved, the stunt and safety team is subject to a rigorous accreditation system administered by the National Stunt Committee which is part of the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA). Producers must ensure that only properly accredited stunt personnel work on their productions.

The MEAA has a very precise definition of the word ‘stunt’: “Identifiable stunt means stunt action performed that requires any extraordinary skill or endured discomfort as part of the performance. Examples include but are not limited to: fire burns, near explosions, vehicle impacts, high falls, stair falls, horse falls, flying rigs, air rams and ratchet rigs, precision stunt driving.”

There are four grades of stunt personnel:

- Stunt coordinator. Qualified and skilled to arrange and oversee the production of a stunt.
- Assistant stunt coordinator. Assists the stunt coordinator with administration, such as stunt budgets, and the set-up and execution of stunts and hazardous action.
- Stunt actor. A suitably graded, qualified and skilled stunt performer.
- Stunt action person. Graded, qualified and skilled to perform in background action and group stunt work under the supervision of a stunt coordinator.



Ingrid Kleinig performs a dangerous stunt on location.

## *During pre-production, the stunt coordinator analyses the script to identify stunts and consults with the director.*

There are a lot of rules that need to be followed to ensure safety on a film set. Safety consultants and supervisors provide specialist knowledge, expertise and advice to minimise risk to crew, cast and the general public.

Every film must commission a safety report prior to shoot, and must follow these recommendations. A safety supervisor must be present for any stunt or other hazardous action, such as filming on public roads, construction at heights or contact sport rehearsals.

The qualifications and skills of people in the stunt team are broad, reflecting the different kinds of action they carry out. Different performers specialise in different skills, and the stunt coordinator recommends suitable stunt performers to the director and producer. The skills might include:

- Body control. Gymnastics, diving, skiing, martial arts, boxing, wrestling, fencing.
- Heights. Climbing, parachuting, hang-gliding.
- Vehicles. Driving licence, and advanced driving courses.
- Animals. Dressage, jumping, rodeo.
- Water. Life-saving, diving, yachting, surfing.

During pre-production, the stunt coordinator analyses the script to identify stunts then meets with the producer, director and first assistant director to establish how they envisage the stunt appearing on screen.

The stunt coordinator works out exactly how the stunts will be performed and discusses the costs with the production manager. These costs might include location preparation (e.g. checking for underwater hazards), the number of stunt performers required and stunt equipment, such as mats, harnesses and pull rigs. They also establish the stunt loadings, the extra payment that the stunt performer will receive for particularly hazardous or difficult work, and the number of times a stunt can be performed. An especially difficult or dangerous stunt – a stair fall, a fire stunt, a car roll – may be performed only once, and the production hires additional cameras and crew to cover the angles the editor needs.

The director and stunt coordinator cast any stunt doubles required, and consult with the actors involved. Many actors know and recommend the stunt performers who double them regularly.

The stunt coordinator works with many other departments and crew, including:

- Makeup and hair for the wigs required.
- The costume department for extra costumes needed for the doubles or for costumes to be damaged in fights or explosions or gunfire.
- The art department for breakaway furniture or candy glass in windows.
- The armourer for the effect of gunshots.
- The visual effects department to coordinate rigging and wire work for later electronic removal.
- The vehicle coordinator about necessary vehicle modifications.

The stunt coordinator choreographs action, a fight for example, to establish exactly what the actors will do and when the stunt performers will step in. Everything is thoroughly rehearsed.

A safety officer and a nurse are always on set on stunt days, and the requirements are set out in detail on the call sheet, which might also have a special safety briefing.

When a stunt is to be performed, the crew is on especially high alert. They are very conscious that the stunt performer is at considerable risk of injury.

On the day, the first assistant director briefs the cast and crew in detail, with additional input from the stunt coordinator and safety officer. They go through the sequence of events so everyone is fully aware of what to expect, and in the correct place at the right time.

Before rolling camera, the first assistant director double checks that all cast and crew are fully prepared, especially the stunt performers, and then the familiar sequence – final checks, roll sound, sound rolling, mark it, and the director calls, “Action!” Once the shot has been performed, everyone on set holds their final position until the first assistant director goes to the stunt performers and checks they are okay. The first assistant director gives the all clear. If it’s a big stunt well performed, the crew give a well-deserved round of applause.

Generally, filmmakers try to shoot the stunts required during the main shoot, when there is a full complement of support staff available, and especially when the lead actors are available to work with the stunt team to create a realistic blend in the action. However it’s sometimes necessary to do pickups and re-shoots, and the entire stunt planning and apparatus has to be set up again.

Many big films run a second unit concurrently with the main unit, to film major stunt action. This will involve a second unit director, stunt doubles and performers, and a whole separate crew. The second unit on a big action movie can often be bigger than the crew required to shoot a medium-budget feature film.

[Click here to view interview with stunt performer Ingrid Kleinig](#)

## Editor

The editor has two key tasks to achieve: to ensure the story makes sense, and to cut the footage in the best possible way so that the film moves and entertains its audience.

The career path for many editors starts with work experience, acting as assistant editor for short films, television programs or low-budget features, then moves on to major features films and big TV dramas.

A feature film employs a number of different kinds of editors. The main editor cuts the picture. The editor may work with one or two assistant editors, depending on the scale of the project. Once the image is locked, the sound editors start work on the dialogue and effects tracks, and the music editor lays in the music tracks. The cut image, and all the tracks, are pulled together in the sound mixes.

Let's focus on the role and tasks of the picture editor, who is the most senior editor and is head of department.

In pre-production, the editor works closely with the director to refine the creative elements of the film. They confer on the story structure and script, and on the pace of the editing, as this will determine the nature of the shots – fast and frantic or slow and reflective?

The editor is also assembling his or her team of assistant editors who check and refine the equipment supplied in the cutting rooms hired for the production. The assistant editors are also involved in the liaison between the on-set crew and the post-production teams, to be sure all the computer codes will talk to each other, and that the film meets the technical specifications for delivery.

If the film contains a high proportion of computer generated imagery, like *The Great Gatsby*, the editor works closely in

pre-production with the visual effects supervisor. Detailed storyboards and pre-visualisations may be created as a result of these discussions.

During the shoot, the editor starts receiving rushes, assembling each scene as the shoot proceeds. The director and key crew are given feedback throughout this process. There might be a shot missing – a character falls off a ladder, but we haven't got the close-up of his foot slipping off the rung. An otherwise good scene might be made great by another close-up. The relevant people are advised and the crew picks up these shots or organises a reshoot.

At the end of each week, the producer and director view an assembly of cut scenes with the editor, and might make further creative adjustments as the shoot proceeds.

During the shoot, the producer might request other work-in-progress cuts from the edit team: for a festival submission, for an advance teaser trailer to go into cinemas, to support a valuable publicity opportunity. And, three quarters of the way through the shoot, to screen to the tired cast and crew so they can see the results of their hard work and long hours, and return energised for the sprint to the finishing line.

In post-production, the long hours in a dark room begin. Following the shoot, the editor will assemble the film in script order, using the best takes as selected by the director.

In the following weeks, the director and editor work together in the cutting room to refine the cut. Some scenes are shortened, some removed. Even the sequence of telling the story may change. Every decision increases the power of the film – for emotion, for comedy, for tension, for euphoria. At the scheduled point, the director and editor call the producer in for a look at the rough cut.

The producer will request some changes. This may be for creative reasons, such as cutting a scene to increase tension, or for practical considerations such as the overall running time or potential classification issues.

With this fine cut complete, the producer screens the film to the distributor and investors, who usually request a tweak here and there. The distributor is usually focused on the ability to screen the film to the widest possible audience.

*“Post-production is usually the busiest time for the composer, whether or not existing or previously composed music has been used in the shoot.”*

Once the fine cut is locked, the editor's main task is finished, but if the budget allows he or she stays on to insert the visual effects, liaise with the sound editing team and the sound mixers, support the director and cinematographer through the colour grading process and give technical support and advice as the release copies of the film are produced.

[Click here to view interview with editor Jason Ballantine](#)

## Music composer

Music plays a huge role in movies, shaping the audience's understanding of the story and engaging them with the performances so that they are enthralled by what they are seeing on screen. The composer has the job of creating this music. It could be songs, but is much more often background music or underscore.

Most movies contain a great deal of original music, especially created for the film – that's the job of the composer. A common career path for composers might be: studying at a specialist music high school, further music or film study, composing music for short films, and gradually gaining more opportunities to work on bigger, more demanding projects.

Not all film composers have formal training. Many are self-taught. Some work their way up through the ranks composing for short films made by friends or students. Others have an established career in serious concert composition and are found by a producer or director who feels that their particular kind of music is right for their film's needs.

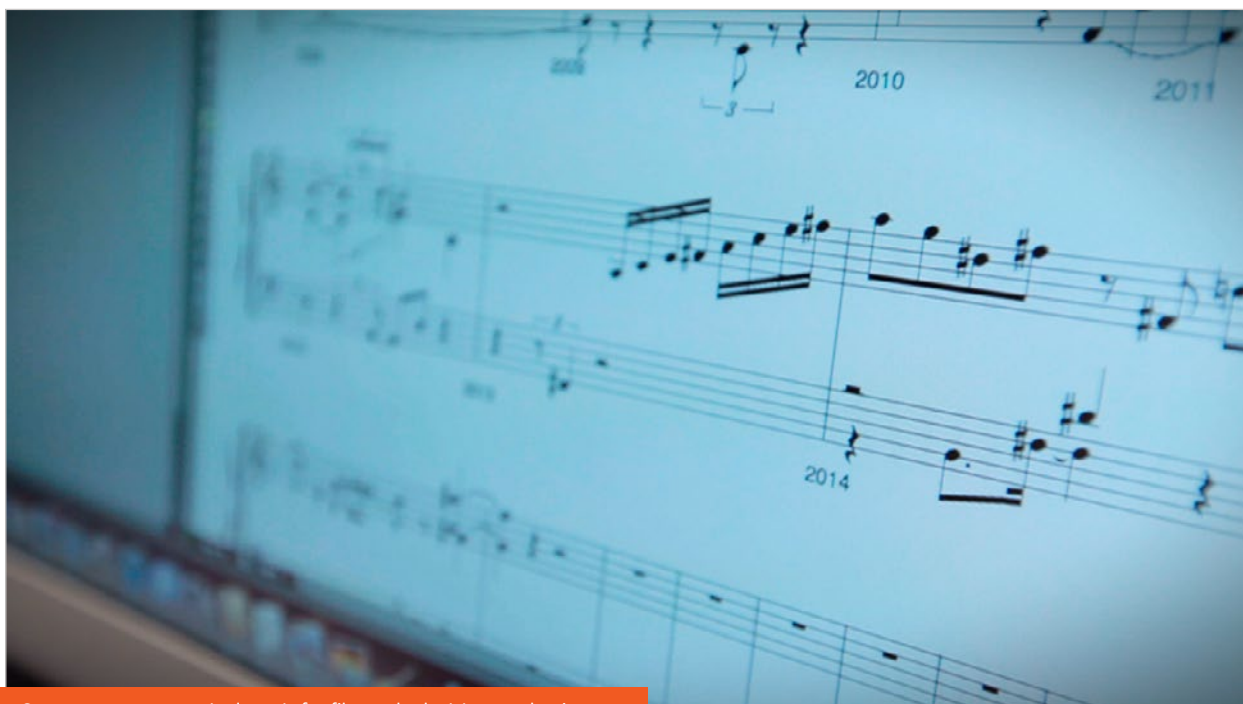
A feature film might use music from a number of different sources.

Like most jobs in film and TV production, a film composer is a freelance job. That is, you'll be your own boss and be seeking contract work from a wide variety of clients, mostly film producers. It is rarely a salaried position.

In pre-production, or before, the composer reads the script and meets the director to discuss the creative approach to the film, and the specific role of music. In some cases, the composer will wait for the film's picture edit to be finalised or locked before undertaking the bulk of the music work.

If the composed music is required for the shoot, on a dance movie for example the composer starts work prior to the shoot commencing, under great pressure, because at the very least, rough "demo tracks" have to be available for choreography, dance lessons, rehearsals and then the shoot. There is a great deal of technical knowledge required for the correct synchronisation of such sequences. A highly skilled music editor or picture editor is often part of this process.

Many films incorporate both existing music and original music composed specifically for the film by the composer. Many films employ a music supervisor to coordinate the music. If existing music is to be used in the film, the music supervisor, briefed by the producer, director and sometimes the composer, has to source and legally clear the rights to use the required music. The music supervisor's role is complementary to that of the composer, and can often be creatively significant, helping the director select appropriate songs. If the film is based on a stage musical, such as *The Sapphires* or *Bran Nue Dae*, the composer thinks about additional music to weave in and around the existing material.



