MAKING MOVIES

Teaching Resource

A comprehensive guide to the film production process and the people who make movies.

This resource features in-depth information on the stages and roles in the film production process. It is accompanied by video interviews with a variety of screen professionals.

Using this resource, students will:

• Understand the stages of a film production
• Gain detailed insights into some of the roles in the production process
• Explore key issues affecting the film industry
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Curriculum Connections

Creative Content Australia Making Movies is a collection of resources that help teachers address aspects of the Media curriculum across Australia. It has a focus on the media production process, media roles, media institutions and issues that affect media professionals. In the Making Movies section, there is also advice to help students make their own films.

The resource includes lesson plans, learning activities and suggested assessment tasks which address a range of curriculum needs.

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Production Stages

In this chapter students will learn about the stages in the film production process:

- Development: From an idea to a script, to the raising of finance for a film
- Pre-Production: The intricate planning and preparation for production
- Production/Principal Photography: The complex collaborative process of shooting
- Post-Production: The layers of activity to finesse and finish a film
- Distribution & Exhibition: Getting a film to an audience and getting audiences to films
We've all seen the long list of names at the end of a movie or a TV show – these are the dozens or sometimes hundreds of people who have contributed to the making of that film and the “credit list” is an acknowledgement of their contribution.

Content has become quite abundant and it’s easy to forget how complex it is to conceive, develop, finance and produce a film or TV show. The media image of the industry - a seemingly constant flow of exciting award ceremonies, premieres and events attended by glamorous, wealthy actors - often overshadows the reality of the uncertainty of the profession, the scarce freelance nature of employment and the many years of hard work required to make every film and TV program.

This resource provides an understanding of the multifaceted process of making film: explaining each stage - from an idea to a cinema release - and exploring a few of the hundreds of jobs involved in the process.

Making a film or TV program can roughly be divided into six stages:

- development
- pre-production
- production (sometimes called principal photography)
- post-production
- distribution
- exhibition

Writer, director and actress Matilda Brown talks about the stages of film production. Click here to access a short video interview.
This stage in the filmmaking process will take, on average, three to four years. In some cases, it has taken a lot longer. It took ten years for director Scott Hicks to turn an idea he read in a newspaper article into the Academy Award®-winning film *Shine*.

Movies originate from many sources. Some start with an original idea by a writer who spends years, often unpaid, getting a script to the stage where a producer agrees to come on board to move the project forward. *The Rocket* originated this way when writer-director Kim Mordaunt developed the script with producer Sylvia Wilczynski.


As the script progresses, a development team starts to form. This usually consists of the writer, a director, and one or more producers. They will need to have a strong belief in their idea because they have to make dozens of other people believe in it to finance and produce the movie. Those investors in turn will need to believe that the film can attract audiences in their tens and hundreds of thousands and more.

“Not one person in the entire motion picture field knows for a certainty what’s going to work,” wrote screenwriter William Goldman in *Adventures of the Screen Trade*. “Every time out it’s a guess and, if you’re lucky, an educated one.” This is one of the key issues in the film industry – even though a great deal of money needs to be spent to make a film, there are many variables that will affect its success – from the script, the cast and the director to the music, the chemistry between actors and many other factors. It is difficult to predict how a film will turn out, making film production a high-risk industry.

**Getting the rights**

Every published, performed or created work is covered by copyright that belongs to the original creator or the owner of the work – books, newspaper articles, comic strips, plays, musicals, songs, theme park rides. The producer must acquire the rights to produce the movie by paying a fee to the original creator.
Chain of title is the series of links that establishes the legal right of the producer to make the movie, and to distribute it. Here’s what happened with the film *Rabbit Proof Fence*:

- Christine Olsen, a scriptwriter, reads Doris Pilkington Garimara’s book about her mother’s childhood experiences and contacts the publishers, UQP, to apply for the film rights. She is advised that all interested parties must submit 3-4 pages on how they see the film as part of their application.

- Christine wants to meet Doris but because of Doris’s busy schedule the only way they can meet is if Christine drives her to the airport. Doris supports Christine’s application to write a screenplay based on her book. Christine signs an agreement with the publishers to write the screenplay, taking out an “option” to make a film from the book.

- Having written the screenplay, Christine rings Director Phillip Noyce in the middle of the night in LA, which makes him direct his office to have nothing to do with her! His office reads the script and likes it, but it takes them months to convince Phillip to read it.

- Phillip and Christine **co-produce** the film. Executive Producers are brought in to raise the finance for the movie based on Christine’s script.

- The strength of the original story and Phillip Noyce’s strong track record enables the **executive producers** to raise the finance and Phillip and Christine co-produce the movie, with Phillip directing.

- Throughout the process, Doris and Christine hold onto their **copyright** - Doris for the book and Christine for the original script - which allows them to receive some payment for their work when the film is made.

Time is of the essence. The initial agreement – and option fee – will usually allow the producer three years to raise finance for the movie. This puts pressure on the producer to exercise the movie rights within the time frame, or face additional fees to renew the agreement or lose the option – making all their work in those three years worthless. Scripts generally need to be reasonably advanced before investors will get involved.

With options signed, the producer prepares a campaign to put the movie together, working simultaneously on a number of fronts.

The script is the blueprint of the story, based on the original work or idea, and is usually between 90 – 120 pages long. It describes every scene in the film. Eight or ten drafts of the script will be written as development proceeds. A single draft can take weeks or months; it’s incredibly difficult to get a script right – finding the right tone, pace, character motivation and development, story arc and dialogue as well as creating tension, humour or mood. This is a costly process that involves high levels of skill and lots of time.

Writing teams for US studio films tend to be bigger than those for Australian films. A US script might have contributions from many writers who have particular skills, such as someone skilled in action scenes or another who writes great dialogue. Experts in the film’s subject matter may also be involved, such as a doctor for any medical information or an historian for period dramas.

**The creative team**

At this stage, the producer will start to find the key creative team such as:

- A director suited to the subject of the film, and with a good track record and reputation.
- A distributor who is in tune with the movie, and has successfully handled the release of similar movies throughout Australia.
- Actors who suit the roles and whose previous films have attracted audiences and good box office revenue.
If elements like music, design or cinematography are integral to the success of this particular film, the producer may also try to secure the right people for these roles as they could assist in making the film attractive to potential investors.

The sales document or prospectus is designed to attract investors who will pay for the film to be made. It contains an outline of the project and explains why it will be a successful movie. It will list the key creative crew and possible cast attached to the project and each individual’s filmography.

This document will include a detailed financial plan showing how much the film will cost and where the money will come from.

A medium-budget Australian movie, considered to be in the $6 million to $10 million range, usually involves a number of investors, such as:

• An Australian distributor who will guarantee the movie a release in cinemas.
• An overseas sales agent who will sell the movie worldwide to overseas distributors.
• Federal and state government screen funding agencies.
• A TV or cable network that will screen the movie after its cinema and DVD release.
• Private investors who may agree to support the film for a range of reasons but always in the hope of good returns.

Once the script is finalised, a first assistant director is employed to prepare a preliminary shooting schedule. This document “breaks down” all the scenes in the script and re-arranges them into what will be shot on each separate shooting day. Films are never shot in script order - the schedule will try to maximise the use of locations and cast so that the crew doesn’t have to spend more time than necessary packing up, moving locations and setting up.

The schedule notes all the elements that will be needed for each day, such as sets, locations, cast, extras, picture vehicles, animals and special equipment.

The producer then employs an experienced production manager for several weeks, to prepare a preliminary budget based on the script and schedule. The budget identifies in great detail all the costs of the film. This shows the investors that the script can be produced for the amount of money the producer is intending to raise.

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**CREATING A BUDGET...**

Every element of the script has to be budgeted. Here’s an example.

Mrs Poulos alights from a bus, which drives off. Her neighbour, young Liv, also gets off at the same stop, and sees that Mrs Poulos is having trouble carrying her shopping. She’s broken her ankle skiing, she’s wearing a moon boot, and she’s using a walking stick. Liv is going to help her.

For this screenplay, the budget would reflect fees for cast and crew, and also, for that day, the cost of:

• bus and driver hire
• a traffic plan to ensure the cast and crew are safe, as well as normal traffic on the street
• local council fees for processing permission to film
• traffic controllers and equipment
• hire of the moon boot and walking stick
• hire or purchase of costumes and props
• parking for the trucks and for crew cars
• catering and portable toilets
• caravans so the actors can change into their costumes and be made up.
Lots of expenses, little income...

At this point, a great deal of time and money has been spent:

- to acquire the rights to make the original work into a movie, plus the cost of lawyers to secure these rights,
- to pay the writers for each script draft,
- to pay the first assistant director and the production manager,
- to create the materials to promote and market the film to investors, key creatives and potential actors, including documents and perhaps a teaser trailer
- to run a production office.

Research from 2007 into six Australian feature films showed their average cost of development was $258,002.

During this long development period the producer is often unpaid, and the movie’s development may be interrupted when he/she has to accept other work to pay for normal daily expenses, as well as the cost of keeping the development process on track.

The producer may have to attend a number of international film markets, such as Cannes, to secure investment from international partners. Travel may also be required to persuade the international agents for well-known actors that their clients will benefit from appearing in the movie, at a price the producer can afford.

Finally, months or maybe years later, all is agreed, all is in place, and the many parties involved can sign the PIA (Production Investment Agreement) - a huge pile of contracts including:

- agreements that confirm the chain of title for the rights and the script
- agreement that confirms the involvement of director and contracts with lead cast
- contracts that confirm which financing body will provide how much money and on which dates, and – very importantly – how the profits from the movie will be shared among the producer and the investors once it has been released.

When all the signatures are on the page, it’s time to start pre-production.
Pre-Production

Once a film has been financed, pre-production starts. Planning the shoot is a process which involves a number of departments working collaboratively.

As the funding for a film is secured, the producer starts to work with the heads of department, such as the cinematographer, who leads the camera department and the designer, who heads up the art department, to finalise who will be involved in their teams.

Early in pre-production a casting agent is also employed to start finding actors for the supporting roles. While this is happening, the writers and directors polish the final draft of the screenplay. The production manager finds office space and equips it with furniture, phones and internet. The first assistant director refines the shooting schedule to work around the availability of the lead actors and locations. Meanwhile the location manager is scouting for locations and confirming their availability.

Many of these people work with each other to weigh up the look of a location against its cost within the budget. The perfect location may be in a distant location, but moving an entire film crew is very expensive. Valuable shooting time is lost during the move to another place because the crew and cast are paid for the time it takes to travel elsewhere. Other costs include accommodation and travel allowances.

The start

Filmmaking is primarily a freelance industry where individuals are employed for the length of the project only, sometimes only a matter of months. Many crew members will have had a gap of weeks or even months between productions. Sometimes they work on commercials or TV shows, but sometimes they need to take other jobs - in cafes, driving cabs or doing office work.

The length of pre-production is related to the complexity and budget of the film. In general, pre-production is given the same time as the shoot. A medium-budget Australian film will shoot for about ten weeks, so that will be the time allocated to pre-production.

Pre-production usually begins with a production meeting, during which the director takes the team through the script scene by scene to communicate his or her intentions in great detail, and to answer the crew’s questions.

Briefings with the production manager then take place for all heads of department, so each department knows how much money they can spend in their specific area – props, costumes, locations, camera equipment.
Auditioning and casting will occupy most of the director and producer’s time for the next few weeks, now that the departments are working on their script breakdowns and costings. They have briefed a casting director who has put out a call to local actors’ agents about the roles available. The casting director has made a list of recommended actors whose showreels will be viewed online.

A pre-production schedule is prepared by the production manager and the first assistant director, to cover the next ten weeks. It reflects what everybody needs to do, and when. As the director’s input is required in so many departments, the schedule must reflect all meetings necessary for decisions and progress to be made. It is issued on paper to everybody, and reproduced on a big whiteboard in the production office for general reference as well. Being a schedule, it will change, and all changes have to be communicated promptly to everyone involved.

Here’s an overview of what some key departments will do in these weeks:

**Production department**
- Keeps up the flow of communication to all members of the team: contact lists, schedules, script amendments, meetings, location surveys
- Identifies and negotiates fees and issues contracts for all crew and cast members
- Books flights and accommodation, equipment, vehicles, equipment trucks and cast caravans
- Sets up workplace safety systems and arranges the production’s insurances
- Tracks expenditure and projected expenditure

**Locations**
- Find and confirm the locations with the production designer and director
- Arrange permission for any work to be done, for example painting a room
- Arrange council, police and traffic permissions for exterior locations

“The heads of departments start to engage their own teams to work on the project according to their suitability and availability.”

