

The Indie Producers Handbook: Creative Producing from A to Z

Pages: 290

Publisher: Watson-Guptill (February 8, 2012)

Format: pdf, epub

Language: English

[DOWNLOAD FULL EBOOK PDF]

In *The Indie Producer's Handbook: Creative Producing from A to Z*, Myrl Schreibman has undertaken a doubly daunting task. The first is to define the producer's role in the seemingly paradoxical context of a popular art form where the very best films are uniquely personal visions realized in fully collaborative ways. Oil and water must be made to mix. The second challenge is achieving success in the arena of independent film production where the freedom to create without boundaries inevitably hits the wall of limited resources.

To help producers navigate these complexities Schreibman provides down-to-earth pragmatic advice that draws on his long experience as an independent filmmaker and film school educator. He provides us with both specific information that can be used for day-to-day problem solving and wise counsel on the producer's mission that can serve to chart a life-long career.

Most importantly, we gain an appreciation of how a creative producer must be an adroit juggler of multiple roles—at once a financial provider, resource manager, social engineer and above all, an obsessed visionary.

—Robert Rosen, Dean, UCLA School of Theater Film and Television

"Myrl Schreibman's book delivers what it promises in its title: it is a handbook for everyday use for the producer who works in the independent market, and is creative. I also recommend it to directors, since it has all the important knowledge a director has to master in order to succeed in the business of filmmaking. This book is not only a great tool, it is user-friendly and well organized, so it is an easy tool to use as well."

—Gyula Gazdag, Artistic Director, Sundance Institute; International Film Director

"With all my years in the business I can attest that this book provides the right insight and knowledge for producing a film. I am very impressed. For the independent producer ... the enormous details and creative tips within these pages will definitely put the most value for the dollar on the screen. After reading this book, all the would be producer needs is persistence, luck, and a little magic!"

—Lewis Horwitz, CEO Lewis Horwitz Organization

“Myrl Schreibman’s insights into the precise yet seemingly chaotic process of production are founded on a keen intelligence and ability to analyze, as well as a creative mind that never falters for ways to save the day. In his new book, he shares and imparts his unique perceptions and prescriptions regarding laying the groundwork and deployment of a successful production. Like a chart for a navigator in stormy seas, his writing points the way for those who might otherwise be lost, eaten by the proverbial sharks, or dashed upon the unforeseen rocks of mischance.”

—Robert Fiveson, Executive in Charge of Production, Jones Entertainment Group, Ltd.

“Schreibman’s book tells the details of creative producing and should be read by every student studying directing or producing. It wouldn’t hurt the screenwriters, too. In fact, I even know some professional producers and directors who would gain new insights into their art and craft if they read this book. A must read if you want to seriously be a part of this business.”

—Abby Singer, Producer, AFI Faculty

“After reading Schreibman’s book I know it is a must read if a) you are interested in any way in the motion picture business, b) you are interested in working on production, c) you currently work in the industry. This is an excellent guide to ensure the understanding and knowledge of motion picture production. I even learned a few things I didn’t know ... and I’ve been at this game for over thirty years! Schreibman knows what he’s talking about.”

—Roger Burlage, Independent Producer, CEO Trimark Entertainment

Copyright © 2001, 2012 Myrl A. Schreibman

All rights reserved.

Published in the United States by Watson-Guptill Publications, an imprint of the Crown Publishing Group, a division of Random House, Inc., New York.

WATSON-GUPTILL is a registered trademark and the WG logo and horse designs are registered trademarks of Random House, Inc.

Originally published in the United States by Lone Eagle Publishing Company, an imprint of the Crown Publishing Group, a division of Random House, Inc., in 2001.

Cover design by Lindsay Albert

Creative direction by Sean Alatorre

Photo of the author courtesy of John Josepho

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Schreibman, Myrl A.

The indie producers handbook : creative producing from A-Z /

Myrl A. Schreibman.

p. cm.

Includes index.

eISBN: 978-0-7704-3351-2

1. Motion pictures--Production and direction. 2. Low budget motion pictures. I. Title.

PN1995.9.P7 S345 2001

791.43'0232--dc21

2001029485

Select references:

Film Production: The Complete Uncensored Guide to Independent Filmmaking, Greg Merritt, Lone Eagle Publishing, L.L.C., 1998.

The Practical Art of Motion Picture Sound, David Lewis Yewdall, M.P.S.E., Focal Press, 1999.

The Industry Labor Guide, 2000 Edition, Entertainment Publishers Inc.

The Directors Guild of America Basic Agreement, 1987.

The Directors Guild of America Freelance Live and Tape Television Agreement of 1993.

The Screen Actors Guild Codified Basic Agreement of 1989 for Independent Producers.

Some definitions used in the Producer's Vocabulary are courtesy of *Filmmaker's Dictionary, 2nd Edition*; copyright Ralph A. Singleton and Lone Eagle Publishing, 2000.

Some of the information contained herein relating to issues of specific guild or union contracts are an interpretive summary. The reader should review the final contracts of all guild and union agreements for precise interpretations of the particulars of each contract.

v3.1

CONTENTS

[Cover](#)

[Title Page](#)

[Copyright](#)

[ACKNOWLEDGMENTS](#)

[FOREWORD](#)

[INTRODUCTION](#)

[PROLOGUE](#)

[CHAPTER 1: THINKING LIKE A PRODUCER](#)

[End Result](#)

[The Five](#)

[Questions](#)

[CHAPTER 2: UNDERSTANDING PRODUCING](#)

[Make the Shoe Fit the Foot](#)

[Relationships and Ego](#)

[Getting Started](#)

[Negotiating](#)

[The Stages of](#)

[Production](#)

[Looking Backwards](#)

[CHAPTER 3: LOOKING AT THE WRITTEN PROJECT](#)

[Breaking Down the Screenplay](#)

[Preparing the Production Board](#)

[CHAPTER 4: THE](#)

[PRODUCTION BUDGET](#)

[The Budget Top Sheet](#)

[Above and Below-the-Line](#)

[The](#)

[Completion Bond](#)

[Financially Protecting the Creativity](#)