Composers create original music for film and television productions.



If it is necessary to see an actor play an existing or composed piece of music in the film, like Russell Crowe in *Master and Commander*, the composer may be involved in finding a teacher who can transform an actor into a convincing classical violinist in just a few weeks.

Production is usually the quietest time for the composer. If the music has been pre-recorded, some final adjustments may be required. Sometimes the composer will provide a click track that sets the rhythm for performers to dance to, for example, while their lines of dialogue are recorded. Or the producer might request music for work-in-progress cuts for a festival submission, for an advance teaser trailer to go into the cinemas.

Post-production is usually the busiest time for the composer, whether or not existing or previously composed music has been used in the shoot. In fact often, this is the first time a composer is brought onto a project.

During the edit period, the composer may visit the cutting room to discuss a particular sequence with the director and editor but the main work starts when the fine cut is locked.

Once the image is locked “music spotting sessions” are held. The producer, director and editor watch the film with the composer, scene by scene, sometimes shot by shot, to give a comprehensive brief to the composer. This brief ranges from where music should start and stop, to detailed emotional descriptions and intentions the director hopes to achieve. Often a temporary score made up of pre-existing scores would have been used by the editor during the edit to help those watching the film in progress to get an idea of what the final film might sound like. This temp music is often a good indication of the director’s intention.

The music is generally composed electronically with music software called sequencers, such as GarageBand, Logic, Cubase, Digital Performer or Protools. On lower-budget films, the final music is presented only in this electronic format. The quality can be surprisingly good and can often service a film’s needs as effectively as live musicians.

For a major film, the music is usually recorded with live musicians, from a small ensemble to a full symphony orchestra. The recording takes place in a professional studio.

A typical musician call is three hours and usually achieves 10 to 15 minutes of recorded music depending on the complexity of the score. An orchestral contractor can be employed to hire and schedule the required musicians. The music production team may also include a composer’s assistant, studio coordinator, orchestrator, copyists, sound engineers and studio assistants.

Once the composed music is completed, the music editor will cut it together with the image and the existing music and deliver the mixed tracks to the sound mixer for incorporation

in the final, full soundtrack of the movie. On lower-budget productions this will all be done by the composer.

The final job of the composer or music supervisor is to create the music cue sheets, which form part of the film’s delivery materials. The music cue sheets document exactly what music is played throughout the film, and what musicians are heard. This very important document allows copyright societies worldwide to distribute royalties to composers and musicians when their musical performances are used in film and television.

Music can often be a significant element in the marketing of a film. Producers and production companies dream of having a hit single from their film shooting up the pop charts just as their film is released. Sadly this is a rarity, although with the reduction in distribution costs there are creative new avenues to use the music to promote the film.

If a soundtrack album is produced, a new master may have to be mixed specifically for this release. These costs are preferably borne by the record company or the production company.

Film music can be a solitary pursuit for lower-budget productions, or an enormous team challenge requiring many creative and dedicated people. Ultimately, music offers an audience a powerful, resonant enhancement of the viewing experience.

[Click here to view interview with music composer Guy Gross](#)

## Visual effects supervisor

The visual effects supervisor has two main tasks. Firstly, to create digitally the images and action that cannot be achieved in live action filming, and secondly to enhance the images that are acquired live in the camera.

Although computers have been used in film and television post-production since the early 1990s, there has been a rapid increase in the last five years. The screen industry has embraced digital cameras and digital distribution in cinemas, and at the same time there has been growth in the power and storage capacity available, and in the speed and accuracy of moving digital images and sharing files around the world.

Australian visual effects companies are very successful internationally and the skilled work they achieve can be exchanged with international production partners. Australian digital effects work can be seen in films like *The Great Gatsby*, *Gravity*, *The Wolverine*, *Australia*, *Unbroken* and *Gods of Egypt*. Employees in the VFX industry are highly mobile, with many Australians working overseas and many international employees coming to Australia to work on the big, effects-heavy movies mentioned.



In pre-production, the VFX supervisor analyses the script to determine VFX needs.

VFX supervisors primarily have a background in film editing, computer animation, compositing, production or producing. They are technically experienced, creative and also well versed providing direction and leadership to film crews.

The VFX supervisor is the linchpin between what the director, cast and crew can achieve on set, and what the VFX team can do in post-production.

Depending on the complexity of the film and its budget, a VFX team can range from one to several hundred people. The size and scale of the film is established when the film is broken down at the initial script stage. At this point the VFX supervisor, the VFX Producer and the film's producer can make an estimate of the VFX budget.

It is normal that the VFX supervisor and VFX producer will then approach a number of VFX companies to study the script breakdown and provide competitive bids to produce the VFX scenes. Each VFX studio gauges how big a team is required and the time frame required to complete the work. This information is fed back to the VFX supervisor and Producer who then re-assess and see how the quoted work will fit into their overall schedule and budget.

The VFX supervisor and producer work out which studio is best suited to the production and commission the work. Some VFX studios may be best known for a particular kind of work, and have a digital pipeline that's already been developed for water simulation, or dust storms, or are just overall better suited to big complex builds. This process saw an Australian company chosen to do the burning dress in *The Hunger Games*.

## Case Study: The Great Gatsby

*The Great Gatsby* was a unique set up. It was designed on the basis of employing a small group of visual effects artists, dubbed the SWAT Team, and a large VFX company.

The SWAT team was part of director Baz Luhrmann's production company. It included thirty people all highly skilled and specifically employed for their craft. They worked very closely with the VFX supervisor producing all the previsualisations, technical visualisations, temporary composites, smaller computer generated builds and composites as well as setting up the entire colour pipeline. It gave the VFX supervisor flexibility and full control which was important as the scale of the film increased and the number of VFX studios involved also grew.

Larger companies were employed to produce the heavy lifting CG builds and shots that required large render farms and fast infrastructure. Each of the studios was specifically employed to produce certain sections of the film that the VFX supervisor and producer felt they were best suited to.

In total, *The Great Gatsby* featured over 1500 shots produced by seven visual effects companies around the world.

Depending on the nature of the film, the VFX supervisor can play a significant role in development, working closely with the director and the producer to create characters and plan action sequences.

**Previsualisation** is an essential part of visual effects. With the assistance of computer animation a scene can be totally planned and edited well before shoot. This provides information for all departments on how the scene is to be

shot - such as the use of blue/green screens, models, matte painting and lighting - and what production requirements are necessary for the shoot. Ultimately it shows the director, the production teams and the actors what coverage is necessary to achieve the final VFX shot. Previsualisations sometimes form part of the package that a producer will pitch to investors to raise finance for the film.

Once the film is financed, the work intensifies. The VFX supervisor works with every department to ensure the live action crew can shoot all the elements necessary to achieve the director's intention for the visual effects:

- they liaise with the production department to decide on scheduling, costing and budgetary decisions
- they work closely with the first assistant director to develop the schedule, decide on crew and any other special requirements
- they work closely with the camera department to ensure technical requirements are met
- they also work with the art department to ensure that the construction of sets and props works seamlessly with visual effects shots
- [lidar scanning](#) provides information on how many vehicles are required in a shot, and where they need to move from and to.
- in the film *Australia*, the visual effects supervisor [consulted](#) with the animal wranglers to create a vast cattle stampede
- provides the stunt coordinator detailed information on how a scene is intended to play out, and what personnel and equipment will be required
- often work together with actors to capture performances required to create digital characters, like these examples from [Dawn of the Planet of the Apes](#) and [The Hobbit](#)

In addition, the VFX department itself is busy at work, creating complex models and or builds that require months of preparation before the first shot turns over. They are also sourcing reference shots, creating backgrounds and working on more detailed previz and tech viz for each of the departments.

On a live action film that will use significant visual effects, the VFX supervisor ensures that a member of his or her team liaises with production to ensure that all the requirements are on the call sheet whenever a VFX scene is scheduled, and is on set for the shoot.

During production, the VFX team continues work on previz and tech viz throughout the shoot, as required. They will also start on post-production. If there are shots that require a full computer generated build, the designs, previz, concepts and duration of the shot length is worked out meticulously and turned over to the VFX team to start on during the shoot, so that the shots are ready to be included in the first cut.

In many cases, and certainly in big VFX films, the VFX teams will be working on specific shots while the film is being edited. The process of passing the effects shots to the editor is called turn over, and is closely monitored. The edit is checked daily to be sure that no shots are omitted from the scene or extended. A database of all shots is logged and each shot is given its own unique identification. At the point of turn over the VFX supervisor and VFX producer work closely with the VFX teams, supervising and overseeing the builds, and direction of each shot.

The VFX supervisor has a wide understanding of both technical and creative decisions, and stays with the film to the very end of post-production, refining and polishing effects through the grade and online process until the master is produced. The work may not end there, the VFX team may be involved in the creation of websites and games to support the film's release.

In contemporary filmmaking, the VFX supervisor has a crucial role, and a vast war chest of skilled artists, technicians and electronic weaponry to create an amazing screen experience.

[Click here to view interview with visual effects supervisor Chris Godfrey](#)

## Distribution executive

Film distribution companies range in size from the majors to the independents. In Australia, the major distributors are Australian-based companies who represent the Hollywood studios and whose film releases are mainly made by the studios.

Independent distributors license the rights to release a range of local and international films into Australian cinemas. These films come from all over the world and are usually made by smaller, independent production companies. Indie distributors often outsource some sales and marketing roles film by film and bring on people to work on a freelance or project basis.

*“Distributors, who often help to fund films, are responsible for the sales, publicity and marketing of films.”*

Distributors earn their money from a percentage of the revenue from the box office ticket sales at cinemas. Distributors sometimes share in other revenue streams – such as DVD or Blu-ray sales or rental, television broadcast, online sales or even from sales of the film to airlines and hotels.

The managing director is responsible for the overall campaigns of the films a distribution company releases. Essentially, he oversees the distribution strategy for the film, which involves an exhibition strategy devised with the sales department and a marketing strategy devised with the marketing department.

Managing directors generally work their way up the ranks through sales or marketing and have particular skills or expertise in one of those areas. Some are really hands-on, ideas people and some are leaders who delegate responsibility to their senior executives.

The role of managing director includes:

- corporate governance of the organisation, e.g. making sure the company complies with its duties and obligations
- maintaining relationships and regular communication with the senior executives and studio heads at their parent company or studio headquarters, which are mostly based in Los Angeles, or with film sales agents around the world.
- maintaining relationships with the producers and filmmakers whose films they release
- finding films to distribute
- finalising the marketing budget for each film release, which determines how much money can be spent on the campaign
- setting the release date for films.

While major distributors get their films from the studios, independent distribution companies need to acquire films to release. They may travel to film markets and festivals looking to buy the Australian distribution rights to films. Business takes place at festivals and markets like Cannes or the American Film Market where filmmakers are looking for the best distributor for their project, and distributors are looking for the best films for their local territory.

At some markets, bidding wars take place where a number of distributors are interested in a particular script of or finished film. This will drive up the cost of acquiring the rights to distribute the film.

Distributors may also do deals with local filmmakers to distribute their finished films or to co-produce the film, which means they put up some of the capital required to fund the film as well as managing the distribution of the film.

The ideal scenario for a filmmaker is to secure a distributor at the earliest stages of development. When a film is unable to secure a distributor, its chances of securing a theatrical release are diminished. Few filmmakers have the leverage to negotiate a multi-screen release on favourable terms with an exhibitor. Fewer still have the funds to finance a marketing campaign that might bring audiences to the cinema.

Attaching a distributor during development will also assist the producer to raise other finance for the film. Having a distributor attached is an essential criterion for securing Australian government funding.

Distributors want to be attached to potentially successful films and the managing director is at the forefront, reading scripts and looking for what they hope will be the next big hit in the cinema. When a distributor finds a film they want to distribute, they work closely with the producer and director to ensure that the film is developed, written and produced with the target audience in mind and to a budget that might allow revenue to be returned to all the participants - the bigger the film budget, the more money needs to be taken at the box office and via all other revenue streams, such as DVDs and TV sales.

The role of the distributor during the making of the film will vary, depending on the personalities of the producer, the managing director and the director. Some distributors may be engaged in the production process, guiding and supporting the film to be the best it can be, while also making sure that it remains appropriate for the intended audience. For example, the managing director might request removing language that might raise the classification rating for the film and block a large portion of the potential audience from seeing it in the cinema. Other distributors take a more hands-off approach, becoming more involved during the editing process.

The distributor may visit the set during filming and view the assembled footage and scenes in the edit room through all the edit stages. Distributor approval of the final edit of the film is sometimes a contractual obligation for the producer.