The heads of departments start to engage their own teams to work on the project according to their suitability and availability.
Assistant directors and continuity
- Refine the shooting schedule as locations and cast availability are confirmed
- Continuity person times the script to be sure it’s not too long or too short
- Arrange and supervise cast for costume fittings and makeup meetings
- Supervise any cast training required, for example horse riding, sports, music tuition

Director of Photography
- Breaks down the script to establish camera and lighting requirements
- Works with the director, art director, costume designer and production designer to determine the visual style of the movie
- Accompanies the director on location surveys in order to plan the best shots for the shoot
- Selects and confirms camera equipment
- Carries out technical and creative camera tests

Production designer and art department
- Meet with the director and other key crew to set the visual style of the movie
- Break down the script to identify sets, set dressing, props, vehicles, animals, etc
- Design sets and any building work required at locations
- Liaise with stunts, special effects and visual effects teams
- Research, cost and buy or hire set dressing and props; make any special props required
- Identify any copyright clearances that need to be obtained – signs, brands, photographs

Special effects, stunts & visual effects
- Break down the script to identify stunts, special effects and visual effects requirements
- Meet with director and first assistant director to establish the safest and most cost-effective ways to achieve results
- Cast and brief stunt doubles, arrange stunt equipment, possibly modify vehicles
- Liaise with safety supervisor on all aspects of stunt and SFX work

Actors
- Research the role
- Consult with the director
- Learn lines
- Rehearse
- Learn new skills if required such as horse riding or playing the piano
- Costume fittings and makeup and camera tests

The final weeks
As the shoot approaches, pre-production becomes more hectic. More crew have been employed as the pace speeds up, and by the last week prior to the shoot all cast and crew members are involved in the preparation. Rehearsals are taking place. Final costume fittings are done. The camera team assembles and shoots tests – the cast in costume and makeup, technical lens tests, visual effects backgrounds.

In the final week, the director and key crew visit every shoot location for a technical survey, to be sure all the requirements are in place. The first assistant director issues the final schedule. Production arranges the final production meeting and safety briefing. The call sheet - an organisational document which lists who is required on set when - is issued and distributed for the first day of shooting.

CASE STUDY: THE HOBBIT
During the production of The Hobbit, director Peter Jackson maintained a video diary which detailed the immense effort that the production team went through during the shoot. The first video, The Hobbit: Production Diary 1, looks at what the production team was doing in the days leading up to principal photography, as Peter Jackson takes you on a tour of the costume department, sets and does walk-throughs of the set with members of the cast.
To provide a more practical insight into a film shoot, we’ve created an imaginary scenario that is based on some assumptions:

- The shoot will be ten weeks long
- Shooting will occur five days each week
- All the locations are in the metropolitan area so no “travel time” is required
- Two of these weeks will be night shoots with the crew working between 5pm and 5am

Day 1 involves shooting a birthday party for one of the characters, Liv. This is not the first scene in the script, films are seldom shot in script order. The schedule is based on a number of other factors including availability of locations and actors. This scene will be shot during school holidays so that the child actors and extras will be more easily available. Shortly before the shoot there has been a script change – as a surprise, Liv’s brother Ben is going to bring along his horses and give the guests rides.

The call sheet has been prepared by the second assistant director, approved by the first assistant director and the production manager and distributed to all crew and cast. It gives maps and directions for getting to the location, and details about the shoot day.

Before the day, specific preparations have been made for this shoot:

- The art department has prepared the set, including a marquee for the party, a fenced area for the horses, and has hired a food stylist to prepare the food.
- Production has approved the horses and wranglers recommended by the art department. They have held a meeting with key crew, wranglers, stunt coordinator, stunt double and safety supervisor.
- The location manager has ensured the house owners are happy with all the arrangements, and has prepared a traffic plan for local council and police, as some of the action will take place on the street outside the house and traffic will be interrupted.
- Production has organised refresher riding lessons for the actor playing Ben, and ensured that an experienced rider is cast as his friend.
- The unit department has set up areas out of sight of the set, in an adjacent paddock, where the equipment trucks can park, and where the horses can be held when not required on set. This is also where the cast vans, the makeup and wardrobe caravans and the catering truck will park, and where cast and crew will be served breakfast and lunch.
Film crews are fed on location in order to save time. Given the enormous number of people, animals, vehicles and equipment on set, every minute of every day costs money and, if people were allowed to wander off set to get lunch, precious time might be lost getting them back. Not all locations are near to available food and it is more time and cost effective to feed everyone on the set.

Here’s a breakdown of what a shooting day might look like:

0600. A white truck lumbers into the paddock. The unit manager steps out, goes to the back of the truck and fires up the generator he’s been towing. The generator will power the catering truck and the makeup, wardrobe and cast caravans. In a few minutes other members of the Unit team will arrive with those vans, and the caterers will arrive to start cooking breakfast.

0630. The makeup and hairdressers arrive next, grateful for a coffee from the urn that had been switched on as soon as the unit generator was running. They set out their equipment, ready for the earliest cast members who have been picked up from home by the assistant directors. The wardrobe department arrive and prepare the costumes for the day’s shoot.

0645. From about half an hour before call time, the whole team assembles. The essential vehicles arrive: trucks containing equipment for the lighting and grips, a silenced, truck-mounted generator to power the lamps, trucks carrying the camera equipment, the sound gear, the art department equipment including furniture and props. The unit team guide the trucks to pre-determined parking as close as possible to the shooting location, to minimise cable runs and to maximise work time.

0700. The director arrives and the cast go to set for a quick, quiet final rehearsal of the scenes for the day.

0715. As other crew members arrive, everyone converges around the catering tables for breakfast. Last minute information and instructions are exchanged.

0730. “Thank you, ladies and gentlemen,” calls the first assistant director, “we’re ready for a block-through!” The director, cast and crew make their way to the set. During the block-through, the actors again walk through the scene as the director indicates the camera positions. The director of photography talks through the lighting and the camera moves with the gaffer and grip. Cast and crew check their positions so that no action will be obstructed by equipment and camera moves can be carried out smoothly. When the block-through is finished, the cast return to makeup and wardrobe, or rest in their caravans until the director is ready for them on set.
The first assistant director consults with the director, gaffer, grip and sound recordist to confirm the most efficient shooting order for the individual shots. They would usually shoot a master shot of each scene first, so that the action is locked, and then shoot closer shots from different angles. Each time the camera position moves, the lighting and other equipment is readjusted to maximise the impact of the shot and ensure continuity.

The first set-up is confirmed, the lighting team move in, and the grips team lay tracks for a dolly shot. We are ready for the cast. A technical rehearsal takes place to check the action in relation to the camera moves and the lighting, and the cast do a “stumble-through”. The Focus Puller measures the distance from the lens to the actor’s face for each part of the shot to ensure the actor is always in focus.

0800. The crew is ready to shoot, capturing shots of the arriving party-goers first; one or two takes for each is all that’s required. The first dolly shot begins, thoroughly rehearsed for action, performance and camera moves. The rehearsal pays off, the long and complex shot is achieved in one take. The director is happy with action, performance, camera movement, lighting and sound. The morning moves quickly. Under the direction of the first assistant director, shooting continues throughout the morning as the crew painstakingly record all the shots required for the party.

1130. The first part of the party, the “Party Table” sequence, has been shot and most of the extras are released to go home. The cast and crew will now work on the horse scenes, and with fewer kids around it will be safer and more efficient. The team spend an hour setting up the next scene – one of the horses is scripted to gallop off with its young rider.

1230. Lunch is always a highlight of the day. Fifty people served a three-course meal from a full kitchen mounted on the back of a truck. Over lunch, the director and first assistant director discuss the call sheet for the next day, consulting with the producer and production manager who come to set for lunch, their best opportunity to talk about any problems that require attention. By the end of lunch the new call sheet is emailed to the production coordinator in the office, who will publish the call sheet and book the cast, crew and equipment for the following day. They will also need to get everything prepared and ready for “rain cover” – planning a completely different day of work if the weather means that they are unable to shoot exteriors.

1315. Straight after lunch, the director, cinematographer and gaffer go to the second set of the day, the horse paddock, and set the equipment for the afternoon’s scenes. Shooting resumes.

Off set, the crew is focused on different aspects of the shoot. The location manager visits the next day’s location to check that the owners are ready for the shoot. The production department is taking care of administration: costing emerging plans, booking security and additional equipment, arranging travel for interstate actors and many other issues.

They will also have regular meetings with the production accountant where cost of resources is assessed, and any necessary adjustments are made to the production plan. The budget is finite so any “overages” will need to be offset with savings.

Investors are kept informed on a daily basis about the progress of the shoot. Is the film on schedule? Is the film on budget? How does it look? Is it living up to expectations?

1600. By the end of the afternoon, the horse scene is completed. Cast are wrapped, they change out of their wardrobe, take off their makeup and sign off. It’s been a good day. Twenty-five set-ups have been achieved by the time wrap is called. However, that doesn’t mean work is over for many of the crew. The data wrangler carefully labels the day’s hard drives, and the runner takes them to the facility where post-production will take place. The equipment is returned to the trucks where it is cleaned and put away carefully. The second assistant director retrieves the walkie-talkies to recharge the batteries overnight and ensures that the next day’s call sheet is handed out to all cast and crew. The art department pack up all the furniture and props brought to the location. The producer, director, cinematographer and editor will sit down and look through everything they have filmed that day and assess whether it works technically as well as creatively. Technical aspects under consideration include camera focus, framing and lighting. The creative aspects they consider might include the chemistry between actors or how emotional moments work.

1700. The unit manager takes a last look around the location, starts up his truck and rolls out into the gathering night. Day 1 is completed. Only another forty-nine to go!

“Offset, the production department is taking care of admin: costing emerging plans, booking additional equipment, planning for rainy weather, arranging travel and many other issues.”
The last day of shooting is generally the last day of work for most of the crew. Some may have a few additional days to return rented or borrowed equipment, furniture, props or costumes; to dismantle sets and clean out locations or sound stages or to finalise paperwork. From this point, the administrative, financial and practical elements of post-production are handled by different people. The producer and director, however, continue to manage the creative and commercial aspects of the film until it is delivered to the distributor.

The creative and technical team must be clear at the start of production about the film that they are making:

- Creatively: the genre, the style, the intended audience, the expected classification rating, and
- Technically: live action, visual effects or animation, high or low-budget, running time, cinema or video release

During pre-production, all these elements are made clear to all members of the team. Creatively, the film is in the hands of the director and producer and the goal needs to be communicated to cast and crew alike. The technical meetings in pre-production will set standards and communications pathways as the digital information is passed down the line from image acquisition to edit to sound mix, music and finally to the DCP (Digital Cinema Package) ready for cinema release.

The age of celluloid film running through the camera on sprockets is over. Almost all movies are now shot and post-produced digitally. Images are encoded as digital files by the cameras. On set, a data wrangler takes the content from storage media and transfers it digitally to the editors. He or she also checks that the files are correctly saved and labelled. These hard drives are the equivalent of the film negative in earlier days, and it’s equally disastrous if they are lost, damaged, re-formatted or over-written.

At the post-production house, the data on the drives is transferred to the servers that will hold all the images and sound from each shooting day. These servers also contain any other data, such as sound or music, which is generated during post-production.

**Editing**

The editor has been working throughout the shoot, reviewing each day’s footage as it comes through, and giving feedback to the director. The feedback is mainly on creative issues, confirming that they have the shots that tell the story, but may also be about technical issues that need to be addressed, such as soft focus or a microphone boom in shot.
The footage for the day is assembled in the order it was shot, with the synchronised sound, into the “rushes” or “dailies”. The rushes are then downloaded to DVDs and sent to the producer, director and heads of department, or they are put online on a protected site where they can be viewed by these same people, and others who have been authorised, for example the director of photography and the production designer.

The process above continues throughout the shoot until the editor has an assembly or rough cut of the film in script order. At the end of the shoot, the director usually takes a break of about a week for a well-deserved rest, and to clear his or her head before post-production begins. The director will be involved during the months of post-production work, and the producer will be involved beyond that.