[CHAPTER 5:](#)

[ABOVE-THE-LINE](#)

[Story and Delivery](#)

[Cast—Actors—Onscreen Talent](#)

[The Sag](#)

[Bond](#)

[Casting Philosophies](#)

[Fringe Benefits Above-the-Line](#)

[CHAPTER 6: THE](#)

<u>PRODUCTION PERIOD</u>	<u>There Is No Substitute for Pre-production</u>
<u>Murphy's Law</u>	<u>Hiring Below-the-Line</u>
<u>Preparation</u>	<u>Production Staff—The Assist Team</u>
<u>Set Operations</u>	<u>Visual</u>
<u>Department</u>	<u>Property Department</u>
<u>Transportation</u>	<u>Camera Department</u>
<u>Production Film—Tape Laboratory</u>	<u>Electrical Department</u>
<u>CHAPTER 7: THE PRODUCTION PERIOD</u>	<u>Wardrobe</u>
<u>Makeup and Hair Department</u>	<u>The Sound Department</u>
<u>Locations</u>	<u>Stages and Studios</u>
<u>Tests</u>	<u>Second Unit Production</u>
<u>CHAPTER 8: THE EDITING PERIOD</u>	<u>Picture Edit—Part 1</u>
<u>Decisions</u>	<u>Post-production Process</u>
<u>Sound Edit—Part 2</u>	<u>Digital Post-production Effects</u>
<u>The M&E Track</u>	<u>Sound Editing</u>
<u>Music</u>	<u>Music Rights</u>
<u>CHAPTER 9: THE COMPLETION PERIOD</u>	<u>Working with the Composer</u>
<u>Film Lab</u>	<u>Post-production Sound Lab</u>
<u>Insurance</u>	<u>Post-production</u>
<u>Deferments</u>	<u>Publicity</u>
<u>CHAPTER 10: ADMINISTRATION</u>	<u>CHAPTER 11: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER</u>
<u>Psychology of Production Layout</u>	<u>The Lox and Bagels Meetings</u>
<u>CHAPTER 12: PRODUCING</u>	<u>The Producer as Coach</u>
<u>Producing Finance Partners</u>	<u>Producing Tools and Resources</u>
<u>Film Festivals</u>	<u>Finance</u>
<u>Joint Venture Agreement</u>	<u>Co-financing</u>
<u>Producer Rep Agreement</u>	<u>Completion Bonds</u>
<u>Non-Filmed Locations Agreement</u>	<u>APPENDIX</u>
<u>Agreement Short Form</u>	<u>Writer Employment Agreement</u>
<u>Below-the-line Agreement</u>	<u>Simplified Personal Release Form</u>
<u>INDEX</u>	<u>Product Release</u>
<u>ABOUT THE AUTHOR</u>	<u>Premises Release Form</u>
<u>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</u>	<u>Option Purchase Format</u>
	<u>Location Agreement Long Form</u>
	<u>Location</u>
	<u>Composer Agreement</u>
	<u>Casting Agency Agreement</u>
	<u>Production Board Template</u>
	<u>Master Budget Form</u>

My deepest appreciation and warmest friendship is extended to all the wonderful people who helped make this book a reality: my teaching assistant (and now a director in his own right) Jason Moore, for convincing me to write this book for student filmmakers everywhere; Gil Cates, Lew Hunter and Bob Rosen for their generous words and thoughts included in the book; Adrian Morales for keeping me healthy during its writing; Robert Fiveson for his long-standing friendship; Debbie Allen, Kelly Asbury, Steve Benson, Roger Burlage, John Caldwell, John Coffey, Alex Cox, Del Crooks, Tom Denove, Len Ephraim, Stu Fox, Gyula Gazdag, Eugene Robert Glazer, Bob Gordon, Carla Green, David Haber, Lewis Horwitz, Rawn Hutchinson, John Josepho, Steve Kaminski, Madeline Kozlowski, Sandra Lawton, Joe Lisuzzo, Jeff Margolis, William McDonald, Maggie Murphy, Nancy Lee Myatt, Nancy Richardson, Chip and David Selby, Lennie Shapiro, Johnny Simmons, Abby Singer, Penelope Spheeris, Herb Stein, Steven M. Stein of Ratner & Prestia, Martin Terrones, Truman Van Dyke, Jamie Wooten and David Lewis Yewdall, for their comments and contributions; Will Gotay, Delia Salvi and Patsy Lake for their endless support and affection; my son, Petty Officer 2nd Class Eyan Schreibman USN, for his love and his belief in me; and most of all: my students, who took reams of notes in my producing classes and who—after they went to work in the business—came back to tell me that they utilized what they had learned. I also thank the hundreds of people I have worked with and met in the industry over the years who have instilled the knowledge and wisdom that only experiences and relationships can teach. And a very special appreciation to the holy trinity: my publisher, Jeff Black, whose energy and wisdom have been invaluable; Norman Hollyn, who pushed for clarity with his notes on the original manuscript; and of course my editor, Lauren Rossini, whose stern, gentle compassion nurtured the life of the book. Finally, to the many others who have so freely given, I thank you.

FOREWORD

Myrl Schreibman knows the business of film production. More importantly, he knows the business of film. In his new book, *The Indie Producer's Handbook: Creative Producing from A to Z*, Myrl describes the details of all the varied elements that go into the usually chaotic and always surprising activities that result in a motion picture film.

In detailing the producer's role of bringing these disparate and sometimes conflicting elements together, Myrl analyses each person's responsibility and how these individual jobs translate into developing a clear and focused film "vision."

There is a great deal to be said about the usually ignored concern for developing a constructive and positive mood on the set. Myrl Schreiberman believes that everyone working on a film can be creative. Indeed it is the harnessing of each individual's creative drive and support that contributes to a fine film achievement.

Congratulations to Myrl for focusing us all on the creativity in each one of us. That is indeed the 'business' of a great producer.

—Gilbert Cates
INTRODUCTION

by Lew Hunter, author of *Lew Hunter's Screenwriting 434*

I want you, and all around you, to read this book because it is the best @#&%#@ book written about PRODUCING. Why? Because Myrl Schreiberman is a current real life Producer.