The managing director works closely with the sales team to determine the best date for a film's release and its optimal exhibition strategy, which includes how many screens, which locations and how many sessions they would ideally like the film to play. They arrange for exhibitors to see the film when it is finished. Screenings are often held in private theatres at the distributors' offices.

When the cinema release is determined, the distributor liaises with each exhibitor about the release strategy in the hope of achieving the best exposure for the film in cinema foyers and the screening of trailers.

Depending on the type of film, the size of the marketing budget and the availability of the actors, the film may premiere in key cities across the world, generating buzz and publicity and, hopefully, raising the audience's awareness. The managing director will need to consider whether film premieres and talent tours will be part of the local distribution strategy, weighing up the significant costs against the potential benefits.

The distribution company must submit the film to the Classification Board so it can be given a rating. An operations manager is responsible for managing the delivery of the film and the trailer to cinemas for every screening of the film in Australia.

[Click here to view interview with distribution executive Troy Lum](#)

## Marketing Manager

The marketing of a film is a crucial part of its distribution. Advertising, publicity and promotions come under the umbrella of marketing and this team is usually the largest department in a distribution company. They generally work reasonably closely with the sales department to maximise the profile for their films in cinemas, but it is in the areas of communicating with consumers and media in a bid to find the maximum potential audience for a film that the marketing department comes into its own.

The marketing manager is a key person in the team and works under the direction of the marketing director.

When a film is finished, the managing director usually sets a screening for all key marketing and sales staff and senior executives in their in-house theatre so everyone can see the film together. They often have a feedback session straight after the screening to hear the opinions of the staff about the film's strengths and challenges. This is the point at which ideas start to crystallise about who they should target the film to, what release date might suit the film best, what cinema locations they think it would work in, what sort of reviews it might attract, whether a talent tour would be beneficial and generally how to market the film.

It is really useful to have all key staff at that first screening because they generally represent a mix of demographics taking into account things such as gender, age, income, suburb and education, so their feedback provides valuable insights into marketing opportunities and pitfalls.

The marketing director has the job of harnessing that initial anecdotal feedback and using it to inform the development of the marketing campaign. The marketing director:

- works with MD and CFO to set marketing budget for film campaigns
- works with MD and Sales Director to determine overall distribution strategy
- works with marketing department to develop marketing strategy within parameters of overall distribution strategy and budget, keeping in mind exhibition strategy
- works with marketing counterparts at studio or Head Office to comply with requirements of worldwide marketing strategy
- works with filmmakers to develop trailer and poster if the film is not a studio title, but rather an acquisition (especially applies to Australian films)
- conducts a marketing brainstorming session, in which ideas are thrown into the mix and discussed for each different sub-category of marketing
- oversees the works of the advertising, publicity and promotions departments or employees
- oversees regular WIP (work-in-progress) meetings so the members of the marketing department can update each other on how the elements for the campaign are coming together; to troubleshoot; to problem solve

The marketing manager participates in most of the above activities to varying degrees. The set-up of marketing departments varies from distributor to distributor but effectively the difference is that the marketing director operates at a more strategic level and takes more responsibility for the establishment of the master marketing plan. The marketing manager is more hands-on and manages the execution of the plan, working in close partnership with the publicity and promotions staff and calling often on the advice and expertise of the advertising department, or agency, to supply information such as the ratings and audiences for TV shows so they can ensure the TV interviews and promotions they do are a suitable 'fit' for the film.

The marketing director will agree on a budget with the chief financial officer, which the managing director has to sign off on. The marketing manager generally recommends how their part of the overall marketing budget is best spent.

The marketing budgets for films vary depending on what the senior executives estimate the film can make at the box office.

### Paid advertising

The various departments within marketing work very closely together so following is a brief overview of what is involved in paid advertising, publicity and promotions.

Paid advertising falls under the umbrella of marketing and includes things like TV commercials, billboards, online banner ads, radio commercials and social media buys. The major distributors spend millions of dollars each year on advertising and often have large ad agencies taking care of their business.

Some distributors spend so much money on advertising that their agency gives them account managers who work in the distributor's own offices exclusively on their releases.

The advertising staff negotiate the most competitive rates and best placements for the distributor's ads; provide intelligence and data on print, TV, radio, digital and outdoor advertising and its reach and help distributors make informed decisions about the best way to spend their advertising budgets.

Studio-aligned distributors are generally provided with approved 'creative' – which means the ads themselves – and they get to localise the end boards with relevant release information but not the content of the ad itself, which usually requires a number of approvals from cast member's agents, filmmakers and the studio.

With an Australian film, a distributor has the opportunity to create the TV ad themselves, with input from their ad agency and the filmmakers.

## Publicity

The publicity department is responsible for dealing with media outlets to generate maximum positive editorial around a film's release, taking into account the target markets that have been agreed upon for the film. This includes:

- issuing press releases
- handling requests for interviews with talent
- liaising with studio publicists in LA to negotiate access to talent at US junkets
- managing publicity tours
- arranging red carpet premiere access during publicity tours
- negotiating with media to generate editorial and reviews
- arranging screenings of the film for media
- supplying video clips and still images from the film for broadcast, online or print media

## Promotions

The promotions manager pitches and negotiates third-party promotions, i.e. with an external company or brand associated with a film. In the case of studio films, worldwide promotions are often negotiated with car companies or electronics companies or fashion brands. In this instance the promotions manager in the Australian distribution office may make contact with the local office of the worldwide brand to see how they can work together to leverage that association to gain attention for the film.

The promotions staff also manage media-backed promotions, i.e. promo giveaways on radio to win tickets to a film or money-can't-buy prizes. When they pitch and negotiate promotions, they try to ensure the media outlet is the best

fit for the potential audience of the film. It is up to them to communicate the key messages of the film in the promotion, work with the media to determine the 'mechanic' (specific procedure entrants need to follow to enter the competition, e.g. take the best 'selfie' on a red carpet) and manage the logistics of the promotion (book flights and accommodation and Premiere tickets for the winners).

[Click here to view interview with marketing manager Heilan Bolton](#)

## Film programmer

A film programmer is responsible for choosing which films play, and how often they are shown, in their cinemas. Film programmers may work for a single cinema or an entire chain.

Many factors inform this decision-making process, including:

- what films are on offer from distributors and at what terms
- the running times of films
- how films are performing at a cinema location
- the particular tastes of audiences at a specific location.

Most film programmers will tell you that the best part of their job is watching hundreds of movies every year to decide which ones will screen in their cinema, based on which they think will most appeal to their cinema audiences.

The film programmer regards the cinema week as Thursday to Wednesday. New films open on a Thursday and generally, their first weekend box office is extremely important as it will dictate the film's sessions for the following week. Sometimes in this cut-throat business, if a film can't find a sizeable audience on its opening weekend, its sessions are cut dramatically.

Monday is programming day, when film programmers consider weekend figures and arrange their schedule based on what is working best for their locations.

The film programmer has one of the most important roles in exhibition, as the activities of nearly all exhibition staff are influenced by the weekly program.

Best not to phone a film programmer or sales staffer from a distribution company on a Monday unless your question is very important as their focus is the following week's program. Sometimes the distributors might be lobbying the film programmers not to reduce sessions on a particular film, or the film programmer may be seeking to reduce sessions for a film which has performed extremely poorly.

The film programmer may move some films into smaller cinemas to accommodate new openers. They usually do their programming using a grid so they can keep track of all

*“Most film programmers will tell you that the best part of their job is that they have to watch hundreds of movies every year.”*

their cinemas – some use a matrix template and program by hand and some have computer templates that help them keep track of all their films and locations.

In addition to telling distributors what changes they intend to make to the previous week's sessions of their films, the film programmer has to provide various different departments within their own organisation with the final program for the coming week so they can do their own jobs. The technical staff, who manage the actual screenings, need to know what to screen when, ensure they have the appropriate KDMs (digital keys) lined up and the film programmer also lets them know what trailers should be playing with which films.

The advertising department needs to have the final program so they can ensure the correct information appears in directory and display ads and the website managers need the program for the same reason.

The front-of-house staff need the coming week's program too - so the ticket sellers can ensure they are selling tickets for the correct films at the designated times and the ushers can be certain that the right film is playing at any given session. They may need to alter the marquee outside the cinema to take off any reference to films that are finishing and add any new openers. Likewise, display staff need the program so they can plan new displays or make arrangements to take down displays for films that are no longer playing.

Marketing staff need the weekly program so they know what messages to send to their loyalty program customers, or include in their weekly newsletters or social media posts.

In some single screen or twin cinemas, the film programmer may need to multitask and fulfil other roles, such as managing the cinema, booking and designing advertising, running the technical side of the screenings, changing the marquee or managing displays.

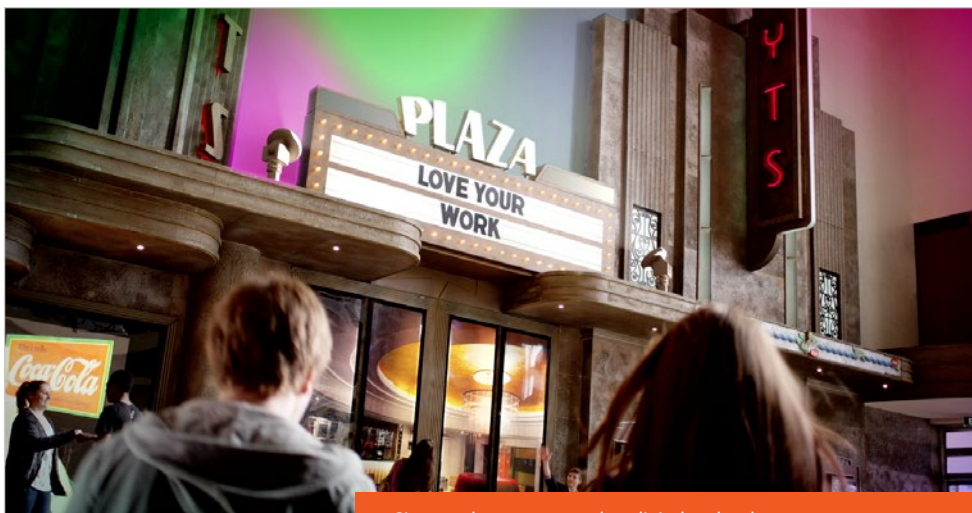
Over the past several years, cinemas have been converting to digital and 3D as the old 35mm prints are phased out. This has involved enormous investment and effort by exhibitors so that patrons can enjoy the best possible in-cinema experience. Film programmers have been very involved in that process as they need to fully understand the capabilities of their location or circuit so they can program optimally.

Many film programmers look beyond films to round out their programs and offer diversity to their patrons by staging live concerts or screening 'alternate content', which includes theatre productions, opera, ballet and sporting events, sometimes beamed in from overseas via satellite.

Being a film programmer can be a very busy job, as they spend a great deal of time watching movies to consider whether they will screen them and are sometimes invited on set visits while films are in production.

Film programmers attend movie conventions in Australia and sometimes overseas to see upcoming product and network with industry colleagues.

[Click here to view interview with film programmer Claire Gandy](#)



Cinemas have converted to digital technology at enormous expense.



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# CHAPTER THREE

## Industry Issues

In this chapter students will learn about some of the key contemporary issues faced by the film industry:

- The impact of online piracy on the screen industries and the people who work in them
- The rapid evolution of technology and its effect on all stages of the production process
- The challenges of finding investors and financing films in a rapidly changing industry
- The operational changes required to ensure sustainable
- Practices and reduce the eco-footprint of film productions



The crew of Australian film THE LITTLE DEATH (2014)







# Industry issues

The film production industry is always changing and filmmakers have to contend with a whole range of issues.

Like any other field of endeavour, the screen industries need to respond and adapt to a dynamic and constantly changing world. As an industry that perpetually balances commercial and creative imperatives, its success lies in its ability to evolve.

This chapter examines a few of the contemporary challenges faced by the industry. Rapidly advancing technology lies at the heart of these issues and, while it offers enormous possibilities, meeting the new demands that come with these developments is the greatest challenge faced by the film industry today.

Online piracy is one of the most insidious threats to the industry. Unfortunately for content creators, the digital era has made it easy to access pirated content online through sites that obtain the content illicitly. Sadly, none of the significant illegal profits made by pirate websites go back to the artists and rights holders. This reduces the local creative community's ability to invest in quality films and TV shows for Australian audiences and build a healthy and sustainable creative sector. Piracy is a growing threat internationally as well as to Australia's world-renowned film and television sector that provides valuable jobs and produces great entertainment for local and international audiences.

