

10 Minute Film School

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<http://www.exposure.co.uk/makers/minute.html>

Now a famous film-maker a while back said something about 'Everything you need to know about film you can learn in a week.' He was being generous. You can learn it in 10 minutes.

Set your watches we will be out of here in ten kids.

Okay, so you wanna be a film-maker?

(Class choruses 'YES')

Wrong! You ARE a film-maker. The moment you think about that you want to be a film-maker you're that. Make yourself a business card that says you're a film-maker, pass them out to your friends, soon as you get that over with and you've got it in your mind that you're one you'll be one, you'll start thinking like one. Don't dream about being a film-maker, you are a film-maker. Now let's get down to business.

Let's Play!!

What you need to learn is that being creative is not enough in this business. You have to become technical. Creative people are born creative - you're lucky. Technical people however can never be creative. It's something they'll never get. You can't buy it, find it, study it - you're born with it. Too many creative people don't want to learn how to be technical, so what happens? they become dependent on technical people. Become technical, you can learn that. If you're creative and technical, you're unstoppable.

Experience - Do you have experience in movies? You do, right - you WATCH movies. Now you need to have movie experience - you're not going to learn from just watching movies, you're learn some things, you'll learn more picking up a camera, making your own films, your own mistakes - mistakes don't have to be mistakes, everything is subjective - a mistake to one person is actually a piece of art to someone else. Hide behind that, tell everyone it's art, you can get away a lot.

Start with a screenplay. Does anybody here know how to write? No - good. Everyone else writes the same way. Start writing your way. That makes you unique. You can take writing classes, that's good, but don't bother to go to film school or you'll be making films like everybody else. We want to see your film.

How do you write a script? Well, you obviously don't have a lot of money or you wouldn't be in my class. So you wanna make a movie but you don't want to spend a lot. You're gonna come up with problems everyday on your set. You can get rid of the problem one of two ways - you can do it creatively or you can wash it away with the money hose. You got no money, you got no hose. So let's make a screenplay for

a movie you can actually make without having to make your parents poor. Let's make a cheap movie.

How do you make a cheap movie? - Look around you, what do you have around you? Take stock in what you have. Your father owns a liquor store - make a movie about a liquor store. Do you have a dog? Make a movie about your dog. Your mom works in a nursing home, make a movie about a nursing home. When I did El Mariachi I had a turtle, I had a guitar case, I had a small town and I said I'll make a movie around that.

How do you visualise a movie? With storyboards, you can do that. You can previsualise your movie and draw them out, but what you should really do is make a blank screen for yourself and watch your movie. Close your eyes and stare at this. Imagine a screen, imagine your movie. Shot for shot, cut for cut. Sit there, close your eyes and get rid of everybody, get rid of all your thoughts in your head except your movie and watch your movie. Is it too slow? Is it too fast? Is it funny? Does it make sense? Watch it and then write down what you see. Write down the shots that you see. And then just go get those shots.

The man and his 16mm cameraEquipment. OK let's go over the equipment. The worse the better. You don't want anything too fancy, remember this is your first movie - you're not Spielberg yet. I used this one for El Mariachi, almost the same one, I used a 16M this is a 16S, this is exactly what I had. It helped me move fast because it was light, it was very noisy so I could do the sound in a wacky way, but this thing here would cost you about \$2000. Don't spend that kind of money, find some monkey that own's one. I found someone who had one of these sitting around, he wasn't using it. I borrowed it from him, I shot my movie.

(Points at what look's like a damn heavy tripod) Look at it, this is a nice stand, its a very solid stand, y'know what's gonna happen? The camera is gonna stay on the stand, you're just gonna keep it there, 'cos its so nice, meaning your movie's gonna look...stiff. Take it off of there, sit in a wheelchair, push yourself around, get some energy in your film. That's the great thing about first films is that they have so much life and so much energy. Big productions can't even duplicate that energy, because they've got too good a stand and too much crew and everything is really smooth and polished and its lifeless. Add life to your film by getting rid of the fancy stuff. (Points at the tripods) Too good, too heavy, too good - just use your hands.

Here's a lightmeter, this isn't the write one, I broke my other one. This is a spotmeter, that's OK but it's too fancy. You just need one with a little white dome on it, point it to your subject, read the light, look at the number on your lightmeter - remember your lightmeter is your friend - feed that into lens and the iris, and then you're set. Start shooting.

Don't overlight. On Mariachi I had two lights, regular lightbulbs, they were balanced for indoor film, so look fine. In fact everyone said the lighting looked moody because there was very little light . Your mistakes, your shortcomings suddenly becomes artistic expression.

Finally, postproduction. When you've finished shooting your movie what do you do? (Picks up video mixer) These are your friends my friends. Video editing systems, computer editing systems, anything like that, its immediate, its easy, its cheap. Do not cut on film. Film is your enemy. You may be shooting on film but don't cut on film. If any of you want to cut on film get out of my class right now. Go spend \$20,000 on a real film school and do that. You'll never get a job though - believe me.

Everything is on computers or video these days. Film is slow, film is expensive, film is not creative - film take's too long. Cut on tape that's what I do. I shot Mariachi for nothing. I edited on video. I had a three-quarter inch master that looked beautiful because the negative was transferred right to tape. There was no middleman so it looked like 35mm - clean, pristine. I made VHS copies of this, sent them out all over Hollywood. I never made a film print. (Picks up film strip) Waste of money. You have to string them up, they get worn out. They're expensive. They're copies of your negative. You don't want that, you don't want copies of your negative, you want your negative...on tape. Where people can duplicate it and watch it and get you work.

OK so you've made your movie, you've cut it, you've got it out, people want you. What do you do? The first thing you want to do is get an agent - right away. Hollywood is full of sharks, you need a shark working for you. These guys go and get you the best deals, they get you the best prices, they get you the best movies.

What you've learnt is what no one else has. How to make a movie dirt cheap. No one else in Hollywood knows how to do that. You guys can make them cheap, you guys can make them better, don't get swallowed in the system, take advantage of your position.

Now I make movies that are still low budget but they look like big budget movies because I learnt the techniques that I just showed you today.

...and this is an e-flat - twang ! All right I've got to go back and do my own films so I hope you guys learnt something today, I hope you grab some of these cameras and go shoot something of your own, I hope you write down the ideas that you have, the dreams that you have.

Stop aspiring, start doing.

See you in Hollywood - be scary!