

**FOLLOWING BELLOW IS THE SPEECH MR PHILIP HEARNshaw DELIVERED AT THE 9<sup>TH</sup> SFS FESTIVAL:**

I was at one of those industry conferences the other day when I heard two filmmakers talking.

One said "My film has a great hook, the inciting incident spinning the story before you're finished page two, then non-stop action reveals the risk, introduces the opponent, and the act one climax has the hero's plan set in stone.

But of course things go seriously wrong as the protagonist arcs into the 2<sup>nd</sup> act world, past the gatekeeper with such obsessive drive that even the mentor is left behind. The mid-point reversal collides the two story values, the gap opens and the hero spirals to a desperate surrender at the end of act 2.

The journey home is along the story spine towards his worst nightmare and a totally unexpected revelation before the climatic final conflict".

The other said "I wish I was as passionate as you".

I once suggested to a producer that I would like to be a producer one day, and she replied, "you'll need lots of passion", as if I didn't possess quite enough for her to give me a job. Or did she really mean jargon?

For graduates embarking on their film career, I thought I would demystify some film industry jargon, particularly the dozen aphorisms listed on what I've always known as "Film Making - Page One".

You know, when anything goes wrong on a film set, someone always says with some condescension, "it's really page one, isn't it?"

So here's the twelve rules on my page one.

**Rule 1: start the way you mean to continue (with respect, grace and courtesy)**

This means to understand how you want to conduct yourself, from the very first phone call to the very last thank you, and stick to it.

I was on one movie that had both a first time director and a first time cameraman. I gave myself the job description of "getting the guys over the line".

Imagine my horror when two weeks into the shoot, the producer called us three into her office on Friday night and told the cameraman he was fired. My rule one was in tatters.

I started telling everyone, including the completion guarantors, that we would be continuing with the team intact or not at all. We would also welcome the replacement cameraman, as we were short staffed anyway.

The interstate cameraman compared light meters, held traffic lollypops, dolled out the sun cream, carried the tripods and handed round afternoon tea on the run. After four days he excused himself and went home.

The team completed the film on time. That first time cameraman has now completed his third feature on location in India.

### **Rule 2: the K.I.S.S. principle (keep it simple, stupid)**

Be careful, this phrase is an oxymoron. It is incredibly difficult to see things simply, and requires great care and insight. For simplicity's sake I urge you to cultivate these things.

For example, I suggested to the producers of Anzacs, a project with three directors, to employ 3 first ADs instead of the planned 2. It was more expensive, but way more simple, and ultimately flexible, to have three teams of a director and their own 1<sup>st</sup> AD. The project successfully confronted unusual production difficulties, 2 shooting units sharing cast and sets, and everyone putting up with the Melbourne winter out there on Pleurisy Plains.

### **Rule 3: don't reinvent the wheel**

For me, this means that filmmaking is not a craft, not an art, not a business.

It is a trade. It is a process, a skill that can be learnt and practiced, and one of the best places to learn is an apprenticeship. Find the masters of the film trade and learn from them. It is not related to access to the tools. Everyone now has a word processor, a digicam, and a computer. Remember the Duomo in Florence was built with a trowel.

I have had the privilege of travelling with Kennedy Miller Mitchell, for a third of my career and I'm due to finish my apprenticeship sometime soon, maybe after Happy Feet 2.

### **Rule 4: the first thing one learns to say when joining the film industry**

For me this was "I'm sorry, I fucked up".

This understanding of the nature of things might be of use to you.

On my first film, Peter Weir's Last Wave, we had a dawn shoot on Bondi Beach, where Gulpilil paints the rock cave.

You know the rest of the story. I slept through the alarm. I went straight up to Peter at 8am, and said, "I'm sorry I fucked up".

It was the last time I ever slept in for a shoot, and Peter did take me onto Gallipoli.

#### **Rule 5: idea A plus idea B equals idea C**

You can only get to idea C if you have been open enough to listen to idea A and perhaps an opposing idea B.

Remember, the magic only comes with idea C.

I'm so used to doing this now, that it happens multiple times a day. It needs practice, patience and intuition. The magic of the universe ALWAYS makes this skill a worthwhile personal asset.

#### **Rule 6: shoot the wide shot first**

What this means is to understand the bigger picture, before figuring out the details. Understand your story's first principles, your story rules, before prosecuting the smaller unruly bits.