[Australian filmmakers talk about online piracy.](#)

This chapter also provides insights into the implications of new technologies that provide both opportunities and challenges for filmmakers are examined in this chapter. Rapid and radical changes in technology have not only changed the way that films are conceived and created, but the expectations of the audiences who demand greater quality, value and excellence in the way films look and sound. Across all stages of development, production, post-production, distribution and exhibition, the digital revolution has huge implications for the screen industries.

In a world where the range of investment opportunities is growing and the skills of even 'mum and dad' investors become more sophisticated, film financing becomes tougher. With absolutely no guarantee of success, film investment is highly risky business. And issues such as increasing piracy simply make the risks associated with revenue return even greater. Where do filmmakers find money for their films and what's the range of investment required?

Finally, this chapter provides an overview of sustainable production practices, offering an insight into the measures being taken by the film industry to protect the environment for future generations.

## Piracy

One of the greatest problems facing the content creation industries today is piracy - the downloading, streaming, screening, copying, distribution and/or selling of copyright-protected content such as movies and TV shows, without paying for it.

In Australia, about one in four people between the ages of 12 and 64 admits to pirating film or TV content and many more are sharing content via cloud or USB devices.

Australians have earned the dubious accolade of being amongst the highest infringers of copyright in the world, with more than two-and-a-half million Australians visiting the two largest illegal content download websites in May 2014.

Downloading or streaming a movie or TV show from a website that is not authorised to host that content deprives the content creators or owners of revenue they would have earned from legitimate websites.

The creators of movies and TV programs include not only the high-profile producers, directors and actors, but also thousands of artists, technicians and personnel such as writers, stunt performers, set builders and painters, cinematographers, costume designers, make-up artists, caterers and animal wranglers.

While it's true that many of the up front creators sometimes gain financially from royalties, the majority of people who make films are freelance and earn a modest and fixed income during the period that the program is in production. Their livelihood is dependent on the number of productions they are involved in and they may have significant gaps between jobs.

"I'm a film editor. I'm sure that when people illegally download, they don't think of the impact on my profession and livelihood. But when investors, both studios and individuals, can't recoup their money because of piracy, fewer films are made and jobs like mine become even scarcer."

- **Jason Ballantine**, co-editor *The Great Gatsby*.

One effect of piracy is that both Hollywood studios and independent production companies are making fewer films. This means less work for local and international film technicians, and fewer films and TV programs means less choice for us all.

Australian creative content industries contribute \$90 billion to our economy annually and employ over 6% of our workforce.

Piracy costs Australia millions of dollars in losses to the film industry and thousands of potential jobs are lost across the economy each year.

Because screen content loses money to piracy, investors are more cautious about financing programs. Piracy, freeloading or copyright theft – by whatever name - robs the Australian

film and TV industry of funds that help develop talent, provide jobs and produce and distribute the film and TV product of the future.

Did you know that Australia produced the world's first feature length film, *The Story of the Kelly Gang*, which was released in 1906? And since that time movies like *Crocodile Dundee*, *Mad Max*, *Shine Strictly Ballroom*, *Animal Kingdom* and many more, plus TV programs such as *Rake*, *Neighbours* and *Summer Heights High* have continued to ensure Australia's place on the international screen content map.

Piracy also affects emerging talent. Many Australian actors, directors, cinematographers, costume designers and producers were recognised via their work on small, independent local films and have subsequently become internationally successful or won major industry awards. The creative industry requires investment and backing to provide these opportunities to develop new talent in all fields.

Making a film isn't simply a 9 to 5, Monday to Friday job. It's fueled by a passion and desire to bring a project to life for the audience. Many people spend years to get a movie made - with no guarantee of any financial return. Fewer than four out ten movies ever recoup their original investment. It's a very high-risk business.

Piracy is a multi-million dollar business. Whether that is from sales of illegally burned DVDs and Blu-rays™, or advertising on pirate websites, organisations that facilitate content piracy make significant amounts of money, none of which ever goes back to the original creators of the work.

Accessing pirated movies and TV programs poses the risk of malware and other computer viruses. A 2013 research study identified that 99% of the advertisements displayed on rogue websites are categorised as high risk, including malware, gambling sites and scams.

One of the other concerning effects of increasing and widespread piracy is that there will be less motivation for people to work in the creative industries and to make music or film and TV programs if the income derived from these activities becomes less certain.

In 2013, TV personality Hamish Blake said this about the excessive downloading of the *Game of Thrones* television series: "We live in a bizarre age where anyone with a computer can obtain things for free that you normally have to pay for... It won't last – I'm sure we'll look back at the Theft Age and wonder how we got away with it for so long, but I panic that this show I'm obsessed with might suffer from everyone watching, but no-one paying."

There are a number of ways to tell if a film or television program is pirated:

- if you can buy or download a movie before its cinema release or while it's still showing
- if the playback quality is poor, artwork and features such as trailers, commentaries, and language choice are missing
- if DVD covers are displayed in a folder or not at all
- if it has been downloaded via a file-sharing network, and there is no Australian classification

Unless it is a legitimate catch-up service for a TV network, if you are not paying for the content it is probably a pirate site.

World renowned filmmaker, chancellor of the Open University, film and television administrator and public figure Lord David Puttnam, has for many years proposed that we should, as a society, become more focused on the idea of digital citizenship. Quite simply, Puttnam suggests that while there is wide discussion about the freedoms desired by those who use the internet, there is scant debate about what sort of responsibilities one should take when going online.

Personal responsibility lies at the heart of the long-term sustainable solution to preventing illegal file-sharing... However, legislative change, which clearly responds to how we access content in the digital age, will also play an important role. Similarly, content creators and internet service providers share a responsibility in providing reasonable legitimate avenues for people to access their content legally.

As businessman Kim Williams said at the keynote speech at the Australian Movie Convention in 2013: "Everyone in the online ecosystem has a responsibility to step up their efforts to protect creators and innovators from having their content literally hijacked for mass distribution without permission or compensation."

**Actress and conservationist Bindi Irwin talks about the incredibly talented people who work behind-the-scenes on the film and tv shows we all love and we hear from some of them on the impact of piracy on their jobs and the industry.**

[Watch video here.](#)

## Technology

New technologies provide both possibilities and problems for filmmakers. When *Puberty Blues* was made in 1981, films were still shot on celluloid which was expensive, bulky and had to be imported from the USA. There were no personal computers, no mobile phones, no internet, no cloud, no DVDs, no Skype. Scripts were typed, and re-typed and sent out by mail or courier. Call sheets were photocopied and hand-delivered to set and to actors' homes. They included maps so the crew could find the locations because there was no GPS. When the assistant directors needed to call the production office, on a land line of course, they had to find a phone booth. Each day the exposed film was sent to a laboratory where, overnight, it was developed and rushes printed, to be projected the next evening after work. And couriered internationally, if required. The film rushes were physically cut up and re-assembled by the editor, the precious negative was also cut to match, and release prints were struck. The film laboratory produced many copies of the final film, great heavy spools that were transported all around Australia and overseas in metal containers. Marketing meant posters, newspaper advertisements and the occasional television commercial. Most people saw movies in cinemas.

The digital revolution is having huge implications for film production, finance and distribution.

### Development

- Scripts are sent electronically to key collaborators.
- Video conferencing allows creative collaborations across Australia and internationally.
- Assemblies and cuts can also be sent internationally for input and approvals.
- Australian producers are far less constrained by the tyranny of distance and international collaborations and co-productions are increasingly common, e.g. *The King's Speech*.



Piracy costs Australia millions of dollars and thousands of jobs annually.

## Pre-production

- Productions set up a secure cloud service to share production information around the office and with crew off-site. Layers of access are set up for documents such as script, schedules, budgets, cast and crew lists, call sheets, maps and driving directions.
- Locations are researched using Google Earth.
- The first assistant director schedules with the help of apps that provide information on sunrise and sunset, seasonal angle of the sun and the rise and fall of tides.
- The art department uses computer-aided design to plan sets.
- VFX prepares previsualisations to help all departments prepare complex shots.
- Screen tests are seen on secure file-sharing sites.
- Call sheets are sent out electronically to mobile phones, and most people use GPS.

## Production

- Everybody has a mobile phone – and has to remember to turn it off when sound is rolling!
- The assistant directors have laptops and mobile modems on set to communicate with the production office.
- Almost all films are shot on digital cameras, such as Arri Alexa or Red Epic.
- Tiny, cheap cameras, such as Go Pros, can be set up around set and operated remotely to capture additional angles of a shot.
- Camera control is increasingly by touch screen, not buttons and knobs, and changes of exposure, for example, can be made quickly and efficiently from shot to shot.
- The DOP can use an iPhone viewfinder, such as Artemis, to preview a shot and show the effects of changing aspect ratio, lens size, depth of field and angle of the lens for tilt and pan shots. The final decision can be recorded and sent to the VFX team.
- A new crew position has emerged – the data wrangler – to manage the visual and audio information acquired on set, and prepare it for the editors.
- The data wrangler can send the camera image around the set to various departments – lighting can make adjustments; B camera can see what the main camera is picking up; sound can see when a boom is in shot; the grips can perform dolly shots more accurately.
- Sound is recorded digitally, and synchronised wirelessly with the image.
- Many stunt and physical special effects scenes can be shot much more safely and effectively with help of VFX for blue/green screen, and for wire removal.
- Crew have access on laptops and tablets to previsualisations and footage shot earlier.
- Rushes from the previous day are often viewed on laptops at lunch.

- Rushes are transmitted on secure file transfer sites to the producer, director and key creatives, and investors both in Australia and overseas
- Continuity and the camera department can give the editors and the VFX team vastly more technical material and logs of footage acquired.

## Post-production

- The fully digital post-production unit takes advantage of the wealth of material that comes to them from set.
- Various cuts can be stored for easy comparison and assessment.
- Colour grading can be done more easily.
- Errors can be erased – a stray takeaway coffee cup painted out of a period film, the colour of a character's coat changed, an uncleared sign in the background removed.
- And the whole incredible armoury of VFX can be exploited to make the film more exciting and emotional.

## Distribution and exhibition

These days, films arrive in cinemas on hard drives that are encrypted for the specific time period that they are licensed to screen in that particular cinema.

Cinema projectors lasted for a very long time. New digital cinema technology is frequently emerging – new servers are required to process the ever-increasing data on the DCP, as well as new technology required to upgrade cinema screens, projectors, projector lamps, cinema lighting, etc. The cost of upgrades is expensive – as well as the cost of training staff to ensure familiarity with the shifting systems.

Digital point of sale and library management systems together with digital large and small screens throughout the cinema can now respond more quickly to changes in audience moving product to larger or smaller screens and changing displays for candy bar offers to suit the demographic of each session time and better meet the consumers' needs.

The delivery mechanism of films to cinemas is changing, allowing films to be delivered to cinemas via satellite. Cinemas will need to install satellite dishes to receive the encrypted files and purchase the necessary hardware and software to download and play the files on their screens.

Distribution platforms for releasing films online are increasing options for audiences to stream or download films to their TV's, computers, tablets or phones.

## Marketing

Although traditional media outlets are still important for advertising and publicity, online and digital are an increasing part of the marketing and media mix.

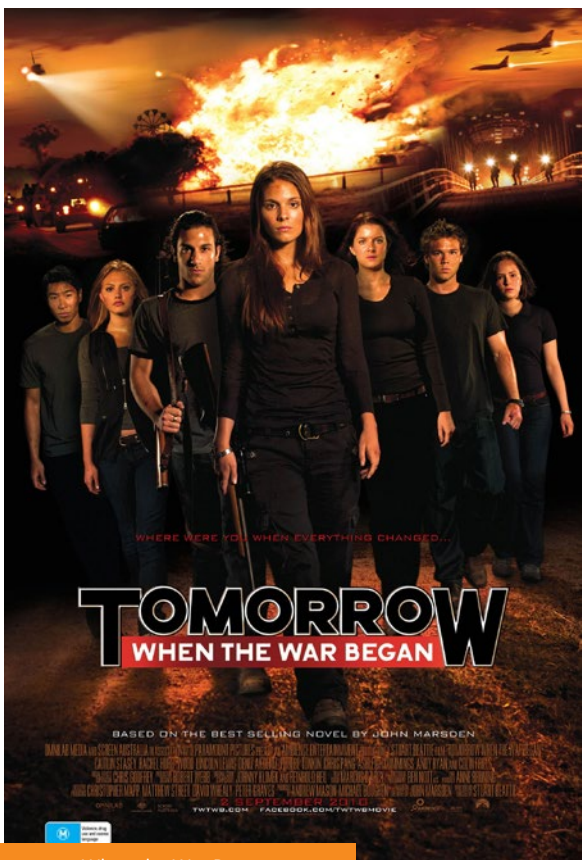
Digital, online and social media are now essential components of any marketing, media and publicity plan and there are increased costs and new strategies required to communicate to fans and potential audiences across a range of channels.

