

*For my whole family  
who love unconditionally*

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## Introduction

I'm writing this book for myself as much as for you. It is not an academic analysis or a practical 'how to' manual. In fact it is more a guiding handbook for anyone making or contemplating making a film for the first time. It is a book of ideas that when thrown together create that sizzling feeling we get when watching our favourite films.

This is also for those who love film and simply want to find a vocabulary to express their appreciation of the art. I hope it will land on the desks of cinephiles in general as well as providing food for thought for actors, producers, writers, directors, cinemagoers and film students everywhere.

It is made up of a series of short chapters designed to allow you to dip in and wander around as you browse the ideas I've laid out for your consideration.

It has been called a 'Self help guide for guerilla film makers'. So if you think about films, are thinking about becoming involved in one or feel the urge to start the ball rolling and actually instigate the making of one for the first time then this book is for you.

## 1. Vision and Sound

Take a look around you. Wherever you are just take this moment to observe your surroundings. Look and listen. This is your audio-visual experience. Can you describe what is going on? Not much? Too much? Whatever your sensory input, this is scene one.

Using what you know, it is your challenge to imagine or rather re-imagine that which you see and hear. If you can get to the stage where you can foresee this projected onto a screen then your journey is already well underway.

A documentary exists entirely in such a domain, capturing the sights and sounds that you require to get your message across. A fictional story needs you to blend your real-life experiences with a vision of the senses that you are going to create.

Sound evokes an image. You hear a dog barking out of sight in the background, you imagine what is happening away from your particular situation. You record a dog barking and your audience will do the same. Is the sound of the dog getting louder, getting closer? Will it appear on screen? You choose.

Of course there is another meaning to 'Vision'. The kernel, the root of the idea of the film in the very first instance. Also the overall conception, the most original and complete initial phase of your movie. It is the Director's job to carry this vision from the beginning to the end. He or she must maintain the consistency and the essence of the idea and unflinchingly reject that which detracts from it whilst encouraging everything that enforces it.

The creation of a soundscape to surround this vision entails knowing intuitively which sounds and which progression of sounds will do justice to the visual elements of the film. It is far too easy to overlook this but bare in mind that a lack of sound, silence, can also be a powerful tool to produce a required effect.

Laughter, screaming, clapping, the sharp intake of breath, footsteps, crying, a whistle, the voice, song, knuckles cracking, a sigh, a yawn, a sneeze. Where do you want to take your audience with the sounds you record? The choices you make deliver your direction through the film and highlight what you are trying to achieve. You must be truthful to your vision by ruthlessly applying yourself again and again in the decision making process in order to retain its integrity.

At this stage you might be wondering how such a vision is obtained. An idea suddenly comes to you out of the blue, it appears at the tail-end of a dream as you wake. You see something breathtaking whilst on holiday and it seems to suggest a great vision for a future project. More likely your dreams and experiences grow over time to build something that eventually you can call a vision. Something overflowing with ideas that needs to be encapsulated in the format of your chosen media. It is here that your version of life may start to best be explained, told, described, contained and re-imagined in the vehicle of a motion picture film.

As an art form, films are very versatile and adaptable but a film may not necessarily be the right thing for you. Have you considered painting, drawing, photography, sculpture, animation, architecture, animation, television? These may be more suitable for your needs, although of course all of these can and have been the subject of films.

The beauty of film as a commercial art is that potentially it is a large vessel that can contain, showcase, and play with many of these forms and indeed many films employ a huge variety of specialised artists to create their films.

## 2. Image and Music

There is your personal image and the image you wish to project with your film. If you can think of a single image that defines your entire film then you are very lucky. Playing with the images you have collected may produce one single image that does this. Remembering that there are twenty-four images recorded every second you have a lot to look through.

Whether you choose original music or pre-recorded music you will want to think about your soundscape. The vista of sound and music running throughout your picture will tie the whole thing together. It is good to think about this before you shoot a single frame.

It may be helpful to have a specific image to hold in my mind that does the same job. Sometimes a single individual image really can say a thousand words before you've even started. Then see it as a poster that along with your log line will draw interest and speculation.

Is there a theme running through your story, script, idea or vision. This too can pull together everything that you are attempting to say. A directorial guideline that influences all that you do, something of a reference in your mind against which the efforts you are making can be compared. Choosing motifs that run through the film can make it so much more enjoyable to watch and create.

The same follows for music. Threads that flow and interweave as the story unfolds lend coherence and originality to the story as it unfolds.

The image of the characters have to be consistent too, if only to allow them to express change as they move through the picture. Transformations of image, evolution of soundscape and a combination of the two mean that you will find a way to synchronise image and music.

It goes without saying that the emotional journey experienced by the creators and the spectators of the finished film is half the point, if not the entire reason to embark on the production of a film. The image that you choose and the music that breathes life into it are vital in ensuring such a journey is worthwhile.

You want to see some dancing, a kiss, a chase. What are the circumstances that bring about these events. You have the image, you can visualise the scene but how will you treat it? What is the situation, the scenario? The music that accompanies these expressions of your imagination will colour the emotions that play out before, during and after. Of course much of what an audience hears is subliminal, all the more reason to make it count.

The dreams that come to the surface, those that reach the forefront of your mind are there for a reason. They inhabit your internal make-up to be shared in the intimacy of the movie theatre. You have a responsibility to make them move and come to life. Only then will you feel that you have blended image and the music to such an extent that your audience leaves the cinema better off than when they arrived.

To display your art to the paying public means that you have arrived at both the end of one show and the beginning of another. Your own image will have changed as will your appreciation of what you can bring about by choosing its musical accompaniment.

Feel free to experiment. A sequence running in sync with one type of music will take on a completely different hue when played next to another. Again, you make these decisions, they are in your hands. There is no wrong or right, only when put alongside your overall vision can the soundscape be judged.

### 3. Structure and Editing

Unless you are making a one shot abstract piece, your film will have a structure, its the nature of the medium. Editing shots together in an order requires that you have some kind of plan as to what that order is. Beginning, middle, end is the basic layout but how you travel backwards and forwards and play with your timeline is entirely up to you. Its ok to not even make sense asking more questions than you answer. Indeed this gives the viewer work to do, to fill in the gaps.

Parallel editing means that you have two or more concurrent stories running side by side, inter-cutting between them as you deem fit. Entering a shot late and leaving it early creates an efficient pace, concentrating on the 'beats' in the shot. You may well decide to cut out carefully filmed shots completely, rewriting your script as you go. During filming and editing your script and story board may become simply a guide. Needless to say, having those guides as an essential point of reference is crucial.

There will be peaks and troughs in your film : high energy, mellow, fast pace, set to music, long dialogues, establishing shots, conflicts and resolutions. Like the written word there is grammar to film, but just as can be seen in poetry compared to prose these largely unwritten rules are there to be played with. You will discover without reading about it that there are things that you can and can't do. Have fun with these obstacles, you may find a way to bend these rules if not find a way around them totally.

Editing is not like doing a jigsaw puzzle where you simply put the pieces together, although this is often done. More it is a chance to remake what you started out with using what you have learned along the way. An editor must be given free reign but also be adaptable to the director who may feel that trying out something new will better serve the picture as a whole. Working

with creative professionals is about being able to try out something novel that doesn't work in order to discover what does.

People who are set in their ways may often do a very good job but bearing in mind that styles of cinema vary like fashion from one day to the next it is good to be flexible in your attitudes towards your film. It may not become what you wanted it to be, this is highly likely, but it may become something else with greater virtues, it may surprise you.

Life has a structure of sorts and your film, once conceived may start to take on a life of its own. Certainly once it is finished, it is there to be shown to other people who will no doubt give their opinion. These opinions may differ greatly, some may upset you, some you may value and some may leave you simply confused. What you think of the finished article is important but to realise that it is now an entity outside of you means to realise that it is no longer under your control. In a way you have to set it free.

Putting two separate still images together may suggest a story, you may start to make a connection that leads into another realm. Think how many more connections can be made when stringing together different lengths of moving images. The suggestive power of film is immense and it is up to you to control it. Just remember your responsibility to your own inner vision and the flights of fancy, caused by an overload of audio and visual information in the editing room, can be contained and used to your advantage. Letting your imagination run free at this time can be detrimental to your own goals.

Spare a thought for the thousands of editors before you. You can learn a lot from their work.

Take time to see how they have shaped and structured films with the footage they have been given.

#### 4. Light and Shadow

Light and the lack of it are your yin and yang. In fact in terms of what appears on the screen, coloured light and shades of darkness are all that you have. To suggest atmosphere requires that you work with a pallet of light and know how to paint the frame that you have chosen.

Natural light, the sun and that reflected from the moon allows an infinite array of possibilities. The time of day is instrumental in lending a feeling of warmth or coolness to your scene. Only through keen observation of how the quality of light changes as the sun moves in its arc across the sky, can one fully learn how subtle its affect can be.

Where you position the camera(s) in relation to the direction of light will make or break the aesthetics of the shot. A low sun will create longer shadows. shooting contra jour, into the sun, will give flares, unwanted or wanted, in the lens and will put a light in your players' eyes.

It may be that what you have chosen for the actor's wardrobe, the dressing of the set and the background in your shot, all provide a uniting theme for the expression of emotion in the film. Cinematographers are masters at literally highlighting what they see in the viewfinder as key to the aesthetics as they change and evolve as the story unfolds. Throw a light on your subject.

Black. Darkness. A lack of illumination. Keeping the audience in the dark can be a powerful way to lend suspense to a movie. What can't be seen, the unknown, will play on the curious mind of a cinemagoer. Combined with a soundscape that works with this and a script that doesn't give too much away is an impressive method in both art and entertainment. Revealing that which has been hidden either slowly or with sudden shock lies well with someone who doesn't want to be lead by the hand to the conclusion of the film.

Psychologically speaking the rich blacks that fill in the space where light doesn't fall needn't be just negative space. Thinking of the screen as a blank canvass is one thing, thinking of the screen as a black canvass can be enlightening.

A wash of light over parts of your film will act to serve as a reminder of what your film is about. Filters and gels can help you to suggest how a character is feeling or how you wish the audience member to think. As an artist you have control of all of these variables, it is up to you to make your choices at every junction along the way as you adjust your storytelling abilities.

Artificial lighting provides an almost endless array of opportunities. From the addition of something very simple, an eye light, a flag or a slash of light across a wall to hugely elaborate lighting set ups over vast spaces, you have control. There will always be elements out of your control, these can be improvised around but for everything else each and every decision makes a difference.

Think of differences in lighting in the same way as how you might think about the differences in intonation of voice delivered by an actor. One line can be read in so many ways and infer so many different meanings and it is the same with light. Yes, these differences are subtle but there is an additive effect with every decision you make.

Sometimes just looking at a scene will be enough, aesthetically it will be perfect. Other times you have to build your lighting from the ground up. Bearing in mind that some of your intricately lit shots may well end up on the cutting room floor for reasons other than aesthetics.

As time is usually a factor, simplicity is the key.

## 5. Colour and Greyscale

What can be said without colour? Black and white is a powerful choice. You remove colour in order to make a statement, you are saying something that requires focussing on everything but colour. Colour can be a distraction, it may provide information extra to requirements. Just because you have access to colour don't forget what can be done without it.

A simple black and white picture can be elegant and meaningful and create associations that would get lost in a colour image. A frame full of colour no matter how carefully constructed can become a confusing mess.

Learning to use black and white can be quite liberating and it is not surprising that many cinematographers relish the chance to use it. The fact that you can utilise both starts to open up doors. Make a friend of black and white and it will pay dividends.

There are a vast number of colour film stocks available, Some have been around for a long time, it is still possible to buy film that was in use 30 years ago. It goes without saying that every different film stock will give a different 'truth' to your film. The image you see on the screen is a translation, an interpretation of the reality that was shot. This becomes increasingly obvious when you become aware of how colour can be manipulated digitally. Choosing the media through which your screenplay is translated into a moving image is one of your first considerations.

Do certain colours have particular resonance for you? Red, Blue, Green, Yellow, Pink, Orange, Purple. Each of these may bring about a personal feeling or message and this can be used in storytelling. A blast of light of a particular colour during a transition in story may signify a particular change. Use colours to your advantage, you have time to plan these things. Colour

your choices and decisions, make them count, bring them to life with the rainbow vision that lies within.

It is one thing to film reality in a documentary way another to film a microcosm, a small fiction world that you have created. In the first you are dealing with the colours and sounds you have at hand but with careful planning and a certain amount of improvising in the moment you can always use colour in the frame and coloured lighting with gels to highlight what you are interested in. A fictional world does not have to be a faithful reflection of reality. In fact, the truth, in a fictional world refers back to the original vision. Does the way you have lit this scene ring true with the coherence of vision that you have set out with from the start? Painters use their paints sometimes with extreme subtlety, sometimes with overblown joy in life to portray a way of looking at the world. Through what filters do you view your world and the world you are trying to depict?

Filtration is often shied away from, it is often seen as cheating or tacky but many great directors of photography use them inventively and with care. Just as is the case with gels, filters are available in a huge range. If you can find a way to use them both, in order to serve your vision, then do so but do so wisely.

People go to the cinema for many reasons but one is to see something that they cannot see anywhere else. For you to facilitate them in their bid to escape their reality for a couple of hours means you have to use every trick in the book. Cinema is an illusion and the cinematographers or artists who work together to produce it are aware that they must have a full working knowledge of their craft to keep this illusion alive. Your use of colour and/or black and white is central to this endeavour.

## 6. Interior and Exterior

The confines of an interior scene can be quite claustrophobic for both actors and crew alike. Everyone has to do their job as usual but with cables, equipment and extras floating around special care has to be taken if only to avoid accidents. A set that has been carefully dressed is open to be changed unknowingly which may detract from the scene as a whole. It is an unspoken rule that you only touch what has direct relevance to your role.

As a director it is important to organise your co-workers so that they may function as efficiently as possible. This is obvious for crew but your actors must take priority. Shots may last for a very short time span, since you have taken so much trouble to arrange everything just so, you would do well to concentrate on their performance at this juncture. What appears in front of the camera between 'action' and 'cut' is all that the audience will see.

Transporting personnel and equipment in the build up to a scene can be problematic and shortcomings in your organisation will show. It is the most important part of production that you keep morale high, happy people work better together and as has been said many times by many people, film is a collaborative medium.

Leaving a location exactly the way you found it will mean so much to the people to whom it belongs. Often they are allowing you to use their property for free with just good will and the excitement of a film crew shooting on their doorstep. Do not abuse your privileges.

Stepping outside brings its own special challenges, weather being only one. Its a good idea to have an alternative, sheltered scene that you can use should the weather be prohibitive to shooting outdoors. Being able to adapt around a changing environment is a strength.

It is often not possible to get power to an exterior scene so reflector boards come in very handy. You are dealing with the sun, the most powerful key light there is, if it is very hot don't forget sun block for the actors or you may get some fairly well fried results. Once more, with everything planned you are free to improvise as unexpected situations develop. Maybe it starts to snow, perhaps this is the time to start shooting rather than time to stop.

If you do have access to electricity outdoors either from a generator or a nearby building then there is always a need to make sure nothing gets wet. Experienced grips and gaffers often know a lot more about the film making experience than those in positions of more power give them credit. Delegating is a way of relinquishing the excess power you have as a director and you will always be rewarded many times over when someone is allowed to have full control over their own specialised area. Also it frees you up to work with the actors. Don't be a technical director, you're probably not very good at it and your talents lie elsewhere.

Outside is a great domain of sound, although some of these may be detrimental for example a plane flying overhead during the dialogue of a shot, others should be recorded for use in the background. Sound people are experts at noticing when the wind has picked up or when a nearby school playground starts to kick off. When blended into the soundtrack such sounds can lend the required atmosphere where otherwise a conversation may seem quite flat. Its another choice in the editing room, you may like all extraneous sounds filtered out. Just be aware your mind is a filter too, know what yours is doing.

Whether int. or ext. or travelling between them its good to cultivate a sense of space around you,  
this is one of the things that translates well to film.

## 7. Landscape and Cityscape

Add to this Skyscape and Seascape and you have an idea of setting. The backdrop to your film is the place where it all happens. You may have a really intimate story to tell that could happen anywhere, something with universal appeal. However, it has to happen somewhere and where you place your players will alter the tension between them and their surroundings.

City people in the country, country people in the city, people living in harmony with their habitat, people fighting to survive in theirs. The view at night as a helicopter shot looks down over a remote coastal dwelling or a corrupt city. Slowly zoom in to your story, the last opening credits as someone starts to talk...

Some places just look better than others, this may be misleading, what lies beneath the superficial can be anything but beautiful. Scouting locations is fun, to find just the right place suggested in the script means that part of the scene is taken care of and the surroundings of the scene may make the scene what it is.

If you're not about aesthetics and your task is to find somewhere gritty, grimy and in some sense of the word 'real', then your search begins in a different place. Documentaries often dig deep into this territory but they may not need to and juxtaposing one type of story with a very real but contrasting, otherworldly film environment may be all that matters.

Looking for a place to set your story will probably be something you want to tackle early on. It is after all going to be the focus of much of your attention when shooting begins. The writer may have specifically requested one set-up that you know will not work, will not cohere with your vision. As much as anything it is your responsibility to change, alter and manipulate what you see on the page into something that will look good and work on a visual level on the screen.

A director's life is far from a walk in the park. You may become quite unpopular with certain individuals when you insist on any number of details being changed throughout the work. But when it comes to the geographical setting and ultimately the specific placing of your actors you must know that the vision driving you is robust enough to make it just so. If you need clarification try to imagine setting your story somewhere different from that outlined in the script.