It’s worth noting that producers and directors are usually paid a fee for the entire period of work – regardless of the length of time and even if the time is extended. On low-budget Australian films, it’s common for the film to run out of money and, to get it completed, these people often put their fees back into the budget. Why? They are hoping that, by adding value to the production budget, the film will be better, get a good cinema release and make more money – which will either flow back to the key creatives or will result in them getting their next film financed.

The rough cut is done by the editor in collaboration with the director. They select the very best version of each shot, choose the way it intercuts with shots around it, and vary the duration of each shot to make each scene as powerful as possible. They may re-locate scenes from script order, even substantially restructure the movie.

As part of this process they may decide to do additional shots, called “pick ups”, or record additional dialogue. All the changes strengthen the meaning and impact of the film. The producer has an initial viewing of the rough cut two or three weeks before its scheduled completion, and usually becomes more closely involved in refining the work until the fine cut is produced.

The fine cut is then shown to the distributor and investors. Further tweaks are often made before the film is finally approved. To an inexperienced eye this version of the movie still looks very rough – there are no sound effects, some temporary music, no graceful fades or dissolves, and the colour may look uneven. This is, however, the final form of the picture edit, and other post-production processes can now begin.

**Visual effects, titles and colour grading**

Visual effects are increasingly used in movies produced today. Digital image acquisition gives filmmakers a powerful new tool, with the images manipulated in specialist facilities by highly creative personnel. With these tools, the visual effects team can:

- create period backgrounds
- replicate stunts – actors leap, fly, crash through walls
- place action in remote locations
- fill a sky with helicopters
- put thousands of extras into a scene
- create imaginary characters and environments
- animate objects
- make a tear run down the cheek of an actor who couldn’t cry on the shoot!
Many movies are scripted to contain extensive visual effects. During pre-production of these movies, there will be substantial consultation between the visual effects team and the shoot crew. Computer pre-visualisation is usually created before filming starts to ensure that every element that is shot fits the visual effects requirements. The colours of sets, vehicles, animals, costumes and makeup, for example, have to be chosen to stand clear of bluescreen and greenscreen backgrounds. Lighting and camera moves will be carefully planned to allow for the visual effects post-production.

Check out this example from *The Great Gatsby*.

Hundreds of specialists are involved in the creation of visual effects, each with their own particular expertise and using sophisticated computer technology. That’s why visual effects-driven films, like *Avatar*, *The Hobbit* and *300* can be very expensive to produce (and have a very long list of credits at the end of the film).

As post-production continues, the visual effects shots are sent through to the edit team and incorporated into the cut of the image so that the sound and music teams can tailor their contribution.

Titles and credits are prepared by the post-production house and sent through to sound and music in the same way.

Colour grading is the process of matching different shots taken on the same location in a single scene and requires skilled personnel and powerful computers with specialist software. It takes place once the visual effects are all inserted into the cut of the movie, for some of the following reasons:

- establish a desired look and mood of shots
- compensate for variations in light on actual shooting days, especially when a sequence is shot over a few days
- match live footage with visual effects footage

**Sound**

After the image is locked, or while it is being refined, work has started on the soundtrack of the film.

Additional dialogue recording, called ADR or post-sync, takes place to either replace dialogue that isn’t clear enough in the location recording or to add off-screen dialogue that will make the story or the mood of the film more powerful. It’s a skill that actors are trained to acquire. In a small recording suite, the image is projected with every frame numbered and shown on the screen. The actor has the new or replacement dialogue, and records the words in sync with the projected image. The new dialogue is cut into the existing tracks by the dialogue editor.

**IN FOCUS:** Read about how the sound designers on *Godzilla* created a language for the film’s creature.

The dialogue editor works for many weeks to cut the recorded dialogue to fit the images in the fine cut. He or she may replace lines from one take with lines from another better take if it improves the clarity of the sound, and cuts in the recorded ADR. Extraneous sounds, such as aeroplanes and passing cars, will be removed from the soundtrack if they are clear of the dialogue.

The sound effects editor enhances the soundtrack with:

- Atmosphere. There is no such thing as a silent location. Every room, every location, has its own particular sound which is laid down in a bed below all the other sound that we hear in a specific set or location.
- Foley effects. The original sounds captured during shooting are often muffled by noise or are unconvincing. Fist fights, for example, are usually staged by stunt actors and therefore do not have the sound of punches landing. Crashes and explosions are often added or enhanced during post-production. These sounds are recorded in a small studio using an unlikely set of objects – for example, a watermelon being split open is a valuable sound in a violent fight scene!
- Sound effects libraries are held by all sound post-production houses, and are used widely to add layers of meaning to scenes.
- Additional location recording may be required to capture specific sounds.
The sound mix will combine all these sources, and the music into the soundtrack. A highly skilled sound crew operates a mixing desk with many digital tracks to combine these elements into a convincing soundtrack. The equipment and software is very similar to that used in music recording studios, but here the projected image is driving the mix, not the artist or band’s performance.

**Music**

Music for a film can come from a range of different sources. In some cases, the music might already exist. Musicals and films that feature soundtracks of existing songs are a good example. In some cases, if singing or dancing is involved, the music will be recorded during pre-production. Although some music might appear to be recorded on location, performers are often performing to a pre-recorded track.

It is more usual to record a movie score in post-production.

Music for films is often recorded by musicians - everything ranging from a lone whistler to a full symphony orchestra - or by composers using a combination of digital instruments and live recordings. If live musicians are used in post-production recording, they will sometimes perform with the movie projected into the recording studio, similar to the process for ADR.

In all of these cases, copyright is an important consideration. There are two types of music copyright: the rights to the composition and the rights to the performance. A music supervisor is an essential crew member on films today. He or she suggests appropriate music to the director, and once selections have been made, researches the ownership of the music, lyrics and if necessary the performer, and negotiates the licences and payment required to use the music in the film. The music supervisor also arranges the studio and payment to the musicians if the music is recorded live.

**IN FOCUS:** The [Where To Watch](#) website has a range of great interviews with composers who have written music for films like *Captain America 2: The Winter Soldier*, *X-Men: Apocalypse* and *Spotlight*.

When the image is finally assembled in digital form, with the visual effects, colour grade, titles and credits included, the final mix is added. The material is ready for the final stage, the creation of the Digital Cinema Package (DCP).

The DCP is a collection of digital files used to store and convey digital cinema image, sound and data streams. The files contain streams that are compressed, encoded, and encrypted, in order to reduce the huge amount of required storage and to protect from unauthorized use.

The package is held securely as a master, and from it, copies are created and sent to the various people who require them, including:

- The producer who will make copies for investors and the National Film and Sound Archive who keep a copy of all Australian films.
- The distributor who encodes the drives with protection data and sends them out to exhibitors. The distributor also provides copies, as required, to television stations, airlines and any other customers to whom the movie has been sold.
- The international sales agent, who will make copies for sale under the terms of agreement with the producer and investors.
Distribution is the process of getting a finished film in front of an audience. The distributor negotiates with exhibitors to screen the film in cinemas and handles the marketing and advertising of the film to ensure that as many people as possible know about the film and go to see it. Generally, distributors are attached to the film at script stage where, based on the quality of the idea and the team that intends to produce the film, they will commit to ensuring that the film will get a cinema release.

Filmmakers unable to find a distributor at production stage may still be able to raise the finance to make the film and, on completion, will then seek to find a distributor who will be willing to put up the money to promote and market the film to the public and negotiate with cinemas to screen it.

Most films are created to screen primarily in cinemas. This is called theatrical distribution. Films can also be distributed via the internet, television, home, on physical media such as DVD and Blu-ray or a number of non-theatrical forms such as in-flight movies, schools, film societies or special interest groups.

For most filmmakers, screening their films theatrically is their ultimate goal: where they have an audience enjoying the experience as it was designed to be seen - in a dark space, on a big screen - concentrating only on their film and on the highest possible technical equipment available. And even better, the audience has paid to see the film.

Thousands of films are made around the world every year, but less than 5% make it into cinemas.

Once all aspects of the post-production process have been completed, the finished film is delivered to the distributor, who handles sales and marketing of the film, working closely with exhibitors to maximise box office revenue.

In Australia, the distributors aligned with the Hollywood studios are called ‘the majors’ and mainly distribute the big Hollywood studio films. Although they are often best known for their big budget blockbusters, they are also involved in the production and distribution of smaller films and co-invest with local filmmakers in many countries around the world, including Australia. Films such as The Great Gatsby and Tomorrow When the War Began were made by local production companies in partnership with Hollywood studios.

There are also independent film distributors who are not involved with one production company or studio, but who partner with different companies – either at script stage or when the film has been made – to promote and distribute films.
Distributors travel to film festivals and markets like the Cannes Film Festival, the American Film Market, Sundance and the Berlin and Toronto Film Festivals and many others to buy distribution rights to films. When distributors develop their own material or become involved with films during the production stage, as investors or co-producers, this is referred to as ‘having skin in the game’.

What does distribution involve?

Film distributors manage two critical aspects of the film production process. They negotiate with exhibitors to get the film into cinemas and manage the marketing strategy and campaign, including advertising and publicity, to maximise the audience that will go to see the film.

A distributor’s staff consists of executive management, sales and marketing teams and administration. Distributors communicate and work with important stakeholders to maximise the success of the film, including exhibitors, media, advertising agencies and the cinema-going public.

When the key sales and marketing people have viewed a film, they are better positioned to devise a distribution strategy by considering the following:

- How much money can the film realistically take at the box office (in order to determine how much money can be spent on marketing)? Distributors usually set box office targets with a low-end and a high-end.

- How much money should they spend marketing the film? This is usually called the ad/pub budget because it is mostly spent on advertising and publicity.

- How many cinemas do they ideally want to screen in? Wide release is the typical pattern of a blockbuster and pins huge expectations on the opening weekend. Limited release often has modest expectations and then expands if the film connects with audiences.

- What classification will the film receive, such as G, PG, M, MA or R18? This can impact box office potential.

One of the first priorities is to agree on the optimal release date for the film. Distributors take into account what films are being released by other studios and often time their releases to coincide with school holidays, related calendar events (such as Valentine’s Day or Xmas), film festivals or major award ceremonies.

The marketing of a film is a crucial part of its distribution. When thinking about marketing, the distributor asks:

- What target audience does the film appeal to? Distributors try to identify the age range of the target audience, any gender skews and socio-economic status so they can market most effectively.

- What is the best way to reach the audience?

- What is the positioning statement for the film? A positioning statement is the agreed message used when discussing the film with media or exhibitors which includes a description of the film and the genre it falls into, e.g. romantic comedy, mockumentary, epic drama, biopic or special effects blockbuster.

- Is there a particular Australian angle to capitalise on? Sometimes the media responds particularly well to local stories, for instance if the film was shot in Australia, as with The Great Gatsby.

- Is the film likely to be nominated for or win prestigious awards or get excellent reviews?

- Will the film generate positive word-of-mouth and benefit from a broad promotional screening program? Or a carefully targeted screening program?

One of the key responsibilities of a film distributor is to produce or provide a trailer and poster, often referred to as a one-sheet, that exhibitors can use to market to cinema audiences. For Hollywood studio films, these materials are often created by the studio, but in the case of Australian films, the distributor works with the film’s producer to generate these vital marketing elements from scratch.

Paid advertising falls under the umbrella of marketing and includes things like TV commercials, billboards, online banner ads, radio commercials and social media buys. The major distributors spend millions of dollars each year on advertising and often have large ad agencies taking care of their business.

The publicity department is responsible for dealing with media outlets to generate maximum positive editorial around a film’s release, taking into account the target markets that have been agreed upon for the film. This includes:

- Issuing press releases to communicate news, such as the confirmation of a release date, announcement of an upcoming publicity tour or advice on box office results.

- Handling requests for interviews with talent. ‘Talent’ usually refers to the actors in a film, but can mean anyone connected with the film who can be used for publicity purposes, such as the director or writer.

- Liaising with studio publicists in LA to negotiate access to talent at junkets held in the US. A junket brings a film’s stars and director together with key media from all over the world for one big day of interviews before the film opens.

- Managing logistics, including transport, accommodation, entertainment and security for publicity tours.

- Dealing with the media which includes negotiating interviews and arranging red carpet premiere access during publicity tours.

- Negotiating with television, radio, print, digital and social media to generate editorial and reviews.
Film merchandise such as t-shirts, CDs, key rings and other material is often provided by the Hollywood studios, or sometimes produced locally, to use for prize giveaways.