On my knees I begged Myrl to call his book *SEX, ACTION, VIOLENCE: The Creative Independent Producers Handbook*. I have produced over 100 hours of film and entertainment and I know darn well that our daily existence is fraught with sex, violence and action. "Sex" not as it relates to the story but as it corresponds to the blasted director desperately hustling everyone on the set so he can get a performance with them privately later that night, while you the producer are trying desperately to get the director to do the last shot before the company loses the light. "Action" because as a creative producer you're always trying to hustle up some kind of future screen action so your house payments can be met and your child can go to Harvard. Finally of course, the "violence" you're going to inflict on the writer who wrote the line "*and the Indians took the town.*" It just happens to be a line you can't get out of the screenplay because some suited studio executive loves the line and/or the Indians.

I can go on forever about how producers who, on an hourly basis, must deal with sex, action and violence in an incomprehensible compendium of circumstances before and behind the camera. Myrl knows them very well. Many industry war stories are not only just that but also very real because the buck stops with you, the producer, even when there are network, studio, or finance people to answer to and a director and an entire production company that waits for your guidance. There are sets of eyes that look to you for a nod, a headshake or a scream. And this book will keep you from doing the latter less often.

I first met Myrl when he showed up to my dailies of *Fallen Angel* at Columbia Television. Myrl was under contract to the studio as a producer and director at the time and I asked him with open eyes why he was at my dailies so often. He said that the buzz on the lot was that the picture was going great and he was there to see and learn and to gather more producing knowledge and wisdom. I think he looked at me as if I was a refugee from some cuckoo's nest because I knew of his producing credentials at dealing with "mushugannah" people, specifically actors and directors (he was a director himself!), in movies, television and the theater.

Hollywood is choked with actors who never act, directors who never direct, writers who never write and producers who never produce. Myrl Schreiberman has produced, is producing and will produce. He hangs his producing hat all over the industry. He also is even more unique in that he totally belies the George Bernard Shaw line "those who can do, and those who can't teach." Myrl is a man who has taught, is teaching and will teach. He also continues to learn by teaching and by

producing or directing. In my twenty-one years as a UCLA Professor concurrently with my writing and producing career, I've come to believe that we should always be stretching for the brass ring of knowledge. Particularly if you are the teacher. Myrl's FTV 247 course, "Producing the Independent Feature" is the mainspring of the MFA graduate Producers Program at UCLA, his own alma mater. He teaches versions of this course in various seminars, the UCLA Professional Producers Program, and the UCLA Extension Program. It is attended not only by business affairs and suit executives from every major studio in Hollywood, but also independent producers from throughout the world. All gaining the knowledge that he has to offer.

This book will show you that you, the producer, are the person for all seasons. You need to know about casting, editing, directing, day out of days, call sheets, the spread, the cameras and their crew, set dressing, costumes, acting, budgets, scripts, pre-production, post-production, promotion (and the list goes on)...but only a little. Yes, you must know a little about a lot. World-class scholars on any single producing component are not needed or wanted! When I started producing my own scripts it was with the 1981 highly successful television movie *Fallen Angel*, and I asked advice from three of Hollywood's finest producers. They each gave me exactly the same wisdom. They told me, "ask whomever comes to you with a problem, what they would do with the problem. Why? Because—hopefully—you hired the best person available to do the job. When they give you an answer, and if your common sense agrees, tell them you will get back to them in a half-hour. Then call us. We'll tell you what to say!" Well, I never made the call. It sounds simple but it's not. The "but it's not" is what this extraordinary book is about.

Just look at the table of contents. It's all there. Everything you need to know as a producer and didn't know enough to ask. "Above-the-line," "below-the-line," Myrl didn't blow a thing. Why? Because Myrl is a master producer and teacher. Hands on, experiential, illustrative with some of his award winning productions.

I am not writing this introduction to tell you how great the book is because it's in your hands and you'll either buy it to learn, or you've already bought it and you *will* learn! Boy and girl, man and woman—you will learn. You will need to read the book more than once to see the many concepts and nuances of producing that only years of experience can teach. I can only promise you that you will go back to this book again and again for long or short films, narrative or documentary, film or video. So don't give it away. No, do give it away—then go buy another so Myrl can send his son to Harvard!

PROLOGUE

A PRODUCER: He or she who makes things happen! A word that is used quite loosely in the film and video industry. The producer is the one who is able to obtain the creative ingredients to prompt a project to go, or the person who is able to raise the funding to give the project a green light but who then turns it over to another producer who *makes* it happen. Producers are looked at as the enemy by craftsmen who work on a project and are often disdained by actors who bring the soul of a project to life. They are scorned by film school students as a necessity but as people who do not have a creative bone in their body. It is a word that sometimes connotes disrespect, because of the business nature of showbusiness and anyone and everyone calls themselves a *producer* when they are "making that deal" or "bottom fishing" in the business. They haunt the film markets looking for that "one" deal, or package and they are the people who call film schools with enticements of multiple picture deals looking for the next Shane Black, John Schlessinger, Brad Silberling, Penelope Spheeris, Mike Werb, Alex Cox or Sydney Lumet, but instead make empty promises to students who are chasing dreams.

Students in my directing classes have told me that the producer is not creatively involved but merely someone who raises the money and turns it over to someone else to provide the creativity to a project. But then I ask them one question: "*Who receives the Oscar® statuette at the Academy*

Awards® for best picture of the year?" Answer: THE PRODUCER. Not the director, the writer or the actor. They have their own statues. The Best Picture Award is given to the Producer of the motion picture, who stands with such producers as Steven Spielberg, Ray Stark, Howard Koch, Louis B. Mayer, Jack Warner; all producers whose driving force for their projects is integrity in creativity. Creativity in front, behind, before and after the rolling of the camera. The creative producer thinks inventively and ingeniously whether it is in the telling of the story, the casting of the picture, the selection of the director, the raising of the finances, and in some cases, the marketing of the film. The creative producer at any moment in the life of a project plays many different roles: the mother, the father, the lover, the romancer, the persuader, the psychologist, the soothsayer, the comic, the tragedian, the best friend, the teacher, the warrior, the negotiator, the arbitrator, the dreamer ... the list seems neverending. The creative producer sees the project completed, dreams the project, gives birth to the project and then holds on as the project takes a life of its own, all the time molding it, shaping it, providing it with content to share with the world, and then leaving it with the hopes that it makes a difference. Does this sound familiar? It's the same thing we hopefully do with our children.

