PERFECT PRE PRODUCTION PLANNING PREVENTS PISS POOR PERFORMANCE IN POST PRODUCTION.

LOW BUDGET MOVIES MUST CAPITOLIZE UPON ILLUSION!!

Who is a Producer?
Exec. Producer, Line Producer, Associate Producer, Co-Producer, Just plain ol’ Producer

Producers are responsible for:
1. Money and the final say so
2. Overview
3. Planning Productions
4. Run the shoot
5. Priorities
6. Schedule & Budget
7. Post
8. Post
9. Distribution
10. Good communication

Who else is necessary and why?

Remember: Choose a Cast and Crew with care, and try to hire only people who do.
The difference between enthusiastic students and pros….

Formats, 16mm = 1.33 (television) 35mm= 1.66 or 1.85 anamorphic, HD, DVcam,

What are your resources? Make those lists.

Low budgets, or any budgets for that matter, start at the script stage….
Breaking down a script is relatively easy, but how is it done?
Remember to add it ALL the details, not that easy.

Business plans, what goes into them? Finding the right information.

Casting – just how is that done? Agents, managers, SAG, etc.
   Local versus LA or New York
   Housing / per diems/ etc.
Setting up an office – what do you need? (even on the simple level)
1. Telephone
2. Copy machine
3. Fax
4. Internet access is nice
5. cell phone policy
6. coffee, etc.
7. Petty cash and the nightmare it can become
8. Keeping records of EVERYTHING!

Saving Money from the start:
1. Time
2. Professionals?
3. Flexibility at the script stage and staying creative
4. Communication is the key
5. Question all costs
6. Beware of false savings – the cheapskate always pays the most
7. Beware of false time estimates or unrealistic expectations
8. Omissions
9. Assumptions (make an ass of you and me)
10. OVERTIME! 6 day weeks, aw, come on now lets get real

Scheduling for a budget versus scheduling the movie for real – what’s the difference?
Scheduling for sanity, money versus time versus talent and locations.
Scheduling in general:
1. Minimize movement
2. Never shoot the most important/ hardest scenes first or last
3. Weather
4. Inflexibility / continuity
5. Exteriors first if possible
6. Sequence
7. Murphy’s Law – You can count on it
8. Denial doesn’t work

Locations:
1. Honesty
2. Audio
3. Electrical
4. Security
5. The “right” look
6. Logistics
7. Cost
8. Permits and what the process is
9. Transpo
10. holding
11. lunching
12. cover sets.

Props and Wardrobe, Sets and Dressing = THE ART DEPARTMENT (A good chunk of money here)

HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN YOU ARE READY TO BEGIN PRODUCTION?

Storyboards, Art Department, Wardrobe, etc. Every department needs prep!

“Production” book and how it works
1. Schedule
2. Breakdown
3. Talent / extras
4. Crew
5. Vendor contracts / Vendor list / Equipment Day out of Days
6. Locations
7. Art Department – Props, Sets
8. Wardrobe
9. Budget
10. Insurance
11. Deal memos/ payroll/ taxes
12. Lab information / Film
13. Post Production
14. Notes / Faxes / Letters / Misc. / Keep it all!

During Production:
1. Keep track of goals
2. Look for Problems – prioritize
3. Division of labor
4. Weak Spots
5. Post Production
6. Sleep, eat, and take your vitamins

Festivals, Distribution. Gotta love your movie a LONG time.

Class Schedule – The following is subject to minor changes. Throughout the semester there may be guest speakers, I will announce them ahead of schedule. This class will attempt to conform as closely as possible to the listed format, but we allow some flexibility for things that may arise or for special speakers.

January 27 – Class overview – Pre Production Planning
February 3 – Production and Post – Student Film budgeting
February 10 – The business of film – Insurance, permits, paperwork
February 17 – no school
February 24 – More business of film – Legal stuff, deal memos, taxes
March 3 – Short Format – Any money in it? Why make shorts?
March 10 – Music Videos / Commercials–(the sorrow and the pity)
March 17 – Documentary – Just how hard is that funding?
March 24 – The Low, Low budget feature – A portrait of “Haiku Tunnel”
March 31 – Unions, SAG, Local IA, Teamsters – What you need to know
April 7 – Legal Details – Copyrights, Clearances, Music, Distribution
April 14 – spring break
April 21 – Assistant Direction – What’s it all about?
April 28 – Field Trip - TBD
May 5 – “Cherish” Anatomy of a slightly bigger budget indie movie
May 12 – Post Production – The cart after the horse?
May 19 – Distribution – “To Heck with Hollywood”, Finals Due

Grades: During the semester there are four budget assignments, the last and final being a feature film budget. Accuracy and presentation of these as well as attendance and class participation will figure into your final grade.

Texts: Recommended “The Complete Film Production Handbook” by Eve Light Honthaner, “Before you Shoot” by Helen Garvey, and “The Director’s Team” by Alain Silver and Elizabeth Ward.

January 27 – Class Overview – From the Personal Narrative or Non- Narrative Movie to the planning and execution of a feature. Different battle plans for different projects.

February 3 – Continue from previous. What about you? Where do you fit in now and eventually? Are there job’s out there? Student Film Budgets – How much can you spend? What are you doing this semester and what will it cost? First Assignment- Write a budget for your student film.

February 10 – The Business of Film – Insurance issues, releases, lawyers, banks, taxes, booby traps of filmmaking. Forms, forms, and more forms. Just what is necessary? First assignment is due.

February 24 – More Business of Film – Prep that puppy and take your time. All the stuff that needs to go into prep. (That is really where a movie is made!)

March 10 – Music Videos, the sorrow and the pity. Examples and discussion of this particular end of the biz. Music video assignment given. Maybe we'll have a guest speaker. Commercial Production will also be discussed.


March 31 – Unions. What you need to know about getting involved with them. Maybe a union rep will come and tell us all about it!

April 7 – Legal Details, details and more details, and what to do with them. How to find a good attorney. Why do you need one? Maybe a guest speaker will come and help us out here.

April 21 – We will go into greater detail about how a feature script is broken down and what the Director’s Team is and how it works. Maybe a first AD will come in and share. Job possibilities and where you fit in.

April 28 – Field Trip – If we don’t go to the set of something I am working on, we will go visit another production or something. Depends on what is going on. This class may get scheduled sooner or later, depending upon what’s happening. TBD

May 5 – “Cherish” Anatomy of a bigger low budget indie movie and success story as it continues to unfold.

May 12 – Post Production, what’s it all about? There are so many ways to do this now and you have to be on top of it. Maybe I can get a Post Production Supervisor to come in and tell us about the madness.

May 19 – Distribution. How does that work? We will screen “To Heck with Hollywood” and talk about film festivals. Finals are due. Class is a wrap.