Distributors work closely with the exhibitors’ marketing departments to collaborate on local area marketing ideas and campaigns, such as targeted group booking pitches and grassroots activity. To promote a film that features some impressive displays of martial arts, for example, it would be useful to contact karate, taekwondo and hapkido schools and clubs to let them know the film is coming and might be of interest to their members.

What is exhibition?

Exhibition is the retail end of the film industry. It involves screening films to audiences in cinemas. The exhibitor doesn’t only sell tickets, popcorn and ice-cream. They sell the experience of going to the movies including the size of the screen, the seating, the high-tech projection and sound equipment, upscale premium viewing options and the atmosphere of the film experience.

Film exhibition is fiercely competitive. There are far more films than available screens. It can be challenging for distributors to negotiate exactly what they want from the exhibitors, who are juggling offers of films from many distributors and face tough decisions about which films to prioritise.

The sales managers and key staff from distribution companies, sometimes referred to as ‘film bookers’, spend a huge amount of time and effort developing relationships and maintaining regular communications with exhibitors. They deal with everyone, from the programming departments at major exhibitors to the owner-operated twin cinemas in small towns.

Exhibitors understand audiences very well as that is the lifeblood of their business. They have direct access to cinema patrons once they are through the doors and have unique opportunities to communicate with audiences.

As in the retail environment, where department stores host a wide variety of different products from different manufacturers and put them together in a particular way to create a shopping experience, exhibitors have the final say about how promotional material is screened or displayed or arranged in their cinemas.

The exhibitors decide how many posters or banners to put up of a particular film and where to put the big, increasingly complex 3D cardboard structures called standees that the distributors pay for and produce. Cinema foyers provide extremely valuable promotional real estate to get a film’s poster, or trailer or flyers in front of audiences and the distributors spend a lot of time and money vying for space and exposure.

Staff who work in exhibition

There are a number of people who work in the exhibition of films.

- Programmers. These are the people who make decisions about which films will screen at their cinemas and negotiate with distributors on the financial arrangements for profit-sharing. They are invited to attend screenings of every film they are offered so they can make their decisions about where they think the film will work best in their circuit, if they program for a cinema chain. Once they agree to program a film, they decide on session times, although negotiations with distributors often include things like a commitment to a minimum number of sessions per day.

- Marketing staff. Cinemas employ marketing staff who work closely with distributors on specific film campaigns, candy bar promotions (branding of drink and popcorn cups, deals where bonus promotional items are offered with candy bar product bundles, etc). These staff also work on marketing campaigns designed to attract cinema patrons to choose their cinemas over their competitors.

  The cinema chains all have loyalty and reward programs, special deals that they market to seniors, ‘mums with bubs’, schools or to attract group bookings.

- Front-of-house staff. These include ticket sellers, candy bar staff, ushers and security. One of the jobs front-of-house staff do is to arrange the list of what’s showing on the cinema’s marquee. Ushers collect tickets as patrons go into the cinema and once a session has ended, they tidy up garbage that has been left behind in readiness for the next session.

- Technical staff. Many are still called projectionists, but very few cinemas actually project 35mm film these days. Most cinemas are now digital and screen films via digital cinema packages (DCPs). The distributors arrange for DCPs to be provided to the exhibitors (once terms are agreed) along with KDMs, or ‘digital keys’
that are programmed to unlock the DCP for the agreed screenings of the film.

- Merchandising/display staff. When elaborate displays are required, that may involve specialised equipment like cherry-pickers to hang banners from ceilings, cinemas employ people to do this. Front-of-house staff usually manage the simpler displays like putting posters into lightboxes and erecting standees when they are not making choc-tops.

- Administrative personnel. This includes people who handle payroll so employees can be paid; human resources and accounts.

- Maintenance. Lots of things can go wrong or need to be fixed at cinemas so they often employ maintenance people either full-time or part-time. They may be required to repair curtains that get stuck, or seats that are broken by patrons.

- Cleaning. Once all sessions are over for the day, the cleaners come in to pick up rubbish left behind, vacuum carpets, clean up any sticky spills on the carpets, empty bins and clean the cinema toilets and offices.

Both the exhibitor and the distribution company earn a percentage of the box office receipts, the money taken from ticket sales at the cinema. The distributor share can vary – film by film, week by week. In the first instance, this will need to cover the money spent on promoting and marketing the film – the premiere, the cost of getting actors to come to Australia, the posters, ads on buses and at bus stops, TV ads, websites, social media sites, making a trailer and the cost of getting the trailer and the final high-quality digital version of the film itself onto hundreds of screens across the country.

After the marketing costs are recouped, the distributor will also earn a fee for distributing the film that will hopefully go some way to paying for their staff and overhead costs. The remaining percentage of the box office revenue is distributed amongst the film’s investors according to the amounts stipulated in the original production investment agreement. As you can imagine, the film will need to earn a reasonable amount at the box office before the distributor and the investors can be paid.

A snapshot of film exhibition in Australia

- There are about 2,000 cinema screens in Australia.
- An estimated 95% of this total have converted to digital projection.
- Australia has several large cinema chains as well as a strong independent cinema sector throughout the country.

- Provided by National Association of Cinema Operators Australasia, June 2014.
CHAPTER TWO

Production Roles

In this chapter students will learn about some of the hundreds of different roles in the film production process and gain a better understanding of the skills required for various jobs and the collaborative nature of the process from:

- Detailed notes outlining the workflow of each crew member through the stages of production
- Video interviews with a variety of screen professionals including footage of them at work and on a film set
- Links to a range of online articles, video clips and websites to broaden the scope of information and the variety of research tasks for students
Most often when we read about films and television, we read about the people in front of the camera. In this chapter of ‘Making Movies’ Resource, you will learn about some of the many and varied roles on a film production.

You will meet some film practitioners, discover how they got into their job and how they find work in a predominantly freelance industry.

An enormous range of skills is required across a film production - many can be studied at tertiary level whilst others are best learnt on set.

Filmmaking is a hugely collaborative process – the many roles on a film set interconnect and depend on one another to achieve the best possible film. This chapter offers an insight into the following roles:

- Producer
- Production manager
- Production designer
- Assistant director
- Production runner
- Camera assistant
- Hair and makeup artist
- Vehicle supervisor
- Stunt performer
- Editor
- Music composer
- Visual effects supervisor
- Distribution executive
- Marketing manager
- Film programmer

A series of 3-4 minute interviews for each role is available to view here.
Producer

There’s a reason that, when a film wins the Academy Award® for Best Picture, it’s the producers who receive the award rather than the director. The public often know the names of directors like James Cameron or Baz Luhrmann, but seldom recognise the names of producers. Producing a film isn’t a job for someone looking for the spotlight.

The job of the producer job starts years before the audience sees the movie and continues for years after it’s been completed.

“The roles are relatively simple at this early stage: the writer writes, the director thinks about cast and supports the writer, and the producer, ever the optimist, flies around the world trying to find money and friends for the film. Once the film is funded... the director’s job is to encourage the cast and crew to excel beyond expectations, and it’s a producer’s job to create an environment that allows the director to reach beyond himself or herself to create a great work.”

It’s the producer’s job to deliver the film on time and on budget to the investors. And not just any film, but the great film that was promised when they were developing the script. Producers usually have great organisational skills, an understanding of finance and excellent interpersonal qualities, often describing themselves as a mix between a drill sergeant, banker and psychiatrist.

During development and pre-production, the producer oversees the process required to get the movie into production. This includes securing the rights to the script, finalising finance for the film, hiring the best director and jointly selecting actors with the director. The producer monitors key decisions including the schedule, locations, actors, sets and costumes.

During production, the producer supervises the shoot, keeps the budget on track, deals with investors, watches the shot footage, and oversees setting up post-production.

During post-production, the producer performs many tasks, including finalising all the details from the shoot, keeping the budget and schedule on track and planning the publicity strategy with the distributor.

Even when the film has been delivered, the work of the producer continues as they liaise with the distributor about the film’s release and monitor financial returns as they start to come in.

Despite the myth of overpaid producers, the reality is that for their hard work, they receive a pre-determined fee - a small percentage of the total budget. They might also have a share of revenue when and if the movie goes into profit. It’s definitely one of the toughest jobs in the industry.

Click here to view interview with producer Nicole O’Donohue

Useful resources:
- Responsibilities of a movie producer
- Rambling On... with Producers: What Does a Producer Actually do?
- What does a Hollywood producer do, exactly?
- Creative Skillset: Producer
- It’s less glamorous than directing, but film producing can be the reel deal

Production manager

A film producer carries the overall responsibility to deliver a finished film to the investors according to an agreed budget and timeframe.

The army of people, and the intricate detail and layers of complexity involved in ensuring this happens is the role of a production manager. He/she is responsible for organising the business, finance and employment arrangements needed to bring the film in on schedule and on budget and ensure the project is carried out safely and environmentally responsibly.

The PM usually gets started early in development, identifying every element in the film and judging how long it will take and how much it will cost to shoot.

This is the budget the producer takes to the investors to raise finance for the film, so it has to be accurate. At this point, the PM might not work on the project again for months, or years, while the producer raises finance.

When the film gets the go-ahead, the PM sets about finding a production office and staff, and essential heads of department including the unit department, safety and first aid, tutors and child chaperones, and the all-important catering department.
He/she is also busy:

- Negotiating employment contracts for cast and crew
- Setting up Occupational Health & Safety systems
- Discussing budgets with department heads
- Setting up the financial structure & systems with the production accountant
- Selecting and negotiating equipment, studio space, locations, post-production and VFX facilities.
- Issuing the final shooting script and schedule, and daily call sheet.

During production, the PM and production office ensure that every element needed for that day’s filming is available when required – cast, extras, additional crew and equipment, vehicles and accommodation – and that information about these elements is communicated to every relevant cast and crew member.

Films are not shot in script sequence but are arranged according to availability of locations, or actors, or a range of other factors. Daily information is conveyed via the call sheet, a blueprint for what will happen tomorrow.

The PM doesn’t work on post-production – his/her role is to wrap up all loose ends – shut down the production office and finalise the cost report that shows just how much was spent during pre and production – and how much is left to finish the film!

The production manager’s job is one of the most complex, varied and demanding on a film, with much of the smooth running and financial success of the project resting on their shoulders.

Production designer

The production designer collaborates with the director, producer and the director of photography to establish the visual feel and specific look required for the film – sophisticated, grungy, ultra-modern, rustic, corporate, exotic, comic book.

The production designer has overall responsibility for studio sets, location construction, set dressing, props, vehicles, animals and weapons. They guide key personnel in other departments such as locations, costumes, hair and makeup, special effects and visual effects to establish a unified ‘look’ to the film.

Even before pre-production, the production designer collaborates with the director and director of photography. With the script as their guide, they determine the stylistic approach, collecting reference material from books, magazines and the internet to refine decisions, and to communicate the visual approach for the film to the crew, cast and potential investors.

The art department is usually the biggest department on the film, and draws on many talents.
Some of the roles include:

- The art director is responsible for the costing and realisation of the visual brief
- The art department coordinator provides administrative and logistical support and research
- The construction manager and a team of carpenters, painters and welders build studio sets and modify locations
- Scenic artists paint backdrops
- Set decorators dress the settings – like a home interior with curtains and furniture or a park with benches and park signs
- Props buyers hire or buy props
- The greens team is responsible for all plants on sets
- Vehicle coordinators choose appropriate vehicles for action and background
- Animal wranglers provide the animals – anything from insects to elephants.

The art department is always working ahead of the crew to have sets and props ready and locations dressed.

Through pre-production and shoot, the art director keeps the production designer informed of the budget and design elements which may have to be modified to be cheaper or more lavish.

The art director finishes work at the end of the shoot but the team carries on - wrapping the sets, disposing of materials, returning hired set dressings and props and selling off or donating remaining items.

Traditionally, the production designer gifts a small item from the remaining props to each member of the art department, as a memento of the shoot.

Click here to view interview with production designer Felicity Abbott

Useful resources:
- The Importance of Production Design
- Skyfall Video Log: Dennis Gassner
- Explainer: what is production design?
- Building Edge of Tomorrow Exosuits

Assistant director

Feature films of any scale have at least three assistant directors and often hire casual assistant directors for crowd and action scenes.

The roles of director and first assistant director are clearly differentiated. On set, the director is concerned with the creative effect of action, performance, lighting and camera movement, all of the images and sound that are recorded by the camera. The first assistant director, known as the ‘first’, is responsible for the timing and work flow of everything and everybody on set.

