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The Artists Rights Foundation presents:

MAKING MOVIES

A Guide for Young Filmmakers

013322

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Introduction



The Mask of Zorro
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Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas
The Grinch (Jim Carrey) conspires with his dog Max to deprive the Who's of their favorite holiday.
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This manual will help you make a movie. It is written like a basic recipe for chocolate; it gives you the basic ingredients and lays out the *process*. Whether you make fudge or M & M's is your challenge. As a filmmaker, you also have a challenge: **to tell your story with your vision, using your creativity and intelligence.** Whether you are ambitiously learning how to make a movie on your own, or working with others in a moviemaking group or class, enjoy. Enjoy the flexibility and discover the fantastic foibles of filmmaking.

This guide explains the basics of making a low-budget, student film. It's a big contrast to Hollywood, but the talents and skills needed to make a good film are the same.

In Hollywood, hundreds of people often work on a single film. You might work together with just eight friends but the process remains the same.

On a big Hollywood production, there are many specific jobs. If you watch the credits at the end of a major movie, you will see that there is a director (who is in charge of the entire movie), actors, at least one writer, a cinematographer, a producer, an executive producer, an associate producer, editors, art directors, and sound-effects people. One person operates the camera, one person is in charge of moving the camera, and

still another might be in charge of making sure nothing gets in the way of the camera. There are also dialogue coaches, stunt coordinators, grips and gaffers, makeup artists, assistant makeup artists, costume specialists, and assistant costume specialists. These are just a few of those involved in a big Hollywood movie.

Fortunately, you do not need all these people to make a film. In making a short film, each person has a special role to play, and each will probably have multiple jobs in order to accomplish all the aspects of film production. This guide introduces these different components.

- Everyone has something special to offer in making a movie.
- This is about learning, having fun, and exploring your creativity.

Just like athletes must practice to build their strength, coordination and skill, this manual offers experiments, or explorations to work your moviemaking muscles. Some might be as boring as lifting weights. Others might be as fun as a pick-up game of basketball. Together, they will help give you the skills and experiences needed to direct and make a movie. You have to provide the creativity.

A Word from Your Sponsor

This manual is brought to you courtesy of The Artists Rights Foundation (ARF). ARF is an organization of some of the top people in Hollywood — some of the most famous and talented directors, actors, writers, cinematographers, producers, and editors in the business. Tom Cruise, Harrison Ford, Whoopi Goldberg, Spike Lee, Steven Spielberg, and John Woo are just a few of the many ARF supporters.

Founded in 1991, by the Directors Guild of America, ARF works to educate the public about an issue that is of tremendous concern to people in the film business: film alteration.

What is film alteration? You might not realize it, but many of the films you watch have been altered after they have played in your local theater — especially the ones on TV. Usually, a television network, or the studio that owns the film, has altered the film by making it shorter. They sometimes cut as much as 30 minutes of film footage to make it fit into a standard TV time slot.

Imagine making a movie — sometimes spending years making sure it is exactly right —then some of your favorite scenes are cut out of it. And then, your name is on a version of your film that has been changed by someone else. No doubt, you would be very upset.

Films are altered in other ways too: Movies shot on black and white film might be colorized even though the director of the film *wanted* the film to be shown in black and white. Films shot for a wide, rectangular, theater-sized screen are chopped off to fit the square-shape of a television set which eliminates the sides of the picture, even when critical parts of the image are being cut off.

Imagine if this were to happen to a film that you made. It wouldn't feel like it was your movie anymore, would it?

We wrote this book to help young people make a film for a couple of reasons: First, because we know it is one of the most interesting, creative activities you can do. And second, if more people appreciate the decisions and passion it takes to make a movie, they will better understand why it is wrong for other people to change them after they are made. By doing so, they will understand our fight against film alteration.

As you know, the product you create is entirely your own. It reflects your vision. It comes from you. Your name is on it. It should not be changed to fit into a convenient time slot or TV box, or anything else.

I hope you enjoy telling your story, and that it will always remain *your* creation.



Elliot Silverstein
President
January 2001

Preface: What Is a Movie?

The word “movie” comes from the term “motion picture” - pictures that move.



Mrs. Doubtfire

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Beetlejuice

Barbara and Adam Maitland (Geena Davis and Alec Baldwin) change their minds about using the skills of demonic “freelance bio-exorcist” Betelgeuse (Michael Keaton) when he shows them his scary stuff.

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Like books, movies tell a story. But instead of words on paper, movies are a visual and a listening experience. The audience sees and hears the story. People all over the world love this powerful medium — they love the way movies tell stories.

The storyteller is the director. He/she is in charge of how a story is made into a film. Exactly where and how the images are filmed and edited, how the actors portray their characters, and what the audience experiences, is all part of the director’s vision. The story itself can be simple or complex, silly or intense. The director’s vision is responsible for how the movie makes the audience feel about the story: sad, amused, bored, exhilarated, scared, powerful, or humble.

Stories in books can describe any place in the universe, with any number of characters. But there are constraints in filmmaking. Film directors can be limited by the weather, number of actors, available space, and, especially, the money needed for props, costumes, special lighting, sound and camera equipment. So, a lot of creative problem-solving comes into play.

It is the director’s challenge to make his or her vision translate from story to movie, using

the techniques of filmmaking — things like character development, camera angles, and editing. But you have to develop your own vision and probably the best way is to create (or help create) a film from beginning to end. By doing so, you will learn how to:

- develop a story and interesting characters
- write the story in the language of filmmakers: a screenplay
- create a visual storyboard to show camera angles, distance, and subjects
- plan a filming schedule
- utilize various camera, sound, and lighting techniques
- work with actors
- understand the power of art direction and continuity
- use costumes and makeup
- do post-production sound and editing

These components are presented in this manual for you to learn, practice, and adapt to fit your own vision. Throughout this manual, movies will be recommended as prime examples of different techniques and film accomplishments. Don't worry if you can't see every movie. You can observe and analyze the concepts in many films.