September 2008

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From Novel to Screenplay

Me and Orson Welles

Manipulate Mood with Filter Effects

Successfully Collaborate with Your Actors

Solutions for the Traveling Voice-Over Talent

Inside *The Office*: Editors Dean Holland and Dave Roger

7 Sources of Money for Your Short Films and Videos



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On the Cover

Director Richard Linklater directs Christian McKay in *Me and Orson Welles*.



StudentFilmmakers Magazine, the **#1 Educational Resource for Film and Video Makers**, invites you to attend the HD Expo in New York this September 22nd through September 25th at The Waterfront in New York City. Drop by our Exhibit Booth # 86 during the hours of 11am - 7pm. If you haven't yet registered online, sign up for free with our promo code SFM08. Register online today at: www.hdexpo.net/september.

Plan to attend the Rocky Mountain VidExpo 2008 show next month? Make sure to drop by our booth, as we look forward to seeing you again in Colorado. VidExpo will take place October 8th through October 9th.

Meet and network with us at HD Expo in Burbank, CA on October 29th through October 30th. Come visit us at our Exhibit Booth #803.

Another exciting show we are looking forward to is DV Expo 2008, to be held in Los Angeles CA, November 4th through November 6th. We will be at Booth # 336, stop by and be ready for photo ops. Sign up for a free exhibit hall pass using our promo code: STFM8.

Also, save the dates for GV Expo 2008, which will be held December 2nd through December 4th in Washington, D.C. We will be at Exhibit Booth # 758. Don't forget to stop by and introduce yourself. We look forward to seeing you there. Visit studentfilmmakers.com events section for all upcoming industry tradeshows and events.

Enjoy this edition of *StudentFilmmakers* Magazine. This month's Cover Story is "From Novel to Screenplay: Me and Orson Welles," (p.14) by David Kaminski. Read "Inside *The Office*," (p.18) on the Eddie- and Emmy award-winning editors Dean Holland and Dave Rogers, written by Scott Essman. Go to the directing article, "Techniques for Successfully Collaborating with Your Actors," (p.8) by John Badham. Jump to the must-read, "7 Sources of Money for Your Short Films and Video," (p. 46) by Peter W. Rea and David K. Irving.

All the articles in this edition are wonderful, educational, and inspiring pieces.

Truly,
Kim E. Welch
Publisher/Editor-in-Chief

studentfilmmakers

The # 1 Educational Resource for Film and Video Makers

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BPA WORLDWIDE

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even **twins** have their own **personalities.**



the beauty of P2 HD in two new handhelds

Like twins, Panasonic's new AG-HPX170 and AG-HVX200A full production quality P2 HD handheld camcorders are as alike as they are different. They both offer a 13X Leica Dicomar zoom lens; 1080i/p and 720p and 4:2:2 independent-frame recording; variable frame rates; a new, advanced 3-CCD progressive imager with spectacular quality; and the reliability and flexibility of a fast, file-based workflow.

Why might you prefer one over the other? The HVX200A features a DV tape drive in addition to two P2 card slots, allowing you to move easily from SD to HD and from tape to solid-state. If you have already transitioned to a solid-state file-based workflow, the two-slot HPX170 offers additional high-end features, including HD-SDI, metadata input, Dynamic Range Stretch and a 5-year limited warranty (upon product registration).

The HVX200A and HPX170. Distinctly different, yet uniquely alike. Learn more at **www.panasonic.com/p2hd**.



AG-HVX200A
- *11 variable frame rates*
- *4.2mm – 55mm*
- *Lightweight – 5.5 lbs*
- *3.5" flip-out LCD*
- *21 HD and SD formats*



AG-HPX170
- *20 variable frame rates*
- *3.9mm – 51mm*
- *Lightweight – 4.2 lbs*
- *Waveform/Vectorscope*
- *3 focus assist functions*

P2HD when it counts

Panasonic ideas for life

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Manipulate Mood with Filter Effects

How to Evoke Ethereal Solitude with Double Fog Filters

by Ira Tiffen

Peace. Quiet. Solitude. And a sense of the ethereal. Today, we are in a cemetery (pictorially speaking) and seeking to convey the sense of actually being there through our imagery.

Standing upright in the fading sunlight, the markers appear starkly white against the surrounding darkness. Without a filter, the scene is much as it would appear to the actual visitor, but without the otherworldly veil that being there drapes over the mind.

In telling our story, we want to involve our viewer emotionally as well as intellectually. In this grave situation, we must visually impart that sense of the earth below and its connection to heaven above. In our unfiltered scene, we clearly see the stones, the fence, the trees and the building in the background. This is both too much and too little. We want to emphasize the stones and the surrounding fence, the latter as a sort of boundary between two worlds. And we want to diminish the rest.

How to do this? Well, we can use what is known as a Double Fog filter. These were originally developed to simulate the appearance of a natural fog, since in their stronger grades they combine both a strong reduction of contrast with a modest amount of highlight flare, much like an actual fog. In today's case, though, we don't want fog, just the suggestion of it, so we turn to one of the milder grades, the Double Fog ¼.

No Filter



Double Fog ¼



With the filter in place, the image goes through some not-quite-subtle changes. The centers of our attention, the stones and the fence, visually come to center stage, their faint glow and paler tones further separating them from their more mundane surroundings. The contrast is softer, rendering reality a bit less real. The result is the infusion of a sense of the otherworldly, the solemn, yet hopeful contemplation of what is to come for us all.