In pre-production, the first AD breaks down the script to identify all elements that need to be considered in the shooting schedule, and produces a cost-effective schedule, which will be constantly modified.

It’s the job of the first AD to produce the final shooting schedule. This schedule will not only need to makes sure the shoot is as cost-effective as possible, but also has to provides an alternate “wet weather” schedule in case of rain.

The First Assistant Director’s job is one of delicate balance. In the Producer’s eyes, he or she has the responsibility for running the set on time and on budget. In the Director’s eyes, he or she is responsible for organising whatever is needed on set to realise the Director’s creative vision. In other words, the First Assistant Director wears two hats.

During production, the first AD is always at the director’s side, organising the work on set, and fielding the many questions that arise.

They establish a shot list with the director for each shooting day. Within the shoot, they plan out the shots in the most efficient order possible.

When shooting is about to start, it’s the first AD who calls for quiet and final checks. They call: “Roll sound.” When the sound department confirms sound is rolling, the first gets the clapper loader to mark the shot with the slate. Then, it’s the director’s job to call: “Action.”

If the weather is looking uncertain, the First Assistant Director checks that all the departments are ready to move to the weather cover set or location in the case of rain.

During production, the first AD will discuss with the Producer any issues that involve the creative elements of the movie –

“Production designers oversee sets, location construction, set dressing, props, action vehicles, animals and weapons.”
the Director is asking for too many takes or the lead actor is unhappy with the glasses he’s been asked to wear – and so on.

He/she will also need to discuss with the Production Manager any issues that may have arisen during the shoot day – the caterers aren’t providing enough vegetarian food or we may need to work overtime tonight - and so on.

At the end of a well-run shoot the first AD thanks all concerned for a great job and heads off to their next gig.

Click here to view interview with assistant director Killian Maguire

Useful resources:
• The Job of an Assistant Director
• Movie Set Job Description: Assistant Directors
• Creative Skillset: First assistant director
• Working as a 1st Assistant Director
• Scary Cow: Assistant Director

Production runner

Although the runner is an entry-level position in the film industry, it requires someone with excellent personal and professional qualities.

Runners often enter the industry through work experience, then move from project to project by developing good relationships with the rest of the crew, and by networking within the crew and in the wider industry. Often they will have some prior experience, for example on student films or short films.

A mid-range feature film employs one or two runners in the production department and another in the art department. Runners are provided with hire cars but they are not always on the road. They spend a fair part of each day in the production office or art department, helping out with photocopying, preparing and recording postage, doing lunch runs and generally being useful.

The runner is one of the first people to start on the film, because the production office has to be operating efficiently from the first day of pre-production. A runner with strong computer skills is very useful.

In the early weeks of pre-production, the runner’s main tasks are to provide support and refreshments for the many meetings. Soon actors need to be transported to and from costume fittings and rehearsals.

In the final week of pre-production, the runner provides support for the camera tests, distributes notices to nearby residents at locations, collects specially made costumes and always keeps the busy production office fed and watered.

The runner picks up cast and brings them to set, picks up or returns camera or lighting equipment and delivers paperwork between set, office and editors.

At the end of the shooting day the runner collects the camera cards and hard drives from the data wrangler and takes them to the cutting room, and may drop some of the actors at home.

The main task of the runner during post-production is to wrap the film, and the production office, in a short time. Hired items are returned – walkie talkies, computers, printers
or wardrobe racks. The runner may assist with the sale of remaining properties and costumes and with finalising the production paperwork.

Finally, the production team will hand over a clean, empty production office to their landlords or the next production.

**Click here to view interview with production runner Hamish Mason**

**Useful resources:**
- Life as a TV runner
- Creative Skillset: Production Runner

**Camera assistant**

Australia has a long, proud tradition of great cinematographers working both in Australia and internationally, including Academy Award® winners John Seale (*The English Patient*), Dean Semler (*Dances with Wolves*) and Andrew Lesnie (*The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*). Most of these talented cinematographers started their career as camera assistants and worked their way up through the ranks of the camera department.

The director of photography (the DOP or the cinematographer) is head of the camera department and works closely with the director to devise and maintain the “look” of the film.

The DOP has a camera team including one or two camera operators (who handle each shot), a focus puller (who maintains a sharp image), a video split operator, a data wrangler and the all-important **camera assistant**. The lighting department and grips also work under the DOP’s direction.

In pre-production, the team conducts technical tests on the camera, lenses and filters to ensure everything is working and creative tests for cast, locations and special effects.

The camera assistant has two main responsibilities. First, they make sure the required camera equipment is available for each shot and in peak working condition. Second, they mark each shot with a clapper board so everyone concerned, and especially the editor, can easily locate any given set-up and take.

When they are on set, some of their other duties include keeping track of equipment, putting down marks for the actors to stand on so the camera can be focused appropriately, keeping camera notes and maintaining equipment.

On top of all this, it is expected that a competent assistant will be able to anticipate a number of those demands before they become problems.

During the shoot, the duties of each team member are very clearly defined so that workflow is as smooth and accurate as possible.

Additional casual camera crew may be required for some scenes, such as stunts, large crowds, action scenes or when specialist camera crew are needed to meet script requirements, such as underwater photography or steadicam shots.

**Click here to view interview with camera assistant Jack Mayo**

**Useful resources:**
- Ultimate Guide to a Camera Assistant’s Toolkit
- Creative Skillset: Camera Assistant
Hair and makeup artist

An actor’s first hour of the day is often spent in hair and makeup and, with the help of accomplished **hair and makeup artists**, they begin to inhabit their on-screen character.

On a very big film, with a larger makeup and hair crew, the main actors may each have their own exclusive makeup artist. Very big stars bring their makeup artist or hair stylist with them from shoot to shoot and this may form part of the star’s contract.

The makeup and hairdressing crew have usually completed an apprenticeship or specialist training, working in salons, before they join the film or television industry.

In pre-production, the makeup and hairdressing crew members analyse the script, break out its key elements, and begin to explore the characters. Extensive research and planning may be required, particularly for period dramas.

The hair and makeup team meets with the actors and directors as soon as possible to tease out the nature of the character. At the same time, they break down the script in detail, especially changes that occur as the story proceeds – ageing, injury, hair growth, beard growth – so they can track the exact story day for each scene, and **maintain continuity** on hair and makeup.

The makeup and hairdressing crew work out of specially fitted out caravans and follow a regular pattern throughout the shoot. They are called to set at least an hour and a half before the main crew call, and start preparing the actors in the order on the call sheet.

They remain on standby on set, keeping an eye on the makeup and hair as the day proceeds and attending to the actors just before each shot when the first assistant director calls for final checks.

Other work may be required for that day’s scenes. A fight scene needs blood and bruises applied, and later scenes with this character will have to show wounds and bruises healing, even if they’re scheduled to be shot before the fight.

On occasion a specialist makeup artist is employed to create, for example, a scarred face or a major wound. These are prosthetic makeup artists. They work closely with the special effects crew and the visual effects team.

Once the shoot is over, the makeup and hair crew give all the reference and continuity photographs to the production department, in case there are any pick-up shots or re-shoots required. They wash their brushes and sponges, tidy up the makeup caravan, pack their kit and go off to replenish their supplies and, like many others on the crew, wait for the next phone call.

Click here to view interview with hair & makeup artist
Bec Taylor

Useful resources:
- How movie makeup artists work
- Creative Skillset: Makeup Artist
Vehicle supervisor

The most valuable resource on a film is time. On a modest film, an hour lost on set can cost up to $5,000. On a big film - with a highly-paid cast, a big crew and a lot of equipment— that lost hour can cost a lot more.

The most frequent cause of delay on film sets is vehicle breakdown. On a film with even a few vehicles, a vehicle supervisor is desirable. On a big film, it is absolutely essential. And it’s a big job. The Mad Max:Fury Road vehicles, for example, were created and modified in Sydney, shipped to Namibia for shooting, then back to Sydney for additional filming.

The vehicle supervisor is part of the art department and has generally trained in fields such as motor mechanics or industrial design.

In pre-production, the vehicle supervisor breaks down the script to establish the vehicle requirements and meets with the director, the production designer and the DOP where they “cast” vehicles. What type of car, and what colour, will each character drive? Do they need to be modified for stunts? Do they blow up or crash during the shoot?

Generally actors don’t drive the cars and the grips will hire low loaders so they can shoot cars that appear to move at the normal height but are in fact being towed.

The vehicles are all prepped so they are in working order. Some cars have been purchased because they are needed for a number of weeks or are scripted to be damaged. Other cars have been hired for the day from film car specialists or individual owners.

When the vehicles arrive on location, the vehicle supervisor gives them a last-minute check, and the drivers go through final details with the owner. The first assistant director and the vehicle supervisor set the cars for the first shot, and they rehearse. With all crew and cast, including traffic controllers and safety officer, fully briefed, shooting can begin.

From time to time, things go wrong, so the vehicles team always includes at least one experienced mechanic, and a support truck with a wide range of car parts, tyres, patches and paints.

Even if all goes smoothly, filming with moving vehicles is a slow process. A simple tracking shot of actors chatting in a car will involve a long string of vehicles – a lead car to be sure the road is clear, the low loader with the “hero” car on its trailer, the tracking vehicle with the director and camera and sound crew, and a follow vehicle to warn traffic coming behind. For every take, this convoy has to find an area where it can safely turn around and reset.

Just imagine what was involved for the vehicle supervisor for the tank car chase sequence in Fast and the Furious 6! It’s why blue screening is a popular solution to shooting vehicle action. Have a look at this behind the scenes video from The Great Gatsby.

After the shoot, purchased cars are registered as sold or scrapped. If an owner has allowed modifications to a hired vehicle, these are reversed and the vehicle returned. The vehicle supervisor keeps a record of useful and interesting cars, and people, for future films.

Click here to view interview with vehicle supervisor Geoff Naylor

Useful resources:

- The Guardian: Building Batman's car
Stunt performer

When you see an onscreen actor involved in a fall, explosion, gun battle, crash or fight, you are more than likely watching the work of a **stunt performer**. The ‘stunties’, as they are called, take on action shots that pose risks to the safety of the actor or need specialist skills or training to undertake.

Because of the high level of risk involved, the stunt and safety team is subject to rigorous accreditation and producers must ensure that only properly accredited stunt personnel work on their productions.

An identifiable stunt means “stunt action performed that requires any extraordinary skill or endured discomfort as part of the performance”. Examples include: fire burns, being near explosions, vehicle impacts, high falls, stair falls, horse falls and precision stunt driving.

There are four grades of stunt personnel:
- Stunt coordinator - qualified to oversee the production of a stunt
- Assistant stunt coordinator - assists the stunt coordinator
- Stunt actor – a qualified and skilled stunt performer
- Stunt action person - qualified to perform in background action and group stunt work under the supervision of a stunt coordinator.

A lot of rules need to be followed to ensure safety on a film set. Safety consultants and supervisors provide specialist knowledge, expertise and advice to minimise risk to crew, cast and the public.

Every film must commission a safety report prior to shooting, and must follow these recommendations. A safety supervisor must be present for any stunt or other hazardous action, such as filming on public roads, construction at heights or contact sport rehearsals.

During pre-production, the stunt coordinator analyses the script to identify stunts and work out how they will be performed and discusses the costs with the production manager. Costs might include location preparation (e.g. checking for underwater hazards), the number of stunt performers required and stunt equipment.

The stunt coordinator choreographs action, a fight for example, to establish exactly what the actors will do and when the stunt performers will step in.

Generally, filmmakers try to shoot the stunts required during the main shoot, when there is a full complement of support staff available, and especially when the lead actors are available to work with the stunt team to create a realistic blend in the action. However it’s sometimes necessary to do pick-ups and re-shoots, and the entire stunt planning and apparatus has to be set up again.

Click here to view interview with stunt performer Ingrid Kleinig

**Useful resources:**
- HowStuffWorks: How stuntmen work
- The Hobbit’s most dangerous stunt
- 5 reasons doing movie stunts is harder than you think
The editor has two key tasks: to ensure the story makes sense, and to cut the footage in the best possible way so the film moves and entertains its audience.

The main picture editor cuts the film and may work with one or two assistant editors, depending on the scale of the project. Once the image is ‘locked’ (finalised), the sound editors start work on the dialogue and effects tracks, and the music editor lays in the music tracks. The cut image, and all the tracks, are pulled together in the sound mixes.