There is always a geographical background to any story. The background you choose will bring other elements to the fore. Just think about how different places make you feel. A long drive in a car, a day out at the beach, sitting in a aeroplane for ten hours, taking a break on a park bench during a walk, looking out across a snow covered city, sitting outside your tent at a music festival. Where you are often has a dramatic impact on how you feel, so will it be with your actors and the characters they play.

Setting is almost like another prop, its something to interact with. If you are able to make sets you have complete control over this environment and can create a sense of place specific to the story. If you are on location you will have certain constraints and certain unknowns but the imaginative will make the best of every location and find in it hidden strengths and opportunities that may not even be in the script. Always think about how you can add to the story, this extra material may come in very handy at the production phase.

Landscapes, Cityscapes, Seascapes, Skyscapes all provide a very broad backdrop to the emotions that will be played out in your story. Married to a Soundscape and you will truly set the mood.

## 8. Actors and Costume

Actors are curious creators by turns children, monsters and artists. Casting for your characters means that you are going to have to look very closely at the script and your interpretation of it to find the right people. To start with you have to look below the surface. One actor may have the right appearance but on digging deeper not possess the manner and behaviour for the part. Beauty is only skin deep so use gut instinct and find the person who will add to the part rather than just inhabit it.

You will be working with these people for quite some time. Depending on your methods you may have rehearsals and through improvisation be asking your actors to rewrite their character. One role may require that an actor has a specific skill set, they may need to practice this. The key trait to look for is flexibility, someone who can adapt and change as the story evolves and progresses.

You will know when the right artist appears at an audition because they will slot neatly into your vision. Likewise you will find it easy to rule out those that just do not fit the bill. Try to avoid compromise, you will regret it from that moment on.

Actors with training will give you a polished performance but they may also bring a set of rules that they have learned to the table. Don't be afraid of using unknown actors especially when their background and life experiences are close to or mirror that of the character they are being asked to play.

On set or location develop a rapport with your players, they are looking to you for guidance and encouragement. Do everything you can to make them feel comfortable and dare I say it special. These people are your assets, it is they who will tell your story and they deserve to be made to

feel like the stars they are. Let them explore the character they are playing and prepare enough to allow what may be several very different takes to crystallise.

As a director you are an actor too, maybe not a very accomplished one but a type that must lead by example. However, try to avoid acting out scenes yourself, or 'showing' actors what they should be doing. Instead create an atmosphere of trust that will enable and empower them to do their job simply and effectively. You'll be disappointed by them simply imitating your moves but if they are allowed to be free you'll be pleasantly surprised at what they can do given the chance.

Clothes and hairstyles make all the difference. Not only will your film look good but the actors often need their wardrobe to feel right, if they feel right they will perform well. As with art direction, thoughtfully spending some time and money in this area can only be beneficial. In fact you might say that not only do your actors inhabit their roles they must also be chosen to fit their costumes.

Sketching out in advance the outfits of the main characters will mean that you can start to think early on about who these people are. With the basic description given in the script, your impressions and imaginations of it and the type of dialogue that the character will be speaking, you can draw up an image of this person. What we wear is one of the main expressions of self. In the small world that you are creating these characters dress themselves every morning, even if we do not see it. What they are wearing is their choice and so tells us a lot about who they are.

Giving an actor an identity by asking them to write a short biography of their character will give them a feel for who they are playing. Actors and what they bring to the project will make or break your film. Learn what makes good acting and good actors.

## 9. Props and Location

Props give the actors something to play with. It may be a pencil, an earring, a hat, anything really. The point is that during a scene if an actor is engaged in manipulating an object they are actually doing something whilst they are delivering their lines. This is a motion picture, not a still photograph, so take every opportunity to introduce movement into the shot. If you are trying to give a minimalist look you can ignore this but little pieces of business that do not appear in the script can help an actor to flesh out their character.

The only props you have on location are those you take with you and those that you may find when you are there. Small items central to the script, objects that are essential to the story can be found or bought by the art department but as always its good to have choices when you are actually shooting. If you need a pair of glasses work with the actor and art director to find exactly the right pair from a selection.

Larger props such as a bicycle or a park bench need to be transported to the location. A lack of transport can be crippling, especially if you are a small unit. Co-ordinating the shooting of a film can be organisational chaos so its good to start planning early on.

Once at a location with the art department having done everything asked of them it is vital that a director starts to focus. Blocking the camera, placing it where it will give the best aesthetic and looking through the viewfinder is a primary consideration. Blocking the actors, giving them their first positions and motion through the shot is the next objective.

The hot zone created on location is everything the camera sees between action and cut. Everything outside of this is of no value. Having said this it is sometimes a good idea to give the actors marks and eye lines, for them to observe whilst being filmed. They can hit these hidden

marks and use points out of sight of the camera as visual aids to their performance. Often when we are walking or talking and speaking at the same time we do not look at the person we are talking to. Its natural to be distracted and actors may feel more comfortable if this type of distraction is pre-planned.

The magic of cinema is that you are inviting the audience into your art form. They will see every detail. Making a film is like painting a picture where each brush stoke comes under scrutiny. However, you have the opportunity to use the skills of your trade to show them just what you want them to see. The camera view is your window on this world and all the props, actors, costumes and specifics of your location or set are yours to frame. Everything must first be expanded from the script, expanded once again from the story board then expanded once more into the three dimensions of the location. Only then can it undergo the compression through the camera lens and onto a very small frame of celluloid. After this expansion and contraction and the following post production can it be finally expanded by a projector onto a sizeable screen.

Bearing in mind that this consideration is for just one shot. There may be hundreds of shots and each one needs the same attention, not only to detail but to the overall vision. Can you make every single shot something interesting and vibrant that no film maker has done before? Probably not, but what you can do is reaffirm your initial dream for the film and place every shot in this context.

In some ways the contents of the frame are simply a moving object to be recorded. Do you like this object? Do you like what you see and the sound that it creates? As an artist you must continually ask such questions and deal with your answers to make the required changes. How many takes do you need?

## 10. Emotion and Expression

Good actors bring their own emotions and varying abilities to express them. If what you require from them is outside of their experience you must drive them towards it and give them their motivation to perform. This involves creating a state of mind for them to inhabit which may involve them to literally become someone else. Method actors may astound you in their ability to do this but do not forget that some actors are very fragile in their core and should only be stretched so far.

The range of human emotion is vast, as is scope of their expression. Think of the infinite range in the colour spectrum and you begin to have an idea. Emotions seen as neurochemical states of mind are one thing but we tend to place human emotion firmly in the heart. If nothing else this is a three dimensional home for the pounding surge of blood that courses through our veins. So should it be with expression. Although the cinema screen is flat, we are not two dimensional beings.

From the most perfectly subtle blink of an eye to the contorted writhings of agony and ecstasy we have a choice to express emotions and sometimes to hide them. It is, more often than not, the transitions between emotions that are most interesting in film. An actor shouting out one emotion may be relevant at one point but the change to another, what brings about this change and the effect that it causes is far more poignant.

You need to utilise every tool to hand in order to capture such change on film. Colour change has already been hinted at but also sound should be at the front of your imagination. You may choose the lyrics and tone of a tune, the changing melody of some source music or the intricate and carefully constructed soundscape, a score that may underpin the entire film. Sounds can be

taken at the scene or may be added to overlay the image, suggesting the true nature of what is being seen.

As you may now know, film can be an impressive animal and the nature of the beast is that sometimes emotions cannot be held inside and hidden. The eruption of feelings from an otherwise subdued character can add impact and shock value. Keeping an audience on the edge of their seats means that you have to stay one step ahead of them. You know what is coming next, they do not. This is a position that should be cultivated but respected.

Sometimes it is a lack of emotion that is required, something cold, calm and calculating. This emotional state can be as disconcerting in real life as in film and can be used to good effect. Emotionally neutral acting says a lot about a character, people screaming and shouting are ultimately just white noise.

The body of an actor and any props that can be used to help should be seen as a whole. Whilst it is well known that, compared to stage acting, film requires more subtle use of the face, this applies in a major part only to close ups. Actors are physical and enjoy using everything they've got to communicate their interpretation of the character they are playing. They should be given the chance to do this and their suggestions for their character should always be given a large degree of freedom.

Films are like a Russian doll: ideas containing stories containing actors containing emotions containing actions. A director has to reveal each container, each layer, piece by piece until all that is left is resolution. Each revelation marks a new transition to a shot, a scene and the movie as a whole. Emotions and their expression tend to roll one into the next as the story unfolds with peaks and troughs making up the terrain of the tale. It is good to know the whereabouts of each of your characters' emotional journey, filming most often out of chronological order.

## 11. Ideas and Objects

Ideas can be formless until they have begun to be realised. Part of the job of the writer and director and indeed every person involved is to distil the script's central idea and bring it into the world so that it can be shaped into the film itself. Ideas make the world go around and if you can make the sealed world of your film turn, the ideas from which it comes should rise to the surface.

There is such a thing as a subject-object relation. The attention of your viewer needs to be quickly captured so that the distance between the subject of your film and the viewer as the object to which it is being aimed can be reduced. This needs to be done so as make audience become 'as one' with the film for the duration of its showing. Often called suspension of disbelief this means quite simply that you have connected with the audience.

The director is the 'first audience', seeing the film piece by piece as it is shot and shaping it along the way so that it will coalesce together and become something that exists as a whole entity in its own right.

Films can be frustrating, as an illusion there is nothing to hold onto. You can talk about a film after it has played out but there is no object to describe, simply forms of light dancing across a screen and the sounds echoing around the theatre. This is part of the magic of the cinema, you do not receive anything concrete for your admission fee, it is still very much an experience. Of course when released for sale in a recorded media format, suddenly there is something other than talk to share and the facility of repeated viewing. Naturally films do exist as the reels loaded into the projector and are the end result of the film production process but these are rarely seen by mere mortals.

You can hone your skills as a filmmaker by listing ideas for films, however ridiculous or sublime. It may be that if you do this enough you will happen upon something of real value, something that is original, unique and 'doable' You may also gain an appreciation for the objects of your imagination. There may be repeating themes and through this work it is possible to discover what you yourself are really about. Not impressed with the current batch of films on show? What do *you* want to see on the screen and do you have what it takes to begin the journey that will culminated with it being placed there?

Sometimes the idea of the film *is* an object. A quest to find a special object or the creation of an object that will fulfil a particular function. Whether or not your script centres around such an object you will find that objects are often used as plot devices. One item may be handed from one character to another in order to continue the story. Objects that are props help the actors to fluidly interact; telephones, weapons, cars, pens, computers, watches, cutlery and tableware, paintings, books, bags, tickets, records, briefcases, clothes, food.

The idea of the film and the ideas that the characters have whilst telling the film provide the backbone to the plot. As such your central ideas should be solid and well formed. Your central premise should be an idea that can be expressed in a couple of sentences as it is this that anyone you pitch the script to will be looking for.

Ideas it seems come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Large ideas are usually associated with large movies but the benefit of an idea is that it can be expressed in a small way also. Ideas don't cost money to make and the bonus of a small film is that it can contain all sorts of ideas, large and small. Playing with the way this is done can be a good way of turning a small film into something great.

## 12. Composition and Movement

You can say a lot with still photography and there are many aspects that can be brought over into motion picture photography. Doing so and then adding the variable of movement inside the frame and movement of the frame itself brings about fantastic possibilities.

Starting with a still frame every shot should be interesting in some way, original composition leads viewers into the picture and encourages them to focus on what you want them to see. A rule of thirds is a benchmark but there is no substitute for a good eye and an experienced appreciation of how to fill a frame. Think carefully before choosing a camera position and don't be afraid to change it if its not working. Focus pulling shifts the object of attention to other parts of the frame.

Foreground, mid ground, background these are basic areas for consideration. With shallow and/or changing depth of field, selective focus, you can direct the audience's attention where you will. Zooming in to highlight part of the field, or zooming out to reveal the wider picture is an option. Panning left and right or tilting up and down is more movement, the speed at which you perform these operations, another choice.

Getting your camera on the move creates a new character. Now your moving eye can be another player. Handheld shots can be effective if used correctly but think carefully before disorientating your audience, unless of course that is your intention.

A dolly and track, jib, crane, steadicam or attaching the camera to a moving object such as an escalator, car or boat will take the story on the move too. Just because you can do these things don't rush into it. Think back to your original vision and decide if you want to pick up the action and take a ride.

We are always hungry to be shown a different view of something familiar. If you have something extraordinary to show keep in mind that you can build up a moving image from simple shots to those that are more ambitious. You can jump in at the deep end, or you can feel your way through the basics to something which then becomes visually more challenging and possibly aesthetically more pleasing. Time taken to plan a film scene by scene and shot by shot may seem laborious but if you don't like the shot list or the way the story board progresses you can always improvise around it.

Mostly it just make sense to get the shots you *need* first and then to try out some shots that you *want* that come to light when shooting. There is no doubt that complex camera movements can look amazing and are sometimes crucial to advancing the plot but if there is no motivation for them it can begin to look like there is too much of a good thing.

Most of all you are asking your actors to be dynamic within the frame, they are not just static models. Scenes need to be choreographed and actors should be encourage to try out new things without overacting. An actors purpose is to act out the story and to use all the skills they possess in order to engage the audience so far that the viewer begins to identify with the situation the character is in. The actor is the channel through which the director moves the audience.

We want to be moved that is the reason we go to the cinema. We want to be reminded that we have a range of emotions too and that we don't have to put ourselves through the mill to feel them. Think of film-making as travelling through an emotional journey, one that you can relax through because you know it is safe. Animate yourself into action, build your stories and allow the audience to share in the emotions you create.

### 13. Spoken Word and Advertising

They say ‘Talk is cheap’ but early on in a production you won’t find a better way to broadcast your ideas. Don’t be afraid of someone stealing your idea instead tell everyone everything about it and in the process you will find your project takes on a shape and indeed a life of its own.

Creating a poster at a very early stage means that you will have a very real visual reminder of what you are trying to do. Even if it is a prototype that you know will be replaced with something better towards the closing stages of distribution doing this one thing will give you hope during those rainy days when all hope appears to be lost. Make it big and give it impact.

Having business cards means that you have a fast and friendly way of making contacts with people who can really help, whether they be industry professionals or someone whose premises you wish to use as a location. It saves a lot of scribbling on beer mats and scraps of paper and shows people you mean business. Also if you’re a director for hire rather than a writer/director you may get some work this way.

The impression you make personally, what you wear, how you look and your attitude towards people sends out a loud and clear message of the type of work you wish to do. Maybe you feel you can roll up in jeans and T-shirt and this may be cool for a music video gig but a shirt and tie may be necessary for meeting with money men. You are a walking advert for your film so you might as well create the right impression. If someone is going to give you money to make your film they want to know you can at least look like a responsible adult whatever the truth may be.

Including advertising in the film itself works in many ways. A restaurant may agree to lend you their premises if they have a credit at the end of the film but if you can offer them free

advertising by featuring a shot of their name in the film you might get more time with them. Product placement works the same and can be a major way of raising money.

The more people you let know what you are trying to do the easier it will get. Other people have great ideas too and they can see your project from a different angle. Being open to the suggestions of others will not somehow dilute your original idea, it can only enrich it.

Headed letter paper may seem antiquated but if you want to create the right image you will be able to send a clear message : this is an enterprise which wishes to flourish and return money to investors. Putting together a simple web site has the same effect, a web presence is pretty impressive. You can include your web address in any correspondence and potential investors can have a good look to see what you're all about.

If you want to go the extra mile creating your own company is the next logical step. Keep in mind that once you start down this particular avenue of enquiry the paperwork mounts up. It all depends upon the size of your project and how far ahead you are planning. Having your own company sounds great and it is necessary once you go beyond a certain point but if your project is smaller the time taken to deal with business administration may be better spent writing scripts and shooting film.

Regarding the name of your film does it say everything you want it to say? It may be adequate but brainstorm around the central ideas and character may throw up a real gem. There are always alternatives and you may be being bogged down with a title that deep down you know is below par. This is a work in progress.

## 14. Attention and Story

From the moment the titles appear, you want your audience to be hooked. They will give you a few minutes to settle them down but from then on you have to keep their attention the whole way through. One and half, two, three hours is a very long time to be seated and quiet so you really don't want to let them down. Slacken off, even for just one scene and you will lose them.

Obviously a tight script will help prevent this but the way it is cut will have an even greater effect. You have to be ruthless when editing and take out even shots that you had originally felt very strongly about. If they don't fit the story and don't cohere with the original vision they have to go.

Let's just think about this thing called story for a while. You have to *involve* the audience make them feel like another character in the story. In some way, any way, they have to relate to what is going on. Plot is simply a device to allow you to string your story together. It is only a series of actions that move the story along. Your story's characters however are alive, have drive and need motive for what they are doing. They *need* to do what they are doing for a reason and there are things or states of being that they *want*.

It is often the case that you have more than one story to tell. It is the way these stories intertwine, and eventually collide, that keep an audience gripped. It is the ability of the human experience to follow a story, to remember what has happened in the past, leading up to the present and in most cases imagining what the possibilities are for where the story will go, what will happen in the future.

Story isn't everything. Character development and simple beauty of certain shots may take priority. The art of storytelling is universal, all cultures find a way to do it somehow, it is often

the way we relate our experiences to other people. It is not the only way. The abstract way that humour communicates often has nothing to do with story, its more a case of making associations and connections that lead us to laugh in recognition of universal truths.

Ask yourself what you are really trying to do. Are you trying to take the audience on an emotional journey, including laughter and tears and everything in-between? Are you trying to make a statement, or a point about our lives at this current juncture in time? Are you trying to teach and throw some light on a subject area that you feel deserves attention? Perhaps your intention is to shock, amaze, and entertain. Or are you just trying to tell a really good story? Chances are it may be a combination of some or all of these.