Or at least as far as our story is concerned!

Photos by Brian Austad

In over 30 years of making optical filters, Ira Tiffen created the Pro-Mist, Soft/FX, Ultra Contrast, GlimmerGlass, and others, netting him both a Technical Achievement Award from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and a Prime-Time Emmy Award. Elected a Fellow of the SMPTE in 2002, he is also an Associate member of the ASC, and the author of the filter section of the *American Cinematographer Manual*.



Techniques for Successfully Collaborating with Your Actors

Acting and Directing are Verbs

by John Badham

"Give me a verb. I love to be given verbs. Give me a verb to play, give me an action. And I'm yours. I love a director who can speak in action, in terms of using verbs. To say, 'In this scene, you want to seduce him.' Really clarify, give me a purpose."

*– **Jeanne Tripplehorn***

Intellectual discussions about scenes and character are the death of good acting and directing. Too many English Literature classes have trained us to look at the bigger thematic pictures, which on a set, will get everyone hopelessly lost in psychobabble and cosmic themes. It's not the actor's job to play the larger themes. It's his job to do the actions… that create the themes.

Acting is about behavior. Whether it's *The Matrix* or *The Miser*, it is about what we *do*. If you can't answer the question, "What is the character 'doing' in the scene?" Then, you don't know what the scene is about. You only think you know.

If we are going to successfully collaborate with our actors we must, must, must learn to communicate with them by using strong, active verbs to describe the action of their characters. If you use grandiose terms you are only confusing matters. Judith Weston's superb book *Directing Actors* lists pages of terrific usable verbs for acting, and shows what a single verb can do for an actor's approach to a scene.

If you can't break a dramatic scene down into actable objectives that can be described by strong, actable verbs, the scene is no good. It has no place in the movie or the play. You may shoot it anyway, but it will always stop the movie cold.

This makes sense. Everything we do in the world is an action. Every action is for a reason. Even if we do nothing, that itself is an action. The choice may be ours, or it may be forced upon us.

For example:

Action – we go to sleep at night as an active choice, to get rest. If we can't sleep there is some reason – we are upset or perhaps we had coffee after dinner. We react to this discovery in some way – we try to force sleep by counting sheep or taking a sleep aid. Whatever we do, we act in some way.

We never do things without some end in mind. If a branch falls off a tree and hits us, we are acted upon. We may be knocked down involuntarily, but our body reacts to stabilize itself. So we have action, and reaction, then the reaction to the reaction and so forth. The great acting teacher Sanford



Meisner said acting is very simple: it is "pinch", followed by "ouch!" Keep your scenes simple, by breaking them down into action / reaction.

Make your actors do the work. Draw them out by getting them to articulate what their character wants to get from the other person. Very likely you will hear answers that are intellectual or unspecific and therefore un-actable. Don't accept this. Press for an active verb. If the actor doesn't give you one, keep asking questions to lead him that way. "What are you trying to *make* him give you?"

Any right answer will contain at least three things:

1. A **verb:** "I am trying to *convince*."
2. A **receiver:** "I am trying to convince *him*."
3. A **desired response:** "I am trying to convince him *to go with me*."

Let's get technical briefly so that we can all be speaking the same language in terms of objectives, actions and adjustments. Everyone uses them slightly differently but the principles are fairly uniform. Some of the other common phrases are: intentions, beats, arcs, journey and given circumstances. It really doesn't matter what words we use, they are all about understanding a character's behavior.

Conflict is the basic foundation of drama. Conflict between characters leads to the sequence of action-reaction, "pinch-ouch." If there is no conflict, there is no drama.

Given Circumstances are the things a character brings to a scene with them: their physical state, their mental state, their past history, as well as what is going on around them. Given circumstances are part of the homework that the actor has to do for himself. He has to understand the entire life and psychology of the character he is playing. That understanding affects how he will perform the action called for in the script.

Objective represents what each character in each scene wants to do at that very moment. There is no such thing as no objective. When a character achieves or changes their objective they immediately have a new one.

Adjustments, the magic As-If: How does one perform an action? A professional baseball pitcher throws a ball one way. A Little League reject throws it another way entirely. A new mother feeds her baby one way, a mother with six children, another. Stanislavsky said that the approach to an adjustment is to perform the objective "as-if". Throw the ball "as-if" you were an uncoordinated kid. Feed the baby "as-if" you were scared you would choke him.

So the combination of these elements leads to how an action is performed.

Given Circumstances → Objective → Adjustment → Action → Reaction

In 2003, I directed Candice Bergen and a young actor named Bug Hall in a suspense movie for CBS titled *Footsteps*. In one scene, Candice's character discovers a young intruder in her house. Her objective becomes to protect herself. While some people might choose to run, or plead for mercy, the character's given circumstances make her choose to overpower the young thug, lock him in the closet and call the police.

The thief's objective is now to escape, and he must try different tactics to achieve this goal.

1. He looks around to see if he can physically break out of the closet and run away from her. That doesn't work.
2. He pleads with her, telling her that his parents will kill him when they find out. The adjustment is (*to escape* by) *making her feel sorry for him so she will open the door.* When she stonewalls him, he has to make another choice.
3. He tells her he is claustrophobic and stages a panic attack. It's the same objective, (escape by) *really making her feel sorry for him,* just now he has raised the stakes.

It's a fairly simple scene with an obvious objective. However, each take