If we took one foot of film from a thousand-foot reel and held it up to the light what would we see? Well, at first glance we would see an image. But then upon further examination and analysis, and as we thought past the physical presence of the film in our hands, we would see actors, wardrobe, makeup, cinematography, sound (encoded somewhere around the image), set, location, props and maybe special effects.

Thinking further, we would realize that it also included everything it takes to do all of the above.

When a creative producer looks at the same strip of film, what he/she should be looking at are the dollar signs. Now imagine one thousand feet of film. In 35mm that represents a little over eleven minutes of film time and in its reeled version is the size of a 78rpm record (a dinosaur today). Imagine that you are holding this in your two hands (and it takes two hands to hold it), and there are nine more reels stacked on top, making the stack quite heavy. Now look at it. You are holding *Titanic*, which cost \$250,000,000. Or you may be holding *The Clonus Horror*, which cost \$250,000. What is the difference between the two? They look the same; they are the same height, the same weight. But why does one cost .001 percent of the other? What role did creativity play in the planning, execution and eventual completion of these projects that apparently look and feel the same? Does the amount of money spent on a film mean an improvement in the film? Can an understanding of creativity go beyond that which is seen on the screen and include how it got there? What role do the words "ego" and "relationship" play when being creative? These and other questions will be answered throughout this book. You will see various tenets of producing, in maintaining creativity, and be able to make creative decisions based upon the integrity of the work and the ultimate end result of the project.

CHAPTER 1 THINKING LIKE A PRODUCER

"There is nothing more rewarding for a director than being able to collaborate with a creative producer, and there is no better marriage on film or tape than that of a producer and director who collaborate brilliantly."

â€"Jeff Margolis, Director END RESULT

The producer is the creative force behind a project. I repeat with emphasis: *The Producer Is The Creative Force Behind A Project*. Contrary to popular belief (and certainly the belief of most film schools) the director is *not* the only creative force behind a project, unless of course the producer entirely relegates that responsibility to the director. Creating a project for film or video is a collaborative effort. It is not like the world of the painter or sculptor who creates alone and then, when finished, the work is presented to the public. It is an art form that requires the collaboration

of individual people, each creatively contributing to achieve the end result of the creative vision.

Before anyone else, the producer must know the end result of the project and know what path the project will take after it is completed. This is necessary in order to understand how to guide the various creative contributions to the project. What is its audience? Does it have a limited viewing life? Is it limited in the marketplace by the creative context? Will it be made specifically for one market or another? The producer also has a creative responsibility to try to provide the original investment with return. How will that be done? Will any investment be returned? The end result of the project and its use must be foremost in the producers' mind. Example #1:

Documentaries are primarily commercially screened on television throughout the world, and many private screening houses are now able to project large screen video. Does this mean that the documentary should be produced entirely on video, or are there creative and aesthetic reasons that require it to be photographed on film and completed in video? Original production in video is less expensive than film but the creative aesthetics between film and video are significant. Perhaps the producer wants the documentary to have moments that feel like the 1920s and decides that the film medium would give the right creative aesthetic element. Therefore the planning for this project would include a creative element. Example #2:

The story of a narrative project involves a gay relationship between a punk rock musician and a hip-hop musician. Although the characters are well developed and the director believes that the relationships between the two characters are universal, will the project, because of its subject matter, ever see the light of day with distribution? And if it did, what type of distribution would it receive? Will it be an underground or art house project? Or will it make it to the public's eye at all? What is the probability of total investment return?

The concept of focusing on the projects' creative end result and use is an important tenet of producing. This is not an original notion, since the Screen Actors Guild and the Directors Guild of America structure their agreements based on the end use of the product. The concept of end use is one you will be directed to many times as you go through this written diary on independent producing. But first we need to consider independent funding for the project. THE FIVE QUESTIONS

You have the project, the idea or the vision and now you must give it life. This begins in the Development Phase. This is the period in which the funding comes together. If funding is coming through a studio or other production company, you will work within their dictated guidelines. But if you are raising independent funds, it is often through a legal construct—such as a private placement document or private partnership. These documents must be prepared by a qualified attorney and structured so that the producer, the creative force, is fully protected against any personal liabilities regarding the project. The producer who usually brings the project to the structure is contributing his or her creativity to the arrangement. The clearer this is within the context of the document the more respect potential investors will have towards the integrity of the project. Inexperienced investors often look to see if the producer has his or her own funds at risk before considering investing. They will need to be educated concerning the structure of a film or video project investment and the value of a producer's creativity to the package.

Once the contribution relationship between producer and investor has been clearly explained and defined in the body of the partnership document, there are five questions always asked by investors.

The partnership document must contain the answers to all five of these questions, as they define the risk to the investor and the depth of the creative producer's motivation. Question #1: How Much Money Do You Want Me to Invest?

This one is easy to answer. The investment is the negative cost of the project with negative cost being defined as the amount of money necessary to come to a completed composite answer print of the project. The negative cost can include the hard cash dollars used on the project as well as any arranged deferred costs. Deferred costs are expenses applied to the project that are paid at some mutually agreed upon time after the completion or during the distribution of the project. The investment proposal may discuss the overall investment and what minimum units of investment might be fashioned as a part of the overall investment. Or it may indicate what sort of investment may be shaped and in what form. But the bottom line is that it will declare *how much money is needed to make the project*.

This brings up one of the big fallacies in the industry as it applies to producers. How can the producer know how much the project is going to cost before it is made? When you are buying a house, the investment is based upon predetermined information. The same should hold true in a movie or video project. But unlike the purchase of a property, the producer—due to lack of knowledge or experience—may first ask various people to provide him or her with information before setting the cost of the project. The unfortunate process for inexperienced independent producers is (all too often), to hire a production manager to create a budget for the project without any dialogue as to the creative producing of the project.