In pre-production, the editor confers with the director on the story structure and script, and on the pace of the editing, as this will determine the nature of the shots – fast and frantic or slow and reflective?

The assistant editors liaise with the on-set crew and post-production teams, to be sure all the computer codes will talk to each other, and that the film meets technical specifications for delivery.

If the film contains a high proportion of computer generated imagery (CGI), like The Great Gatsby, the editor works with the visual effects supervisor. Detailed storyboards and pre-visualisations may be created as a result of these discussions.

During the shoot, the editor receives footage from the shoot (rushes) and assembles each scene. There might be a shot missing – a character falls off a ladder, but we haven’t got the close-up of his foot slipping off the rung. The relevant people are advised and the crew ‘picks up’ these shots or organises a reshoot.

At the end of each week, the producer and director view an assembly of cut scenes with the editor, and might make further creative adjustments as the shoot proceeds.

In post-production, the long hours in a dark room begin. The editor will assemble the film in script order, using the best takes as selected by the director. In the following weeks, the director and editor work together in the cutting room to refine the cut. Some scenes are shortened, some removed. Even the sequence of telling the story may change. Every decision increases the power of the film – for emotion, comedy, or tension.

With this fine cut complete, the film is screened to the distributor and investors, who may request changes to ensure the film appeals to the intended audience.

Once the fine cut is locked, the editor’s main task is finished, but if the budget allows he or she stays on to insert visual effects, liaise with the sound editing team and sound mixers, support the director and cinematographer through the colour grading process and give technical support and advice as release copies of the film are produced.

Click here to view interview with editor Jason Ballantine

Useful resources:
- HowStuffWorks: What does a film editor do?
- Inside the Edit: The Editor

Music composer

Music – songs, background or underscore - plays a huge role in movies. Many films incorporate both existing music and original music composed specifically for the film by the composer.

In pre-production the composer reads the script and meets the director to discuss the creative approach to the film, and the specific role of music.

If it is necessary to see an actor play an existing or composed piece of music in the film, like Russell Crowe in Master and Commander, the composer may be involved in finding a teacher who can transform an actor into a convincing classical violinist in just a few weeks.

The composer usually only starts work on a film in post-production, when the fine cut is locked. In “music spotting sessions” the director, editor and composer watch the film scene by scene, or shot by shot, deciding where music should start and stop and discussing the emotional intentions of the director.

The music is generally composed electronically with music software called sequencers, such as GarageBand, Logic, Cubase, Digital Performer or Protools. On lower-budget films, the final music is presented only in this electronic format. The quality can be surprisingly good and can often service a film’s needs as effectively as live musicians.

“Post-production is usually the busiest time for the composer, whether or not existing or previously composed music has been used in the shoot.”
For a major film, the music is usually recorded in a professional studio with live musicians, from a small ensemble to a full symphony orchestra.

The music production team may include an orchestral contractor, composer’s assistant, studio coordinator, orchestrator, copyists, sound engineers and studio assistants.

Once the composed music is completed, it will be cut together with the image. The sound mixer will incorporate the mixed music tracks into the final soundtrack of the movie, which includes dialogue and sound effects.

The final job of the composer or music supervisor is to create the music cue sheets, which document exactly what music is played throughout the film and the names of all the musicians. This allows copyright societies worldwide to distribute royalties to composers and musicians when their musical performances are used in film and television.

Music can often be a significant element in the marketing of a film. Producers and composers dream of having a hit single from their film shooting up the charts when their film is released.

Composing film music can be a solitary pursuit for lower-budget productions, or an enormous team challenge requiring many creative and dedicated people. Ultimately, music offers an audience a powerful, resonant enhancement of the viewing experience.

Click here to view interview with music composer Guy Gross

Useful resources:
- Soundworks: Michael Giacchino
- Soundworks: Bryan Tyler
- Captain America: The Winter Soldier’s Composer Henry Jackman on Scoring a Superhero

Visual effects supervisor

The visual effects supervisor has two main tasks. Firstly, to create digitally the images and action that cannot be achieved in live action filming, and secondly to enhance the images that are filmed “live” in the camera.

Australian visual effects companies are very successful internationally and Australian digital effects work can be seen in the films The Great Gatsby, Gravity, The Wolverine, and The Lego Movie. Employees in the VFX industry are highly mobile, with many Australians working overseas. Some VFX studios may be best known for a particular kind of work, and have a digital pipeline that’s already been developed for water simulation or dust storms.

Depending on the complexity of the film and its budget, a VFX team can range from one to several hundred people. The VFX supervisor can play a role in creating characters and planning action sequences.

Previsualisation uses computer animation to plan a scene and provide information for all departments on how the scene is to be shot and what production requirements are necessary for the shoot.
During production, the VFX team continues work on previz and tech viz throughout the shoot, and will also start on post-production. If there are shots that require a full computer-generated build, the designs, previz, concepts and duration of the shot is worked out meticulously and turned over to the VFX team to start on during the shoot, so that the shots are ready for the first cut.

In many cases, the VFX teams will be working on specific shots while the film is being edited. The process of passing the effects shots to the editor is called turn over. At the point of turn over the VFX supervisor and VFX producer work closely with the VFX teams, supervising and overseeing the builds, and direction of each shot.

The VFX supervisor has a wide understanding of both technical and creative decisions, and stays with the film to the end of post-production, refining and polishing effects through the grade and online process until the master is produced. The work may not end there, as the VFX team may be involved in the creation of websites and games to support the film’s release.

In contemporary filmmaking, the VFX supervisor has a crucial role, and a vast war chest of skilled artists, technicians and electronic weaponry to create an amazing screen experience.

**Useful resources:**
- [Wikipedia: Visual effects supervisor](#)
- [Get in Media: Visual effects supervisor](#)
- [VFX of the Hobbit](#)

**Distribution executive**

Film distributors license the rights to release films into Australian cinemas. While major distributors get their films from the studios, independent distribution companies acquire films from production companies in Australia and around the globe.

A team of **distribution executives**, led by the managing director, oversees the campaign for the film, which involves setting the release date, negotiating a multi-screen cinema release and financing a marketing campaign to attract audiences to the cinema.

Distributors may also do deals with local filmmakers to distribute their finished films or to co-produce the film, which means they put up some of the capital required to fund the film as well as managing the distribution of the film.

The managing director works closely with the distribution sales team to determine the best date for a film’s release and its optimal exhibition strategy, which includes how many screens, which locations and how many sessions they would ideally like the film to play. They arrange for exhibitors to see the film when it is finished and are responsible for getting the film classified.

When the cinema release is determined, the distributor liaises with each exhibitor about the release strategy in the hope of achieving the best exposure for the film in cinema foyers and the screening of trailers.

Depending on the type of film, the size of the marketing budget and the availability of the actors, the film may premiere in key cities across the world, generating buzz...
and publicity and, hopefully, raising the audience’s awareness and interest. The managing director will need to consider whether film premieres and talent tours will be part of the local distribution strategy, weighing up the significant costs against the potential benefits.

Distributors earn their money from a percentage of the revenue from box office ticket sales at cinemas. Distributors sometimes share in other revenue streams – such as DVD or Blu-ray sales or rental, television broadcast, online sales or even from sales of the film to airlines and hotels.

The distribution company manages the delivery of the film, the trailer and posters to cinemas for every screening of the film in Australia.

Distributors also create the social media campaigns for films, either in-house or via an agency, to try to create a positive “buzz” about the film or the actors to maximise the number of people who go to the cinema to see the film.

Click here to view interview with distribution executive Troy Lum

Useful resources:
- Wikipedia: Film distributor

Marketing Manager

The marketing of a film is crucial to its success. Effective advertising, publicity and promotions will heighten the profile of a film and help it find its maximum potential audience. The marketing team details its ideal marketing budget for film campaigns and determines the overall distribution strategy.

When a film is finished, the managing team will decide who they should target the film to, what release date might suit the film best, what cinema locations they think it would work in, what sort of reviews it might attract, whether a talent tour would be beneficial and generally how to market the film.

They might work with filmmakers to develop the trailer and poster if the film is not a studio title, but an acquisition (especially applies to Australian films).

The marketing manager manages the execution of the plan, working in close partnership with the publicity and promotions staff and calling often on the advice and expertise of the advertising department, or agency, to supply information such as the ratings and audiences for TV shows so they can ensure the TV interviews and promotions they do are a suitable ‘fit’ for the film.

The marketing budgets for films vary depending on what the senior executives estimate the film can make at the box office.

Paid advertising falls under the umbrella of marketing and includes things like TV commercials, billboards, online banner ads, radio commercials and social media buys.

With an Australian film, a distributor has the opportunity to create the TV ad themselves, with input from their ad agency and the filmmakers.

The publicity department is responsible for dealing with media outlets to generate maximum positive editorial around a film’s release. This may include handling requests for interviews with talent, negotiating with media to generate editorial and reviews and supplying video content and images from the film for broadcast, online, print media or socials.

The promotions manager pitches and negotiates third-party promotions, i.e. with an external company or brand associated with a film. In the case of studio films, worldwide promotions are often negotiated with car companies or electronics companies or fashion brands. In this instance the promotions manager in the Australian distribution office may make contact with the local office of the worldwide brand to see how they can work together to leverage that association to gain attention for the film.

The promotions staff also manage media-backed promotions, i.e. promo giveaways on radio to win tickets to a film or money-can’t-buy prizes. When they pitch and negotiate promotions, they try to ensure the media outlet is the best fit for the potential audience of the film. It is up to them to communicate the key messages of the film in the promotion, and manage the logistics (book flights and accommodation and Premiere tickets for the winners).

Click here to view interview with marketing manager Heilan Bolton
A film programmer is responsible for choosing which films play, and how often they are shown, in their cinemas. Film programmers may work for a single cinema or an entire chain.

Many factors inform this decision-making process, including:

- what films are on offer from distributors and at what terms (agreed revenue split)
- the running times of films
- how films are performing at a cinema location
- the particular tastes of audiences at a specific location.

Most film programmers will tell you the best part of their job is watching hundreds of movies every year to decide which ones will screen in their cinema, based on which they think will most appeal to their cinema audiences.

The film programmer regards the cinema week as Thursday to Wednesday. New films open on a Thursday and generally, their first weekend box office is extremely important as it will dictate the film’s sessions for the following week. Sometimes in this cut-throat business, if a film can’t find a sizeable audience on its opening weekend, its sessions are cut dramatically or it may even be taken off.

Monday is programming day, when film programmers consider weekend figures and arrange their schedule based on what is working best for their locations.

The film programmer has to provide various different departments within their own organisation with the final program for the coming week so they can do their own jobs.

The technical staff, who manage the actual screenings, need to know what to screen when, ensure they have the appropriate KDMs (digital keys) lined up and what trailers should be playing with which films.

The advertising department needs to have the final program so they can ensure the correct information appears in directory and display ads and they know what messages to send to their loyalty program customers, or include in their weekly newsletters or social media posts.

In some single screen or twin cinemas, the film programmer may need to multitask and fulfil other roles, such as managing the cinema, booking and designing advertising, running the technical side of the screenings, changing the marquee or managing foyer displays.

Many film programmers look beyond films to round out their programs and offer diversity to their patrons by staging live concerts or screening ‘alternate content’, which includes theatre productions, opera, ballet and sporting events, sometimes beamed in from overseas via satellite.

Film programmers attend movie conventions in Australia and sometimes overseas to see upcoming product and network with industry colleagues.

Click here to view interview with film programmer Claire Gandy
CHAPTER THREE

Industry Issues

In this chapter students will learn about some of the key contemporary issues faced by the film industry:

- The impact of online piracy on the screen industries and the people who work in them
- The rapid evolution of technology and its effect on all stages of the production process
- The challenges of finding investors and financing films in a rapidly changing industry
- The operational changes required to ensure sustainable practices and reduce the eco-footprint of film productions
The screen industries need to adapt to rapid change and continually strike the right balance between commerce and creativity. Their success lies in their ability to evolve.

This chapter briefly examines four contemporary industry issues.

The threat posed by online piracy

Did you know Australia produced the world’s first feature length film, *The Story of the Kelly Gang*, released in 1906? Since then *Crocodile Dundee, Mad Max, Shine, Strictly Ballroom, Animal Kingdom* and many more, plus TV shows such as *Rake, Neighbours* and *Summer Heights High* have secured Australia’s place on the international screen content map.