The oral, written and visual traditions of cultures can vary widely. If at all possible look at your own roots and think about what it is inside of you that has made you become someone who wants to relate experience through film. Use your strengths in this area for this is what will make you stand out from the crowd. You are a unique and specialised individual in addition to the qualities you share with others. Try to harness and translate this uniqueness through the medium into something that everyone can marvel at.

Making commercial art in this medium is not for everyone or just anyone. You are dependent on *a lot* of other people and you have to become a translator. Taking a project from script to screen means that you have to translate your vision to each and every person as you move through the process. There is a language to film and you would be wise to learn as much of the vocabulary as you can. It can get to the point when you feel like a foreigner in your own land because the language you speak is so full of words that only a few understand. Make good friends of these people and you can find a voice.

## 15. Meaning and Intent

Have you intentionally embedded a meaning in your work? Is there something hidden that the alert viewer can discover should he or she follow carefully what you have made? Most films mean something, they often have a message or a philosophy that can be summed up in a few sentences. A truism or perhaps a modernisation of a morality.

If you have an intent, a deliberate placing of meaning in your film it will be suffused throughout the entire film. However, more interestingly, if you are simply telling a story it may transpire that a meaning slowly becomes apparent, not making itself known to you until others have seen the finished print and discussed what you have done.

Work that has meaning generally also has depth. A film that can be read on several different levels is likely to be of more interest to a greater number of people. If you are making something very personal again it is likely to translate into a meaningful experience.

Something you want to avoid is giving an unintentional message that detracts from your movie. Its good for new ideas to spring up from you work as it evolves and it is even hoped for. It is difficult to know whether your vision is changing as you continue to work and you have to decide how flexible you are going to be to input from others. As a generalisation films are in essence about, or at least feature change, mostly change in the characters that are being played, so it is best to embrace it from the start.

In a way, once your film is complete, it has a life of its own. Any meaning that you wished for it is open to discussion. It is now in the public domain with any meaning it might have being conferred upon it by each individual who sees it. Having spent much time and energy in its creation you have to let go of it, if only to get on with your life that follows.

If you are serious about creating film for both artistic and financial reasons you are going to have to get used to the fact that you are in it for the duration. Having several projects at different stages of development is advisable as each one may take the lead at different stages. Once you get some kind of green light on one of them then I'm afraid you are going to have to develop a kind of obsession for quite a long time in order to see it through to the end.

You will have a relationship with what you write, produce, direct and edit. The truth is that it may take over your world. Just remember that ultimately film is an object and as with other forms of objectification and materialism its healthy to take a break from it or at least take things steady for a while. Unplug, unwind, rest.

Of course if you laden your film with heavy symbolism and deep hidden meaning it may well be lost on most people. Sure, some critics may marvel at how well you have interlaced story with a beautifully obscure subtext but its good to remember that symbolism often needs a key to unlock it and no amount of subliminal suggestion will provide this key unless perhaps it is central to story.

It all comes back to intent. You'd be surprised how difficult it is to simply make an audience smile, knowingly or otherwise. Don't underestimate the intelligence of your audience or their fluency in the language of cinema but at the same time let them truly enjoy the experience without forcing them to contemplate your inner world at every corner.

Art comes from within but in cinema it is the successful act of removing it from there to a place where everyone can see what it is that you are trying to show them.

## 16. Direction and Continuity

Don't confuse your actors, keep your direction simple and let them do their thing. As a minimum, with reference to the script you must tell them what they have done in the preceding scene, what they must do in the current scene and where this will lead to in the next scene. Give them their marks, eye lines and first positions and tell them the physical path they must take through the scene. For a first take let them have control over *how* they do this, they have skills, let them display them.

Trust that actors know their lines, if they stray from the exact lines written on the page keep rolling. If they can get the job done in whatever way it may be unnecessary to force them to stick to the words.

Even if a first take seems perfect it is wise to do a few more to give you choices in the edit. Subsequent takes may reveal a better way than that which you have prepared. Sometimes 'accidents' or 'mistakes' can become 'moments'.

You may have worked out some creative edits before shooting begins. If this is the case make sure the beginnings and endings of your shots dovetail with your plans.

On a more creative level direction of actors requires that you explain to them the emotional journey asked of them. One shot may contain a specific emotion or resonance that they must express. Hopefully some of your scenes will also include *changes* of feeling, a movement of one into another caused by an event, transition or piece of dialogue in the script.

These changes can be stressed and re-enforced by a variety of techniques. Changes in lighting and composition are just two ways that you can accompany or mirror the movement of emotions.

When watching a scene you must focus on what you feel is the pivotal point. This may be triggered by a spoken word, an action or an event outside the control of the actors and the characters they play.

Let the actors explore themselves and the level of intensity with which they deliver their performance. In short let them play. You are going to spend a long time with these people so make good friends of them, know what they can do and their limitations also.

Pushing people beyond their sphere of experience is one way of getting a powerful performance. Another is to rehearse properly and allow your actors to prepare themselves for difficult scenes. A short rehearsal before a take is important not just for the actors but also camera and sound.

Continuity whether a specialised role or simply someone from the art department should be allowed to look through the camera to check everything is just so. It is surprising how many continuity errors can be avoided in just doing this.

As for the director he or she must ensure that there is continuity of performance. Will the scene cut well with what comes before and after? Are the actors keeping to the thread of the story? Is the director of photography keeping to the development of any prearranged visual theme and is he or she aware of how the lighting may have changed from shot to shot?

Directing a film can be a monumental task, one that will test any director's commitment, patience and stamina. If you can keep calm, free and unflustered as you work you will set a good example for your crew and performers. You will also win their respect, something that is essential as you are relying so heavily on them to give you that extra magic that will create something memorable and special.

## 17. Entertainment and Message

This is a balance. Most people have a desire even a need to be entertained from time to time. It is the primary reason cinemagoers make that trip to their local theatre. Its fun, its a good night out, you have a shared experience the memory of which may last for a long time. It is the entertainment business after all. Its also the best way of keeping an audience hooked. If you can make them smile, laugh, scream, hold their breathe and stare in awe at the silver screen then this may be success for you. But what if you want to make them think?

Some people are better than others at making the kind of film that does both. You have spent a huge amount of time, effort and probably money to arrive at this point. Say you work on a film for a year. You have to squeeze all your creative juices from that time into just a two hour time-slot. Surely the least you hope for is that someone is going to think about your film once they have seen it. More than that you want them to talk about it and recommend it to everyone they know.

Current film guides contain tens of thousands of films made over the last one hundred years or so. Will yours be just another entry? Its got to be good, really good. Its got to stand head and shoulders above the other films that surround it.

To give your film a message is to give it depth and even a profound sense that it is completely unique. Think, you might not get a chance to make another, do you want to be a one hit wonder? Perhaps you are the type of filmmaker that has just one really beautiful film inside. However, once you have finished making it and gone through the sometimes tortuous route of bringing it to the screen, you will most surely be in a very commanding position to make another.

A career in film is like no other. You are completely self-motivated and you have a great responsibility. Its like being the pilot of a 747 that contains everyone and everything you need to go on what you can think of a busman's holiday. You have to get this thing off the ground and then you have to fly it to your destination. Plus you need to find the money to do it. Can you do this?

What could your message be? It may be central to the plot or it may provide just the background, but don't you think it should be there somewhere? Social, political, financial, environmental, aesthetic, futuristic, a study of relationships, to do with travel, ethical. These are just a few ideas that stop short of genre. Within in them, if you wish to do some research you may find some way of making the most of your opportunity to communicate with your audience. If you are fascinated with film it is sometimes difficult to step outside the arena and take a good look at what else you feel strongly about.

I know of no other subject that demands such persistence and commitment over such a long period of time. If you're not very careful *all* your energies will be sucked into this hyper-real spiral and you won't be able to see the wood for the trees. Keep your wits about you and have a life outside of the film business. If nothing else realise that not doing this will detract from the films you make.

There is nothing wrong with entertainment and making your audience happier leaving than when they entered the cinema is a primary goal. Its just there are many ways of doing this. You don't have to be a goof, you have to be quite serious just to do this. It just seems a shame that since you have the audience's attention for two hours or so you should avoid communicating with them on several different levels; humour, beauty, emotional, philosophical and intellectual being just a few.

## 18. Design and Feel

If you have the time and the wherewithal you can design your film from the ground up. You can do this on a computer for sure but a sheet of A2 paper laid out on a table is going to be a lot more useful at the outset.

You can go as far as you like with this depending on the scale and scope of your movie. Laying out your story first with all the major plot points will give you a picture of the film. Costume design, lighting set-ups, camera movements, set models, animation sequences can all be sketched out in advance. Doing this will give others a much clearer ideal of what you are trying to do at an early stage and they will be that much more able to help you.

Having a feel for what you are doing, just moving forward in an organic way will eventually pay off. Slow productive growth of your ideas is easier to handle sometimes than grand plans thrown together in a fit of creativity. Continuously updating and exploring your vision can lead to some interesting places that rigid planning may miss. Reading around the subject and maybe watching other films that you wouldn't usually consider is a way of subtly influencing the delicate make up of an embryonic project.

Talking to friends, family and industry professionals is a great way to gain perspective. You'll be forced to answer difficult questions that will throw new light on what *you* may feel is already quite obvious. Thinking about someone else's point of view is a refreshing way to keep reinvigorating what at times may seem like quite a tired objective.

If you can find as many ways as possible of looking at what you have already done you will keep your film alive. That's half the struggle. How many projects similar to yours have fallen by the wayside as lost and forgotten dreams? Work on a dream soundtrack, get the script bound nicely.

Do all the little things that you can and you might be pleasantly surprised how your ideas grow. Don't file away everything you have done so far, leave visual reminders of what you have already achieved.

Just keep working and hoping and dreaming and acting and thinking and talking and listening and watching. The thing about feeling your way through the almost endless maze of a film's genesis is that if you keep your senses alive, there will always be new material to add to your evolution.

There are some people who have a feel for design, if you know of such a person get them to help you start converting the idea of your vision onto paper. The most obvious of these techniques are story boards. If you can draw then get down to this, the sooner the better. The best thing about having someone else do this for you is that it brings about an immediate effect of a translation of what you are trying to express. At first it may not correspond to what you are after but with time you will find that a version of your description of your film comes to life.

Drawing overhead plans of scenes, complete with camera set ups and/or movements, lighting arrangements and the actors' dynamics will not only encourage you but you will begin to see what is possible. It doesn't take long and if you know the actual set or location it can save a lot of time when the production begins.

Have a feeling about the film, a good feeling. Trust that you can make a good go of it, trust your instincts. Like what you are doing, just the fact that you are embarking upon such an adventure makes you a very lucky person indeed. You owe it to yourself, and eventually the audience that will be the ultimate judge of its success, to give it all you've got. Enjoy yourself.

## 19. Action, Reaction and Interaction

These are the fundamentals of acting. It is what actors do. In a scene with more than one actor where would we be without; eye-contact, magnetism, electricity, touch, repulsion, will they / won't they?

Master the art of communicating to your actors how they should act in any given situation. Allow them to react to each others actions in a way that is natural to them. Then explore their interaction. Seeing acting as a dance is helpful, first one leads and the other follows, then a change, now the leader follows.

Simple actions are to be encouraged, fluid natural movements that are a long way from being wooden. Subtle changes in expression will be bread and butter for experienced actors. Those new to the game will need more guidance. Under acting is to be preferred as slight movements are easily picked up by the camera, especially in close up and blown up to full size.

Dynamic action may require a wider angle to appreciate the physical aspect of larger movements. However, try to get plenty of inter cutting coverage of such shots, from different angles and lens choices. Action sequences are sequences to be stitched together in post-production and the more shots you have to choose from the better. Mini sequences are best shot in order to make sure you have the entire set of movements.

In a two shot, to save time and money shoot not only the first actor's part of the dialogue but have the other actor read their lines read off camera so that you can then also capture the reactions of the first.

As with actions, for the main part reactions should be underplayed. Naturalistic acting is all about subtlety and a joy in communicating with gentle facial and vocal cues. If you can afford to do as many takes as you wish you can obviously play with the strength of such gestures, but know when the actors have nailed it. Actors get frustrated if they've already done their best and you keep asking them for more.

The interaction of players on screen is the most part of why we find good performances so intriguing and mesmerising. Romances, power struggles, misunderstandings, investigations, these all require the actors to interact, not just with each other but also with the environment in which they have been placed. Good actors make this look easy but it is in truth a skill learnt with experience. Those learning the ropes may give adequate performances but, if they have potential, even these novice excursions into self expression will have a refreshingly awkward or even innocent quality. This is something to look for in casting auditions.

We all interact with the world around us. In our own homes or situations with which we are very familiar these interactions come to us naturally. Think about the situations of your actors. In the story, are they familiar with their surroundings or are they new to them? Are they the kind of person who finds themselves at home where-ever they are or are they a fish out of water? The answers to such questions will colour your direction.

When you come to shoot three or more people in a scene the dynamic becomes more complex. You really only have a few choices; place them all in one wide shot, have them leave and enter the frame, or build a more structured selection of shots. The directive to make the composition of each shot as simple or as aesthetically interesting as possible means that in effect you will be using a combination of all three of these. With a moving camera of course you are free to place your actors wherever you wish in the location and glide around and between all of them.

## 20. Character and Mood

Your character will come into question, it will be tried and tested as you move forward. You need to know the characters in your stories like the back of your hand before you start telling others how to act them out. Your actors will be characters too, on and off screen. Those in charge of giving you money to make your film will be characters. The entire crew consists only of characters! You will be required to be an eternal student and expert on the subject. Your finished film should have a character of its own too.

Character is often confused with personality but the truth is that character is more about a consistency and unity of certain virtues and values and less about confidence and fame.

The mood of a character is a persistent emotion, one that translates very well to film. We all want to see something cool on film and mood often generates this. A mood can be continuous or an actor can play a hero whose mood fluctuates from one moment to the next. Some actors like to get in character and sometimes stay in character even when not shooting in order to maintain this mood.

You may be a moody person, changing mood when situations around you change. If harnessed properly this can be a powerful tool, you have some real emotion that you can relate to the film. Also actors may be more able to relate to you and provide more convincing performances if they understand you on this level. Of course with all such strengths there are some downsides, wildly fluctuating moods will get you nowhere fast.

Setting the mood for a scene can often be done with lighting. Its important to have your own ideas for this but consultation with the director of photography is imperative. An experienced DP can work wonders with the atmosphere that you require and as a specialist in this area the

details of how he achieves this are best left to her or him. Effects such as rain or snow outside can have a great effect.

Music and sound are the most common way and the most effective way of creating a mood or atmosphere. Sound can be used to create tension, highlight comedy, increase suspense, accompany fear and provide punctuation. There's no way you can record enough sound on location and in the editing suite you can have a lot of fun searching pre-recorded sounds for use in improving the film. Of course without music where would we be?

Giving actors points where their character *changes* mood at specific transitional moments in the script will give them most of the information they need to pin together their journey as the story moves on. This can apply to subtle as well as more obvious morphing of their character. Such movement is of paramount interest to the director as it's what drives the ever fluxing form of the picture. Your film may have just one such turning point for each character or it may be suffused with them.

Exploiting your characters' strengths and weakness and showing these on screen will allow the audience to see them as human. The ways that an actor's character is tested in this way will help the audience to identify with the character's struggle.

The way lighting and music can illustrate the changes that a character goes through as he or she traverses the obstacles put before them will help you tell your story to the audience. However, when shooting you will be confronted with the task of gaining the material you need in the editing room to make this possible. You will need to use every tool at your disposal to do this. A script, a directors treatment and breakdown, a story board, notes on the overall shape of the work and even access to the music that you hope to use for each scene.

## 21. Photography and Sculpture

Learning photography will provide you with the skills and language to communicate with your DP. Also it will give you an appreciation of what can be done if you know how. Photography is an art form in its own right but it's a very good idea to be familiar with the basics. Perhaps the most important things you will learn are lens selection and lighting.

The scene you are filming is three dimensional, converting it into a two dimensional image does several things. Firstly you lose depth perception and therefore the illusion of depth has to be created. Secondly, because you are looking through a lens the image created takes on certain qualities. You should be aware of these because they can be used to your advantage.

Wide angle lenses distort around the edges, things nearer the lens will be especially susceptible to this. On the plus side they have a large depth of field which means everything both near and far will be in focus. Telephoto lenses have a smaller depth of field meaning only a little distance is in focus. With selective focussing this can be used to throw both the foreground and background out of focus, picking out your subject in the mid ground. Night shots with lights in the background look great as they are out of focus and increased in size.

Photographing towards the sun can look beautiful, with the light flaring and silhouetting your characters.

Playing with film speeds is also something to try. 'Fast' films can be used in low light and although they may be 'grainy' when blown up this too can be used to your advantage to create a raw, gritty image. 'Slow' films need more light to give a good image but when this is done it results in a sharp and sumptuous image with deep and rich blacks and colours.

Focus pulling can obviously not be recorded on a stills camera but you can still see the effect when used with different focal lengths. Zooming also can be tried out in this way just to give you an idea of what can be done.

Perhaps the greatest thing you can learn from stills photography is the affects of different kinds of lighting. Generally if you are trying to have a sculptured look to your photography you must light with a 'key' light, possibly the sun, from one side and a 'fill' light of lesser strength from the other side. Sometimes you can use a reflector for this purpose.

In the final analysis lighting is a very complex subject. There is a huge amount that can be done with it but unless your hope is to become a director of photography yourself, or you want to be a 'technical' director its best to stick with directing actors. Having some knowledge is not a dangerous thing and it will help when you are trying to explain exactly what it is you want to see on screen.