Production managers are not producers, although some may be line producers. They manage the day-to-day operations of film production. They are not involved in post-production, or above-the-line decisions of a project. They have not set the creative or philosophical approach to the producing of the movie, nor are they required to completely understand the demands of a director. So why are production managers asked to prepare budgets? Or more importantly, why would a “soon to be” producer trust the budgetary figures that a production manager provides them with? Production managers will always budget to protect the downside of their job. They will always ask for more dollars than are necessary for their area of responsibility and shortchange those areas that they do not know well or are unfamiliar with. There are not many rules in production, but there is one that is constant about the *process* of production. *“What you do not plan for in pre-production affects production, and what you do not do in production affects post-production.”* This chain reaction is what causes any project to go over its budget. So why take a budget prepared by a production manager as gospel as to what the film will cost?

Studios have budget departments that, after reading a screenplay, prepare a budget that is presented to the producer as what the film should cost. Thus studios require producers to be responsible for keeping a project on a budget created by people who have never before made films. Does this make sense? During the development phase of *The Girl, the Gold Watch and Everything*, I prepared a budget based upon the first draft of a screenplay, knowing that I had to keep it within the licensing fee of \$1.6 million dollars paid to the studio. The studio’s Budget Department prepared a budget for the same screenplay. Their budget was \$2.6 million dollars. I was told by the studio to have the script rewritten so that it could be made for the license fee. I remained firm on the screenplay as written and presented them with my budget created from the same screenplay (and my production board), reminding them that I was responsible for the producing decisions on the film. The project came in at \$1.37 million dollars. Question #2: What Do I Get for My Investment?

This is another easy question to answer. The document should clearly spell out what percentage of the film’s profits that the investment dollar or any portion of the investment dollar is to receive. Do the investors (often referred to simply as “the money”), share in 50 percent, 70 percent, 30 percent of the profits? Do the first investors who invest in the project (commonly referred to as “first money”), get a higher return on the investment than those who are partially motivated to invest because others have done so? (The thought being that first money is almost always the most difficult to raise.) Whatever the deal may be, it needs to be clearly spelled out in the investment

package.

There can be many different types of profit structures each reflecting a different psychological factor to the investment. As an example, a first-time producer may take a smaller share of profit participation, offering investors the larger share as an incentive to invest. Or, the producer might structure their share of profit participation as the source for any profit participation that must be given to secure talent. Or profit participation to secure talent can be taken from the total before investors and producers take their participation. The independent feature *Hunter's Blood*¹ was budgeted at \$850,000. It was a genre project, a clash of cultures type of adventure/horror film. Practicing the "End Result Use" tenet, research told us that the project could have a high probability of a return on an investment of this size. It would, of course, depend on the quality and creativity of the producing. We decided to interest passive investors in the investment (a passive investor is one who has never before invested in a motion picture project), who turned out to be a group of doctors from Central Florida. They were a bit shy to invest cash, as they were unfamiliar with entertainment industry investments and it wasn't like investing in a piece of land that you can go to and touch and feel. So we had to find a method of investment that would provide them with the security, and convince them that this particular deal was a low risk investment. We brought in a bank which would provide the funds against letters of credit that were issued by the investors through their respective financial institutions. This gave the group of doctors the psychological security of knowing that a bank had reviewed the investment (*Hunter's Blood*) and had decided it merited the funds against the letters of credit collateral. The bank was not at risk as they had the collateral in place. The investors were more comfortable knowing that another financial entity had reviewed the investment package and decided that the people involved could deliver. The burden of this investment fell to the production, because in order to pay the interest on the loan, we had to factor in another \$150,000 onto the negative cost as a bank fee should we have needed to pay the bank back through the end of the terms of the loan. Therefore, through our investors we needed \$1,000,000 in letters of credit for the bank. One of the major responsibilities that a producer has when doing a project is to maintain the integrity to the investors and to recognize that the "business" end of the phrase "show business" is equally as important as the "show." When the picture was completed the negative cost was \$750,000 and the bank was paid back within one year of the completion of the answer print of the picture. The letters of credit were never called, the bank received interest on the money, the investors received their percentage of profits and the picture was a success.

In another film proposal, the producers were making their first film and needed to find a mechanism to entice investors to believe in their project. Although they had not done all their homework or research in terms of examining ways to reduce the risk to the investors, they were able to raise the funds by structuring the proposal as a 75/25 percent split between investors and producers with any participation points given from the producers' side. This was further enhanced by allowing the investors to recoup their investment plus 15 percent before there was any profit participation. To the investor this is a very good deal. Now all the investor had to think about was the earnestness and passion of the producer and creative team that was being put together since the return to risk ratio was in the investors' favor.

Although film and video investments may appear to be very businesslike, emotion almost always enters into the partnership. With emotion comes ego, with ego comes motivation and since the producer has to appeal to the investors to get the project funded, the producer should define how the investment is put together. Question #3: When Do I Get My Money Back (or Any Portion of My Money Back)?

The answer to this question is a bit more complicated. The payout to the producer from any project has its greatest return within the first eighteen months of the life of the project. That is to say, assuming that upon completion of the answer print, a path for distribution and release has been

set in motion, the terms of distribution usually reflect the largest revenue coming back to the investors within the first eighteen months of the life of the film. There are several reasons why this is so.

During the first year of the project's completion, distributors provide reports to the producer monthly. The second year, the reports are made quarterly. By the third year, the producer should expect reports biannually. The major thrust for a project in whatever primary markets are determined happen immediately upon the project's release, while ancillary markets such as television, cable, videocassette and DVD may be scheduled sometime after the initial release. All of this usually happens within the first eighteen months of the life of the project.

Advances can also be negotiated regarding any of the avenues of distribution, which will have a direct impact on the percentage of distribution or release fees that will be levied against the product. If these advances are in the form of guarantees made by distributors during the development phase of the project, then the producer is able to unequivocally state when any portion of the investment will be able to be returned to the investor.