On La Spagnola, our story 'night' was shot at twitching hour (except for one long scene). This meant that each night wide shot achieved all of the following:

- the ability to see the whole exterior location without a big lighting setup
- the use of the twilight hours to shoot instead of wait for darkness,
- creation of a style that matched with the director's 'European' look
- constraint on the subsequent close ups lit to match the wide shot, that ensured no mucking around
- wrap by 8pm

#### **Rule 7: "the important thing is . . ."**

What this means is, in a performance, or in a location, or in a frame, or in a meeting, be able to list the elements in order of priority. Actually achieve the top one or two, making sure that they have not been undermined by numerous other competing but less important layers.

On Babe this meant that all effort was put to the main conceit. That animals talked. Everything followed after this, or was designed to support this, the single most important thing of the film.

#### **Rule 8: does it tell a story?**

This means you ask the question; does the shot you're working on contribute directly to the film story you're trying to tell? Will the audience understand what is being photographed?

If not maybe the performance or the shot or scene or sequence needs redesigning. The biggest trap for this rule is the script that tells in big print a story that can't be photographed. Or worse, a script that tells in dialogue a story but is dramatically static.

One film I worked on was taken over by the completion guarantors after our allocated schedule of nine shooting weeks was up. But we had about a quarter of the script to shoot. The problem was not the director or the crew, but the producer failing to realise that swadges of the big print was simply un-shootable, and we spent precious resources attempting to do it.

Imagine your film as a silent film, and only then write the big print to suit and write the least amount of dialogue necessary.

#### **Rule 9: don't cross the line**

This is definitely my favourite. More film production hours have been spent arguing this point than any other single issue, except getting the video to work properly, or shooting the CGI plates.

What this means is you have to know where the line IS, before you can cross it successfully, if required. Learn your film language thoroughly.

From the film *Buddies*, try this quick quiz:

Imagine a long caravan or trailer that has 2 doors on one side, each near an opposite end.

Colin Friels walks up to the foreground door, knocks and steps back. The anamorphic lens shoots the wide shot first (rule number 6), looking between the closed door left of frame and Colin waiting in medium close-up on the right of frame.

The far door in centre of frame, unexpectedly opens and Norman Kaye pokes his head out. A short conversation ensues.

le: Norman looks L to R, Colin looks R to L.

Everyone is ecstatic about the wide shot.

But now to shoot the two reverse close ups. Which side of the line do you shoot them, and what is the solution to the dilemma?

Answer:

If you do NOT cross the line and shoot Norman looking Left to RIGHT, and Colin's reverse looking Right to LEFT, it appears that each character is looking AWAY from the line of the caravan which in Norman's close up, is running out of frame LEFT, and in Colin's, running out of frame RIGHT. This is therefore illogical as we know from the wide

shot that each character is looking along the wall of the caravan, and in these close ups they look out the opposite side of frame.

If you CROSS the line to solve this issue, that is shoot Norman looking along the line of the caravan right to LEFT, and shoot Colin left to RIGHT looking along the line of the caravan, the close-ups are obviously on the wrong side of the line and therefore won't cut.

We ended up re-shooting the wide shot to be on the outside of the line, on the correct side to match the close-ups that followed the line of the caravan!

#### **Rule 10: don't polish the rivets on the Titanic**

What this means is to know when to stop working on a performance, a take, a piece of art direction. The essence is one of balance. Each tiny piece or decision of a film project is part of the whole. It really isn't just a string of decisions, as one producer told me. Understand what each part plays only in reference to the whole.

On La Spanola, the last shot of one night shoot, was a cramped close-up in the back seat of a car. The producer was anxious because we were right on overtime when the cameraman pointed to a small bug mic he had not noticed before but was definitely in frame of the last and only take. The producer wanted to wrap, accepting the shot for what it was.

I immediately called another take. The second take without the mic is in the film.

Just know which rivet to polish.

#### **Rule 11: what is the difference between a good crew person and a poor crew person?**

The answer is 2 minutes. The good one is 1 minute ahead, by anticipating; whether by a day, or an hour, or 5 seconds. No-one will know the time frame.

But the poor one is a minute behind, and everyone will notice.

I think the same probably applies to every department.

So in the end . . .

#### **Rule 12: choose to be part of the problem or part of the solution**

Even though you might be right about something, understand the difference between helping or hindering the broader communal objective of making the film.

On Happy Feet, a number of my colleagues had never before made a complete movie, and therefore had no knowledge of the 'page one of film-making'.

Subsequently I had to give up on all the above points, except number one and number twelve.

I wanted to be part of the solution.

We all contributed to Happy Feet's Oscar for best animation film.

For your careers, I wish you all the best of luck, and the best of breaks. Over thirty years ago, my break came courtesy of Tony Buckley and Ross Matthews. I can still gladly say thank you.

May your film begin!

Philip Hearnshaw