

So, You want to make Movies?

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Filmmaking is an expensive business and if like me, you have a burning urge to make films the cost can be prohibitive. Despite this there are ways you can hone your craft and even make good films. A good place to start would be to invest in a mini-dv camera or to give it its full title 'Digital Video'. These cameras can range from 2k for a really good one with bells and whistles down to five or six hundred for second hand basic units. A tripod is essential to avoid 'Blair Witch' type handshake where it's not wanted. If this proves too expensive then Dad's old video camera will be fine, just remember that costs and time will be involved in digitizing your footage afterwards.

So now you've got your camera, you're ready to make movies. Of course there's the little problem of figuring out what it is you're going to make. Drama, documentary or star wars type blockbuster, it won't matter unless you have a plan or a script. If you decide to do a documentary then look around your locality for interesting stories and subject matter. It could be a historical documentary of some person or place in your area. Are there people around that know this history and can tell it well? If so, will they tell the story on camera? Footage of these interviews combined with footage of the area and if necessary a good narrator working to a pre planned script, could produce very surprising work. Try keeping it short to start with, say ten minutes. A good ten-minute documentary, presented well could do wonders for a fledgling career and get you noticed if not working.

If it's a drama you decide on making, choose your subject matter well. If you feel you want to write your own script remember you are operating on zero budget and therefore will get little chance to do that wild 'Bullit style' car chase you always wanted. Keep it simple, keep it short but

above all be creative with your vision and your storytelling. Good dialogue has the power to enthrall an audience even if the film itself has the worst lighting, shakiest camera movement and tackiest set in the world. As a scriptwriter it's your greatest weapon.

Now that you have your masterpiece shot comes the whole new problem of putting it all together in a coherent and structured way. Welcome to the world of editing. Again this can be done at home with the right software; however, just because you have the software does not make you an editor. An editor's job is one of the most important in any filmmaking process. It takes years of training and experience and a talent not everyone possesses to become an editor, but with a good eye and good footage it can be done by you at home. Software costs from €500 to €3,000 for the bells and whistles type suites. As with the camera, once you have made your investment the best way to learn is just to do it. Once you keep your master tape and work with a copy you can make all the mistakes which you will, but after a while you will get the hang of it. Your burning desire to finish your film should be motivation enough to try it. Failing that, try and find if someone local to you has the software. Will they help you in return for a credit as an editor? Filmmaking is collaborative. Other people in different areas of the industry are doing exactly what you are doing, trying to get a foot up the ladder with their first or at least early work. To them, editing your masterpiece for a credit might be all they require.

So now you have completed your film. Where to show it? Well a good place to start with is family. Sit them all down, take the phones off the hook and press play. Try to learn from their reactions afterwards.

Don't lap up all the praise, thinking you are the next Kubrick. Ask them questions relative to parts of the film you felt should have elicited a certain reaction. You might be surprised to find the different takes an audience have on your work. If someone doesn't seem enthused try, without embarrassing him or her, to find out why. Don't take it personal! Learn from their comments. If you feel you want to take your work further can you organize a showing at your local pub or community hall or cinema for that matter. If you want to reach a bigger audience then you could send your work out to a number of distribution companies who specifically work in short film. Please be sure and ring them first and check their submission policies.

Apart from the courtesy shown, you are also establishing first contact with industry people. Remember as with all walks of life, first impressions last. Another way to get your film shown is through the Internet. Plenty of web sites show short films and might be willing to show yours. With all of these just be sure you read any agreements thoroughly. You don't want to give away the rights to your film to anyone, at least without getting something in return. Most of these companies have non exclusive agreements which means you give them permission to show your film, but you also reserve the right to show it anywhere else that you wish to, including on another site on the internet.

So if after all that you think it's simple, then I'm sorry to burst your bubble, it's not. However if you have the urge, the drive, the patience and the creativity, you can make something special. Something that might just stand out from all the others. One thing is for sure, you won't know until you try. So time to stop dreaming of what might be, and do what must be done. Take the first step.