However, this type of situation puts a certain amount of fiscal responsibility on the guarantor, or distributor, and therefore the producer usually agrees to other incentives for the distributor when the project is completed. The incentives may be in the form of a high distribution fee taken upfront, total recoupment of the guarantee plus interest, equity participation, creative input or control in the project, or any or all of the above.

The producers of *The Clonus Horror* received a \$100,000 advance from their distributor upon delivery of the answer print for distribution. On the surface of it, this seemed to be a fair deal. Not a great deal, but a fair deal, as the picture only cost \$250,000 to produce. However, the young producers were not familiar with all of the nuances of distribution and discovered that the distribution fee was higher than it might have been without the advance. Also the distributor charged interest on the advance based upon the prime rate in any year. So although almost 45 percent of the investment was returned within three months of the investment, the balance of the investment took longer to receive. Looking back on the twenty years since its distribution, the profit to the investors would have been sooner and greater had there been no advance.

On the low budget feature *Crime Task Force* (\$450,000) the producers did not offer the investors any guarantees or make any warranties as to when the investment would be paid back. They wanted to return the basic investment as quickly as possible to their investors so they could ask them for funds for a second film. In so doing, they negotiated a \$250,000 advance from the foreign market and a \$200,000 advance from the domestic market which covered the negative cost of the film, paying back the full investment. But the foreign distributor took a large percentage for a distribution fee and the domestic distributor retained all domestic rights (including any ancillaries that might have been available such as videocassette, DVD etc.) Subsequent funds came in to the producers after the first release of the film, but the percentage return to the investor was much lower than it could have been had the producers not decided on the advances.

Negative Pickup—A term used to describe an agreement between a film's distributor and the producer, whereby the distribution company agrees to pay a fee for the rights to distribute said film. The fee typically is not paid to the producer until delivery of the completed and cut negative. (This is the opposite of pre-production financing.) If the pick-up deal is with a major studio, the producer can usually take the agreement to a bank where it can be discounted (e.g., converted into money for a fee). Many productions are financed, or partially financed, this way.

So Question #3 begins to introduce to the producer some philosophical decisions that must be dealt with in relationship to the project. The producer must ask some questions: “How badly do I want these investment dollars? How much of the creative element am I willing to give away? Is it a wise decision to get advance guarantees to secure the investment if the investors’ opportunity to recoup or profit potential is decreased?” Question #4: How Do I Know You Are Not Going to Ask for More Money?

More money! More money! More money! This is the producer’s undying cry as the film gets into production and the funds are being used up quickly. The investor wants to know if the producer is able to make the project for the original amount that the producer warrants is needed for the project. This is a fair question. The investor wants the assurance that the investment isn’t going to be sold off later because of the need of funds for its completion. Certainly, you can talk to the investor until you are blue in the face, trying to convince them that you know what you are doing and that you are absolutely sure that you will not need more money to complete the film—in spite of the fact that your director has a reputation for being slow and not completing a scheduled day’s work, and your director of photography loves to “paint” with light until the image is absolutely perfect because that is how they did it in film school. Unless you know how to successfully use the word “no” with these and other situations, *you will need more money!* So don’t fool yourself. Protect the investment and find a method that will assure and guarantee to your investors that you will not need more funds to complete the project. This can be done by using a completion bond. The completion bond is an insurance policy purchased through a qualified company made up of certified experts in film and video production. After they have analyzed the documents in the application package—including the script, production board and budget—they will provide a letter stating that in their opinion the project can or cannot be produced in a first class distributable manner. If it can, they will state their willingness to provide the completion bond. If for any reason the project is being produced badly, or the money is being used unwisely in the producing of the project, they, as overseers, will come in and complete the film at their expense. Their letter should state this information as it will provide confidence to investors and provide the answer to Question #4.

If it is that simple, why doesn’t every project have a completion bond? Because not every project is bondable! Bonding companies in reality, do not bond (insure) projects; they bond (insure) the people making the project. The last thing in the world a bonding company wants to do is take over a project. So they look to the people making the project as to being reputable, knowledgeable, creative and (they hope) experienced. It is therefore difficult for a first time producer to obtain a bond on a low or medium budget picture. A first time producer may have to align with a bondable commodity such as a director, co-producer or line producer with a positive track record. Bonding companies are primarily concerned with the preparation and production aspects of a project because production can be, and usually is, volatile. The post-production phase is a more fixed and controllable phase at which time the responsibilities of the bonding company may be (but are not always) relieved. Does this assurance for the investor come cheap? No. Is it necessary? Probably. Bonding companies routinely charge 6 percent of the project budget as a bonding fee; if there is no contingency in your budget, they require at the least a 10 percent contingency before determining their 6 percent fee.

As an example: If a project’s budget is \$2,000,000 and does not contain a contingency within the total amount of the budget, then an additional minimum of \$200,000 must be added. The bond fee of 6 percent is then calculated on a budget of \$2,200,000, thus adding an additional \$132,000 to the budget as a fee paid to the completion bond company. The cost of the project has now been increased by \$332,000 to \$2,332,000.

However, bonding agreements are negotiable and various terms can be discussed and negotiated as part of the agreement. These terms include such items as the working relationship with the

producer, terms and conditions of invading the bond, procedures regarding expenditures of budgetary items, and the bond fee (some of which are discussed in [Chapter 4](#)). Question #5: How Do I Know that the Project Will Get in the Marketplace?

This is the question that requires the most puzzled answer of all. Because *you don't know!* But there are various elements you can pursue that will increase the likelihood of it getting into the marketplace. The producer, director or writer may be someone with a track record and whose previous projects have been released. After researching the marketplace, acquire an option on an actor or actors whose names may encourage distribution. Tie up a distribution deal early on in the package. Or, throw the dice and trust your creative abilities to produce an exciting project with a good story that distributors will want.

