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1

Construction

I have a metaphor for making a movie. Making a movie is like building a house. It doesn't matter if it's :30 seconds or 4 hours long, and it doesn't matter if it's a home VHS-C camcorder or an Imax 70mm film camera. Most people know that there's the 3 phases of making a movie:

PRE-PRODUCTON
PRODUCTION
POST-PRODUCTION

The house metaphor works like this; your script/story/idea is the BLUEPRINT. Where most first timers make the mistake is thinking because there is so much involved and so many people involved with the shoot that production is at least partially construction. Nope. The shoot is nothing but the COLLECTION OF RAW MATERIALS. The edit and post production is CONSTRUCTION.

**SCRIPT = BLUEPRINT
SHOOT = RAW MATERIALS
EDIT/POST = CONSTRUCTION**

Using this metaphor, if your script/story/idea is not good, no matter what you do on the shoot, you can't make a good movie. You could have the best materials in the world, IE best actors, best performances, great camera work, but since the blueprint sucked, you can't build a good house.

Similarly, you can have the best blueprints ever written (think Shakespeare or some other great literary piece), but without good camera work and even better performances, you can't put it all together in post and make it suddenly good.

Finally, the third scenario means that with the greatest foundations, and even better raw materials, without a good editor and post production team putting it all together, your house will still fall apart.

People starting out often wonder which part is the most important part of filmmaking. They are all equally important. No aspect, no detail, and no job on a movie are insignificant. They all contribute to the whole.

Remember the audience is a non-active participant. That's not an oxymoron either. You are emulating human experience in a kind of hyper-reality. You are manipulating the viewer intentionally. If you are making a comedy, you're trying to make someone laugh when they weren't laughing, or in a drama you're trying to force someone to think or feel something they weren't before they started to watch your movie. Everything from camerawork to performance to set design to music and editing are the weapons in your arsenal to make the audience go where you want and feel how you intend.



Scary Larry

In the year 2000, I started a group called the "Columbus Film Consortium". Once I had made a few short films and discovered these pockets of actors looking for movies in one part of town, then some cinematography people in another corner, I thought to myself, "*Wouldn't it be great if all these people could find each other?*" and thus the "CFC" was born.

We had monthly meetings, a few screenings and film festivals, classes for actors, a website, and all kinds of stuff. The Consortium grew and was very popular. Our attendance at the monthly meetings started peaking at around 75 people a month. I was against membership dues or generating money

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for it as I wanted it to eventually become a 501(c)3 Non Profit Corporation, but then that takes time & money, plus a lot of effort.

It was during this time that I met my future babe, My Sexy Girlfriend Veronica [™] and her then manager, a gentleman we'll call SCARY LARRY. Veronica was an actor, and at the time, she had a friend, a guy in his late 50's who worked at a funeral parlor. SCARY LARRY wanted to help his friend, a young girl in her 20's, and act as her manager for her acting career. He, like many of these older guys, made many promises, and delivered on none of them.

They both approached me to help get the CFC to the next level. I needed the help, so I was relieved. Veronica was set to research the 501(c)3 Non profit status and that required us to spend time together. We immediately hit it off, unbeknownst to SCARY LARRY. Veronica and I started going to dinner a lot and going to movies, and we stopped talking about the Columbus Film Consortium.

SCARY LARRY made promises of funding and resources that could help make the CFC a powerful entity. He also made the customary promises of knowing a lot of people with money and could help get investors for a movie very easily since he worked at a country club years before. When asked to get in touch with these people, there's the usual stall tactics common in most people with no access to any money.

Veronica and I officially started dating, but decided not to tell too many people. Once SCARY LARRY became suspicious, before he even had evidence, he started actual stalking. First following her car wherever she went, and even staking out my house. I could see his big car on the corner and we'd have to do fancy driving with complex routes to lose the guy just to have chicken tenders at a sports bar.

At one of the screenings of short films from CFC members, SCARY LARRY even went so far as to exaggerate my sexual prowess. He told Veronica about several alleged relations I had with actresses to get parts. Of course what he didn't know is that she had been hanging out at my place so much, Veronica

SCARY LARRY

and I were going out with most of these actresses who were and remain just friends.

It was when he started driving by her house at all hours and calling and hanging up a lot (*unaware of modern caller ID technology apparently*), that she got sufficiently scared. Veronica sent the customary email saying, "please don't contact me ever again."

This affected the Columbus Film Consortium considerably. Veronica had dropped out, there was disarray in the organization when SCARY LARRY became much more concerned with Veronica and stopped actually doing anything for the organization. He still approached other local directors, trying to get Veronica work, acting as her manager... even though she had requested he never contact her again.

The real problem and the meat of this story kick in with an email to Veronica. Veronica received an email from a generic AOL account that said:

I received a copy of your resume. I like your look, & would like to meet with you this Sunday July 14th at the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Cleveland Ohio. RE: a screen test for a Paramount Pictures and MTV Films venture.

- Neal Moritz

Now this had so many **RED FLAGS**, you'd think that Nazi's were invading. Now this was pretty obviously a fake. From misspelling "Paramount" to a producer with nothing better to do than trying to bang an unknown actress in Ohio, this looked bad. Well, I called Neal Moritz' production company, Original Films, and got to his personal assistant. I asked her if he was going to be in Cleveland on July 14th, and she said absolutely not since he was on set (shooting Vin Diesel in **xxx** no less). She asked me to forward the email on to her & Neal, so I did. Neal Moritz was understandably pissed off. If some actress thinks she's auditioning for him and gets raped and/or killed by

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some mad man, Neal Mortiz' name would get dragged through the mud when he did nothing wrong.

I independently confirmed with a friend at AOL that SCARY LARRY did in fact register the sub-email account and he did. Best case scenario, SCARY LARRY was going to trick Veronica into driving to Cleveland 2 hours away and trap her in a hotel room to say, "*Look, I lied to you but here's what I really want to say...*", and that's not good. Worst case scenario, who knows what he would have done to her?

Yes, we filed restraining orders and took action. The consequence was that we took the summer off from the Columbus Film Consortium, canceling meetings and classes while we recovered from this. It was a fallow time. In the mean time, SCARY LARRY attempted suicide and was put in a mental hospital for a few weeks.

In September, after months of silence, we tried to reopen the CFC. I was greeted by a letter from the Attorney General's office saying I was under investigation for embezzling thousands of dollars from a non profit organization. SCARY LARRY had filed a complaint. I went down there with our bank account statements and all of our cancelled checks and reconciled them with an attorney investigating the case. As I explained then, it's impossible to embezzle thousands of dollars when the grand total monies earned was under \$200 and the books match.

I ended the CFC that day & have no interest in participating in any group like it ever again.

LESSONS LEARNED?

Girls, if a guy is trying to help you out as an actor, he better be a blood relative, or he's probably interested in something else.

If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. If you get an email from someone claiming to be a big Hollywood Producer, look up the numbers and try to verify it before going. The world is a scary, ugly place sometimes.