Australia’s creative content industries contribute $90 billion to the nation’s economy annually and employ over 6% of our workforce. The Australian film and television industry contributes around $6 billion into our economy and supports around 47,000 full time jobs.

One of the biggest problems those industries face is piracy — the downloading, streaming, screening, copying, distribution and/or selling of copyright-protected content such as movies and TV shows, without paying for it.

The digital era has made it easy to access online content via sites that obtain the content illegally. In Australia, about one in four people aged 12-64 admits to pirating films or TV and many more share pirated content.

There is clear evidence that piracy causes a significant decrease in box office and ancillary sales. But it’s not just about lost profit, it’s about the ability to finance a film in the first place. When piracy impacts the return to investors, they are less likely to finance other films. Fewer films = fewer jobs.

“I’m a film editor. I’m sure that when people illegally download, they don’t think of the impact on my profession and livelihood. But when investors, both studios and individuals, can’t recoup their money because of piracy, fewer films are made and jobs like mine become even scarcer.” - Jason Ballantine, co-editor *The Great Gatsby*.

Australian filmmakers talk about online piracy

Film and TV creators include not only high-profile producers, directors and actors, but also thousands of artists, technicians and personnel such as writers, stunt performers, set builders and painters, costume designers, cinematographers, make-up artists, caterers and animal wranglers.
Most people who work on films and TV freelance and earn a modest fixed income during production. Their livelihood depends on the number of productions they work on and they may have long gaps between jobs. The less films made, the less they work.

Piracy also affects emerging talent. Many successful Australian actors, directors, cinematographers and designers got their break on small, independent local films and have become internationally renowned or won major industry awards. The creative industry needs investment and backing to provide opportunities to develop new talent in all fields.

Making a film isn’t a 9 to 5, Monday to Friday job. It’s fuelled by a passion to bring a project to life for the audience. Many people spend years to get a movie made - with no guarantee of any financial return. Fewer than four out ten movies ever recoup their original investment. It’s a very high-risk business.

Another concern about increasing and widespread piracy is that it will discourage people to work in creative industries - and make music or film and TV programs - if the income from these activities is less certain.

While investment and income may be shrinking in the creative industries, pirate sites are making multi-million dollar profits, by selling ad space, often to malicious advertisers, who harvest user profiles and sell them.

It’s not just ‘kids in a basement swapping files with friends’. Infringing sites often have links to other criminal activity and, despite the huge money they make, not a cent goes back to the creators or owners of the work.

“Movies are digital bait. Pirate sites have always stolen from content creators by making shows available for free, but now they’re stealing from people who download those shows, as well.” - Tom Galvin, executive director of Digital Citizens Alliance.

Personal responsibility is at the heart of the long-term sustainable solution to preventing illegal file-sharing. Legislative change, which provides a guide to how we access content in the digital age, will also play an important role. Similarly, content creators and internet service providers are playing their part to ensure there are legitimate avenues for people to access their content legally.

Actress and conservationist Bindi Irwin talks about the incredibly talented people who work behind-the-scenes on the film and TV shows we all love and we hear from some of them on the impact of piracy on their jobs and the industry. Watch video here.

Technology

Technology is changing so rapidly that it’s hard for young filmmakers today to imagine how films were made a mere 25 or more years ago.

When Puberty Blues was made in Australia in 1981, movies were still shot on celluloid which was expensive, bulky and had to be imported from the US. There were no personal computers, no mobile phones, no internet, no cloud, no DVDs, no Skype, no tablets.

Scripts were typed, re-typed and sent by mail or courier. Call sheets were photocopied and hand-delivered to set and to actors’ homes. They had maps of the locations because there was no GPS. When assistant directors needed to call the production office, they had to find a phone box. Each day the exposed film was sent to a lab where it was developed overnight. The lab produced many copies of the final film, heavy spools shipped around Australia and overseas in metal containers.

Marketing meant posters, newspaper ads and the occasional TV ad. Most people saw movies in cinemas.

Piracy costs Australia millions of dollars and thousands of jobs annually.
The digital revolution has huge implications for film production, finance and distribution. For example:

**Development**
- Video conferencing allows creative collaborations across Australia and internationally.
- Assemblies and cuts of the film can be sent digitally for input and approvals.
- Australian producers are far less constrained by distance so international co-productions and collaborations are increasingly common, e.g. *The King’s Speech*.

**Pre-production**
- Productions set up a secure cloud service to share production info around the office and with crew off-site. Layers of access are set up for scripts, schedules, budgets, cast and crew lists, call sheets, maps and driving directions.
- Locations are researched using Google Earth.
- The first AD schedules using apps that provide info on sunrise and sunset, seasonal angles of the sun and the rise and fall of tides.
- The art department uses computer-aided design to plan sets.
- VFX prepares previsualisations to help all departments prepare complex shots.
- Daily Call Sheets are sent out electronically to mobile phones, and most people use GPS.

**Production**
- Everybody has a mobile – and must remember to turn it off when sound is rolling!
- Communication between the location and production office is via laptops and mobiles.
- Almost all films are shot on digital cameras, such as Arri Alexa or Red Epic.
- Tiny, cheap cameras, such as Go Pros, can be positioned around set and operated remotely to capture additional angles of a shot.
- Camera control is increasingly by touch screen, not buttons and knobs, and changes of exposure, for example, can be made quickly and efficiently from shot to shot.
- The DOP can use an iPhone viewfinder, such as Artemis, to preview a shot and show the effects of changing aspect ratio, lens size, depth of field and angle of the lens for tilt and pan shots. The final decision can be recorded and sent to the VFX team.
- A new crew position has emerged – the data wrangler – to manage visual and audio information acquired on set, and prepare it for the editors.
- Sound is recorded digitally, and synchronised wirelessly with the image.
- Many stunt and physical special FX scenes can be shot much more safely and effectively with help of VFX for blue/green screen, and for wire removal.
- Rushes from the previous day are often viewed on laptops at lunch.
- Rushes are sent on secure file transfer sites to the producer, director and key creatives, and investors both in Australia and overseas.
Post-production
• The fully digital post-production unit takes advantage of the material sent to them from set.
• Various cuts can be stored for easy comparison and assessment.
• Errors can be erased – a stray takeaway coffee cup painted out of a period film, the colour of a character’s coat changed, an uncleared sign in the background removed.
• The whole incredible armoury of VFX can be exploited to make the film more exciting and emotional.

Distribution and exhibition
• Films now arrive in cinemas on hard drives encrypted for the time period they are licensed to screen in that cinema. The future involves delivery of films via satellite.
• Cinema projectors lasted for a very long time. New digital cinema technology is frequently emerging – new servers are required to process ever-increasing film data files, as well as new technology to upgrade cinema screens, projectors, projector lamps, etc. Upgrades are expensive – so is the cost of training staff to use new systems.
• Distribution platforms for releasing films online are increasing the options for audiences to legally stream or download films to their TVs, computers, tablets or phones.

Marketing
• Digital, online and social media are now essential components of marketing, media and publicity plans, with increased costs and new strategies needed to communicate with fans and potential audiences across a range of channels.
• Social media can spread word of mouth quickly, and be further propelled by effective digital marketing.
• Where once audiences could only see a full-length movie trailer at the cinema, the launch of the movie trailer online is now one of the biggest spikes of a movie’s marketing campaign.

Consumers sometimes complain that business models are slow to react to technology but many contractual arrangements exist that ensure a film has the finance and resources to go from idea to cinema. These are not necessarily able to be renegotiated simply or rapidly enough to keep up with technology changes.

Filmmakers, distributors and exhibitors work hard to remain nimble, informed, flexible and up to date with rapid technological developments.

Getting started by finding film finance

Peter Weir started out making comedy sketches for Channel 7, and went on to direct Picnic at Hanging Rock, Gallipoli, Witness and Master and Commander.

Phillip Noyce started making student films at university, and went on to direct Patriot Games, Rabbit Proof Fence and Salt.

George Miller worked as an emergency room doctor to self-finance his first short film, and went on to make films such as Happy Feet and Mad Max: Fury Road.

Everyone has to start somewhere. It may be at school, university, or film school, when a group of friends make a short film. They might then make an entry for a short film festival. These might be self-financed, on a shoestring, or the filmmakers may seek funding from screen development organisations and government film agencies. Those serious about a filmmaking career may enrol in a full-time film course or attend short courses.

The Screen Australia website is an excellent source of information about getting started in the film industry.

Finding funds

Having a great idea and turning that into a successful script is a pretty tough task, but most people are not aware of just how extraordinarily difficult it is to find finance for a film and how long that process can take. With a better understanding of the complex nature of each stage of production, and the hundreds of skilled people needed to make a film, it’s easier to understand why films cost millions of dollars.

Finance rarely comes from a single source, but requires numerous partners, all willing to commit some of the total budget – and always in the hope of making a return on their investment.

“People are not aware of just how extraordinarily difficult it is to find finance for a film and how long that process can take”
Film financing is the painstaking process of locking in the disparate financial elements and partners. It's a “house of cards” which can fall over when any one element falls away. On average, it takes over four years to finance a film in Australia. Most films don’t make a profit. There are many more secure investment opportunities. Financing a film requires innovative thinking and, in a global financial landscape that is constantly changing, patience and persistence.

No-budget films
The no-budget film is something of a myth. It’s virtually impossible to make a film for mainstream release that has no costs attached. Reasonable quality cameras, lights, tripods, editing software, location fees and just feeding your crew costs money. The no-budget film usually involves friends and colleagues working for no fees or on deferred fees. Many producers try crowd-funding to raise small amounts of money. This can give the filmmaker a lot of creative freedom but takes a long time and much hard work to bring the project to fruition and the returns can be risky.

There are some famous and successful no-budget films such as Gabriel and the cult classic Clerks.

Low-budget Australian films
The next step up the financing ladder is seeking finance through Australian sources, for films budgeted under $3 million. To achieve this, the key creatives (director, cinematographer, composer, etc) are usually Australian and the actors are likely to be well known locally, and probably all Australian.

Low-budget films can take advantage of the tax rebates offered to support film production. This animation illustrates how the system works.

Low-budget Australian films can achieve considerable success - think Strictly Ballroom, Samson and Delilah, Muriel’s Wedding, Animal Kingdom, Wolf Creek and The Babadook.

Success for these films might mean excellent box office revenue, success at international film festivals such as Cannes, Venice or Toronto or it could mean the director’s career is launched in the international film industry.

Medium-budget Australian films
These films have a budget between $3 - $10 million. Their path is similar to low-budget films but the money put up by the sales agent and distributor will be greater, based on strong creative involvement, well-known local actors and possibly some international cast.

The Sapphires is a good example. It was based on a very successful stage play, had great music and popular cast members in Jessica Mauboy and internationally renowned actor Chris O’Dowd.

International co-productions
Budgeted from about $15 million upwards, international co-productions are produced jointly between an Australian producer and an international producer, with some work carried out in each country. Often the film is shot in one country and post-produced in the other.

An international distributor and sales agent will be involved, maybe an international broadcaster. The subject matter is likely to be international, often an adaptation of a novel and the cast is likely to include high-profile Australian actors.

Australian-made, studio-financed
This investment is driven by the director’s box office track record, a high concept and “marquee” cast (actors known to draw audiences into cinemas) or a well-known brand. These blockbuster films can cost almost as much to market as to make. Renowned Australian director Baz Luhrmann has made several films in Australia, financed by Hollywood studios – from Moulin Rouge to The Great Gatsby.

Overseas films in Australia
A number of overseas films are shot or post-produced in Australia because we offer very high production standards, often at less cost than the US or UK. International movies shot in Australia include Wolverine, Mission Impossible 2, Peter Pan, Star Wars: Episode III - Revenge of the Sith and Superman Returns.

International films that have done some or all of their post-production here include The Hunger Games, Gravity and X-Men: Days of Future Past.
These films create hundreds of jobs for local crews and provide opportunities to emerging Australian filmmakers through trainee, apprentice or mentor schemes.

### Adopting sustainable production practices

Like many other businesses, the screen industries have had to amend business practices to reduce their eco-footprints and operate sustainably - from development through to release.

In 1987, the UN defined sustainable development as ‘development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.’

Sustainability is evaluated in three key areas: environmental, social and economic, or People, Planet and Profit.

**Environmental considerations** include: reducing greenhouse gas emissions, waste and the use of harmful toxic substances; reducing resource usage, such as materials, water and fossil fuels; and protection and rehabilitation of local ecological environment during location shoots.