There are now many more fragmented outlets for marketers to promote their movies to target audiences – including websites, games, mobile phones, social networks, and the online arms of traditional media outlets such as newspapers and television programs.

This means that fans and audiences have more information available to them about upcoming films than ever before – and can share this information with each other, across international borders. This also means that some elements of a film's marketing campaign are now coordinated globally; such as the release of a first trailer, clip or poster.

Where once audiences could only see a full-length movie trailer at the cinema, the launch of the movie trailer online is now one of the biggest spikes of a movie's marketing campaign.

Word-of-mouth is an effective means of driving people to the cinema but one that previously happened relatively slowly post-release, once consumers heard from their friends and family that they enjoyed the film. In the age of social media and constant digital connectivity, word of mouth can spread quickly online, and can be further propelled by effective digital marketing.



Tomorrow When the War Began poster.

Research into consumer electronics is moving quickly into the professional field where film crews can use products to work more cheaply and more efficiently. Smaller image sensors are being developed, allowing the manufacture smaller and lighter cameras. With the efficiencies increasingly available, low-budget productions with smaller crews are more possible, giving opportunities to more filmmakers.

Filmmakers, distributors and exhibitors need to remain nimble, knowledgeable and flexible to stay up to date with the rapid technological developments and changes. Consumers sometimes complain that business models are slow to react to technology but many contractual arrangements exist that ensure a film has the finance and resources to go from idea to cinema. These are not as simply or rapidly renegotiated as technology changes.

## Finance

Peter Weir started out making comedy sketches for Channel 7, and went on to direct *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, *Gallipoli*, *Witness* and *Master and Commander*.

Phillip Noyce started making student films at university, and went on to direct *Dead Calm*, *Patriot Games*, *Rabbit Proof Fence* and *The Quiet American*.

George Miller worked as an emergency room doctor to self-finance his first short film, and went on to make *Mad Max*, *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome*, *Happy Feet* and *Mad Max: Fury Road*.

Everyone has to start somewhere. It's often at school, university, art school or film school, when a group of friends put together a short film. They might go on to make an entry for Tropfest or another short film festival. These could be self-financed, and made on a shoestring, or the filmmakers might look for funding from screen development organisations and government film agencies. Anyone more serious about making films as a career may enrol in a full-time film course or attend short courses.

The Screen Australia website is an excellent source of information about [getting started](#) in the film industry.

## Finding funds

One can imagine that having a great idea and turning that into a successful script is a pretty tough task, but most people are not aware of just how extraordinarily difficult it is to find finance for a film and just how long that process can take. With a better understanding of the complex nature of each stage of production and of the hundreds of skilled people needed to make a film, it's easier to understand why films cost millions of dollars.

Finance rarely comes from a single source, but requires numerous partners, all willing to commit some of the total budget – and always in the hope of making a return on their investment.

Film financing is the painstaking process of locking in the disparate financial elements and partners. It's a "house of cards" which can fall over when any one element falls away. On average, it takes four years to finance a film in Australia.

Keeping in mind that there are many people throughout the process who will take a portion of the revenue for their role - such as distributors and exhibitors - one of the key elements in determining the budget of a film is to estimate the potential revenue so your film makes enough money to pay back everyone.

Most films do not make a profit and there are many other more secure investment opportunities. Financing a film requires innovative thinking and, in a global financial landscape that is constantly changing, patience and persistence.

## No-budget films

The no-budget film is something of a myth. It's virtually impossible to make a film for mainstream release that has absolutely no costs attached. Reasonable quality cameras, lights, tripods, editing software, location fees and just feeding your crew will cost money.

Many of the famous no-budget films, such as *The Blair Witch Project*, were made for very little money but cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to complete for a cinema release.

The [no-budget film](#) relies on friends and colleagues working on the film for no fees or on deferred fees. Many producers try crowd-funding for raising small amounts of money. Working in this way can give the filmmaker a great deal of creative freedom but it takes a long time and a lot of hard work to bring the project to fruition and the returns can be risky.

Nevertheless, there have been a number of successful no-budget films such as *Gabriel* and the cult classic *Clerks*.

## Low-budget Australian films

The next step up the financing ladder is seeking finance through Australian sources, for a film with a budget from \$1 million to \$3 million. To achieve this, the key creatives are usually Australian and the subject matter generally, but not necessarily, Australian. The cast are likely to be well known locally, and probably all Australian.

The first step in getting funding involves:

- securing a local distributor
- getting support from a broadcaster such as the ABC or SBS
- securing entry in a film festival, like MIFF
- getting an international sales agent
- applying for funding from a government agency such as Screen Australia.

Low-budget films can also take advantage of the tax rebates offered to support film production. This [animation](#) illustrates how the system works.

Low-budget Australian films can achieve considerable success. *Strictly Ballroom*, *Samson and Delilah* and *Muriel's Wedding* all trod this path. Other successes include *Animal Kingdom*, *Wolf Creek* and *The Babadook*. The success can be in terms of box office revenue for the film, success at international film festivals such as Cannes, Venice or Toronto or it could mean that the director's career is launched in the international film industry.

## Medium-budget Australian films

These films have a budget between \$3 million and \$10 million. Their path is similar to the low-budget films but the money put up by the sales agent and distributor will be greater, based on strong creative involvement, well-known local actors and possibly some international cast.

*The Sapphires* is a good example. It was based on a very successful stage play, had great music and popular cast members in Jessica Mauboy and internationally renowned actor Chris O'Dowd.

## International co-productions

Budgeted from about \$15 million to \$30 million, international co-productions are produced jointly between an Australian producer and an international producer, with some of the work carried out in each country. Often the film is shot in one country and post-produced in the other. *Bait*, for example, was shot in Australia and post-production occurred in Singapore. Some of these are official co-productions, based on trade treaties agreed between the two countries (*Bait*, *The Railway Man*) but they can also be purely commercial agreements between producing partners (*Tomorrow*, *When the War Began*).

An international distributor and sales agent will be involved, perhaps an international broadcaster. The subject matter is likely to be international, often an adaptation of a novel and the cast is likely to include high-profile Australian actors.

## Australian-made, studio-financed

This investment is driven by the director's box office track record, a high concept and "marquee" cast (actors who are known to draw audiences into cinemas) or a well-known brand. These blockbuster films can cost almost as much to market as they do to make. It's essential that these films are accessible and attractive to audiences across the world because it will take hundreds of millions of dollars in international revenue to cover the costs of production and country-by-country publicity campaigns.

## Overseas films in Australia

In addition, a number of overseas films are shot or post-produced in Australia because we offer very high production standards at less cost than the US or UK. International movies shot in Australia include *Wolverine*, *The Matrix*, *Mission Impossible 2*, *Peter Pan*, *Star Wars: Episode III - Revenge of the Sith*, *Where the Wild Things Are* and *Superman Returns*.

International films that have done some or all of their post-production here include *The Hunger Games*, *Gravity*, *Prometheus* and *X-Men: Days of Future Past*.

While these films do not generally have any Australian investment, and therefore no revenue will flow back here, they do create hundreds of jobs to local crews, as well as providing opportunities to emerging Australian filmmakers through trainee, apprentice or mentor schemes.

## Financial incentives

The Australian government is keen to encourage film production. Film production creates jobs and productions spend large amounts of money – from flights and hotels, to set building and catering. Production also creates intellectual property which can generate returns that can be re-invested in the Australian screen industry for decades to come.

Government incentives for production is offered in the way of a tax rebate, similar to research and development incentives in some manufacturing industries. The screen rebates are very successful in generating production. In 2012/13, rebates of \$221 million supported \$805 million in production.

## Sustainable production practices

Like many other businesses, the screen industry has needed to evaluate and amend its business practices to ensure a reduced eco-footprint and carry out its operations – from development through to release – in a sustainable manner.

What are principles of sustainable development?

In 1987, the UN World Commission on Environment and Development created a definition of sustainable development in their report *Our Common Future*.

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts:

- the concept of 'needs', in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and
- the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organisation on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs.

Sustainability impacts are evaluated against three key areas: environmental, social and economic, more commonly referred to as People, Planet and Profit.

Environmental considerations include:

- Taking a precautionary approach to environmental impacts
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- Reducing resource usage, such as materials, water and fossil fuels
- Reducing waste
- Reducing the use of harmful toxic substances
- Protection, and rehabilitation of local ecological environment during location shoots
- Reinforcing the demand for sustainable solutions to cast, crew and others

Economic considerations include:

- Encouraging innovation of sustainable solutions in the supply chain and providing a market for these products and services
- Reducing costs through resource conservation
- Reducing costs through reducing waste created
- Reducing costs through reducing energy consumption

Social considerations include:

- Knowledge and skills transfer into the local workforce, community and industry at large
- Creation of jobs through supply chain demand
- Communicating sustainability to the community by demonstrating best practice
- Leaving a legacy in terms of physical materials, enduring infrastructure, or financial support of community initiatives
- Supporting human rights and fair labour
- Ensuring a safe and healthy working environment

Initiatives are implemented at each stage of production – including development, pre-production and production, post-production and the launch of the film – and by every department, including the production office, construction, locations, post-production and merchandise.

## Pre-production and production

As this phase involves more people than any other stage of the process, it's no surprise that production also creates the most waste. The good news? This means this is the area with biggest potential for improvement! Changes can be made to how paper, fuel, electricity, water, food scraps, transport and building materials are used.

When setting up a sustainable production, many issues are addressed.

- Do the studio, production office and post-production house have a sustainability policy? Do they comply with energy efficiency ratings?
- Are sustainable sourcing practices in place, such as the use of environmentally sound cleaning supplies? Are consumables, such as copy paper and toilet paper, made from 100% recycled content?
- Is mains power sourced from a renewable energy supply such as GreenPower or solar panels?
- Are generators run on biodiesel or other renewable fuel?
- Are energy conservation strategies in place e.g. power down policy, sensors, insulation, passive solar?
- Are energy efficient equipment and operating procedures in place for heating, ventilation and air conditioning?
- Does house lighting use energy efficient bulbs, and operating procedures e.g. switch off policy, sensors, LED lighting, use of natural light?
- What waste reduction and avoidance initiatives are in place at the facility?
- Does the facility have recycling, composting and set salvaging?
- Is it easy to access the facility by foot, bike or public transport? Is there bike parking?
- Are water-saving initiatives in place? Is greywater collected and re-used onsite?

Within the production itself, a number of systems to ensure environmental sustainability practices can be implemented. Thoughtful strategies - from compiling call sheet and script distribution to ensuring departments comply with sustainable purchasing policies - can significantly impact on the sustainability mindset of a production.

These might include:

- Establishing a secure online hub to share documents and files and reducing paper use – circulate scripts, schedules, call sheets, cast and crew lists and memos electronically.
- Making use of teleconference or video conference facilities to reduce unnecessary travel, saving time, money and greenhouse gas emissions.
- Hiring or borrowing equipment as opposed to buying new and selling off after the production.

- Re-using as much material as possible from other productions or salvage yards.
- Managing waste with appropriate segregation, adequate recycling and waste facilities/contractors available locally to the lot and locations.
- Shutting off power and all appliances when not in use and using rechargeable batteries.
- Requesting minimal packaging when ordering supplies.
- Providing reusable plates, cups, utensils and linens. Washing up, whilst using water, has far less impact than landfilling.
- Avoiding pre-packaged plastic water bottles and having water filling stations on location for cast and crew.

The film industry, like all other industries, is changing the way in which it operates to ensure that its impact on the environment is positive. Some ways in which it is doing this is reflected in this list of tips:

1. If flights are necessary, fly economy. The cost of an economy class ticket AND carbon offsetting will still be cheaper than business class
2. Ensure all production printers are default set to print double-sided
3. Use hybrid cars and save on fuel costs
4. Approach eco-friendly companies to feature in your film or provide their product for crew (cars, equipment etc). Make sure they receive a credit!
5. Buy in bulk
6. Request minimal packaging from suppliers – remember, the less trash you have, the less you pay at the dump!
7. Reuse costumes and set materials from past productions when possible (and donate them again at the end of production).
8. Look to hiring or borrowing equipment as opposed to buying new
9. Assess energy star certification when renting equipment to select the most energy efficient.
10. Cater efficiently, increase vegetarian options and don't buy bottled water.

## Credits

- [Screen NSW](#)
- [GreenShoot Pacific](#)
- [mememe productions](#)





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FOUNDATION



# CHAPTER FOUR

## Filmmaking

In this chapter students will learn some skills to assist them to make their own films:

- How to come up with an idea for your short film
- How to write a screenplay
- How to plan the production of your story including shot listing and storyboards
- Tips for managing principal photography and post-production
- Copyright issues for using other footage, music or elements within your film



The crew of Australian film THE LITTLE DEATH (2014)





# Making Movies

Thinking about making a film? Here's a bunch of advice, hints and tips to get you started and guide you through the production process.