Each of these circumstances requires the producer to carefully consider any particulars that may arise. Again by example, should the project include a person with a track record, the back end participation (commonly referred to as "profit points") may be part of the relationship and affect the way the investment is structured. It may very well be that investors are deciding to invest because a writer, director or producer has a proven track record that would logically dictate the purpose of the project. The difficulty in this situation may come from the working relationships of these three people, as they must all have a clear and unified understanding of the vision for the project so that their efforts do not conflict with one another.

If the producer determines that the project needs a viable actor to insure its marketability, a difficulty may arise in acquiring distribution. Although the producer's research might indicate that having a "name" actor tied to the project may ensure distribution, the reverse may also be true. Distributors may decide that the particular actor tied to the project is wrong for the project and they can easily say no to the project because you have given them a way out. And, if the actor is a member of the Screen Actors Guild, and unless you have structured the actor's relationship to the project in a certain way, the actor is paid for the project whether or not it is produced since SAG actors work on a pay-or-play basis.

If the producer agrees to a distribution deal during the development phase of the project, the deal will probably be a healthy one for the distributor and a not-so-great one for the producer. Distributors believe that their involvement makes the project viable, so they negotiate for a larger distribution percentage than they might receive if the project did not need their association to secure the investment. Further, it is not unheard of for the distributor to be involved with the creative side of the project if that relationship is required for investment.

If the producer throws the dice and goes with their belief in the project, its characters and its story, the producer is then in the strongest position creatively, but distribution will rest entirely on the integrity of the work. The producer must convince investors the project will be successful in the marketplace, and will include the right actors, director, writer, cinematographer and composer, all of which will help maintain the quality of the work and motivate distributors to put the project in theaters or on the small screen. Or the producer must believe in the project so strongly that investors are convinced that the project will be successful on the festival circuit before getting distribution. This can be shortsighted since important festivals are getting very selective about what they accept. In other words, the producer is selling integrity to the investors and attempting to set up a level of trust and mutual respect. This is the toughest road to go since it is built on dreams and passion but it can also be the most gratifying to the producer.

As you can see, the answer to the last question is the most complicated and has a direct correlation to the answers for the previous four. However, if you present these answers clearly in your investment document, your investors will be willing participants.

“When dealing with studio ‘suits’ the real job of a creative producer is simple: lie. Lie like a dog, lie like a rug, lie, lie, lie. Say whatever it takes to get executives out of your way so you can get your project made the way you want. Mostly, this involves the old Hollywood standby—telling them what they want to hear: ‘I promise you it will have male appeal’ (and it does!), ‘If it comes in over-budget, you can take it out of my salary’ (but it never does!), ‘I know for a fact that the scene will work when it’s on its feet’ (and it does). Don’t ever tell them what it will really cost, or how long it will really take to shoot (because they have no imagination or creativity and don’t really know production anyway). Once it’s made, there’s nothing they can do. If it never gets made, there’s nothing you can do, except learn from your ‘truth mistakes.’ In addition, one of the fringe benefits of professional lying is how powerful the truth can be. Once, when I was executive producing a sitcom for Fox Television, we were called into a meeting to explain how we’d fix the show in order to get (a pickup of) the coveted back nine episodes. The show was hanging by a thread, and my studio execs (which studio shall remain nameless), were tap dancing their asses off to get the network to give us the order. I listened silently for an hour, then made my move. I told the network president the truth: that the show sucked. ‘It’s about flight attendants, for God’s sake. We’re barely getting the show to stick to the videotape, and the only thing we can tell you without bullshitting you is that we can try a little harder.’ There was a long pause as everyone in the room stared at me as if I had just killed their mothers. The network president looked at us and said, ‘Thank you. This meeting is over.’ No one from the studio spoke to me for the rest of the day. But the next morning, guess what? We got the back nine. Sometimes it actually pays to tell the truth. Who knew?”

â€”**Jamie Wooten, Producer-Writer, *The Golden Girls, The Five Mrs. Buchanans, For Your Love***

[1](#) The creative nature of *Hunter’s Blood* is discussed in the book *Men, Women and Chainsaws, Modern Horror Film Genres*, by Dr. Carol Clover and published by Princeton University Press.

CHAPTER 2 UNDERSTANDING PRODUCING MAKE THE SHOE FIT THE FOOT

We read about projects that go over budget and the lament of projects costing so much money in Hollywood that the projects go to Canada, Australia, South Africa, Eastern Europe or other countries. They call these runaway productions. A lot has been written about runaway productions that seek less expensive locales or government tax credits. It’s true that in some instances savings can reduce a budget by as much as 35 percent because of a strong U.S. dollar or government incentives. This is especially helpful on television projects where production costs have risen while the fees networks pay production companies have decreased. Producers blame the rising fees on the craft people, unions and guilds for running projects out of Hollywood. That’s not entirely true. What has contributed to running projects out of Hollywood are producers who do not understand the positive side of the words “ego” and “relationship,” and who are worshipers of the written word. They believe the words in the screenplay are sacrosanct and should never be changed, so they try to adjust the production (and its budget) to fit the written words.

Let’s examine that logic. The words of a screenplay are written by a writer sitting alone in a room, dictated by his or her imagination. The writer has little or no knowledge about the inherent problems to production—and why should they? They are writers, and you are a producer. They write; it’s your job to produce. But collaboration is the key to this relationship and you must try to make the shoe fit the foot, with the foot being the budget and the parameters of production and the shoe being the screenplay and the process of production.

What makes an excellent screenplay? Is it the size of the bridges that are blown up or the number of cars that crash in the first ten minutes of the film? Or is it the characters and what they say and

feel? We all know the answer to that one. The answer should always be “it’s the characters.” No doubt about it, when a project has solid characters who feel, speak and interact within a good story, the picture has the potential of being an excellent project.

Crafting a screenplay to include characters who are solid, emoting, feeling characters takes creativity, not money. Blowing up the bridge in the story may advance the story but is it necessary for the characters and to the story? Can the story be advanced and achieve the same thing without an onscreen explosion? The characters’ reactions to the dramatic intent of the action or effect should be what makes the project work, not the special effect itself.