It may have taken much time, effort and skill to create a set or dress a location, so think of it as a work of art in itself. Treat it as an installation that you can move around within and your actors as moving sculptures. The necessity to do this increases with the desired quality of the images you are trying to collect.

In short there is much that you can learn just by picking up an old film SLR and starting to shoot places, people, things and anything that you feel like. Experimenting with how the film captures light will leave you feeling more confident about what can and can't be done. You might want to make notes as you take photos just to remind yourself of what you were trying to do for when you get the pictures back. Then you can use this knowledge in pursuit of improving your motion picture film.

## 22. Perspective and Parallax

Drawing a viewer's eye into the frame will help you to engage them in the story. Think of an exterior shot in an expansive setting, a long road leading off into a distant vanishing point. This could represent your journey. Half the battle of making a film is to allow your full self expression whilst at the same time objectively telling your story and you may have to travel a long way down the road to do this.

The technical nature of the medium often obscures the fact that it is an art. The fact that *everybody* involved is some kind of artist should give you encouragement. You have been given the freedom to show what you can do but sometimes this can weigh heavy on your mind.

Take a moment to consider the rules. There are many of them that have developed over the history of films and they all have a purpose. Observing the rules as you encounter them will ensure you that there are no blinding errors which could possibly ruin the illusion. Some are aesthetic, most technical. It is true however that over time most of these rules have changed, evolved or been replaced as the medium has progressed. 'Crossing the line' is one such rule.

When you cross the line between two actors with a camera set up in a two shot, in the edit your actors will flip sides, left to right and right to left, and this can look awkward and very confusing. The general rule is that if you cross the line you do so for a reason. With greater freedom of movement of the camera it is now possible to go behind and around the line or perhaps even upwards and over the line. In this way some adventurous directors break the rule, crossing the line to make a point about how the characters have literally switched places at this point in the story.

With greater freedom of movement comes more interesting visual expression. Parallax is simply the relative movement of objects close to and further away from the camera as it moves. It is a phenomenon that can be used to help tell stories visually. It is pleasing to the eye and any modern audience, although they may not be able to describe it will understand what is going on. To *show* story development and progression in such ways is simply to be fluent in your chosen language of cinema.

A director's treatment or breakdown of a script should be full of a working knowledge of camera set ups and movements and sound and music cues. Further work should include a shot list for the DP if not pages of diagrams of how you wish to tackle tricky scenes. With this work having been done and following lengthy discussions with your DP, you will be able to leave it in their hands, freeing you up for the main work of directing actors.

If you come up against people who tell you that what you are proposing can't be done then you know you are on the right tracks. If you can imagine it chances are there is a way. The whole film-making endeavour is a challenge and innovating new and exciting ways of working should be a primary goal. Audiences can be fickle and will demand such progress. Its one thing to copy ideas from your favourite auteurs another to dare to create your own. Obviously you are going to go through a lot of trial and error and many of your attempts will never see the light of a cinema projector bulb.

Still all is not lost, we come back to the idea of perspective. The way you can use this to bring your audience into the world of your film is simply one tool. Gaining an overall perspective of what you are trying to achieve is another. How your initial vision fits in to this perspective is a vital step towards seeing it realised. Letting your imagination run away with you may prove to be creative in some aspects but keep your feet firmly on the ground.

## 23. Cult Status and Success

As you might have realised by now there are any number of ways of making a film and wildly varying scales of ambition. What you see written here is applicable to many of these ways but the area in which it applies most readily and with which you may have most success is within art house cinema.

What is success? How will you know whether you have been successful? Here are some goals; Finishing your film; Getting your film seen; Selling your film to a distributor; Making a profit; Critical Acclaim; Showing your film at a festival; Seeing your film for sale in a shop; Hearing someone talk about your film; Being interviewed about your film. There are a lot of goals.

Cult films are not exactly a genre, more relevant is that they may achieve this description as a status. To have a cult film on your hands is to have an audience who admire this type of film-making. Often but not always low-budget and about a subject area that mainstream cinema may shy away from, your cult film is one that may start life very humbly but end up being quoted and referred to again and again.

If you want to tap into this audience keep in mind that it is not an excuse to make a lousy film. Many cult films are beautifully shot and contain admirable acting. Some actors go on to great things on the back of just one movie that has achieved cult status. Cult films however can be intentionally bad, usually because of a low budget the filmmakers are forced to improvise and make the best of what they have. A great script will often be very funny and quotable lines can be the backbone of such a film and audiences are very forgiving of lean production values if they know they are in on the joke.

The success of a film can be down to one thing - Truth. Movies are fictional, some are based on a true story but even documentaries that are searching for the truth often distort it in some ways. No, what I'm talking about is ensuring that your film rings true. An audience recognises believable acting and you'll know when you have achieved success if you can both laugh with and also feel the pain of their performance. This kind of truth is rare but if you can at least pursue it you may well be successful in your efforts and achieve cult status.

Success can be a double edged sword. This project is going to take up *all* your time. Other personal and social objectives may fall by road but there is consolation. To get your film made you are going to have to do a lot of networking, telephoning and travelling but these people who you meet may become more than fellow business colleagues or co-workers. Because you are dealing with the entertainment industry if you are on the up and up you will also be making a lot of friends along the way. You will have to let down your guard and trust these people for without them you will go nowhere fast. Some of these people may become life long collaborators. Having a structure to your life will help and it may suit you to treat it as a regular job, knowing when to switch off.

There are few if any secrets to achieve your definition of success, just hard work in the right direction. You may already be further along the path than you think. Someone you met a year ago who only now are you in a position to deal with. An old script idea that suddenly is more relevant to your life at present. A friend who gives you a piece of advice that you decide to take. A new funding scheme that just appears to be what you need. You have to keep your ear to the ground and make the most of your efforts to date.

Cult films are about a knowing understanding that is shared with the actors, crew, production staff and most importantly the audience.

## 24. Heightened Reality and Dream

What we see on the screen once existed in the auteur's mind, a place full of memories, dreams, ideas, stories, vision and the belief that it can be projected for us all to see and hear. Unbelievable as this may seem it is not surprising that what we do experience is a form of reality, a heightened reality.

The reality of our experience is a constant stream of sense impressions. Wherever we are, in a coffee shop, a queue, by the sea, in an aeroplane or driving through the night if we tune into it there is a cacophony of information. How we choose to filter this and channel it into our work *is* a choice.

Dreams on the other hand exist in a different sphere of human experience. They live out their lives in our sleep and coming to the surface when we wake enable us to look at the world in a completely different way.

Nightmares are often out of control and on the whole we decide to ignore them in the hope that they will go away. Along with dreams their analysis is the work of professionals who can put much credence and meaning in the symbolism that may arise.

Daydreams are fleeting but again it is our choice as to how much we indulge in them.

All such mental events force us to consider what goes on in our subconscious. For the filmmaker who can separate clear conscious thinking from the vague notions of a dreamlike state, there is much bounty to be found in terms of translating personal experience into a motion picture film.

Sitting in front of film is a very curious event. We are closed off almost completely from the 'real' world and asked to open our minds to someone else's version of an 'unreal' world. With few, if any distractions the point of view of the audience member is akin to nothing else. Now although all films are censored there is a responsibility bestowed on a film maker to at least take care with what is soaked up by the hungry sponge-like mind of our sometimes unknowing audience.

As with many other roles, having power over someone else means that the temptation to corrupt, especially young minds, can be great. Having said this, once you realise however that the cinema experience is essential *safe* then pretty much anything goes. This is good news considering some of the influences that may be taken from your dream states.

On the one hand its a matter of making something that *you* would like to see. You are most probably an avid cinemagoer yourself and have a keen sense of what you enjoy and what you are simply not interested in. Think of screening your film as inviting someone into the theatre of your mind. What would you like *them* to see?

The idea of self censorship is tricky but we all do it, thankfully, on a daily basis. No one wants to be repeatedly reminded of the inner workings of your psyche so get used to the idea that using your imagination, as perhaps the greatest gift that you have, is preferable to inviting people in to view all your doubts, insecurities and fears.

A filmic dream is one of the most beautiful and sublime visions that you can offer an audience. Mostly they seem to have little meaning, but this might be one reason why a dream sequence, with all its meaning stripped bare, can allow the audience to drift with you, accompanied by sounds and music that might also seem surreal. Films are like dreams. It is no coincidence that film-making and dream analysis arose at around the same time in history.

## 25. Suggestion and Fantasy

If film is like a dream then the suggestion is that you are inviting the audience to dream, a waking dream. Dream imagery suggests that there is another world which we are close to all the time yet is so often just out of reach.

Bringing your audience into a fantasy world means that you are allowing them to step out of their own lives and into yours. There are needs inside all of us to escape and escapism is what film does best. Other than material possession and necessities such as food and shelter it is difficult to articulate what we want from life. Film gives us clues; love, happiness, wealth, freedom, success, hope, truth. These are all topics that get regular treatment by writers.

You have to look within for what is universally attractive and give an account of what you find. If you look hard enough your version of things will be unique which is just as well because an audience seeks stories and fantasy worlds that they have not seen before.

To show other ways of life, no matter how obscure or strange they may seem is to suggest that such a way of life is at least worth considering as something that could potentially be done in real life. Who knows how many people have taken cues, roles and the throwaway philosophies of their favourite film stars as suggested in films. Obviously there is an understanding that films are not *real* in the same way that say a table is real. However when you start to look below the surface you may begin to discover that films are in every way as real as any other art form.

A photograph, painting or sculpture in the home may provide endless scope for interpretation and to lose yourself in one even for just a few minutes every day is no bad thing. You have the opportunity to create other microcosms and the sky really is the limit as to how fantastical they can become. A mundane world can be shattered by the arrival of something other worldly or a

bizarre and outrageous situation can be bust wide open by the introduction of something or someone quite normal. It is completely up to you what spin you put your story together with and the beauty of it is that you can change it with twists and turns as the story unfolds.

There is a distinction between, fact, fiction and fantasy. True facts can be used as an alarming starting point for both fiction and documentaries. A basic statistic might be all that's necessary to set the ball rolling as to the source of a film's origination. Fiction itself is often thought of something that has not happened but could possibly happen and fantasy is often associated with the realms of that which just could not happen in 'real life'. There are always blurrings of these distinctions and as always it is up to you as to how you play them off against each other and where to draw the lines, however fuzzy they may be.

The power of suggestion cannot be overemphasised. It is always more intriguing to suggest a state of affairs over simply revealing them. Telling a story on film has been likened to peeling back the layers of an onion one by one. How you do this is part of the art but bare in mind that the foremost question on the mind of any audience member is likely to be 'what happens next?' To suggest one answer and then to reveal another is misdirection and it is a great way to leave your audience guessing.

Where you meet the audience is the crossroads between what you want them to believe and what they actually believe. If you insult their intelligence by assuming that they are easily led and leading them up the garden path you will only be rewarded with groans as this is where cliché resides. Avoid it by providing a strong plot that ties your story together.

## 26. Moments and Philosophy

Arguably a film is made of moments. There may just be one that the entire film leads up to. A moment in a film is very personal, its something that strikes a chord deep within and resonates with your own private feelings. Such a point in a film may be very special to you but overlooked by others. Create these moments, make them count. Usually touching they can take a hold of you and losing yourself 'in the moment' you are suspended for an instant. Surely this is the magic of cinema.

Films are full of philosophy. If you watch closely you may find some words that lift your spirit and even provide a mantra for your life. In making a film you have a chance to introduce a philosophy of your own. Do not however confuse philosophy with sayings. "Where there's a will there's a way" may be appropriate in reminding you that with determination you will be able to complete your film. Philosophy however runs deeper. How can you sum up the trials and tribulations of life in a simple saying? You may have to make several films before your philosophy is revealed even to you.

The moments that you capture on camera will feed your philosophy and as you develop so will it. You may discover recurring themes that are unintentionally buried within the fabric of your work. You may read what other people think of your work and be pleasantly surprised at what they have found. This doesn't mean that any message you intended has been lost, only that there is more to your work once it has gone through the production process than perhaps you had imagined possible.

In a way modern cinema *is* modern philosophy. After all it is a place where ideas can be born, nurtured and grown. It also has the advantage of being divorced from academia and is accessible to all. By adding to this work you are in effect adding to popular philosophy. You can see the

truth of this if you read film analysis. There's a lot going on in a film and the reason why such large scale blockbusters are so popular is that often hidden within them there exists layer after layer of high concept thinking. This dichotomy arises due to the large scale of variety of workers who contribute to their manufacture. Depending on your specialised area in film you will find someone, somewhere who has put a lot of thought into their job.

Film makers often create films by holding a mirror up to society. Life is full of moments, not in such a concentrated form as that found in a good film, but if you are observant you will see moment after moment played out on the stage of life. A dad walking along with one of his children on his shoulders, someone dropping a glass, a car narrowly missing an accident, a postman delivering a package, a man catching a fish, a teenager walking in the streets listening to music through headphones, an aeroplane coming in to land. There are so many of these moments in everyday life and they can all enhance or even form the basis of a film. What are the stories behind these characters' moments?

Forming a plot from moments is not difficult. All you have to do is ask yourself 'Why is this happening?' and 'Where does this lead?'. If you have certain moments that you wish to include in a film based upon them you just need to ask the additional question 'How do I get from one moment to the next?' Moments that happen at the same time in different places can be poignant and drive the story along.

Many film moments are generic; a kiss, someone dying, people being reunited, sudden realisation, a successful rescue. Most films contain several of such events and in the interests of originality you will have to find new ways of bringing your own particular take on them to the screen.

## 27. Viability and Improvisation

Whatever your budget restraints, if you have let your imagination run wild, you will find there are some things that you simply cannot afford. If you are wise you will think about this right from the start, at the writing stage. Unless you are planning on selling your script to a major studio you will have to write in only that which is viable.

The irony of making films on a tight budget is that you are forced to be more creative with what you have. As necessity is the mother of invention, time after time you will be asked of your project ‘What does it *need*?’ The harder you look, more often than not you will find creative solutions to problems. Being told ‘Show don’t tell’, is fair enough but if you can’t get hold of the thing you need to show you will simply have to find ways around it. Film is very forgiving in this sense and you can always suggest something without actually showing it.

All you have when you arrive at a location is that which is already there and that which you bring with you. This has got to be *at least enough*. Making do with what you have is all that you can do. There should be a list of everything that you absolutely need in terms of props, wardrobe and technical equipment and another list of things that you would like. A wish list of things that might really make an aesthetic difference is really helpful as you might find you are just able to obtain some of them more easily than you had anticipated. Such additions to a scene can give it a greater production value. Improvising with the stuff that you have will ensure that you can continue to play around with your scene right up to the camera rolling.

Encouraging actors to improvise with their lines, props and surroundings will lend an air of naturalism to their performance. We are not just static voice boxes, we are physical, we move and we interact with the places we find ourselves in. Its ok if an actor does not always remember the lines exactly, they may even stumble across a better way of getting the gist of the dialogue

across. Stressing the right words, intonation, and physical expression of emotions are all in an actor's training. Giving them just the right amount of freedom to improvise around the things that they simply have to do to advance the plot will bring an originality to the scene. Authenticity and originality are the goals of an actor, let them do what they do best and if they run off from the straight and narrow keep the cameras rolling. Many a moment has been created from such unexpected happenings.

Know when you've got a few good takes. If you have one with a mistake in it, one that is a good version of the scene as it is in the script and one that plays around with it a little then you may have enough. Ensure that the take is good for sound and camera and if you are happy with the performance then know that it is time to move on to another set-up or another scene.

Eventually there has to be an end to improvisation. In addition to the actors needing marks, the camera needs a rehearsal as does sound to get the right levels. A perfect take is one where all the prearranged structure and organisation meets a fresh performance from the actors.

If you are considering making a film be aware of the fact that you may not receive much encouragement let alone belief in it from even your closest friends or family. You have to carry your vision from concept to completion and most of the time self-belief is all that you will have.

There will be dark times as people question the viability of what you are trying to do and you will have to improvise with the factors in your life to make its success more and more possible, more and more probable. It is a very good idea to have role models to look up to, they have done it, so can you.

## 28. Innovation and Originality

New cameras, new formats, new computer editing and manipulation software, new sound recording media. Don't get bogged down by new technology. Cinema has been around for only just over one hundred years and there have been many innovations and revolutions. You need to choose what works best for you and nine times out of ten this will be dependent on budget. Use what you've got and make it work for you.

More importantly what the business requires is new ways of looking at the world. Innovation in this area is brought about by the original thinking of creative individuals. Do you have an original take on something that has been tried many times before? To be original isn't necessarily to be weird, bizarre, and obscure, although these attitudes may be helpful. Think of the car, it too has been around for only just over one hundred years. See how it has advanced and been revolutionised, yet still every car has four wheels, an engine, a body and a steering wheel. If you look at new cars it becomes obvious that it has become harder and harder to differentiate them from one another. Don't try to reinvent the wheel.

Do look at all the features of your story that make it stand out from the crowd and accentuate these. Where it is set, how it is told and any novel uses of sound and music will help in this respect. An original premise can be expanded almost without limit, a period of brainstorming and recording this will explore all avenues as far as you wish to take them. You may even find some spin offs from your original idea that may develop into bonus material for future reference and use in future screenplays.

The problem with being original is that often you will later find that your premise has already been covered. This is not unusual and shouldn't get you down. It's how you treat your ideas that really matters. After all often even remakes are better than the original. If you have a good idea,

run with it. Rather than fighting against becoming like something that already exists, reach out to see if you can touch upon new ground.