So you're thinking about making a film? Making your own film requires a lot of time and effort. When you're developing the idea for your movie, you will have to take on the role of writer, director and producer. In the development stage, you will need to think about the following:

- **Ideas.** Coming up with an idea can be one of the most difficult stages in the film production process. Remember that ideas don't just appear from nowhere. You need to watch films and experiment with technical equipment. Since film production can be such a long and difficult process, you need to decide on something that is going to sustain your interest. Make sure you also settle on an idea that is achievable.
- **Locations.** When you're thinking about ideas, consider locations carefully. Don't plan to shoot a scene in a hospital, for example, if you don't have access to that location. Set dressing a room in your house never looks convincing. Instead, think about locations that you do have access to. You can still script an engaging film set in your house, at school or a local park. Limiting the number of locations is a good way to reduce the complexity of your film. After all, there are a bunch of terrific films that occur in a single location, such as *Lifeboat*, *Buried* and *Phone Booth*.
- **Actors.** Think carefully about who is willing and available to star in your film. Making a film is a time-consuming process that requires a great deal of commitment from your actors. You need to select actors who are reliable, cooperative and willing to invest considerable time in your film. When exploring ideas for your short film, think carefully about available actors and the sort of roles they are willing to play. Don't plan to make an epic crime film about warring families if only your dad and the family dog are willing to act in your film. Ensure you cast age appropriate actors. If you and your friends are going to act in the film, it's probably not going to be terribly convincing if you cast them as middle-aged gangsters.
- **Safety.** When you are making a film, safety is an important consideration. When developing your idea, don't plan to use weapons, such as fake guns, or film any dangerous or illegal acts. Professional filmmakers spend a considerable amount of money planning these sort of scenes to ensure that they are conducted safely and legally. You don't want police arriving on the set because your actors are running around with fake guns!

As you are developing the idea for your film, remember to keep it simple. Think about the locations and actors you have available and develop your story to suit that.

# IDEAS FOR SHORT FILMS

1. Write a screenplay based on a famous urban legend like The Babysitter and the Man Upstairs or Clown Statue. Snopes is a great starting point.
2. Make a mockumentary. Start by watching exceptional examples of the genre like The Office.
3. The Age's Oddspot features humorous stories that could be the basis for an interesting short film.
4. Imagine what it would be like if you mashed up the narratives of two completely different films. A Fistful of Dollars meets Office Space, for example.
5. Make an adaptation of a story that's fallen into the public domain—examples include The Tell-Tale Heart or The Monkey's Paw.
6. Make a film named Interview with an...Of course, you have to fill in the blank. Interview with an Invisible Man? Interview with a Hobbit?
7. Think of an interesting person in your family and make a documentary telling the story of their life.
8. Think of something boring – like buying milk or making a sandwich – and film it in the style of an action sequence.
9. Create a film in the style of a traditional film noir like Double Indemnity or The Big Sleep.
10. Make a fan film. Have a look at Batman: Dead End and Troops for ideas.
11. 11. Start planning your film by thinking of a twist—then work out how you're going to lead up to it.
12. Create a short film inspired by the style of a famous and distinctive director like Paul Greengrass or Wes Anderson.
13. Create a film in which your main character is confined to one location – think Phone Booth and Buried.
14. Make a film where the main character breaks the fourth wall and talks to the audience—like Ferris Bueller's Day Off.
15. Make a short comprised entirely of scenes parodied from famous films.
16. Make a film which uses the main character's diary as the source of narration.
17. Make a film about a day in the life of...
18. Use this random plot generator to think up an idea for your short film.
19. Learn how to make special effects at Backyard FX and build your story around that.
20. Use one of the fairy stories written by The Brothers Grimm as the basis for your short film, giving it a modern twist.

# IDEAS FOR DOCUMENTARIES

1. Think of an interesting person in your family and make a documentary telling the story of their life.
2. Make an instructional video on how to make something, check out the site [Instructables](#) for inspiration.
3. Make a Mythbusters-style segment to attempt to prove a popular myth. Can you clean a coin with Coca-Cola? Do cheeseburgers go rotten?
4. Create a cooking show.
5. Pick an issue from your local newspaper and make a documentary about it, interviewing important stakeholders.
6. Create a tourism video to promote your local area. Check out the television program [Postcards](#) for inspiration.
7. Make a documentary about an interesting job or occupation—approach the local police or fire fighters and ask if they'd like to be interviewed.
8. Create a documentary about an interesting historical event in your local area. The local library or historical society is a good starting point.
9. Make a documentary about the story of your family – get your parents, grandparents and other family members involved.
10. Create a documentary about an important social issue.

## Developing your story

So you want to make a short film? Here's some advice for developing your story into a treatment. With a clear sense of your characters and the conflict in your story, you'll be much better prepared to write your screenplay.

A log line is a one sentence summary of what happens in your film. Developing a log line for your short film is a useful activity because it helps you capture the essence of your film. If you can't express your idea in a sentence then it's likely that you haven't decided what your film is about.

Your log line can help sell the film to actors or crew who might want to be involved. People are far more likely to give you their time and expertise if you can convince them it's going to be worthwhile.

The log line should give a clear sense of your protagonist and the conflict in the film without giving away the ending. Your log line is the bait to convince people that your film is a good idea. You can tell them more about the plot once they've taken the hook. Log lines are often referred to as elevator pitches. You bump into a film producer in an elevator who

asks you about your latest film. You've only got a few seconds to sell it so you'd better make every word count.

Here's what you should include in your log line:

- Characters. Who is the protagonist in your film? What makes them interesting or intriguing?
- Conflict. What is the protagonist trying to achieve? What obstacles are they trying to overcome? Who is trying to stop them? What are the stakes?
- Climax. Hint at the drama your film is building towards.

Here are some examples:

- In a dystopian future, a young girl is forced to fight to the death by a ruthless government (*The Hunger Games*).
- Riddled with bullets and left for dead, a former spy is pursued by assassins while he struggles to remember who he is (*The Bourne Identity*).
- A log line can run for a few sentences but stop if you find yourself getting bogged down in story details. Keep it brief and compelling.

Once you've come up with an idea, it's time to clarify the concept by developing a story question. A story question helps to explain the central conflict in your narrative. Defining the story question follows on logically from writing your log line. After writing your log line, you should have a clear sense of the conflict in your story. What is the goal that your protagonist is trying to achieve?

- *The Hunger Games*. Will Katniss survive The Hunger Games?
- *The Bourne Identity*. Can Jason Bourne outmanoeuvre the assassins and discover who he is?

The story question should be very clear to the audience. They need to understand what your protagonist is trying to achieve. If your character's objectives are unclear then you're going to find it very difficult to engage your audience.

The story question also needs to be important. It needs to make a difference to the life of your protagonist. If you can't show your audience why it's important that your character gets the girl or arrests your murderer, they simply won't care.

Although the protagonist's goal might be achievable, they're going to encounter difficulties along the way that prevent them from achieving their goal. Without obstacles and difficulties, without the prospect that your protagonist might fail, there is no drama.

Carefully defining your story question can help you clarify the conflict in your story and flesh out the three act structure.

## The three act structure

All stories have a beginning, middle and end. When you're making a short film, you need to consider each of these stages carefully.

The first act of your screenplay should feature a dramatic change in the life of your protagonist. This disruption creates conflict that they must deal with. Make sure the conflict upsets the balance of your protagonist's life. It doesn't have to be something as dramatic as murder, as long as it means something to your character, you've got a great starting point for drama!

The second act of your story is when your character tries to deal with the conflict. They encounter difficult obstacles or further events that complicate the situation. These obstacles should become increasingly difficult. In every scene, consider what your character wants to achieve. At the end of the scene, they might get close to achieving this before they face further obstacles and complications. How does this make them feel? What will they do next? How can you make your audience identify with your character?

Towards the end of your narrative, you need to resolve the story question that you established at the beginning. How many times have you come out of a movie thinking, "That was kind of cool but the ending was awful"? If you've put your audience through the wringer in your short film, they might feel cheated if you don't give them the ending they expect. If you're making a romantic comedy, there's nothing wrong with having a happy ending. In most cases, this is what your audience is craving. When making a short film, consider resolving the film in a clever or unexpected way. If you're planning a twist ending, however, always remember that you need to signpost what's going to happen. If the ending appears out of nowhere, your audience will feel cheated.

The outline of your three act structure becomes the treatment. Writing a treatment is a great way to sort out your story and its pacing before committing yourself to a completed screenplay.

## Writing a screenplay

A screenplay is the shooting script that is used by actors during rehearsal and on the set. Screenplays are written in a particular format to make them easily readable.

When writing a screenplay, you need to follow some fundamental rules to ensure it's easy to read:

- traditionally screenplays are written using the font Courier
- use at least size twelve
- begin every scene with a slugline
- write character names, important props and sound effects in capital letters
- every page is numbered for quick reference

There are a number of tools available to help you write a screenplay in the correct format, including Celtx and Microsoft Word templates.

See the next page for an example of how to format a screenplay from the film *Tomorrow, When the War Began*.

## Resources

- [How to Format a Screenplay](#)
- [Celtx](#)
- [Microsoft Office: Screenplay Template](#)
- [Oscars: Screenplay Format](#)

EXT. CAMPSITE - HELL - DAY

CAMERA FOLLOWS Ellie as she runs up to the campsite with Lee to find the others all gathered around Kevin's SLEEPING BAG.

KEVIN  
There's a bloody snake in my  
sleeping bag!

HOMER  
You sure, mate? I don't see  
anything --

-- the bag moves of its own accord and the whole group jumps.

ELLIE  
What kind of snake was it?

KEVIN  
I don't know, I didn't look!

HOMER  
Lot of red-bellies out here.

FI  
Are they deadly?

HOMER  
No, no. Well, if they *bite* you...

Homer uses two LARGE STICKS from the firewood to lift up the CLOSED END of the sleeping bag. The snake does not fall out.

ELLIE  
Shake it.  
(Homer shakes his bum)  
The *bag*, Beyonce.

He smiles and shakes the bag with the sticks.

CORRIE  
Don't lift it too high --

Too late. A very angry RED BELLIED BLACK SNAKE tumbles out the open end of the bag, hissing at them. Robyn turns and runs. Fi lunges into the creek. Kevin goes still with fear, white as a ghost. Corrie scampers around the other side of the camp fire. The snake starts slithering towards Ellie. She backs up fast and trips over a log, falling to the ground, eye-to-eye with the fast-approaching snake.

ELLIE'S POV LOW ANGLE ON THE SNAKE as it bares its fangs about to strike her. Suddenly, BAM! Lee darts INTO FRAME in front of her, walloping the head of the snake with a stick, killing it, brutally, violently, efficiently. Homer gathers the dead snake by the tail, reluctantly impressed by Lee's actions.

EXCERPT FROM TOMORROW WHEN THE WAR BEGAN, SCREENPLAY BY STUART BEATTIE, BASED ON THE NOVEL BY JOHN MARSDEN

## Storyboards

Storyboarding is an essential part of planning a film. It's an opportunity to think about the contribution that camera techniques, composition and mise en scène will make to your film. First-time filmmakers often find the storyboarding process more than a little daunting and tedious.

Before you start storyboarding, creating a shot list is absolutely essential, allowing you to imagine what the film will look like before you commit yourself to the time-consuming process of pre-visualising your film. A shot list is exactly what it sounds like, a list of all of the shots in your film. When you have completed your screenplay, a shot list is a great way to imagine how it will look on the screen. When you're creating a shot list, it's useful to have the following columns: scene number, shot number, duration, shot size, location and description. Completing your shot list in a spreadsheet is a great idea because after you have printed a chronological list of the shots in your film, you can sort the rows by location. This is particularly useful if you're shooting in a number of different places. When you're shooting your film, it's a great idea to print another copy of your shot list so you can cross each shot off after it's completed.

When you're making a film, it's important to remember that you don't need expensive equipment and software to pre-visualise your film. All it takes is a pencil, some paper and a bit of determination. During the pre-production of *Alien*, director Ridley Scott meticulously drew every shot in the film. Twentieth Century Fox was so impressed with the quality of his storyboards that they almost doubled the budget for the film. These storyboards demonstrate how one person's vision for a film can be translated to paper with little more than a

biro and some dedication. During the pre-production of *Prometheus* (Ridley Scott, 2012), Ridley Scott spoke about the importance of storyboarding because it forces filmmakers to very specifically articulate their vision for the film.

