

THE FILM PRODUCTION WORKSHOP

TOM KANE

REEL-WORLD ADVICE YOU CAN USE

PREVIEW



DISCLAIMER

In all cases in this book, **you need to check for the current rates**, as they change often. The goal here is to expose you to all the categories, rules, etc., that come into play, NOT the current rates or numbers which will be different depending on when you read this. **YOU NEED TO CHECK!**

Though I wanted to be gender neutral, there is no easy path in English to consistently remain gender neutral. Using "they," for example, leads to style problems in a book that addresses so many specific tasks a Producer, an Assistant Director (AD) and a Unit Production Manager (UPM) takes on. In the end, the problem isn't just mine, but a problem of the language, the culture, and the movie industry. In this book, except for rare instances, I've had to resort to "he," which I hope the reader will view as gender neutral.

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Chapter 1

PREVIEW

**The
Unit Production Manager**

Chapter 1

The Unit Production Manager

CREATING A BUDGET

Let's begin with a discussion of the role of the Production Manager, which is commonly referred to as the UPM. This stands for Unit Production Manager, a term that's been around for a long time.

You might get a phone call asking,

“Would you like to do this movie?”

Actually it's more likely you'll get a call asking,

“V
Implicit in this is the need to create a budget and a

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TNT ORIGINALS CROSSFIRE TRAIL			
DIRECTOR: S. WINCER EXEC. PRODUCER: M. BRANDMAN PRODUCER: T. KANE, S. BRANDMAN UPM: G. GILROY SCRIPT DATED: August 25, 1999 Pink UNIONS: IA / WGA / DGA / DGC / TEAMSTERS / SAG / ACTRA START DATE: AUGUST 30, 1999 BUDGET DATED: AUGUST 27, 1999		LOCATION: CALGARY, ALBERTA, CANADA EXCHANGE RATE: US \$0.68 = CD \$1.00 HOLIDAY: 1 (SEPT. 6, 1999) TOTAL SHOOT DAYS: 27 (5.4 weeks) (2) Pre-Prod Shoot Days (Thurs, Fri. Aug 26, 27) POST PRODUCTION : 12 Weeks Based on Pink DOD& B/downs : Aug 24 BUDGET TITLE: CrossfireFINAL.mmb	
Acct#	Category Description	Page	Total
11-00	STORY, RIGHTS, CONTINUITY	1	\$322,927
12-00	PRODUCERS UNIT	1	\$727,206
13-00	DIRECTION	2	\$237,291
14-00	CAST	3	\$1,932,445
15-00	TRAVEL & LIVING	9	\$260,514
19-00	TOTAL A-T-L FRINGES		\$155,448
	TOTAL ABOVE-THE-LINE		\$3,635,831
Crossfire Trail Budget - Top Sheet			

You need to know how many shooting days there are, and to learn that you've got to board it, that is, create a production board.

You've got to create a board (schedule) in order to fit those 110 screenplay pages into a concise period of time.

Once you're hired, a budget should be pretty much all you care about initially. When I was a UPM, it was the only thing that frightened me. What frightened me was the thought,

“What have I forgotten to include?”

It's much easier now than in the days when I started.

[illegible]

There's a centralized, standardized software that we use, called **Movie Magic Budgeting**. This isn't a plug for that particular product, but it is the industry standard, and you should use industry

standards al Draft.

For budget

You might think that's the only thing you could do. But there's another way, put zero where it doesn't apply, and that's that. Of course, it's not that simple.

Once the project gets a **greenlight** from the studio (that is, the studio has approved your budget and you're read to go), then the

studio will set up a schedule of money transfers to the UPM through the Location Auditor. Your Auditor will know when you need money and will make sure it's been transferred into the motion picture bank account.

LOCKING THE BUDGET/CREATING A PAD LIST

Once your budget is locked, a lot of the fear goes away. You should *never* lock a budget until the day before shooting, if you have control over the lock date. The **studio** will try to get you to lock it earlier, because they don't want you to discover any additional expenses (for the purposes of this book, "studio" means whomever the financing entity is, whether it's Warner Brothers or a consortium of dentists).