You may admire the way someone before you has handled their material. Films are full of homages to other film makers, don't even think about it as copying. Innovative use of animation, styles of diction, setting in time, physical location and wardrobe are just examples of what you have at your disposal. You can have it your way, you can do it your way.

If there is one thing that you are going to have to innovate its your attitude and pace of life. If you're in it for the long run you are going to know when to pursue your goal with full power and speed and when to rest and recuperate. Patience is paramount but so is stamina and strength. If you lose your cool, crack under the pressure you will simply wake up surrounded by a mess of your own making. Stay organised, stay loose and stay alert.

There is no harm in trying out new ways to approach what you do. The chances are that your film will be part of a juggling act. At various stages keeping all the balls in the air at the same time will be your one and only way to survive. To be flexible means that you may have to learn some new skills on the go whilst navigating the maze before you.

Ultimately your first film is going to be a combination of new feelings, challenges and the sheer fun that can only be achieved by knowing you are doing exactly what you want to be doing. If you appreciate the help that you will most surely be asking of others *and* let them know that you could not be doing this without them you will gain confidence and earn the trust and admiration of your co-workers.

## 29. Animation and Time

All films are a form of animation and your film should be given the time and attention to detail that traditional animation takes. To animate is to give the illusion of movement to that which would otherwise be static. At twenty four frames per second motion seems both smooth and realistic, every frame should be a work of art.

If there is camera movement or any movement in the frame, something to be encouraged, then every frame of film will be slightly different from the previous. When you are editing you will be examining this, looking for the best place to cut into a shot and the right place to leave it. Cutting on movement is to be preferred. Good editors keep the flow of the film and pace it according to the story line.

Different ways of showing the passing of time are to be developed. Dissolves from one scene to a slightly altered following scene are just one way. The classic shot of a clock at one time dissolved into one later with the hands moved around is just another.

The way that time can be manipulated with film is unique to the medium. Back story or what happens before the film actually starts is a great way to explain parts of a plot. To find out in the middle of the film what has caused the characters to be there is very revealing. Flashbacks are similar and can express where the character's mind is at during a particular moment. The characters in your story have memories of the past and visions of the future just like anyone else and it is sometimes expedient to show these. Flash forwards or imaginations of what is yet to come can add a mental edge to proceedings.

Sometimes the timeline of separate characters and their stories can intersect. Showing the audience that your characters have separate lives before they meet is a simple way of explaining

that we as individuals are in possession of our own timelines. Coincidence and serendipity abound in our daily lives if you care to look for it and so it should be with your characters also.

Telling a story out of order invites the audience to participate in stringing it together. Preferably, if you want to take this option, you can write this in at the script stage. Alternatively many things can be played around with when editing. Any opportunity to allow the audience to do a bit of work for themselves should be taken, assuming a certain level of awareness of the language of film on the part of the audience will increase their absorption into the ongoing story.

Time itself is often the subject of the movies. How we live through it, how we pace our lives to be in sync with it and how we grow from birth to old age. Time travel, races against time and being trapped in time are common backgrounds for the telling of a tale. It is obvious that time in films is often very different from time in reality. Even when a film is set in 'real time' its actual duration usually spans a time much longer than the length of the film.

Films are set in the past, in the present day or in the future. It seems that we have a fascination with the past in terms of how stories change over time and with their telling. The truth of what really happened in the past is hard to get at. If you set your film in the past be aware that it is *your* version of the past. So sometimes it is useful to set a story in the future, its fairly well acknowledge fact that we can, at best, only see very little into the very near future. With film there is an opportunity to imagine future worlds and the stories that happen in them.

If your film is set in the present day then it will be at least 'of the moment', how far you choose to explore the moment is up to you but there is always more to it than meets the eye.

### 30. Purpose and Criteria

Why are you making this film anyway? What is the purpose of your enterprise? Do you seek fame or fortune? Both? Do you want to reach out to someone in the audience? Is this a personal endeavour? Do you think you have something to teach actors that they don't already know? Do you believe that you can make a lot of people very happy by making your film? As an artist is it the only medium through which you can communicate? Is it just a job? Are you in it for the journey, the ride, the buzz? You must have some reason and you would do well to work out what it is sooner rather than later.

There are some things that can only be said in a film. Films can and do change peoples' lives. But what is it that is the essence of film, that which only it can offer to the film makers and viewers alike? Well from the audience point of view, films are relatively short and you don't really have to do much. All that's asked of you is that you sit there relatively quietly and follow what is going on in front of you. Depending on your choice of film you leave the cinema in awe, contented, shocked, confused, wiser, amused, scared but in general entertained.

If you can work out what you would like your audience to be left feeling then this will be a great step in defining your criteria for success. No criteria no measure of success. If you want to make some money, how much? Do you just want to break even or do you want enough to buy a new car, send your kids to a private school, go on holiday, buy an engagement ring, make another, bigger, better film?

Part of the problem with films is that we first see them when we are young. If you are marvelled by them at an early age you may carry the dream with you until at some point you get the bug to start down the long road to film production. The problem is that we lose sight of why we liked

them in the first place and if you're not careful the industry can seem like a big bad dangerous world with more perils than rewards.

If you can reconnect with your original amazement of the cinema experience you might start to think that rather than some slasher horror movie you actually want to make an animated feature length movie for kids. Its all down to questioning what you're in it for. Is it worth it?

The obvious problem with film is that it, and everything that goes with it is so expensive. This is where digital video and high definition video plays its trump card. If you have the will to make your film then chances are you will find yourself using some kind of video format. Do not be afraid of it, it is just the future...

If you absolutely must shoot film and there are a great many reasons for doing so, foremost among these is that it has the film 'look', then 16 mm is a good option. The cost of film and equipment rental is far less than 35 mm and you can easily edit off-line on a computer. Manipulating the image too is a possibility as is blowing it up to 35 mm for release.

Slow motion and step-processing look amazing on film, the first done in camera, the second in the lab. Motivation for using such techniques can either be due to the advancement of plot or more usually again just because it looks so good.

The fact that you are animating, bringing about a moving image is key to the process as a whole.

Beginning to make a film requires a huge effort of motivation if your life is static in the first place but you will be rewarded day after day with a life that becomes more and more dynamic with every new challenge met. The only problem is knowing when to put the brakes on.

### 31. Imagination and Memory

These two are very closely linked. What fuels your imagination often comes from the store of your memory. Memories of other films you have seen, of books you have read, of any area of culture and most importantly of your life and the people in it,

The human memory is not like a computer memory. It is not simply a data storage device and the way in which we create our memories is very subtle and in large part unknown. The way we access our memories is also a mysterious phenomenon. It seems that they are triggered and move from the subconscious to the conscious part of our minds. These triggers can be used both to stimulate our imaginations when creating a film and also those of the audience as they watch the film.

To use your imagination is simply to fuse together chosen memories with the current ideas and sensory impressions in your mind and then to find a way to express this. Using imagination is simply a way to let the visual part of your mind run free. You might be surprised to find what resides in your insides. Its probably not all good. You can focus on whatever you like but having some quiet space away from the overpowering images of TV advertising and radio babble might be more conducive to activating your own imagination.

With imagination and memory anything goes. You can use one memory as a starting point, re-imagine it or meld it with other connected mental events. There's no need for mind altering substances, the naked mind is far more powerful when it is fully in tune with its natural states, you just need to find ways of triggering it. Closing your eyes you can roam back and forth through the infinite catalogue of images at your command. Its on the tip of your tongue, its at your fingertips, its at the front of your mind.

Sounds and music provide filters as well as triggers. What images do certain sounds evoke in your personal head space? What music brings about the kind of moods and atmosphere that you are after? Smells as well as taste and tactility provide further fuel to your imaginations.

A change of place, an art gallery, a busy railway station, a theme park, a building site, a museum, these are ways of heightening your spatial and temporal awareness. Anything you can do that allows your mind to come alive will be an especially vibrant way to stir what is an ancient part of your brain. Ideas need to be born and allowed to grow.

Your memory can be trained and if you start to write memories down, more will follow. If you like you can even produce a map of your memory, how it was affected by certain events in your life, for better or worse. Is there a key to your memories, a way of unlocking them? Like a muscle, the more you use it the stronger it, and your individual memories will become.

Sketching out specific life events should lead you to an understanding of why you have arrived at the position you are in. If someone asks you why you wanted to get into film in the first place you should have an answer, it's just not enough to list your influences. Unless you want to do something superficial don't be afraid to have a deep look inside yourself and using your imagination as a guide, decide if you really believe you have what it takes to spend a life in film.

Using your imagination in the moment you can construct story lines around what you see and hear on a daily basis. Memories of a day, conversations overheard in a queue, people going about their daily business, memories of others and the memories they have of you are all food for thought.

## 32. Timing and Zeitgeist

*When* you say something is often as important as *what* you say. We are all immersed in the prevailing culture and subcultures of our time. Surrounded by bare reality and that reality that has been transformed and filtered through every media.

What is happening within a mile radius of you right now? What are these people talking about? Film, music, art, the economy, technology, illness, food, sex, religion, death, global issues, television, weddings, warfare, the weather, academia, nature, cars, holidays, education, comedy, work, money? Where these types of subject overlap, and they all do eventually, is where argument, contrast and conflict live. Tapping into these zones of confusion and distilling the essence of the human condition is to be involve in the zeitgeist.

Trends and patterns of thought, paradigm shifts and quantum leaps exist both now and throughout all periods of culture. As a film maker it is impossible to be impervious to this, even if you chose to let such change pass you by you would find that such an act would in fact change you.

There is so much hype and spin in the media that you would do well to keep above it. You need to be alert and have deep knowledge of yourself to ride these waves of change but whatever happens if you wish to make films as a career you will inevitably become part of it.

When you have put your ear to the heart of the media beast and heard the chaotic turmoil you may run as fast as possible in the opposite direction. But after getting so far it seems a shame not to use your insight to try to capture the zeitgeist of the moment and film is the perfect medium with which to do this. Can you look at society and see where it might be headed? Do you have a unique window on the world? Is your individual perspective one that will resonate with the

public, your audience? Do you have your finger on the pulse of your nation, its people? Are you aware of the hopes, fears and dreams of your generation? Can you look into the near future and explain what you see?

One story may not be ready to be told, another may flourish and need only the illumination of your attention. Sometimes the time is just right for certain characters to appear in the spot light. Just as actors rise and fall in popularity with their success so the zeitgeist ebbs and flows. If you don't want to avoid it you just have to catch the wave and ride it out until your film is made.

Films become part of history. The good ones have staying power and are referred to and watched over and over again regardless of their age. Some become favourites, even special memorable events in peoples' lives. What will become of your film once it is finished? Make them good, make them memorable and give them a life of their own. Those who like going to the cinema are a unique clan and complete the process of film production. What do they want to see? What do you know that they don't realise yet? What do they know that you haven't even thought of yet? You are the first audience of your film, do you like what you see?

Just a note on *comic* timing. Those pauses between words, sentences and the punch line or pay off. Comic acting is a very special art, it seems that some people have it whereas others can't even approach it. To get the right style of timing for the style of your film you are going to have to cast the right actors. Make sure at auditions that you choose actors for the right reasons, those who you know will be able to deliver the performance you require. Timing and delivery of lines is different for all actors. Hopefully you will have a choice of acting abilities before you, any one of which will fit the bill in a variety of ways.

### 33. Genre and History

Genre is a way of categorising films. Maybe you don't want to be categorised. If you *are* going to be involved in a genre movie make sure that its something special, something that adds to the genre. Putting a twist on a genre can be very successful. The bonus is that an educated audience will know that you are playing with the genre. You can play with them by toying with their expectations, brought about by having seen other films of that type.

There are a basic set of recognised genres, laid out over the history of film. You have to make yours good because it will be compared to everything that has gone before. Is the genre of your film something that you have purposely chosen or is it simply something that has evolved in addition to your story?

You may choose to blend two or more genres. Again this has been done to great effect. Respecting a genre means to give at least a nod to the 'rules' of that genre. Each genre has its own set of these, you can choose to break them if you wish but its a good idea to do so for a reason or the film may fall foul of being not only genre-less but also directionless.

Once you get into multiple-genre movies sometimes the film can become a mess. There is a reason why most films fit into a particular genre, they build on what has gone before, modernising the form. If your film really has no genre at all, as many cult films start out, you might think of inventing one.

The history of cult movies is strewn with genres of the strange and bizarre. It seems to go that if someone makes something unique and original, which also has some modicum of success, then others will follow. The result is that over a particular period of time several if not many of these films are made and hence a new sub-genre if not a whole new genre is born.

If you think you have a new genre of film on your hands think carefully at what may come after. Imagining how others might adapt what you have yet to do may provide even more material for your original work.

Genres come in waves of popularity. Its good to look back through the history of film at those genres that were successful but have perhaps lately been overlooked. Reviving a genre is another way of making a film that has the benefit of having a ready-made recognisable categorisation. This will give you a greater chance of success, because something like it has already been successful. Any facet of your film that gives it an edge in this way is to be strengthened.

The history of your film should be looked into. If you are somewhere in the middle have a look back at what you have done. How did it start? Also have a look at the history of the characters in your script. To give them more depth the right thing to do is write a short character biography. You can put any amount of information into these, from just a basic outline to detailed descriptions of minutiae. Apart from giving you a better grip on what makes these characters tick they can be invaluable to the actors playing them who can then form a better understanding of their part.

The history of genres is one thing, the genre of history, the historical movie is something special.

If your film is just set in a particular part of history and the story is entirely fictional then you have to do the research necessary to set the scene to make your story credible. Starting with a true story, effectively already written for you, you have to decide how closely you stick to this story. In the interests of making a riveting plot come alive you may be attempted to bend and alter the facts. Just be careful, rewriting history, even in the interests of entertainment, can leave you open to harsh criticism.

### 34. Montage and Dialectic

Putting two separate words, ideas, images or theories together to create a third is a way of dialectic reasoning. In film this is just par for the course and occurs with montage or editing.

Plot is driven by showing successive images or scenes. These progress the plot and suggest a third state of affairs. Whether the plot is linear or asynchronous matters not. Whether consciously or not we still follow a plot by seeing first one situation, then another and then infer a third. The strength of good story telling is that we can alter this third expected situation to create surprise. Suspense can be created by continually giving them what they expect, lulling them into a false sense of security until you, being one step ahead, do what you will. Of course the best use of sound and music is vital in this process.

Dialectics can be applied to actors too. If you put two very different players together they may play off each other, with conflict or humour, producing the ongoing dialogue. Eventually a third state of affairs will show itself. Conflict and resolution are key concepts in screenplay writing and film production.

It's not a good idea whilst filming to say 'We'll fix it in the edit'. The first edit should be as near as possible to that planned in the pre-production stage. Things will change of course whilst in the production stage, you may have added some scenes and dispensed with others. Your editor should be made aware of this and in a second edit be allowed to have free play, with only guidance from the director, to create the story as it now stands.

Editing, like many other areas of film work is a specialised discipline. Editors are artists in their own right and may offer you something that is an evolution of the work that has gone before. You may have changed as a person since you started out on this journey and the editor, with your

assistance may reflect this in the editing room. You must have reference to your initial vision but be prepared to view the footage you have in a new light. With the experience you have just had, has your vision changed since you began?

With the addition of music and a soundtrack, this is where your film can start to take on a life of its own. You may find that your *control* over it has diminished with time. It may be here that you choose to begin the process of letting go. Its pointless to try to shoe horn what you have into a vehicle which is no longer the best shape.

Depending on how meticulous you are in your planning and execution of the script there will be a number of decisions to make as to how you wish it to be transformed into the finished work. If you choose to supervise every single edit point the atmosphere in the editing room may get quite difficult. You may wish to leave the entire first cut in the hands of your editor whilst you take a break. Getting away from everything until the editor has something to show you will not only recharge the batteries, but you will get a fresh perspective on what you have done to date.

The first cut may be very different from what you had imagined. There may be parts that are just as you pictured them, others that seem to be a brand new addition. Establishing a good working dialogue with your editor means having creative discussions about what works and what doesn't. He or she will tell you why they have done things a certain way and you will tell them why you agree with them or why you need it to be changed.

Putting things together and looking at what is generated as a result is simply a creative tool that you can use at any stage in your film's synthesis.

### 35. Discipline and Play

Many a moment can be made by the playful interaction of actors with each other and with their director. However time and money are factors and you have to get all the shots you need to tell your story. Stick to the script but encourage the use of improvisation on subsequent takes to see if you can improve on the way the story is told and the suggestions of the story board.

Interestingly this is much easier for the little guy, a smaller crew and less equipment means greater flexibility. Overcoming the constraints of your budget and arranging for you to have plenty of time in any given location means that you can be freed up to play with the situation that you find yourselves in.

Again its a balance. A certain amount of discipline is required not just within the crew but with the actors also. A 1st Assistant Director should be charged with making sure that the film is shot safely, on time and within the budget. Having someone on set who is a serious figure that keeps the production moving on at a good rate is essential.

Film making itself is a discipline, it needs to be to get anything done within a reasonable time frame. Writing is perhaps foremost in this. It takes a lot of continuously reapplied dedication to start and then complete a script. It is a job, you have to set aside so many hours in the day to progress. Writing 100 or so pages of description, dialogue and structured storytelling is no mean feat. Doing this on your own requires a knowledge of self and the determination to finish what you have started.

Co-writing makes the whole process more fun and can give very creative results. Meeting for several hours with a co-writer on a daily basis to brainstorm, and just to work with someone else towards a common goal, can be very satisfying and rewarding. You can work on ideas, develop

them, work on story structure and direction and you can work on dialogue. You may find that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, two heads are better than one and the finished script is something to be proud of in its own right.