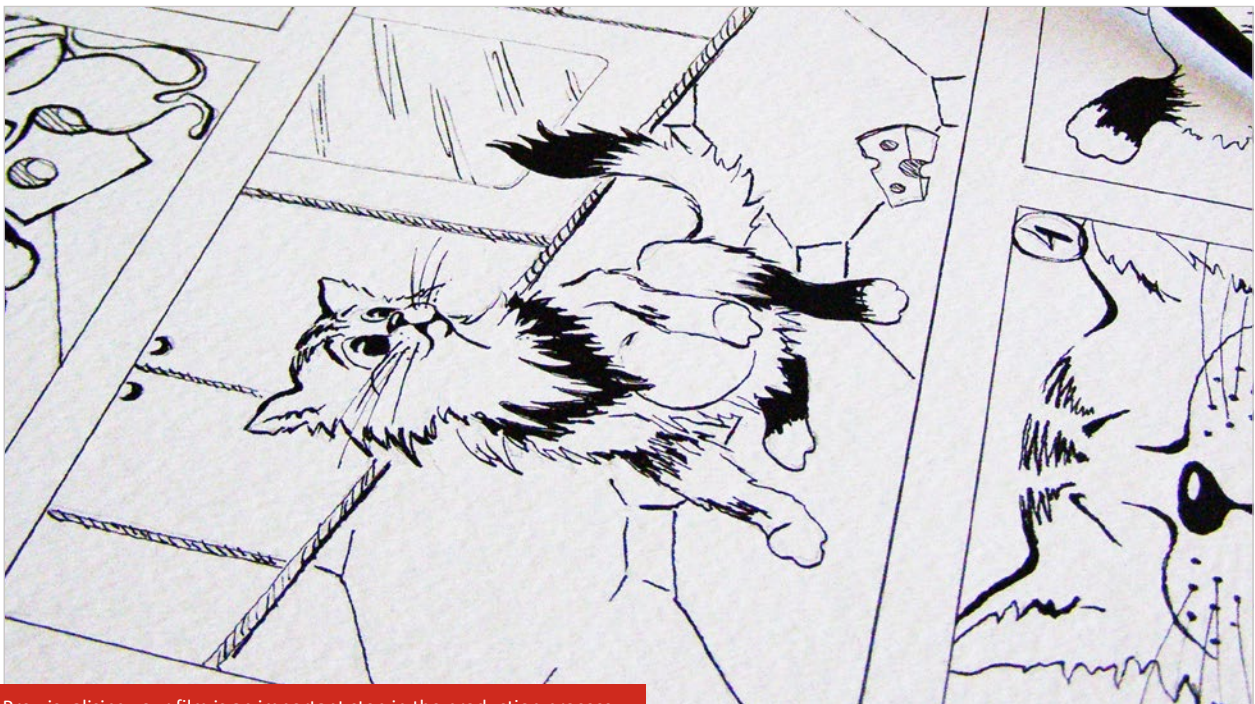
So what makes a good storyboard? The best storyboards are quick, clear and simple. They show movement, expression and they give your cast and crew a clear sense of how shots should be composed. When you're drawing storyboards, it's also important to consider blocking - the process of deciding where your actors, props, cameras, lighting and other important filmmaking equipment will be positioned. Usually conveyed using a simple overhead diagram, blocking is an important consideration. If you don't think about the location when you're conceiving the shots, you may discover that some camera setups are simply unachievable.

Using a pencil and paper is the simplest way to pre-visualise your film. If you're keen to see what good, hand illustrated storyboards look like, check out the storyboards for *Hot Fuzz* (Edgar Wright, 2007) which are available on the Blu-ray release of the film. The illustrations are simple, clear and give a clear sense of what the finished film would look like.

Drawing storyboards is something that first-time filmmakers find more than a little daunting. Don't worry, it gets easier with practice and having the ability to quickly sketch out shots is an invaluable skill.

So how do you improve?

Start by picking up a pencil and paper. Getting some practice is the best way to improve. Find some books and teach yourself how to draw faces and figures. You'll find heaps of great books about manga - a simple and accessible style



Pre-visualising your film is an important step in the production process.

of illustration - that is particularly suited to storyboarding. YouTube is another great source of drawing tutorials. You'll be surprised how much your ability to draw improves with a little practice. Storyboarding your film with a pencil and paper is one of the best ways to improve your drawing skills. Just imagine how much better you'll be when you've finished storyboarding your first film!

Of course, drawing storyboards with a pencil and paper isn't for everyone. Fortunately, most filmmakers are already carrying a powerful storyboarding tool in their pockets.

Smartphones are a powerful weapon in your filmmaking arsenal allowing you to quickly and effectively communicate your vision for a scene. One of the advantages of using a smartphone to storyboard is that you can use the actual location that you plan to shoot in. Even with someone standing in for your actors, you get a sense of where the camera can be positioned and how shots can be composed.

Photographs can be exported to a computer and dropped into the storyboarding templates in Apple Pages or Celtx. Alternatively, you can simply flip through the albums on your smartphone to show your cast how you want the scene to play out.

There are a number of apps—for iOS and Android—that make pre-visualising a whole lot of fun. Celtx Shots is a nifty app allowing you to take and sequence photographs into a storyboard that can be played back as a simple video. The real advantage of Celtx Shots is its ability to quickly create a sketch of your location using a clipart library, which features images of cameras, lighting stands and actors. Cinemek Storyboard Composer is another great app that allows you to take a photo, pan and zoom, play your storyboards back and export the finished document to a PDF.

Armed with little more than a smartphone, you have everything you need to pre-visualise your film!

When you're storyboarding, it's very important to consider the following:

- Shot size. How close your camera is to your subject is very important. Establishing shots are usually used at the beginning of a scene to establish where that scene is taking place. Full shots are useful for your master shot, which shows everything that happens in a scene. Mid shots and close-ups are best for dialogue and showing the expression on your actor's face. Extreme close-ups are useful for pointing out small details. Don't be afraid to get the camera close to your subject!
- Camera framing. When you are framing your subject, ensure you use headroom, look room and rule of thirds to ensure that your shots are well-composed
- Camera movement. Nothing will make your film look more amateurish than poor handheld camera movement. Try to use a tripod and static shots when possible. If you are planning dollies, tracking shots, pans and tilts, think about why you are using them and how they contribute to your story.
- Camera angle. Although most of your shots will be at eye level, you can use camera angles to achieve particular effects. Shooting your actors from a high angle can make them seem small and powerless while filming them from low angles helps to convey a sense of power.

This article first appeared in *Screen Education*.

Find more articles like this in [The Education Shop](#).

## Resources

- [ACMI Storyboard Generator](#)
- [Storyboard That](#)



Everyone on a set has a specific role and responsibility.



## Production tips

Here is some advice for when you're on location shooting:

**Blocking.** Before shooting, conduct a block through with your actors. Walk around the set and explain how you intend to shoot the scene and where you want them to stand. While you're conducting the block through, think about how you might avoid potential issues with lighting or sound.

**Tripod.** Poorly filmed handheld shots and zooming will make your film look amateurish. Instead, use a tripod and film key parts of a scene from different angles. You might, for example, film part of the scene in full shot and then get your actor to do exactly the same thing in a close-up. Assuming your actor's performance is almost identical, you should be able to cut between the full shot and close-up in the edit, performing a seamless match on action.

**Coverage.** When you are shooting, make sure you get enough coverage of every scene. Your shot list will call for a number of different shot sizes and camera angles. Always plan to shoot more. The more footage you have, the more flexibility you will have during editing.

**Lighting.** Think carefully about the lighting of every single shot in your film. Make sure your actors are lit appropriately. Open curtains and blinds, use overhead lights and desk lamps to make sure they are illuminated well. Poor lighting is something that cannot be fixed in post-production.

**Sound.** It's a good idea to enlist a friend to help out with sound, particularly if you are planning to use an external audio recorder. When you arrive on location, always get your sound operator to identify ambient noises - such as traffic, air conditioners or refrigerators - that might interfere with the soundtrack. When you are shooting, get the microphone as close to your actors as you possibly can. When shooting wraps, remember to record a few minutes of 'atmosphere'.

Every location has a different sound and you will find this invaluable when editing the scene together. It's also a good idea to capture particular foley sounds, such as doors opening, when you are on location. A good recording of these sort of things will improve the quality of your soundtrack. If your sound is poor, there is very little you can do in post-production to correct it.

**Shotlist and storyboards.** When you're making your film, have your shotlist and storyboards on a clipboard so you can tick off each shot as it's captured. After crossing off a shot, it's a good idea to write the file name of the successful take on the shotlist to make finding the clip easier when you are editing.

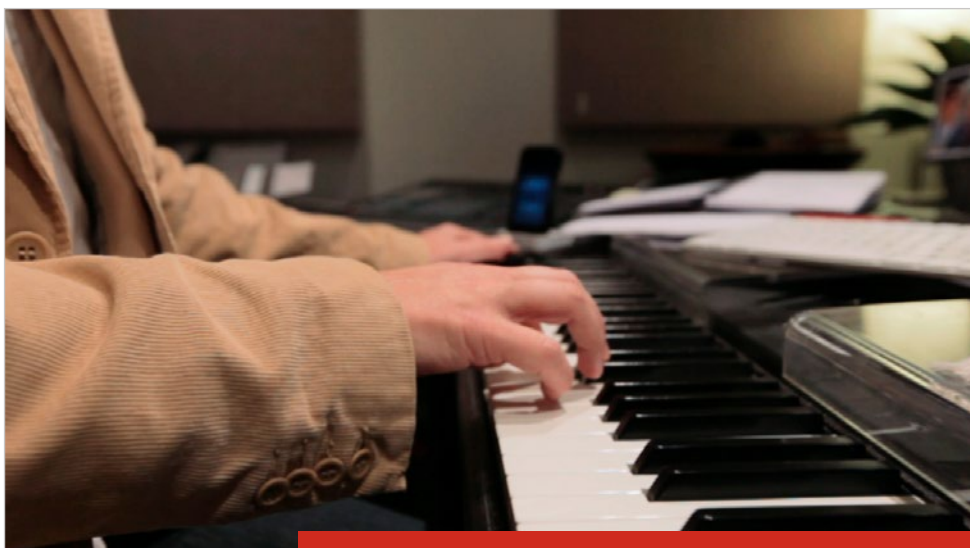
**Slate.** If you are making a complex film, it's a good idea to slate your shots. You don't need a professional camera slate to do this, even a notepad and marker will do. Have a camera assistant on set to slate up every shot. This will make it easier to find the shots when you are editing.

**Action calls.** Discipline and organisation is essential when you're shooting a film to ensure that you don't make needless errors. When you are on the set, consider using action calls to make sure everyone is ready to go. Director: "Quiet on the set, please. Sound?" Sound operator: "Sound rolling." Camera assistant: "Scene one, take one..." Director: "Action!"

**Dailies.** At the end of the shooting day, it's a good idea to review your footage to make sure that you have captured enough material to edit your film together. Viewing the footage before you leave the location means you can avoid a potentially time-consuming reshoot.

## Resources

- [10 Don'ts of Recording Sound for Film](#)



Composer Guy Gross working on a composition for his latest project.

## Post-production tips

There are many things to consider when editing your film.

**Colour correction.** Sometimes shots might not work together because they were shot in slightly different light or with different camera settings. Using colour correction filters in your editing program is a good way to adjust the brightness and saturation of your shots to ensure that they fit together better.

**Sound editing.** Although you will probably spend a lot of time visually editing your film, don't neglect the soundtrack. A clear, well-mixed soundtrack will add considerable production value to your film. The free audio editor Audacity allows you to take sound files, recorded with your camera or audio recorder, and clean them up. Using this software you can perform a basic noise reduction which will remove consistent sounds, such as the hum of an airconditioner or camera. Most editing software also has similar filters that can be applied to audio. Use the atmosphere track that you recorded on location as the basis for your soundtrack, then layer your dialogue and music on top of that.

**Music.** When you are making a film, you need to obtain permission for any copyrighted music that you use. Because this can sometimes be a long and expensive process, it's usually best to use public domain or creative commons music. Archive.org is a good source of public domain music. These are usually songs for which the copyright has expired. Music distributed under a creative commons license allows other people, such as filmmakers, to use that music in their own work. There are many sites on the internet - including Incompetech and Free Music Archive - which allow you to download creative commons music.

**Effects and transitions.** Although many editing programs have flashy transitions and effects, these usually distract your viewer from your story and take them out of the moment. Avoid using dissolves and page peels when a simple cut will do!



Example of colour correction - the bottom half of this shot has been corrected.

# Glossary

## Actor

Performer in a film or television program.

## ADR

Additional Dialogue Recording or Automated Dialogue Replacement. The re-recording of dialogue during post-production.