Of course, you want to have a pad list (a list of expenses you anticipate) in case something goes wrong, or you forgot something, or there's something you couldn't possibly anticipate (acts of God).

Only a few people get to see the pad list — you (as the UPM), the producer, the accountant—never the studio. Once you lock a budget, you're not going to get any more money. At least, you certainly shouldn't anticipate that you're going to get any more money.

The more you work in this business, the

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MR. YES



*I worked with Sly Stallone on the cable car hijacking sequence for **Night Hawks**. He referred to the UPM on the film as "Dr. No". Better to be known as "Dr. Solution."*

You don't want to be called "Dr. No," you want to be called Mr. Yes. You want to come up with suggestions, alternatives, not just, "No you can't do it, you don't have the money."

Chapter 2

PREVIEW

The Assistant Director

Chapter 2

The Assistant Director

While the primary focus of the Unit Production Manager (UPM) is the **budget**, the Assistant Director's primary job when he hits the ground is to get the **schedule** done. Although the UPM has created a schedule to determine the number of shooting days, it contains little detail. The AD's job is to *include* all the detail, now that he has access to the Director.

From the moment that the AD begins to compile his version of the schedule, it becomes *his* domain and the UPM now follows the AD's lead.

SCHEDULE

The schedule of shooting. There are three stages to doing the schedule.

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1. Lining the Script
2. Breaking Down the Pages
3. Creating the Actual Shooting Schedule

The schedule takes two forms: a **physical shooting schedule** and a **production board**. We'll go through each of these steps shortly.

It might seem daunting to try to estimate how long a certain scene will take to shoot — there are no hard and fast rules to go by. Just be aware that it gets easier and easier — or, rather, you get better and better, the more experience you get.

Crossfire Trail				Page 1
ONLINE SCHEDULE				Wed, Apr 25, 2007
Shoot Day #1 -- Mon, Aug 30, 1999				
11	EXT	RODNEY RANCH Establish the abandoned homestead. ID:1, 5	DAY	7/8 pgs.
Scs. 38	EXT	RODNEY RANCH - MEADOW Rafe, JT & Joe are fence mending. ID:1, 4, 5, 13	DAY	2/8 pgs.
Scs. 39	EXT	RODNEY RANCH - CORRAL Joe Gill & JT split logs. ID:4, 5, 13	DAY	4/8 pgs.
Scs. 36	EXT	RODNEY RANCH - MEADOW/CORRAL Sunset the men bring the herd home. ID:1, 4, 5, 13	DAY	1/8 pgs.
Scs. 37	EXT	RODNEY RANCH - CORRAL DUSK. Rafe, JT and Joe brand a yearling. ID:1, 4, 5, 13	DAY	2/8 pgs.
Scs. 32	EXT	RODNEY RANCH Cattle graze near the homestead. ID:	NIGHT	1/8 pgs.
Scs. 33	INT	RODNEY CABIN JT burns their steaks, Rock returns. ID:1, 4, 5, 13	NIGHT	1 4/8 pgs.
End Day #1 -- Total Pages: 3 5/8				