**Economic considerations** include: encouraging innovation of sustainable solutions in the supply chain; reducing costs through resource conservation; and reduction of waste and energy consumption.

**Social considerations** include: knowledge and skills transfer to the local workforce, community and industry; job creation; leaving a legacy of physical materials, enduring infrastructure, or financial support of community initiatives; supporting human rights and fair labour; and ensuring a safe, healthy working environment.

Initiatives are implemented at each stage of production – including development, pre-production and production, post-production and launch – and by every department, including the production office, construction, locations, post-production and merchandise.

Pre-production and production involve more people than any other stages, and create the most waste. But there are many simple ways in which film and TV productions can become more sustainable.

#### Sustainability Tips

- Establish a secure online hub to share documents and files electronically and reduce paper use
- Circulate scripts, schedules, call sheets, cast and crew lists electronically and store files in cloud
- Source mains power from a renewable energy supply such as GreenPower or solar panels
- Run generators on biodiesel or other renewable fuel
- Use energy efficient bulbs, natural light, sensors, rechargeable batteries and a switch-off policy
- Recycle, re-use, compost and use as much as possible from other productions or salvage yards
- Hire or borrow equipment instead of buying new and, at the end of the shoot, sell it to another production
- Use copy paper and toilet paper made from 100% recycled content
- Assess energy star certification when renting equipment to select the most energy efficient.
- Avoid plastic water bottles and disposable cups and have water filling stations
- Ensure printers are default set to print double-sided
- Use hybrid cars to save on fuel costs and provide bike parking

#### Credits

- Screen NSW
- GreenShoot Pacific
- mememe productions

Sustainable operations are increasingly important on film sets.
CHAPTER FOUR

Resources

This chapter contains the following resources:

- Glossary
- Useful links
- Making Movies links
- Acknowledgments
Glossary

Actor
Performer in a film or television program.

ADR
Additional Dialogue Recording or Automated Dialogue Replacement. The re-recording of dialogue during post-production.

Art department
Headed by the production designer, the art department is responsible for the visual look of the film, including elements like sets, set dressing, costumes, props and vehicles.

Block-through
On the set, the director walks through a scene with the actors, director of photography and camera department to detect issues before filming.

Budget
The funds allocated to a film production.

Call sheet
A daily schedule which includes cast and crew call times.

Casting agent
Conducts auditions and screen tests to find actors suitable for roles in a film or television program.

Cinematographer
Expert in the art of capturing images who devises the look of a film or television program by choosing cameras, lenses or film stock.

Clapper loader
Member of the camera department responsible for writing scene, shot and take numbers on a slate and marking up shots.

Colour grading
Adjusting the colour of footage in post-production to achieve a particular look.

Composer
Composes original music for films or television programs.

Dailies
Footage from a shoot that is viewed at the end of the day.

Data wrangler
Manages the digital information, both images and audio, that is acquired on set.

Development
The process of getting from an original story to the point where a film or TV project is ready for financing and production.

Dialogue editor
An editor who cleans up and edits location recordings and ADR to create the final dialogue mix.

Digital cinema package
A collection of digital files and keys used to screen films in cinemas.

Director
The creative head of a film production.

Director of photography
The chief cinematographer on a film. An expert responsible for the art of capturing images, responsible for the look of a film which entails the use and selection of cameras, lenses and film stock.

Distributor
Company that promotes markets a film and negotiates its release with exhibitors.

Dolly
Any moving platform used to support a camera, creating smooth, fluid movement.

Editor
An editor assembles individual shots create a film or television show.

Exhibitor
A cinema or cinema chain that shows films.

Filmography
A list of films that someone has worked on.

Fine cut
The final edit of a film that appears in cinemas.
Glossary

First assistant director
Manages the process of a film shoot, breaking down scenes, creating schedules and ensuring that production runs smoothly.

Front of house staff
Staff who work for exhibitors, often selling tickets and popcorn.

Grip
Member of the camera crew who operates dollies and cranes.

Location manager
Responsible for finding locations, organising permission to shoot on location.

Locked
A film is locked when editing is complete and has been approved.

Marketing staff
Responsible for the advertising, publicity and promotions campaign of a film.

Master shot
Usually a wide shot that incorporates all of the action in a scene.

Music supervisor
Responsible for recommending music for a production and obtaining rights to use tracks in a film.

Option
An agreement between the owner of a story and a film company to produce a film.

Pick ups
Additional shots taken after production has finished.

Post-production
The work that occurs on a film – including editing, sound editing and composing – that occurs after production is complete.

Pre-production
The process of preparing for production once a film has been financed, often including script development, previsualisation, production design, set construction and scheduling.

Press kit
Material distributed to the media to promote a film.

Producer
Responsible for developing a film, overseeing production and delivering the final product to a distributor.

Production department
Department responsible for organisation and administration during a film shoot.

Production designer
Head of the art department responsible for the look of film, which includes props, sets, costumes and other production design.

Production investment agreement
Contracts signed before pre-production which involve the rights to the script, contracts for the director and key cast and agreements about who will fund a film.

Production manager
Head of the production office who is responsible for overseeing the administration of a film production.

Production
The shooting of a film or television program.

Programmer
Employed by a cinema or cinema chain to set the time and frequency of screenings.

Prospectus
A selling document for the film created during development.

Rough cut
An early edit of the film.

Rushes
Unedited footage viewed during dailies.
**Script**
The written plan for a film that includes dialogue and screen directions.

**Shotlist**
A list of all the shots required for a film.

**Showreel**
Compilation of a film professional’s work.

**Shooting schedule**
A plan organising a film shoot.

**Sound effects editor**
Mixes sound effects into a film or television program.

**Sound mix**
Process of combining dialogue, sound effects and music which occurs in post-production.

**Spotting session**
A composer and director collaborate to decide on when and how music will be used in a film.

**Steadicam**
A device for stabilising the camera that allows handheld movement over rough terrain.

**Theatrical distribution**
Screening films in cinemas.

**Video on demand**
Distributing film through pay-to-download services.

**Visual effects**
Digital effects created for films or television programs.

**Wrap**
End of shooting.

**Writer**
Artist responsible for writing a script.
Links to some other useful resources

Assistant director
- The Job of an Assistant Director
- Movie Set Job Description: Assistant Directors
- Creative Skillset: First assistant director
- Working as a 1st Assistant Director
- Scary Cow: Assistant Director

Camera assistant
- Ultimate Guide to a Camera Assistant’s Toolkit
- Creative Skillset: Camera Assistant

Distribution executive
- Wikipedia: Film distributor
- BBC Film Network: Distribution

Film editor
- HowStuffWorks: What does a film editor do?
- Inside the Edit: The Editor

Locations
- Dawn of the Planets of the Apes Location Manager on Filming in Rainforests

Music composer
- Soundworks: Michael Giacchino
- Soundworks: Bryan Tyler
- Captain America: The Winter Soldier’s Composer Henry Jackman on Scoring a Superhero

Hair and makeup artists
- How movie makeup artists work
- Creative Skillset: Makeup Artist

Producer
- Responsibilities of a movie producer
- Rambling On... with Producers: What Does a Producer Actually do?
- What does a Hollywood producer do, exactly?
- Creative Skillset: Producer
- It’s less glamorous than directing, but film producing can be the reel deal

Production designer
- The Importance of Production Design
- Skyfall Video Log: Dennis Gassner
- Explainer: what is production design?
- Building Edge of Tomorrow Exosuits

Production roles
- The Credits

Production runner
- Life as a TV runner
- Creative Skillset: Production Runner

Sound
- 10 Don’ts of Recording Sound for Film
- Godzilla Sound Designers Erik Aadahl & Ethan Van der Ryn on Creature Language

Storyboarding
- ACMI Storyboard Generator
- Storyboard That

Stunt performer
- HowStuffWorks: How stuntmen work
- The Hobbit’s most dangerous stunt
- 5 reasons doing movie stunts is harder than you think

Vehicle supervisor
- The Guardian: Building Batman’s car

Visual effects
- Dawn of the Planet of the Apes: Ape Evolution

Visual effects supervisor
- Wikipedia: Visual effects supervisor
- Get in Media: Visual effects supervisor
- VFX of the Hobbit

For up to date links on film notes:
www.nothingbeatstheralthing.info
Making Movies
video links at a glance

Introduction
Click here to view interview
Writer, Director and Actress Matilda Brown talks film: from the development of an idea to the cinema release, it’s a complex process involving tons of equipment, hundreds of people, enormous persistence and years of work.

The Producer
Click here to view interview
Producer Nicole O’Donohue discusses the process of finding a story, collaborating with a writer to develop the screenplay, finding a director, seeking out financial partners, a distributor and sales agents. Oh, and pouring Ryan Kwanten into a superhero suit.

The Assistant Director
Click here to view interview
Killian Maguire talks about the differences between 1st AD, 2nd AD and 3rd AD on a film, the pivotal role AD’s play and why getting up at 2am to work on The Wolverine in the freezing cold wasn’t a problem.

The Production Runner
Click here to view interview
The runner is considered the starting role for people wanting a film career. Hamish Mason shares what he learned working on Tomorrow When the War Began and The Wolverine and how the runner works with every department on a film.

The Camera Assistant
Click here to view interview
What is a focus puller? The on-set workings of the camera department explained by Camera Assistant Jack Mayo who worked in Japan on The Wolverine and says putting down marks for actor Leonardo di Caprio was initially ‘quite scary’.

The Hair & Makeup Artist
Click here to view interview
Bec Taylor on how hair and make-up artists help create characters and a ‘feel’ for a film, or help produce tears or sweat for actors on set and why it’s not so glamorous when she’s covered in dirt and blood.

The Vehicle Supervisor
Click here to view interview
An industry veteran whose CV includes Superman Returns, The Great Gatsby, Tomorrow When the War Began and The Wolverine, Geoff Naylor talks about how his role interacts with most departments on a film when it comes to characters with wheels.

The Production Designer
Click here to view interview
Production Designer, Felicity Abbott works closely with the director and cinematographer on the ‘look’ of the film and supervises the Art Department to achieve that vision. She says patience, endurance and creativity are important qualities for her job.

The Stunt Performer
Click here to view interview
Ingrid Kleinig spends work days jumping off cliffs, being on fire and crashing or being hit by cars. She has done some terrifying stunts for many famous actors, on films including Mad Max: Fury Road, Pacific Rim and The Great Gatsby.

The Editor
Click here to view interview
Editor Jason Ballantine talks about working with the director to achieve the look, tone and story of a film, plus technological changes since the days of handling film strips, cutting frames with scissors and sticky-taping bits of film back together.

The Music Composer
Click here to view interview
Award-winning music composer Guy Gross talks about how he works with the director, producer, editor and sound designer on a film project. His advice for aspiring composers is listen, learn and go to parties and film festivals to meet people.

The Visual Effects Supervisor
Click here to view interview
Chris Godfrey, visual effects whiz who worked on Tomorrow, When the War Began, Australia, Moulin Rouge and The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring talks about recreating Times Square on ‘green screen’ for The Great Gatsby using state-of-the-art technology.
The Distribution Executive

Managing Director Troy Lum describes the role of the distributor and talks about why releasing Australian films is so much harder; how only one in four films are successful and about distributing the biggest Australian film of 2012 - The Sapphires.

The Film Programmer

Claire Gandy gets paid to watch at least a film a day. One of the few female programmers in the Australian film industry, she talks about ‘super-busy Mondays’, her favourite set visit and costs of installing technology to run digital cinema and 3D.

The Marketing Manager

Heilan Bolton talks about the importance of identifying and understanding target audiences when marketing films. She collaborates with her publicity and promotions colleagues and media agency to find effective ways to reach out to audiences to maximise box office revenue.

Piracy

Actress and conservationist Bindi Irwin talks about the incredibly talented people who work behind-the-scenes on the film and tv shows we all love and we hear from some of them on the impact of piracy on their jobs and the industry.
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For innovative education resources to stimulate thought and discussion in classrooms about copyright: www.nothingbeatstherealthing.info

For research into the online behaviour and attitudes of Australians to film/TV piracy: www.creativecontentaustralia.org.au

For news, in-depth articles, clips, blogs and infographics about copyright: www.contentcafe.org.au
"WE ALL WORK TOGETHER TO BRING A MOVIE TO LIFE. THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT PEOPLE IN VARIOUS ROLES INVOLVED IN A FILM CREW."