So a creative producer who is familiar with reality and is starting to raise the money should first determine, based upon research, how much money can be raised, everything being equal. This is a key phrase! “Everything being equal.” This refers to the project before distributors or financiers demand specific requirements, each of which they feel is critical to protect their end of the risk and which will raise the budget of the project. The requirement of a specific actor, for example. Once the budgetary funds have been determined, then the producer working creatively with the writer adjusts the screenplay to work within the available funds (making the shoe fit the foot). A production breakdown on a production board (discussed in [Chapters 3](#) and [11](#)) will identify some of the creative changes that might need to be made. It may mean changing certain locations, which do not work for the production or are too expensive, adjusting the number of characters in the story or perhaps setting certain limitations as dictated by budget. Limitations are always part of the formula. Creativity flourishes within limitations and restrictions. Mozart had a deadline when he was commissioned to write *The Magic Flute*; the Pope continually pressured Michelangelo with deadlines for the completion of the Sistine Chapel. Limitations can force you to stretch your creativity in new (and often cost effective) directions.

As previously mentioned *The Girl, the Gold Watch and Everything* had a screenplay that the studio said would cost over two million to produce. I knew that if I produced the film from scratch and had to find or build all the locations and did the scripted special effects the way that was standard at the time, it would have cost what the studio had projected or possibly even more. This was prohibitive for a movie for television. We were doing a union (IATSE) picture and set construction alone with an IA crew would have taken the entire budget. The final script the studio Budget Department read had already been reworked with the writer with the “shoe fit the foot” theory. I decided to walk the studio soundstages to see what sets were standing and what sets could, with changes to the set dressing or minor alterations to the screenplay, be used for *Gold Watch*. I found a wonderful hotel suite which would match into the Hotel Del Coronado in San Diego, and an interior being used for a romantic comedy which could also be matched with exteriors into the project. This tenet of producing, of maintaining picture quality and creativity and having the “shoe fit the foot” prevailed through the entire production process.

Hunter’s Blood was faced with a different problem. The executive producer had wanted the project shot in Florida, thinking that the terrain of northern Florida was more suited to Arkansas and Oklahoma where the story was set. (She was also from Florida.) I was faced with finding locations in Southern California that could work for the picture. I knew that what was important to the movie were the people, not the trees and shrubs (although there couldn’t be any palm trees in the film) or how the landscape was dressed. So I needed to find exterior locations that could pass for the woods of Arkansas. I knew the first draft of the screenplay would need changes to coincide with the vision I had of two cultures clashing with one another. I spent weeks looking within a fifty-mile radius of our production office. Finally I found a woods on a “location backlot” in Newhall, California, just behind the Six Flags Magic Mountain Amusement Park. Once I found the woods, I asked the lot manager what else was situated on the lot. He drove me around and I saw areas that—with some rewriting and clever set dressing—could work very successfully for the film project. I also found a practical (that is, working) freight train and about five miles of track. When I

showed this to the writer we changed the ending of the picture and added two exciting (but inexpensive) stunts to the project. Once again, the shoe was made to fit the foot!

RELATIONSHIPS AND EGO *

Myrl Schreibman has written a comprehensive and practical, step-by-step guide for organizing and running a film from pre-production through post-production and delivery. This invaluable resource provides fundamental tools to produce a more thorough, more organized, and more professional film production. Packed with engaging and useful anecdotes, Schreibman provides a superlative introduction and overview to all of the key elements in producing for film and television. Useful to film students and filmmakers as a theoretical and practical guide to understanding the filmmaking process, Schreibman fills his manuscript with practical examples from his considerable personal experience in the film industry. Loaded with insider tips to help filmmakers avoid the pitfalls of show business.

The Indie Producers Handbook Creative Producing From A To Z - Achetez et tÃ©chargez ebook The Indie Producers Handbook: Creative Producing from A to Z (English Edition): Boutique Kindle - Direction & Production Migos pro tools template - List of books by author Myrl A Indie Producers Handbook Creative Producing From A To Z Read - Free download. Book file PDF easily for everyone and every device. You can download and read online The Indie Producers Handbook: Creative Producing Screen Daily - Indie Film Producing explains the simple, basic, clear cut role of the putting name actors on your indie film-it's all doable, and this book guides Laid out in a step-by-step, A to Z, matter-of-fact style that shows how the producer's role can be easy, Chapter 1 Introduction- Wear the "Business Hat" and the "Creative Hat". The Indie Producers Handbook Creative Producing From A To Z By - No worry to forget bringing the indie producers handbook creative producing from a to z PDF Full Ebook book. You can open the unit and get the book by on-line. ISBN 9781605690506 > Indie Producers Handbook : Creative - AbeBooks.com: Indie Producers Handbook : Creative Producing From A to Z selection of similar New, Used and Collectible Books available now at great prices. Myrl A. Schreibman Books - Gotta admit it, Myrl's book is an essential! Discover ideas about Movie Producers. Indie Producers Handbook : Creative Producing From A to Z: Myrl Creative Production - Indie Film Producing explains the simple, basic, clear cut role of the putting name actors on your indie film-it's all doable, and this book guides Laid out in a step-by-step, A to Z, matter-of-fact style that shows how the producer's role can be easy, Chapter 1 Introduction- Wear the "Business Hat" and the "Creative Hat". Kshmr Sample Pack Volume 3 - Indie Producers Handbook Creative Producing From

A To Z - In this site isnt the same as a solution manual you buy in a book store or download off the web. The Indie Producers Handbook: Creative Producing from A to Z - The NOOK Book (eBook) of the The Indie Producers Handbook: Creative Producing from A to Z by Myrl A. Schreibman at Barnes & Noble. Jlo outboard - profilscope - Myrl Schreibman has written a straighfoward, insightful, and articulate account of what it takes to make a successful feature film. Download Indie Producers

Relevant Books

[[DOWNLOAD](#)] - Poor Husbands! Reloaded pdf

[[DOWNLOAD](#)] - Download Free A brief history of Ireland online

[[DOWNLOAD](#)] - Download The Osirian Realm: The Secret Book Of Orion

[[DOWNLOAD](#)] - Free The Wages of Choice epub, pdf

[[DOWNLOAD](#)] - Free A Shade of Mind epub, pdf