This may be what you're all about, with a finished script you can get an agent who will try to market and sell what you have done. If you're working with a larger budget concept this route can be extremely rewarding financially. There are a lot of people doing this and competition is fierce but if you can master your craft and are good at giving people what they want then this can work out perfectly.

Doing research for a project is a means to an end. Buying books, visiting the library, interviewing relevant people or going online can provide you with all you need to get that script into shape. As you can see, serving your need to improve upon what you have can start to become a way of life. The ideas, facts, visions, choices, experiences and senses of your own life are the basis of the inputs to your film. Write about what you know *but* know that there are whole worlds out there that you know nothing about. In a bid to escape from your own situation you may wish to try writing about these. Playful creation of a fictional microcosm can be a great release from the surroundings that may be inhibiting your natural creativity.

A time for work, a time for play. In the film business the distinctions between these are often blurred and confused. To keep your head and know the difference is a preference if you wish to have a private life outside of your work. Business or pleasure? Both, but at different times. Its really just about having a professional stance on what you are trying to achieve. If you make time to enjoy yourself when you are not working then what you gain will be fed into your working life, making it richer and better.

## 36. Preparation and Execution

Proper preparation leads to perfect performance. Every element that can be planned and prepared before production begins should be. There are enough unpredictable factors that will arise to ensure that chaos will ensue at some stage but if you are prepared you will be able to deal with whatever is thrown your way.

Every action you take will be the execution of a decision. Each decision in the process should be made carefully with thought for how it will impact on the overall shape of the piece. Some decisions come naturally and are relatively easy to make. You need to be able to do such with confidence that you are doing the right thing at each juncture. Some decisions require a lot of thought over a long period of time and are harder to make. The bonus with these is that once executed the decision making process for each one of them will come to an end and then you can simply watch their effect.

Saying 'action' is the end of a long process for each shot of each scene. Once said, the performance which follows, the one you record, comes alive and provides the input into post-production. The material you gather in this way has a quality of its own. Depending on the direction of your vision, this material will vary in how it matches up to what you expect and hope for. After you have done as many takes as necessary to obtain the best performance from your actors this is all you will have to take to the next stage. Good preparation helps to make sure that you get what you want.

Putting stories into action is a way of getting the ball rolling. Once a story is underway or in action you realise that a transition has been made. Some actions are irreversible and are just left to run their course, some can be tinkered with to a certain extent. This is most obvious when the medium changes from a paper script to your recording medium. Film is all about a continuous

execution of ideas that brings about the realisation of them. This is necessary to transform all your dreams and hopes for the project into a form that can finally be shared with other people.

Actors and crew are very special people because they make this transition or translation happen. It has been said that what is essential in one medium is lost in translation when it is transformed to another. There is truth to this but you must remember that you are in charge of these transformations and it is up to you to be creative with shaping them. From the production phase onwards, time and again your input into the changes that occur will be central to the finished result. You are a translator and the completed product is your translation.

Being a writer and director makes translating between media easier, translating your own words into your own moving images is straightforward when compared to executing what is actually just your vision of someone else's script. If you gave the same script to three different directors you would see three very different films.

The everyday sounds around you undergo this same transformation when recorded. They can be played with and manipulated to give the required effect. Something as simple as the volume they are given can have a great impact.

Film has been called 'organised chaos'. It is certainly chaotic but the degree to which it is organised can make all the difference. As a director people will come to you for your opinion when a choice has to be made. The more fluent you are in both the technical language of film and the emotional language of actors the better will be your knowledge on which to base the choices put in front of you. Every choice should be a creative and informed one.

### 37. Look and Attitude

Primarily the director is responsible for the look of a film. Because this is the result of a great many factors and a huge variety of peoples' hard work, the director must be able to talk to everyone in the film on their level. An autocratic attitude, merely giving orders, is not the ideal state of affairs. Creative people are often sensitive and this should always be born in mind. Its pointless repeatedly telling someone the way you want it to be when they are gently trying to tell you that it won't work that way.

You need to listen and develop a way of working that allows for as much communication as possible. There are an almost infinite number of factors that are finally distilled to give a film its look. This being so the director must have an edge, an example to everyone else that there is something holding the whole film together. Such an edge is to have a simply key theme, such as Water, Fire, Earth, Wind. Finding your own theme that you feel works well for the film as a whole will help to ground you in an arena where inflating egos are inclined to take hold.

Giving an actor a theme for their character might help them to get a handle on what holds their character together. For they too have a look and attitude. With rehearsals this can be reinforced to make the actor's character seem more genuine.

From a cinematography point of view there is a large contrast in look between different media; video, 16 mm, 35 mm. Although at the outset your choice will be dictated by budget its worth a thought that you may be able to use mixed media. Video is relatively cheap although it can be treated to give a film look. It has come a long way but those in the know seem to agree that film is the only real option if you want 'the look'. 35 mm is the industry standard but only accessible to those with large budgets. 16 mm is a very neat format and very versatile, it looks great and

doesn't cost the earth. Super 16 mm can also be blown up to 35 mm giving all sorts of possibilities.

Before long, if not already, you are going to get wrapped up in 'theories of cool'. What is cool and why and what isn't. This is purely subjective but if there is an attitude, a look, a feel and a theme that everyone can agree upon is definitive of cool then that is what you will get, agreement. Can you define cool with relation to your project? What would be cool?

Half the reason why most people get into film is because it is so cool. If you go for the cool look you've got to make it work. Your actors have to be cool, both the heroes and the bad guys. Your sets have to be cool, all the equipment has to be cool. There are as many other looks as there are genres and sub-genres. Do what's right for your script and if it so happens to be cool then make a cool film.

The eyes say much on a cinema screen as they do in daily life. Much of this is natural but some people are better at acting with their eyes in close up. Letting your actors know the shot and how much of them is in frame will allow them to adjust their acting according. Giving an actor an eyeline or eyelines by placing a mark on a wall or a point in the distance can help some actors by providing a reference that they can play off when interacting with another actor. Glasses hide the eyes and you may be better off asking an actor to wear contacts if they need to. Glasses with 'flats' in them can be used if you want your actor to wear glasses.

Many films contain people looking for things or places or other people. When they find what they are looking for this marks another plot point. Know when you have found what you are looking for in every shot and every scene. The crew and actors will be looking to you to see if you are happy with their work.

### 38. Commencement and Closure

Mark the moment a project begins. A word, an image, an idea, a title, a drawing, a subject, a photograph, a statistic, a painting, a doodle. This will remind you of how it started lest you forget further down the line. How your film starts out and how you nurture it may well have repercussions as to how it will turn out eventually. It's easy to alter and play with what you have until it is unrecognisable from what it was at the beginning. This may be fine as you may watch it grow into an entity far greater than its starting point. However, it may have lost everything that was unique about the original concept.

It's good to start several different projects and have them at different levels of development. You can move from one to the next and work a little at each when it suits you most. It's also good to know, to really know that one of them is head and shoulders above the others and stands a much better chance of completion. Of course it may be a surprise when one takes off through the intervention of another party. Whatever the case have a best and worst case scenario worked out for what you will consider completion. Obviously getting paid for what you have done and knowing that everyone else is getting paid is not a bad criteria for this.

Closing a distribution deal is a milestone. You really are putting your film into someone else's hands. If a distributor buys your film they must be confident that they can make a profit on it so it goes without saying that if *you* intend to make money you must make your film into something that other people will see as profitable. This is where your judgement of the market place comes into its own.

An art house film made on a budget will not have the glitz and glamour of a big budget film but it does have its advantages. It doesn't have to make very much money at all in order for the distributor to break even, making money after this point. Also it can provide a showcase of the talents of yourself, your actors and your crew.

Can you imagine a time in the future when your film is finished? If you can then you are already well on the way to making it so. Right from the start, finishing and how you finish should be at the front of your mind. Always be closing, always be putting the finishing touches to what you have started. You will find that you have to keep starting new avenues of enquiry for your film and with equal vigour you should keep on finishing these off until your work is done.

It has been said that films are not finished, they are merely abandoned. If this is true then you should make sure that when you do abandon your film through, exhaustion or because you simply need to move on, then you do so by leaving it in the hands of someone who can do something fruitful with it.

A completed script is a shooting script, anything else is just a draft or a work in progress. Most of writing is rewriting, and it is the constant reapplying of oneself to the job in hand that completes this work.

During production each shot and each scene at each set or location must be started and finished. Often the best way to start is for the director to agree with the director of photography where the camera is to be positioned at the outset. This allows the DP to get on with setting up the camera and lights whilst the director can discuss the scene with the actors. To finish is to agree that the necessary shots have been obtained.

The end and the beginning of a story are closely linked. The beginning may explain the end and vice versa. You only have one opening shot and one closing shot, so make them count.

### 39. Budget and Production Value

Whatever your budget you will have to decide whether you want to get the best production value possible or to spend what you have on other things you deem to be of greater importance to your film.

If you want to make your film look like it has cost more than it actually does then there are ways but you may be onto a losing battle. Perhaps the greatest thing you can do is to get great locations at little or no cost. This is all down to having a great locations manager who can sweet talk any owner into giving up their property for a day or three for a mention in the credits and a case of beer.

Some films require a lot more money to be spent on them simply because of where and how they are set. Starting out at the bottom of the ladder such films will have to remain a pipe-dream for the moment.

A film that requires the use of lower production values because of where and how it is set means that the success of the film will depend heavily on acting ability, direction and creative use of camera operation. Writing a film with this in mind may help to get a perspective on what is actually possible and therefore what is more likely to get made.

The budget is often a millstone around a film maker's neck, so often it determines what you can and what you can't do. How much of it have you got and how much are you prepared to spend? Without breaking the law can you get more? What exactly would you do with this extra money? Can you start a company and sell shares in it? Do you know someone who would lend you the money? It goes round and round and at some point you are just going to make the best of what you've got.

Free up what money you do have and focus it upon what you think really matters. If the quality of image is of the utmost importance get some nice prime lenses. If its a particular prop, such as a car, that's central to the whole picture, get just the right one. Likely as not having your actors dressed correctly for their parts will be a priority, if they look the part the audience will accept them.

Film making is an activity, once started it develops interest and other activities live off this enterprise. Film critics and craft services would be out of business if the enterprise that supports them were to disappear. Generating as much interest as you can through local radio and press can only be good for the film to prosper. There are people whose sole function is to finance film production. If you can get in touch with such studios and let them know what you are doing they can only increase your chances of completing what you start. There are people who provide money for the completion of films and you should contact them at key points in the picture's development. Contacting the distribution arm of a studio at an early stage will give you an idea and maybe certain criteria for what kind of condition your film needs to be in before they will consider it.

Building up a network of contacts within the business will give you vital links to the people who can take your work on to the next level. Believe it or not there are people who want to talk to *you*, but you have to make yourself known to them. If you are genuine and sincere, people will help you not only because it is in their best interests financially but because it is their job. Give these people work to do, go the extra mile and make them do the same.

Match funding is provided by a body where you put forward the project and money you have and they match it with an equal sum. This kind of loan as with any loan has many clauses and as you

go on you will find that more and more legalities become embroiled in the process. If you are prepared for these then you will see them simply as obstacles to be overcome.

#### 40. Quality and Consistency

Care over your entire project and attention to detail should be of prime interest to you. From your selection of recording media through to how you feel about what your actors are going to be wearing you need to exercise your vision to its fullest. Quality should be built in from the ground up. General, overall decisions that affect the look of your film cannot be undone on location. Buy and/or rent the best equipment that you can afford, skimping on the basics such as camera, lenses and sound will mean the whole production will be compromised. They say that god is in the details but you can always go for a minimalist look.

Getting the script into the best shape possible, so that every line is not only advancing the plot but will be memorable later on, is vital. If you stick fairly closely to this script in the knowledge that it is as good as it can be then you won't go far wrong.

Get the best actors that you can. It may be that you have decided to use friends or even family but experienced actors will have better range, a professional approach and they may require less direction. Using raw, fresh talent is a risk but if they are keen and able they could give your film the edge that it requires to make it stand out in the market place.

Consistency of acting and the direction needed to bring this about is what you are looking for. Because you are almost surely shooting your scenes out of chronological order, it is essential to keep your actors engaged by letting them know exactly their whereabouts in the story. Reminding them of the key aspects of their character as they progress will ensure that each scene cuts together well with the next. Indeed giving each actor their key emotion for each scene and what motivates their actions within it will give them the encouragement and the facts they need to give you the performance you need.

A thread running through the cinematography will help the dialogue between you and the director of photography. As long as you are sure that the camerawork has this thread running through it you will be safe in the knowledge that it will not jar from shot to shot and from scene to scene.

If you can develop a good working routine including everyone in front of and behind the camera you will not only get on with your work in a smoother way but you can also get into a rhythm. Any physical work that gets into a groove and creates such a rhythm is more enjoyable and more constructive for everyone involved. There is a limit to how fast you can work given the difficulties of any shoot but taking it steady and building a pace that everyone is comfortable with will only increase your productivity and the quality of the end result.

If you are consistent on set and on location then slowly everyone begins to know what to expect and what is required of them. If you keep applying and reapplying yourself to the job in hand with a persistent yet still creative attitude you will build a rapport with the actors and crew. It takes time to communicate just what it is that you need to make a shot, a scene and in fact the whole picture. If you are consistently sending out the same vibes to all around, this message will be transmitted and received far more readily.

When something goes wrong or there is a communication breakdown, it is your basic drive and reference to the simple key elements and themes that you have laid out that will get you through. Your vision could become clouded at these points but if you refer yourself to the consistency and quality that underlies everything you do you will find that others are far more able to understand your wishes.

## 41. Integrity and Fun

Cultivating good humour and a sense of fun is essential to the smooth running of a shoot. Far from causing mayhem this will ensure that there is a good morale all round. People know when to be serious and concentrate on the details of their job position but without being able to laugh and smile at what can sometimes appear to be ridiculous situations, only tension and frustration can prevail. Looking at the broader picture, it is likely that you will want to work with some of these people again and a good time had by all with some beautiful memories will ensure that this is possible.

An integral part of achieving this is making sure you hire the right people. Actors can be a law unto themselves and will associate themselves with the rest of the crew or stay as a group to themselves depending on their personalities. Why should friendships not flourish in this environment? The greater the interpersonal relationships grow the more the members of a shoot will gel as a unit and this can only be good for the quality of the film as a whole

However this is a work place. Integrity of character, pride in the work being done and professionalism suggest that most people on a crew will simply be doing their job as best they can in the prevailing conditions. How much people play whilst they work is down to personal character. Also the subject matter of the film may have an effect. It all depends on how you approach your art, for some it is a very serious task for others playfulness is key to getting the right result, play is how we create.

Being serious in your dealings with financiers and the people buying, marketing and distributing your film means that you need a calm, straightforward business approach. This means being presentable in any meetings you should have, having a mature phone manner, being responsible

with your budget and being serious about meeting deadlines whether self-made or imposed upon you.

Depending on the number of you working on this film, especially in pre-production, you are going to need a different hat for each job that you do. Every job has a function and each function requires a different set of skills and approaches. It is your integrity that will be called into question here. Can you tie all these different job functions together to form one whole human being? Sooner or later you will find that you simply cannot do everything and that the intelligent solution is to find others who are not only good at what they do but are also more than willing to get involved in your film. Your choices here are to get the best people you can as you give up some of the work, control over and responsibility of these roles.

Once again we see that there is a balance to be struck. You will know when you have reached this balance because your film will slowly start to move forward, expand and progress. Not only is film a juggling act, it is also a balancing act. Think of someone juggling whilst walking a tightrope!

For this reason alone it is a very good idea to get away from your film every now and again. Its easy to get snowed under with paperwork and planning. A holiday is a always a good thing, as is getting out to see friends and enjoying a rest in their company. You're only human and concentrating on one thing for a long time will only be detrimental in the long run anyway. The trouble is that once you get embroiled in such a long term project everything around you seems to be relevant. Can you sit back and enjoy listening to some music if you are constantly thinking about how it would work in a particular scene? Can you go to the cinema without analysing every shot and edit? The truth is that at some point, for your own health if nothing else, you will need a break. Don't be afraid of taking one.

## 42. Process and Profit

The standard process is as follows:

Concept, Development, Pre-Production, Production, Post-Production, Distribution, Analysis

Knowing where you are on this line is to know how far along you are, how much there is to do and how much work has already been done. Despite how it looks, it is a dynamic process and should be treated in a non-linear way. At every stage you should find yourself jumping backwards and forward, concentrating on making links between what has to come first and what you know will come later.

The rate at which you move through this process depends upon the size of your project, every restraint and obstacle that you might imagine and how fast you work.

At the concept stage you are bouncing ideas around to see which ones might have the legs to carry it all the way to completion. Good ideas will show themselves but unfortunately some of the best may be impractical or beyond budget. Its still a good thing to record all these ideas as some may become more viable in the future.

It is not uncommon to have several ideas in development. with each one, in its own time, pushing ahead in terms of the integrity of the script, to be selected for pre-production.

Pre-Production is the beginning of a big drive. Everything necessary to complete a shooting script and prepare it for production has to be prepared. Crew, actors, equipment, locations, transport and food are just a few of the major considerations.

During production the material for post-production is gathered. It has to be of the best quality possible, both sound and image, because you can't do it again and it's all you will have to take into the editing room.

Preferably after a break, post-production begins. Working with an editor and sound designer you can at last put your vision together to form one complete, whole, entity. When you are satisfied with a final cut you have something to hand over.

You may have to market your own work with the goal of getting a distribution deal. A distributor takes your completed work to the next stage and has the means to sell what you have done to your audience.

Analysis is a time for you to sit back and take in what you have achieved. It's also a time to look closely at the finished work and decide if, by your own standards, it is a success.