Crossfire Trail				Page Count: 7/8 2/8 4/8 1/8 2/8 1/8 1 4/8										
Shoot Day: 1 1 1 1 1 1 1														
Director: Simon Wincer														
Producer: T. Kane														
Asst. Director: Bob Donaldson														
Script Dated: July 19th, 1999														
Character	No.	EXT - RODNEY RANCH - DAY	EXT - RODNEY RANCH - MEADOW - DAY	EXT - RODNEY RANCH - CORRAL - DAY	EXT - RODNEY RANCH - MEADOW/CORRAL - DAY	EXT - RODNEY RANCH - CORRAL - DAY	EXT - RODNEY RANCH - NIGHT	INT - RODNEY CABIN - NIGHT	End Of Day 1 8/30/1999 3 5/8 pgs.	EXT - RODNEY RANCH - CREEK - DAY	EXT - RODNEY RANCH - TRAIL/MEADOW - DAY	EXT - RODNEY RANCH - BLUFF - DAY	EXT - SIERRA NEVADA MOUNTAINS - DAY	EXT - RIVER & MOUNTAINS - DAY
Rafe Covington	1	1	1			1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1
Ann Rodney	2													
Charles Rodney	3													
"Rock" Mullany	4		4	4	4	4	4		4		4		4	4
JT Langston	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5		5	5		5	5
Captain Gorgan	6													
Gene Thompson	7													
Sing Hua	8													
Barnard	9													
Snake Conville	10													
Pep-wee	11													
Bruce Barlow	12													

Shooting Schedule

(see Appendix)

Production Board

(see Appendix)

Shooting Schedule
(see Appendix)

Production Board
(see Appendix)

It's also not that important to be precisely correct on every estimate, as long as the discrepancies even out over the course of a day. Sometimes in shooting, things go better, quicker, and more smoothly.

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But once you start shooting, it takes forever. I mean, it takes forever to take a scene, and that's why you have to be very complicated and they get done in eight hours.

It always helps to be lucky, and while you can't control luck, you can improve your odds, which is why you're reading this book. If you can manage to make the days that you're lucky be the days that you're shooting, you'll work more.

In the first pass at lining the script, you'll just do the best you can. You become the Director for that day.

So for instance you might envision a stampede and ask yourself, "How many cows are going to be in that stampede?" You're going to write it on the breakdown page, and then you're going to imagine,

with as much experience as you have, how long it will take to shoot.

And with each movie, you're going to get better and more accurate at visualizing and predicting what needs to go into a breakdown.

Both the **UPM** and the **1st AD** will **line the script**. The **UPM** does it, maybe eight weeks before shooting starts, to determine how many days will be needed and how that will affect the budget.

The **AD**, later, does Both of the directing

much experience as they have, they can imagine how long it will take to shoot each scene.

While lining a script as an **AD**, you should keep a separate list of questions for the Director to help clarify the time required for a shot if it's unclear.

A schedule is a living document. You will be constantly refining the schedule. There's a saying that no one has ever improved on the paper clip even though they keep trying. In the same way, no one has been able to improve on the production strip board in over one hundred years of filmmaking.

GOOD LUCK VS. BETTER LUCK



The shot in *Prizzi's Honor* at the Palermo Gardens party —

explosion has to be smoke shooting into an

high and positive that everyone in the cast, stunts, and crew had their stuff together, anticipating it's going to be really difficult.

With this sense of urgency, we actually got the stunt / shot in only 2 takes.

PREVIEW

THE FILM PRODUCTION WORKSHOP

Visit <http://filmproductionworkshops.com> for more resources.

Explore the roles of the Producer, Production Manager (UPM) and Assistant Director (AD). Examine the procedures, attitudes, techniques and paperwork needed to plan and run a large or small film production.

Learn to scout locations, break down a feature film script, create a production board, shooting schedule, day-out-of-days, and film budget.

This eBook is written by Tom Kane, a highly successful film producer, who has 30 years experience in the "business" and over 40 Feature and Television Films and TV Series to his credit.

The material covered is applicable to high and low budget features and both corporate and video projects.

Useful handouts, reference lists and samples of film production forms are included. The course includes a copy of John Huston's screenplay, *"Prizzi's Honor,"* (Jack Nicholson) and Louis L'Amour's *"Crossfire Trail"* (Tom Selleck), the bases of the workshop.

"Tom Kane taught me everything I know, but not everything he knows."

- Jon Kilik, Producer -

"THE HUNGER GAMES" (all 4), "FOXCATCHER",
"PLEASANTVILLE", "DO THE RIGHT THING"