## Art department

Headed by the production designer, the art department is responsible for the visual look of the film, including elements like sets, set dressing, costumes, props and vehicles.

## Block-through

On the set, the director walks through a scene with the actors, director of photography and camera department to detect issues before filming.

## Budget

The funds allocated to a film production.

## Call sheet

A daily schedule which includes cast and crew call times.

## Casting agent

Conducts auditions and screen tests to find actors suitable for roles in a film or television program.

## Cinematographer

Expert in the art of capturing images who devises the look of a film or television program by choosing cameras, lenses or film stock.

## Clapper loader

Member of the camera department responsible for writing scene, shot and take numbers on a slate and marking up shots.

## Colour grading

Adjusting the colour of footage in post-production to achieve a particular look.

## Composer

Composes original music for films or television programs.

## Dailies

Footage from a shoot that is viewed at the end of the day.

## Data wrangler

Manages the digital information, both images and audio, that is acquired on set.

## Development

The process of getting from an original story to the point where a film or TV project is ready for financing and production.

## Dialogue editor

An editor who cleans up and edits location recordings and ADR to create the final dialogue mix.

## Digital cinema package

A collection of digital files and keys used to screen films in cinemas.

## Director

The creative head of a film production.

## Director of photography

The chief cinematographer on a film. An expert responsible for the art of capturing images, responsible for the look of a film which entails the use and selection of cameras, lenses and film stock.

## Distributor

Company that promotes markets a film and negotiates its release with exhibitors

## Dolly

Any moving platform used to support a camera, creating smooth, fluid movement.

## Editor

An editor assembles individual shots create a film or television show.

## Exhibitor

A cinema or cinema chain that shows films.

## Filmography

A list of films that someone has worked on.

## Fine cut

The final edit of a film that appears in cinemas.

**First assistant director**

Manages the process of a film shoot, breaking down scenes, creating schedules and ensuring that production runs smoothly.

**Front of house staff**

Staff who work for exhibitors, often selling tickets and popcorn.

**Grip**

Member of the camera crew who operates dollies and cranes.

**Location manager**

Responsible for finding locations, organising permission to shoot on location.

**Locked**

A film is locked when editing is complete and has been approved.

**Marketing staff**

Responsible for the advertising, publicity and promotions campaign of a film.

**Master shot**

Usually a wide shot that incorporates all of the action in a scene.

**Music supervisor**

Responsible for recommending music for a production and obtaining rights to use tracks in a film.

**Option**

An agreement between the owner of a story and a film company to produce a film.

**Pick ups**

Additional shots taken after production has finished.

**Post-production**

The work that occurs on a film – including editing, sound editing and composing – that occurs after production is complete.

**Post-production house**

A company that produces visual effects for a film.

**Pre-production**

The process of preparing for production once a film has been financed, often including script development, previsualisation, production design, set construction and scheduling.

**Press kit**

Material distributed to the media to promote a film.

**Producer**

Responsible for developing a film, overseeing production and delivering the final product to a distributor.

**Production department**

Department responsible for organisation and administration during a film shoot.

**Production designer**

Head of the art department responsible for the look of film, which includes props, sets, costumes and other production design.

**Production investment agreement**

Contracts signed before pre-production which involve the rights to the script, contracts for the director and key cast and agreements about who will fund a film.

**Production manager**

Head of the production office who is responsible for overseeing the administration of a film production.

**Production**

The shooting of a film or television program.

**Programmer**

Employed by a cinema or cinema chain to set the time and frequency of screenings.

**Prospectus**

A selling document for the film created during development.

**Rough cut**

An early edit of the film.

**Rushes**

Unedited footage viewed during dailies.

**Script**

The written plan for a film that includes dialogue and screen directions.

**Shotlist**

A list of all the shots required for a film.

**Showreel**

Compilation of a film professional's work.

**Shooting schedule**

A plan organising a film shoot.

**Sound effects editor**

Mixes sound effects into a film or television program.

**Sound mix**

Process of combining dialogue, sound effects and music which occurs in post-production.

**Spotting session**

A composer and director collaborate to decide on when and how music will be used in a film.

**Steadicam**

A device for stabilising the camera that allows handheld movement over rough terrain.

**Theatrical distribution**

Screening films in cinemas.

**Video on demand**

Distributing film through pay-to-download services.

**Visual effects**

Digital effects created for films or television programs.

**Wrap**

End of shooting.

**Writer**

Artist responsible for writing a script.

## Links to some other useful resources

### Assistant director

- [The Job of an Assistant Director](#)
- [Movie Set Job Description: Assistant Directors](#)
- [Creative Skillset: First assistant director](#)
- [Working as a 1st Assistant Director](#)
- [Scary Cow: Assistant Director](#)

### Camera assistant

- [Ultimate Guide to a Camera Assistant's Toolkit](#)
- [Creative Skillset: Camera Assistant](#)

### Distribution executive

- [Wikipedia: Film distributor](#)
- [BBC Film Network: Distribution](#)

### Film editor

- [HowStuffWorks: What does a film editor do?](#)
- [Inside the Edit: The Editor](#)

### Locations

- [Dawn of the Planets of the Apes Location Manager on Filming in Rainforests](#)

### Music composer

- [Soundworks: Michael Giacchino](#)
- [Soundworks: Bryan Tyler](#)
- [Captain America: The Winter Soldier's Composer Henry Jackman on Scoring a Superhero](#)

### Hair and makeup artists

- [How movie makeup artists work](#)
- [Creative Skillset: Makeup Artist](#)

### Producer

- [Responsibilities of a movie producer](#)
- [Rambling On... with Producers: What Does a Producer Actually do?](#)
- [What does a Hollywood producer do, exactly?](#)
- [Creative Skillset: Producer](#)
- [It's less glamorous than directing, but film producing can be the reel deal](#)

### Production designer

- [The Importance of Production Design](#)
- [Skyfall Video Log: Dennis Gassner](#)
- [Explainer: what is production design?](#)
- [Building Edge of Tomorrow Exosuits](#)

### Production roles

- [The Credits](#)

### Production runner

- [Life as a TV runner](#)
- [Creative Skillset: Production Runner](#)

### Sound

- [10 Don'ts of Recording Sound for Film](#)
- [Godzilla Sound Designers Erik Aadahl & Ethan Van der Ryn on Creature Language](#)

### Storyboarding

- [ACMI Storyboard Generator](#)
- [Storyboard That](#)

### Stunt performer

- [HowStuffWorks: How stuntmen work](#)
- [The Hobbit's most dangerous stunt](#)
- [5 reasons doing movie stunts is harder than you think](#)

### Vehicle supervisor

- [The Guardian: Building Batman's car](#)

### Visual effects

- [Dawn of the Planet of the Apes: Ape Evolution](#)

### Visual effects supervisor

- [Wikipedia: Visual effects supervisor](#)
- [Get in Media: Visual effects supervisor](#)
- [VFX of the Hobbit](#)

# Making Movies

## video links at a glance

### Introduction

[Click here to view interview](#)

Writer, Director and Actress **Matilda Brown** talks film: from the development of an idea to the cinema release, it's a complex process involving tons of equipment, hundreds of people, enormous persistence and years of work.

### The Producer

[Click here to view interview](#)

Producer **Nicole O'Donohue** discusses the process of finding a story, collaborating with a writer to develop the screenplay, finding a director, seeking out financial partners, a distributor and sales agents. Oh, and pouring Ryan Kwanten into a superhero suit.

### The Assistant Director

[Click here to view interview](#)

**Killian Maguire** talks about the differences between 1st AD, 2nd AD and 3rd AD on a film, the pivotal role AD's play and why getting up at 2am to work on *The Wolverine* in the freezing cold wasn't a problem.

### The Production Runner

[Click here to view interview](#)

The runner is considered the starting role for people wanting a film career. **Hamish Mason** shares what he learned working on *Tomorrow When the War Began* and *The Wolverine* and how the runner works with every department on a film.

### The Camera Assistant

[Click here to view interview](#)

What is a focus puller? The on-set workings of the camera department explained by Camera Assistant **Jack Mayo** who worked in Japan on *The Wolverine* and says putting down marks for actor Leonardo di Caprio was initially 'quite scary'.

### The Hair & Makeup Artist

[Click here to view interview](#)

**Bec Taylor** on how hair and make-up artists help create characters and a 'feel' for a film, or help produce tears or sweat for actors on set and why it's not so glamorous when she's covered in dirt and blood.

### The Vehicle Supervisor

[Click here to view interview](#)

An industry veteran whose CV includes *Superman Returns*, *The Great Gatsby*, *Tomorrow When the War Began* and *The Wolverine*, **Geoff Naylor** talks about how his role interacts with most departments on a film when it comes to characters with wheels.

### The Production Designer

[Click here to view interview](#)

Production Designer, **Felicity Abbott** works closely with the director and cinematographer on the 'look' of the film and supervises the Art Department to achieve that vision. She says patience, endurance and creativity are important qualities for her job.

### The Stunt Performer

[Click here to view interview](#)

**Ingrid Kleinig** spends work days jumping off cliffs, being on fire and crashing or being hit by cars. She has done some terrifying stunts for many famous actors, on films including *Mad Max: Fury Road*, *Pacific Rim* and *The Great Gatsby*.

### The Editor

[Click here to view interview](#)

Editor **Jason Ballantine** talks about working with the director to achieve the look, tone and story of a film, plus technological changes since the days of handling film strips, cutting frames with scissors and sticky-taping bits of film back together.

### The Music Composer

[Click here to view interview](#)

Award-winning music composer **Guy Gross** talks about how he works with the director, producer, editor and sound designer on a film project. His advice for aspiring composers is listen, learn and go to parties and film festivals to meet people.

### The Visual Effects Supervisor

[Click here to view interview](#)

**Chris Godfrey**, visual effects whiz who worked on *Tomorrow When the War Began*, *Australia*, *Moulin Rouge* and *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* talks about recreating Times Square on 'green screen' for *The Great Gatsby* using state-of-the-art technology.

## The Distribution Executive

[Click here to view interview](#)

Managing Director **Troy Lum** describes the role of the distributor and talks about why releasing Australian films is so much harder; how only one in four films are successful and about distributing the biggest Australian film of 2012 - *The Sapphires*.

## The Film Programmer

[Click here to view interview](#)

**Claire Gandy** gets paid to watch at least a film a day. One of the few female programmers in the Australian film industry, she talks about 'super-busy Mondays', her favourite set visit and costs of installing technology to run digital cinema and 3D.

## The Marketing Manager

[Click here to view interview](#)

**Heilan Bolton** talks about the importance of identifying and understanding target audiences when marketing films. She collaborates with her publicity and promotions colleagues and media agency to find effective ways to reach out to audiences to maximise box office revenue.

## Piracy

[Click here to view interview](#)

Actress and conservationist **Bindi Irwin** talks about the incredibly talented people who work behind-the-scenes on the film and tv shows we all love and we hear from some of them on the impact of piracy on their jobs and the industry.



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- **Leah James, Hello There Productions** - Producer
- **Stuart O'Rourke** - Cinematographer/Editor
- **Abigail Hatherley** - Music
- **Gary Wright** - Animation
- **Trevor Smith** - Cinematography (Australia Zoo Shoot)
- **Darren Franklin** - Sound Recordist (Australia Zoo Shoot)
- **Heike Andryk** - Autocue (Australia Zoo Shoot)
- **Dani Haski** - Autocue
- **Claudia Magro** - Makeup Artist
- **Alexandra Back** - Makeup Artist
- **Tracy Terashima** - Makeup Artist
- **Christian Alexander** - Makeup Artist (Australia Zoo Shoot)

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- **Bindi Irwin**, Australia Zoo - Host
- **Matilda Brown** - Host
- **Bec Taylor** - Makeup Artist
- **Chris Godfrey** - Visual Effects Supervisor
- **Claire Gandy** - Film Programmer
- **Felicity Abbott** - Production Designer
- **Geoff Naylor** - Vehicles Supervisor
- **Guy Gross** - Music Composer
- **Hamish Mason** - Production Runner
- **Heilan Bolton** - Marketing Manager
- **Ingrid Kleinig** - Stunt Performer
- **Jack Mayo** - Camera Assistant
- **Jason Ballantine** - Editor
- **Killian Maguire** - Assistant Director
- **Nicole O'Donohue** - Producer
- **Troy Lum** - Distribution Executive

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**IP AWARENESS**  
FOUNDATION



"WE ALL WORK TOGETHER TO BRING A MOVIE TO LIFE. THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT PEOPLE IN VARIOUS ROLES INVOLVED IN A FILM CREW."



The crew of Australian film THE LITTLE DEATH (2014)



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