This simplified route is missing one item: money. If you have played your cards right then you should have sold your film for more than you spent on it. The knowledge that you can make a film for a profit should drive you through the entire process, in addition to your artistic intents. If you discover that film critics like your film, this is one thing. If you find that everyday cinemagoers really like what you have done and are willing to pay to see it, well this is something else. If you are afraid of the way this business works then just see your profit as a seal of approval from everyone down the line, a way of saying 'It worked!'

There is such a thing as a 'lost leader'. Maybe you didn't strike it rich on your first go but more than likely, with all the contacts you have made and people you have met, it will have put you on the map. If you have put your heart and soul into a project but have only broken even or made a

loss there is still the now tangible hope that you may have the opportunity to take on something  
with more potential.

### 43. Output and Scale

If you've got a wind-up 16 mm camera then you can make beautiful silent movies and edit in camera. You can output them onto DVD for friends and family to see. If you have a modern mini-DV or HDV video camera and a computer then suddenly possibilities open up. There are people who have used this format to produced full blown feature length films with great sound and music and this trend will grow.

As soon as you step up to sync-sound 16 mm you need a Nagra sound recorder and a lot of extras. This is still the budget way to make a feature length film in a real sense. If you want the look, use film. Of course moving up to this format brings with it an increased budget but still you can make a film for relatively little that when blown up to 35 mm for a cinema release print will look amazing. There are drawbacks to this medium, such as editing costs but again there are people who choose such a set up as their basic standard and who have used their experience with it to move on to 35 mm.

As you move up the different media the expense grows and so does the scale of your operation. As your ambition grows so does the need to put something extraordinary onto the medium you have chosen. However once you have done this your artistic skills come into their own and you are freed up to explore them, it can be quite liberating. Once you know the limitations of your chosen medium you can begin to work with them and sometimes around them to articulate your story.

After you have you made your first film you will be in a good position to decide whether you want to try making another one, or several more. Now that you have done it once you are more experienced and knowledgeable of just what has to be done. A second should be easier. Bearing in mind that you want to make quality not necessarily quantity it begs the question how many

films do you have in you? Do you choose to go for something bigger that you hope will be better? Or do you use the template you have already made to produce something of similar size albeit completely different in content?

Maybe, on the merits of your first outing you will be asked to direct, produce or co-write somebody else's film. Is this what you want, or do you want to stick to pursuing your own personal stories? Such choices are the dilemmas of someone who has already achieved a certain level of success.

Its worth noting how good it is to have ideas as you are planning and making your film about how big you would like it to be. You may have a range in mind as to what you wish for your film once it is finished. Perhaps you won't consider it finished until it has reached a certain scale.

Small is beautiful. You may have discovered a way to make a profitable, low-budget, independent feature film. It seems fair that you might continue this to find that you can make beautiful small pictures on a variety of different subjects in different genres that the audience warm to. Sure there won't be the same size of glitz and glamour associated with films starring big name actors but this could be good enough for you. There used to be a 'B-Movie' shown with the main feature and these B-Movies started to take on a life of their own. They didn't have the same production values or star the greats of their time but they still made a profit. You could make films this way but cultivate an 'Art house' feel that would lend an air of legitimacy to proceedings.

Whatever you decide ensure the choices you make at every stage are creative ones that allow for changes down the road. Just as it is foolish to be burning bridges so it is with the future. Leave space for opportunity and expansion should it come your way.

#### 44. Reality and Fiction

You can play with the grey area in-between these but it pays to know the difference. If you live in a fictional world, reality is that nagging feeling that keeps threatening to upset your comfort zone. If you live in the real world, fiction is that idea that there is more to life than meets the eye and that 'round every corner there is possibly something more exciting.

Films are great at entertaining both such realms. Making something more 'realistic' is often a goal. This way of making films relies on mirroring what happens in 'ordinary' life, matching the two up, mostly with great attention to detail. Or it relies on creating something which matches what we expect from using our imagination. We can all tell a 'realistic' dinosaur from a phoney one although no one has ever really seen one.

Films that show an alternative reality allow you to enter a fictional world that exists just in the cinema. In fact you could say that cinema as an experience *is* an alternative reality, certainly different from what is going on outside on the street.

Most interesting is an artist's interpretation of the reality that we live in. Often here the idea is that there is something else that exists 'just below the surface', something that can't be seen unless you go looking for it. It may be a fantasy wonderland or a dark and menacing place but either way it is curiosity that takes us there.

Fiction as a lie is another way of showing us that there are realities that are kept from us, from which we are 'protected' by the powers that be. When we discover that we have been systematically lied to 'for our own good' the results can be catastrophic, one of denial or maybe leading us to search for 'the truth'.

A 'virtual reality' may be one where we are completely ignorant for our entire lives unless pulled out of it by some benign influence only to tell us that the entire world is under the impression that it is living in reality when the actuality is that they are all living in a created fiction.

Conspiracy theories usually rely on one sole person being convinced that they are in possession of 'facts' that prove everyone else has been misled. In addition someone may discover usually piece by piece that the 'truth is not as it appears'.

The slightly boring reality of life is that we all have our own set of beliefs and memories with which we use to tell whether something is true. As most of know however there are always trouble makers out there who are trying to pull the wool over our eyes. In such a case there is that doubt, that feeling that we are being conned, cheated and basically lied to by someone who stands to gain by doing so.

We all like to tell our everyday stories to each other and of course there is always room for embellishment. Over time the telling of one particular story may change it beyond recognition, even so we all become aware of this and arguably there is a need for us to keep doing it. 'True' stories are often the most unbelievable and perhaps this is a reason why 'Truth is stranger than fiction'.

However you care to look at these distinctions maybe it is the idea that some stories seem to have 'the ring of truth' about them and it is these we like. We can learn from these stories and relate them to others in order to impart a message or a moral.

It is hard to imagine a world without stories, real or fictional but it is within your remit as a filmmaker to keep developing new ways of telling them.

## 45. Style and Taste

The style of your film is largely up to you and those you choose to work with. What eventually appears on the screen is the result of this teamwork and will speak volumes for the care and preparation put in from the beginning. Planning sound design, lighting design, costume design, set design and camera movement all has massive impact. In truth, it is the overall design of the picture that will set the tone for its style.

You may choose to follow an already established style in agreement with those in charge of each department. Examples of particular genres often borrow from each other creating recognisable styles that impart an air of authority to the look of the film. If you are making a genre film you might do the research to find out what other films in that genre share.

Coming up with a style all of your own can be risky but if it pays off your film will have a look of genuine originality. Working with people who really know what they are doing, people who can readily draw on the history of art, is the smartest move.

Choosing individual songs, or pre-recorded, pre-paid tracks is a very good way of highlighting various scenarios. Having a musician as a sound designer however will give your film's soundtrack a life of its own. Also commissioning original music will give a shape to the feel of the whole endeavour that cannot be matched in any way. You have to really trust such an artist because their addition will colour everything you have done.

Lighting and cinematography can be designed from the outset like many aspects of your film. A competent DP will know how different lighting aspects will effect the mood of each scene. Pushing this can lead to the lighting having a visual story all of its own. Always lighting some

characters one way and others another, even having themes for each section of the film, there are many ways of playing with styles of lighting.

Wardrobe is vital in giving an actor the feeling that they are properly inhabiting their role, if they feel the part they'll play the part. Matching styles and colours of clothing gives each actor presence. Its amazing what happens if you put a man in suit or an actress in a little black dress. When you see your actors walk onto the screen you want them to own it.

Style of direction is down to the experience and character of the director. Perhaps the most valuable asset is versatility. In a wide range of locations and situations as a director you want to keep everybody onboard and working in harmony with each other. In some ways the director is like the hub of a wheel, if he or she stops functioning properly the whole wheel comes to a halt and it takes a lot of energy to get it spinning again.

Swearing, nudity, sex, violence, gruesome special effects, its all a matter of taste. If your film revolves around one or any of these or they are used as vital to plot fair enough. They can all be done well, they can all be done badly.

Its not a good idea to try to censor your own film, someone will do that for you. If you have enough material in the edit you will find much that was well executed has to be left out. If you are leaving out favourite scenes think about the necessity of what you are leaving in. Its healthy to think about taste, good and bad, it can tip the scale in improving your film or it can detract from it totally. Questions of taste are entirely subjective. If you feel happy with a shot in reference to the vision you have of the film, keep it in.

## 46. Longevity and Formulas

Although we live in a fast throwaway culture there is plenty of interest in recycling. If you make your film to last then chances are that years after its release cinephiles will still be talking about it, writing about it and watching it. This would be no mean feat considering the number of films that are released every year. But if you go out of your way in trying to achieve this you just might have success. It is both oscar winners and cult films that many people refer back to as their favourites. What is it about such films that achieve this?

There are trends in the film business that go largely unnoticed. Just as blockbusters do what they describe, halt or turnaround downturns in cinema attendance, so cult films seem to capture the imagination of a small group of people which then grows over time.

A cult film is one that often does what larger mainstream films cannot. It takes a subject matter that would otherwise be shied away from, or it reinvents a genre or it tells a story that is both tragic and comic. It does these things and it does them well. There may be no formulas for such films. They are personal journeys told from the heart, they are groundbreaking in what they achieve on a small budget and they are difficult to categorise.

Are there formulas for larger successful films? Certainly, with the use of one or more A-list actors and a script that is highly structured and polished, combined with a named director and a large budget it seems financial success is almost guaranteed. There have been notable large scale flops but they are the exception. It seems as a whole that the more money is thrown at a good script and its marketing the higher the probability of its success.

Mainstream films have the 'wow' factor and are often great entertainment but it is the smaller pictures that are more memorable for their moments and great dialogue. The more films you see

the more you become aware of what it is about them that you actually enjoy. You may be a sucker for CGI or particular actors, maybe you start to enjoy the work of certain directors. Whatever it is, as a cinemagoer you refine your tastes and begin to have an appreciation for what it is about cinema that you really like.

If you like snappy dialogue and stories that are off the beaten track then looking into the whole world of cult cinema may be a revelation. Cult movies are not exclusively the domain of low-budget enterprises, some larger films qualify especially as they mature over time. Some people know nearly every line of dialogue in the film and this is often because they are very well written and the acting is of a very high calibre.

Some B-movies provide the learning curve for actors, directors and crew who then go on to larger budget films. Actors are given the chance to show their talents, directors can try out basically anything they want to and crew gain valuable experience.

If you stumble across a formula for making profitable feature films it is of no use without the people needed to make them. As a team you can be unstoppable, as an isolated individual you have no voice or empowerment to turn your vision into a reality. If you haven't already you will have to start building up such a contact list. Networking on the internet is one way but looking closer to home may be better. There is a blurring between friends and co-workers. On the one hand you want to get along very well but at the same time you don't want to get too close. If there is money involved and reputations to make and keep then honesty and good business sense are the best policy. You will find time after time that no matter how much you enjoy film-making, it is work.

## 47. Language and Universality

It's a common occurrence for people to learn to speak another language by watching subtitled films from another country. You see cinemas all over the world and presumably the enjoyment gained from them must be similar. The themes and language of cinema are fairly universal and the dialogue is of its time. World cinema shows off the best and sometimes the worst of a country's culture but it is a window on that culture nonetheless.

The idea that your film could be viewed in other countries is quite a daunting concept. On the whole most films are made with their home country in mind, what works here may not work there. Indeed most films are a direct reflection of their country of origin. One way to introduce yourself to another country would be to begin viewing its cinema. Do you like what you see? Would you like to visit this country? In this sense a film becomes like an ambassador for its country. Do you want to show your country in a good light or do you want to expose everything that infuriates you about it?

Heartfelt stories travel far and wide and ultimately it is not where they are from but what they are about. Giving a truthful account of the benefits and shortcomings of your country of residence may be secondary to the issues your films address. For someone in Spain, a British film will be under the label 'World Cinema'.

Thinking about how someone from another country would view your film is a good way of getting some much needed perspective. Are you simply trying to make some money, hold a mirror up to the zeitgeist, or are you really trying to communicate truths that you hope anybody, wherever they are from, will understand.

The size of your ambition in this respect and the scope of your work should be a major consideration from the outset. Whatever your views you should at least have a thought for how far you are trying to reach.

In the same way you might care to think about what age range you are aiming at. We are all ready for different stories at different ages. If you can tap into the audience you are aiming at then this too is a form of success. Animated feature films can offer something to all ages but you are brave indeed if you can capture a teenage imagination.

The language of film is a subject for theoretical discussion. We are told that it has its own syntax, grammar, methods of expressing symbolism, even punctuation. Much of this will be lost on an audience craving pure fun and sheer entertainment but deeper more thoughtful films will have more to offer in this area.

Some universal themes that we learn in life and grow to understand; Love, Hate, Grief, Pride, Joy, Shame, Revenge, Suffering, Friendship, Fear, Lust, Safety, Home, Hunger, Abandonment, Laughter, Death, Birth, Relief, Loneliness, Despair, Rejection, Rebirth, Pain, Greed, Belonging, Trust, Poverty, Celebration. Obviously a film doesn't have to be about any one or combination of these but if it has a story it will be about *something* and what that is may well have universal appeal.

To be involved in film is to be wrapped up in a glorious mixture of emotions, work and play. Trying to obtain an objective viewpoint from where you can gain a sensible view of the world and the great mixture of people that live here is a life long project in itself. Trying to make films that express not only your singular identity but also the trials and tribulations of those you care about is the hardest of all. To be inclusive means to learn their languages, empathise with them and to share what you have.

## 48. Distribution and End Product

What you need, what you are looking for, in this world of imagery is something real, something to show for all your hard work. Picture going into a shop, looking for and finding the DVD of your film. Here is real, tangible proof that you have arrived. So much so that this physical goal would make the perfect moment to say that you are successful.

Getting to this point is going to take determination, persistence, commitment and energy. If you can get to a distributor with the final cut of your film, convince them that they need to see it and that it will make them money then you are doing your job well. To get to your final cut you need to set targets in the editing room and deadlines that you stick to. To get into an editing room in the first place you either have to know someone or you have to do it yourself. As with a great deal of this journey doing it yourself is most likely the way you'll have to go.

For your first showing you may want to invite a few select people around, get some popcorn in, sit back and relax. Your personal distribution will be to get copies to crew and actors. They'll appreciate this greatly, to see what has become of their work and for those all important credits.

Getting a full-on distributor to come on board should mean that you'll be able to pay your participants, this they will also appreciate greatly.

Your work is not over quite yet. The more effort you put in during the next few months the better exposure your end product will have. Remember that magic moment of picking up a copy in the shop. You may have to supervise aspects such as the cover of this DVD.

Where there's a will there's a way. Keep on keeping on and pace yourself, you're still in it for the long run and the next project is on the horizon.

Should the opportunity arise make yourself available to promote your work locally. Interviews with local newspapers, magazines and radio are a good way to get out and about and to let people who might be interested know what you've been doing.

You will surely have had a wrap party at the end of the shoot and at this stage you might like to throw a party for everyone that's been involved. Such occasions are rare but allow everyone to get together and let their hair down.

People say 'You're only as good as your last film' and in many ways that matter you *are* your last film, you are the end product yourself. The bright side of this is that you had complete control over its creation. You are going to be associated with it for the rest of your life and you will only be able to put distance between you and it when you start to talk about the next film. Enjoy this time, there's no point in resting on your laurels but why not lap up the attention for a while before you become embroiled in the next project.

The best thing to do of course is to give yourself a holiday. Chances are you will be physically drained and mentally fried. A couple of weeks in some beautiful beach resort, eating well and enjoying a beverage or three is probably just what the doctor orders.

A distributor may or may not want to give your film a theatrical release. The position you are in will most likely be one of accepting what you are offered. The important thing to remember here is that you will be very happy at this stage but you might try to negotiate what is on the table say by agreeing how the deal will change for the next film. You may be a very good business person, certainly making a film is an indicator of this, try to negotiate wisely.

## 49. Reviews and Festivals

A film festival is a great place to premiere your work. They are full of people who all share a love of the cinema and so are a receptive audience. Because of the large variety of films on show and the fact that they are most likely to be accepting of what is new they will also have an open mind.

The second equally important aspect of a festival is that there will be representatives there who may be interested in offering you a distribution deal. With a large number of films on offer at what is also a market, there is stiff competition for this kind of attention. It will be your films strength to stand out from this competition to put it head and shoulders above the rest. This is where the unique and original nature of your film will help.

It is also at a festival that you will encounter reviews for the first time. Reviewers are likely to be kind but not to the point of being uncritical. Here you will start to get an impression of how your film is received by people who have no prior knowledge of it. It will have to stand on its own merits.

A good idea is to have business cards with you, including your name, the name of the film and your contact details. You may even go as far as having press packs produced so that industry professionals can have a better look at the films genesis, the background of some of the people involved and any special details of the film.

You must submit your film to such a festival following several guidelines and rules. During post-production you will want to have a look at these to make sure your end product is of the required format. You will also have a strict deadline for entry usually with no exceptions but this can be a great date to aim for.

With all this, transport to the festival and accommodation once there, you will have to have a festival budget. Better to be considering how you will raise the money for this at as early a stage as possible.

Plan which festival you enter with care, they are all different and each has its own strengths and weaknesses. However, the prospect of seeing your film on a large screen for the first time, meeting the people who may take you through to the next stage and seeing reviews of your film, make planning a festival entry an all round winner.

Critics can be harsh, if there is little or no positive criticism from some reviewers don't be upset. The subjective nature of film is such that you can't please all the people all the time, actually it is often beneficial to polarise an audience with a split of those who like it and those who don't. This provokes discussion and discussion provokes debate which in turn provokes publicity. As long as some people really like it and understand what you set out to do then you're doing fine.

What you are really after is constructive criticism, someone who has looked at your film and been moved enough to provide a meaningful analysis. Someone who praises what they see as the better parts of your film, who attacks what is seen as weaker and tells you *why* they think that way. Your friends and family will be useful critics as they tend to be honest.

Festivals are a celebration of film and you will also be able to look at what other film makers are doing. Being so tightly absorbed in your own work for so long this will come as welcome relief, you may rediscover why it is that you like to watch films as well as make them. They are very well organised events, your film will appear in the program and will be screened at a specific time. This is your time, be businesslike and make a memorable impression.

## 50. Feedback and Rebellion

Any feedback you get at any time during the whole course of the film's life is valuable. Not only can you consider it and put the results of your consideration into the film but later feedback can be looped into future film production. To get feedback you have to be open about your work, showing it to people whose judgement you respect. Being so open can be difficult, especially considering that not all feedback is positive. Still if you value a person's opinion it can be best seen as an input into the creative process.

You are free to be so open and of course you can always reject advice if you feel strongly about what you have. It can be easy to get too close to your work and asking for a frank appraisal of it at any stage will invite positive comments also. You may need to take a break so that you can come back with fresh eyes and ears and be brutally honest about how you feel the work is progressing. Building carefully at the beginning means that you can always trust the foundations you have made.

At times you may feel that you wish you hadn't started. These down days should be looked at in the context of what you have already achieved, going back to look at what you have done may provide reassurance and even the inspiration you need to continue.

People you ask for feedback can only do so on the basis of what they know. If you are clear in telling them what you are trying to achieve they will be in a better position to help you. You may have decided to rebel. You are tired of the way everyone else works and are determined to follow a course of action, a style a method all of your own. If you depart from expected norms others will be at least confused and at worst condemning of your decisions. This will be most apparent with your use of money. Some think that there is just one way that you should do things but for you, you just might have to be the black sheep.

Just getting involved in film is enough for some to write you off completely. Know that such an attitude is just ignorance. Try explaining to such people that not only is what you are doing work but that it could also be a financially astute life direction. You will feel alone and you will have to dig deep to keep going. Talk to people who speak your language, make friends of those who are playing the same game and who have the same dreams. If you do not know anyone like this then look harder, they are there for you to find.

The act of rebelling will give you courage and strength in itself. The independent film scene, world-wide, is strewn with rebels and mavericks and you can consider yourself to be in their company. Get some heroes, film makers you admire and know that its ok and that you're not breaking any rebel code to follow in their footsteps.

Really start cooking, get those ideas turned into working scripts, get on the phone, scour the net until you start getting results. Go down avenues of enquiry knowing that whatever you find may be useful. You need information, you need clues, leads, names, numbers, facts, statistics and addresses. The more you find out the more you will start to find answers to questions you didn't even know existed. Then you can start to ask the kinds of questions that are specific to your personal goals.

You are going to start having a lot of ideas, get them down on paper, look at them later, sort the wheat from the chaff, expand on what you like, throw away anything that you know was, is and always shall be useless. Streamline your workspace, make efficiency second nature, have an elegant filing system. Know that you are on top of everything you produce.

## 51. Business and Constraints

The more serious you get about making your own film the more thought you will start to give about setting up your own business as a vehicle for its production and distribution. This can be a daunting prospect but it is a logical step if you wish to continue making films into the future and decide that what you are doing is worthy of a decent financial return.

There are many different types of company and you will have to do your research to work out which is best for you. The decision you arrive at will be a combination of your ambition and the rate of expansion that you foresee. In this regard it's most likely that unless you have experience in small businesses or an education about them you will opt for the most simple and straightforward option that requires the least amount of paperwork and maintenance.

Your main concern should be the film itself, you don't want to have too much time locked up in the administration of your company. If you are completely new to running a business it would be a really good idea to talk to someone who has their own business and who can give you advice along the way.

Running your own business is a serious step to take and for many a jump into the unknown. There are entities such as accounts to take care of and you may shy away from such activity if your main area of interest is just in film. Bear in mind that at some point the artistic creation of a film and the commercial world will eventually meet, surely you will want to have some involvement with how they do so.

Do your research, get as much advice from people who are in business for themselves and look at your options. Should you decide to make the leap be as clued up as possible as to what you will be responsible for and what will be expected of you.

Being your own boss and eventually employing others to help you achieve your goals can be extremely rewarding and even fun. Like a film, once created a small business takes on a life of its own, it is an entity separate from you that is designed to help not only with the creation of your film but with what follows when the film is completed.

Think of a business as a box, a certain size box with a lid. Your box will have a name, the name of the business, the choice of which is entirely up to you. You are going to make your film and place it in the box. Now the box, because of its size, can only take objects and papers of a particular dimension and it has a finite volume so that the number of objects is limited. It stands to reason that your choice of box will depend very much therefore on what it needs to hold. Knowing your film, that is exactly the nature of what it is that you wish to put in the box will determine what kind of box, or business is suitable for you

This example is to show that there are constraints on the making of your films. The point is that your company will have a value and there is value to having a company. It will become the container for everything that you create. With an optimistic and entrepreneurial spirit you can speculate on the size of this container and the rate of its growth. Being able to employ people in the pre-production, production and post-production phases will give better results as paid people are happy people. There are tax incentives too. Keeping all your receipts connected to the making of the film will mean that you will be able to claim a portion of your tax back. Having an accountant to keep your books who is an expert in this area will eventually help financially. The fact that you can pay yourself an income from the company will mean that you will be truly independent.

## 52. Shape and Form

A vague shape in the distance may be starting to take on a form of its own. It is you, your co-workers, your film and the company which houses it all.

You may picture yourself as the sculptor of this form, slowly chipping away at the stone to reveal the sculpture inside. Your film should be a work of art, you are an artist, but don't get hung up on this. Whatever its scale and ambition it is the end result of a lot of hard work by a group of artistic individuals who have most likely made sacrifices to be part of it. A better way of looking at this sculpture is to see it as the product of a team. It is more of a sport, you may be the captain of the team but it is the team as a whole that wins the game.

It is in the editing room that a film really begins to evolve into a recognisable form. With the structure of the script as an immediate guide and a logged list of all the best shots you can give the film its ups and downs, twists and turns, progression of plot and a new structure based on what it has become at this stage. Its like writing the script again, except this time you are using images, sound and music instead of words as your building blocks.

Placing shots together to make scenes can bring about new ideas in the edit. Perhaps you have discovered more comedy than was in the initial script, maybe its has developed a deeper meaning, or style. Just as giving the same script to different directors will produce different material, so giving the same material to different editors will yield differing final cuts.

Working with a specialised editor will free you up to get a new perspective on what you have done so far. He or she can suggest ways of splicing a scene together that you may not have thought of and this may in turn open up a new way of looking at the film as a whole. You will have learned a lot during the production and it may even have changed you subtly as a person,

here is a chance to bring that new knowledge to the film. Depending on the strength of the script and your initial vision however, you may choose to keep the original concepts in place and there is a lot to be said for this.

Unless the editor has some kind of dual function, perhaps as continuity on the shoot, he or she will be seeing the production for the first time. Keeping the sense of joy and well-being brought over from a successful shoot and handing the baton on to an editor will give them all they need to put together a rough cut. Armed with just the script and all the material that you have shot this could be a brutal assembly of all that you hold dear and may not correspond to what you had in mind. Still it is only a starting point.

The best thing you can do at this stage is to work with someone to get the music in place. This is really going to give your work the kiss of life. Contrasting scenes with different music can have a huge effect on the impact and feel of those scenes. Again, working with what you now have you are in a position to completely alter the shape and form of your work. Think carefully before you do this, you may be tired of some of the ideas and scenes that were originally in place but remember that they all had a purpose. Changing or removing them will impact on later scenes and the story as a whole.

You only have to look at the deleted scenes on a DVD of a movie to see how things might have been. In general there will ultimately be only one true way to tell your story and you must find that way by asking yourself a lot of questions in relation to your original vision.

The shape and form of your picture morphs and evolves throughout its life, you are its guide.

### 53. Media and Energy

The amount of energy needed to make a film is huge. The energy to motivate yourself, sheer volition, is incomprehensible to most. Most of all you need stamina to see a project through from start to finish. Also you need to be able to motivate others around you. An obvious word here is *food*. If you are surviving on just cigarettes and coffee your energy levels will be flagging all the time. During pre and post-production it just makes sense to eat and drink properly. The extra energy will show itself in your decision making.

In the production phase a lot of people live just on adrenaline, but this isn't enough. Regular breaks for food and drink are essential. Hungry workers tend to get tired and frustrated and this will begin to show in their work. Also breaks are a good time for everyone to relax and talk either about the film or anything else that floats their boat.

The energy required to power the equipment often has to be portable, batteries, and if you're lucky a generator. It is amazing however how close to power points you may be and if you can be sponging electricity from helpful people then the power it will produce, especially for lights will benefit the film greatly.

The light of the Sun is your greatest friend. Aiming to shoot a film in the summer is no guarantee of good light but it will make it all the more likely. The use of reflectors helps to throw light into the darker areas. Sunny days are what shooting on location is all about. If it rains or snows be prepared and see if you can turn it to your advantage.

In a large part light is the all encompassing media in itself. Without it we are all in the dark in more ways than one. Even at night it is streetlights or the light from the moon that gets us home.

Media it seems has many meanings and to understand it requires that we are aware of all of them. On an artistic level the media is the material through which we choose to express ourselves. Paper, paint, wood, stone, pencil, photographic paper, celluloid. Choosing the right medium for the job in hand is essential to the successful expression of our emotions and intellect. Media are the materials that help us to record our mental and emotional landscape.

Recording media in film production are great in number and differ wildly in their abilities to reproduce faithfully what we see and hear. You will be faced at every transition in the production line with a variety of such media and the choices you make will not only reflect yourself as a person but also the direction of your journey.

Some media are old, tried and tested, others are relatively new and take time to become established. Embracing new media is a brave step but you shouldn't be intimidated when considering the move from what you know to what you feel is the reality of the future. There is nothing wrong with being in a comfort zone with older media. It does however take a build up and surge of energy to advance yourself to newer media. The effort required often prevents such media reaching the very people who could make most use of it. Knowing the journey is different from taking the journey.

Your choice of media will shape your future. Looking into the future and being honest about your situation financially and personally you will see that choices become clearer as you proceed. The important thing is that you make that choice thus enabling yourself to take the journey that you dream about. With thought and action and energy you will start such a journey and who knows where it may lead?

## 54. People and Technology

There is an interface where people and technology meet. Some people are far more adept at this place and can manipulate the technology to their own ends. You need people like this because the basic fact about film is that it is an arena where Art meets Technology. The tools of the art of film are highly advanced and require the use of experienced hands.

People are not machines and should not be treated as such. Where there is a person there is a heart and soul, where there is a machine there is just inanimate matter. The choice of film is one made with this in mind, it is just another barrier to be overcome, that one must use such technology to transform one's vision.

Of course there are plenty of people who love all the types of technology associated with the film process. The image of a crew on location is often one that draws the attention of the crowd. Most importantly the equipment is of value to the filmmaker because it does a job.

Some film technology is quite beautiful, if looked at with this in mind. Cameras especially are incredibly well designed and have an appeal all of their own. But it is the look that they create that is of interest here. Different technology, like different brushes for a painter yields different results. In a way it is the mastering of this technology that gives an artist the freedom to utilise its functions and work around its limitations.

Actors it seems have little or no interest in the paraphernalia of film technology. They must know a little in order to give their best performance. It is the director who has to be the go-between, primarily shuttling back and forth between the actors and the director of photography. So the director needs to be able to speak both the technical language of the crew and the emotional language of the actors.

Knowing your limitations in these areas is wise. Sometimes knowing what you want and being able to articulate it to the actors and DP is all that is required. They will then do their best, with their own specialised know-how, to give you this. It all depends where your strengths lie. A technical director may spend longer setting up the shot with the DP than talking to the actors. Some directors are all about acting. In truth you need to be bilingual.

This whole subject is often the basis of the story lines in a film. Man versus machine, the machine as an extension of a person's ego. Some machines in films are depicted with a benign facet such as friendly robots but by and large the machine is the bad guy. Whatever your take on these issues at some point you are going to have to get used to the nature of film as being one where technology is king. If you fail to work with it then you will almost certainly be working against it.

There is a certain cache about working in the film business. It is why many people originally want to get involved. The idea that you can at once be an individual artist and at the same time be part of something where teamwork is everything. You could see it as a team of artists.

There is also something magical about working with the film medium in particular. The modern equipment is the latest evolution of what was used over a hundred years ago. It is as though the film itself, running through the camera does provide a soul for the machine. Shooting on film is expensive but if you can find a way to afford it and edit on a computer you will find yourself with a very different product than if you use a digital recording medium. Maybe the digital revolution has yet to develop a soul.

## 55. Market and Audience

You aim your film at those people who will most benefit from watching it. There may be a particular single individual whom you have in mind the entire time you work on the film. More than likely though you will have a demographic, an age range or certain types of people who you are hoping will hear about the film and watch it for what it is.

Hopefully you will reach a wider audience than you intend. With some luck and work on behalf of whoever is in charge of marketing your film, word will spread and you will start finding your way into film magazines. If you can get here then your film will be exposed to many more avid cinephiles.

With a humble offering you will be very lucky to get your film shown for any length of time in all but a few cinemas. Your hope is that the appeal of your film will grow over time. If your film becomes a hit with the right crowd after a while it may achieve a cult status and you will be happy to see it shown in arts cinemas all over the country in years to come.

Knowing your audience is particularly tricky, to know what they want to see harder still. All you can do really is try to imagine what it is about film that still captures the imagination. What was it for you that first gripped you about cinema? Was it the action and adventure? Was it the allure of other countries depicted on film? Was it the fantasy lands that you saw? Was it the awesome sound? Maybe it is the separate distinct memories of what you saw, where you saw it and who you saw it with, you just like the show on offer.

No doubt you have seen some films that didn't really do much for you. You may have even walked out of a few in boredom. Needless to say they are films that you now cannot remember

but interestingly enough if one of these is brought up in conversation or is shown on Tv your memory will probably be jogged and you will recall having seen it on the big screen.

Going to a cinema on your own may not seem to have much promise but if all your friends are busy, its a lousy day, and there is something you want to see playing at your local cinema then you may be tempted to spend a couple of hours relaxing on your own as the movie plays out in front of you.

You are the first audience of you film. You've seen it at every stage. In effect you have made something that hopefully you like and you feel is the kind of thing that you would of liked growing up. Lets face it, most people do most of their cinema gazing in their childhood to late teens. What do you know about these people now? Maybe more than you think.

Sure there are many mature elder people who go to the cinema regularly, what do you know about these people? It helps to have a large family that you get on well with and wide circle of friends. These people influence you more than you might imagine and their input into you creativity should be welcomed warmly.

You cannot work in a vacuum and why would you want to?

Once more your imagination as to the wants and needs of an audience is key. Trusting your feelings as to what they like is crucial also. Throw some light on the areas that your instincts tell you are pivotal in the current cinema release.

Do some research into the market place. Audience attendance and the takings for the latest films on show can be a guide to what is currently popular. You want your film to be popular but you also want it to be unique and original. Knowing what is in vogue is a good starting point in

achieving this. Where is the success, personal or financial, in a film that never sees the light of day?

## 56. Desire and Inspiration

Desire is controlled passion and inspiration comes from without as well as from within. To become a professional director requires that you are inspired and that you have the desire to see it through. You have to have passion tempered with reason to get anywhere.

Where your inspiration comes from is certainly personal as is your passion. Where you look for these is your own business but having a variety of sources can only enrich your films with greater range of emotion, innovative storytelling and a distinctive style.

Some say that everything is on your doorstep. Exploring that which you think you already know is a great way to gain insight into your local world.

Much film making is inspired by the films themselves and where better a place to look than that which has gone before you? Everything essential to a film has most likely be gathered from the experience of watching films. At its limit this does have its drawbacks, there is a danger that you will be simply recycling what has gone before, albeit with a different slant.

Small stories you are told or pieces of stories that you overhear provide fuel for inspiration. And not just stories. Look at paintings, books, sculptures, photographs, stories in newspapers, these all reflect what is going on in your time.

Popular mass culture is awash with anecdotes and scenarios that when transformed could all provide the embryonic beginnings of a new film. Mostly there is too much information and you have to become a master of filtering to get at what you are looking for.

Once again look closer to home. The people you know have all got life stories that they will be glad to tell you if you ask in the right way. You may think you know someone well but dig a little deeper, below the surface and you may be amazed at what you discover.

Having a passion means that, at any given time, you are able to become intensely absorbed in an activity for long periods with no sense of everything else that is going on around you. Although this is certainly needed every now and then you will likely burn out and become exhausted. Desire is the key stone to building a film as it is a steady flame that warms and lights.

Wants, needs, desires. Wanting to bring about a certain situation is not enough, we all know people who just want, want, want. They never get. Needing something is not enough either. The fact that there are a lot of people in need does not change the facts of whether they will get what they need.

To desire is to have a feeling, a feeling that reaches out to other people and shows the way things might be. It is inclusive of the imagination and is a way of being that has very real long term power. It is also romantic, there can be an object of desire.

We are governed by our feelings, senses and emotions as well as our powers of reasoning and logic. Not always but often we have the choice of which of these we allow into our private world and which we choose to have control over our lives. To choose wisely is to be aware that we do not have complete control over anything, let alone our own lives. To think that we might have total control over a film's production is an illusion. Believing illusions is the experience of cinema. Know that your life is not a film, or an illusion, or a dream. We are simply in the business of channelling inspiration with a desire to reach The End, and of course The Beginning...