RMM General Meeting Minutes January 30, 2014 (January 2014 Meeting)

Start Time: 6:34PM

Total in Attendance: 32

Location: RCTV

Agenda:

Introductions:

* Made individually around the room
* Announced membership price of only $25.00 a year, and joint RMM/RCTV membership for only $65.00 a year
  + Voting members get free tickets and discounts to events

Upcoming Events:

RMM M2M 2014

* Announced all 19 teams that signed up completed their films on time
* Screening and Awards Ceremony will be Monday, February 10, 2014 at 7:00pm at Cinema Theater

Executive Board Meetings

* Next meeting is Thursday, February 13, 2014 at 6:00pm at The Little Theater Cafe

RMM Writers Workshop

* Next meeting is Tuesday, February 4, 2014 at 6:00PM at Pita Pit, 311 Alexander Street
* Bring outlines, short scripts, or first ten pages of feature for reading and discussion
* All skill levels welcome

Script-A-Palooza

* To be held during March 2014 RMM General Meeting
  + Script Competition for 10-page or less scripts (short films or excerpts from feature films)
  + Members vote for “Best Screenplay” award
* Entrants are highly encouraged to attend a Writers Group meeting to pitch/read script and receive feedback

Speaker:

Avery Munger – “Pre-Production For Directors: Essential Tasks To Do Before Filming”

1. Background

A. What is a “Director”?

1. Definition: “A director is a person who directs the making of a film. Generally, a director controls a film's artistic and dramatic aspects, and visualizes the script while guiding the technical crew and actors in the fulfillment of that vision.”

a) How involved is a Director? Arguable they spend the most time on a film - 20hr days are not unusual.

1. Director’s Role during pre-production mayhem

A. So what are the Essential Tasks

1. Create a Vision

a) Read the script!

(1) For hired Directors this is a no-brainer and has to be done

(2) For Writer/Directors - they usually think they can skip this step - mistake if they do

(a) Why? Because they are already at disadvantage

i) too involved in the story for a fresh perspective and...

ii) is difficult to have a gut (visceral) reaction like you would have reading someone else’s script

b) What do I do when I’m working on a film

(1) Read the script as if it’s the finished film I’m watching - whether I wrote it or not

(a) take lots of notes on the emotional responses I have on scenes/sequences/dialogue/characters

(b) Many times I jot down colors, music, or other imagery that helps me remember and explain what my experience is

(c) I use these notes to help determine the visceral core of the story and begin to formulate my vision from that

2. Do In-Depth Story Breakdown / Analysis

a) Simply: it’s what makes the story tick

(1) For example: not the nuts & bolts, but the reasons

(a) Not figuring out the props in each scene, etc.

i) this is done by the AD typically

(b) Not figuring out the angles, locations, etc.

i) that’s done later w/ the Cinematographer, etc.

(2) What questions determine the reasons (or what makes it tick)?:

(a) Who are the characters? what are their Internal/External needs in the story?

(b) What are their obstacles and how to they adjust or overcome them?

(c) What actions do they take in order to overcome the obstacles?

(d) What is the A/B Plot, act breaks, sequences, etc.

b) What do I do?

(1) First, I do a “Character Study” on each of the primary (lead & significant supporting) characters in the script - creating a “Character Spine”

(2) Next, I do a “step outline” of the plot and the setups & payoffs throughout the script

(3) I use to carry around a small steno pad with all these notes, but nowadays, it’s an iPad, Laptop, or phone

(4) use these notes on set if necessary - hopefully the prep I’ve done will help the talent and bring out those great performances

3. Do an In-Depth Screenplay Logistical Breakdown

a) Just a note: This is typically done by the Assistant Director or a breakdown service. However, for many of us as Indie Directors usually need to wear many hats, so this is something you should at least try once for familiarity of the process.

b) So, what does a logistical breakdown look like?

(1) First step, marking the 1/8ths for determining the length of a scene or sequence of scenes

(a) valuable for Line Producer and AD for scheduling the shoot and time

allotted on sets, locations etc.

(2) Using breakdown sheets you’ll determine:

(a) The number and types of actors required

(b) How many scenes each actor will be in and the total length of their performances

(c) The requirements, number and types of locations

(d) The number and types of stunts, special effects, visual effects

(e) What special costumes and makeup will be required

(f) What props are required

4. Collaborate w/ the Cinematographer (DP) and other creative crew

a) This one is essential.

(1) Frankly... you’re not doing your job as a director if your only collaborative communication with your DP is on set before you roll on each setup - not doing your film a favor either

(2) A good DP will have done their own analysis and breakdown of the script and characters and may be able to contribute to improve and enhance your initial vision. For example:

(a) how shot choice/lens choices affect story

(b) how lighting and color pallets affect the audience perception of story

b) When working with your DP...

(1) Convey your vision, mood, etc.

(2) together, decide on the shots you must have

(3) storyboard complex scenes

(4) Discuss color, lighting, textures, costume, sets vs locations.

(5) Determine what shots need special equipment.

(6) Determine what shots involve VFX (if any) and bring in the VFX Supervisor to discuss

c) This is also where you would be meeting with your Prod Designer/Art Dir, Costumes, etc. discussing the same things above

5. Blocking/Rehearsals

a) Does this sound familiar?

(1) “I have no time or money to rehearse!”

(a) I suggest you’ll have less time & money if you don’t rehearse

(2) “I want spontaneity from my actors”

(a) The lack of spontaneity is likely due to the exhaustion & frustration on set more than the fact they have rehearsed the part

(b) My experience is that you get better performances when you rehearse scenes because they (the Actors) have had more time with the character by the time shooting begins

(3) “I can fix it in post!”

(a) Not to sound harsh, but this is lazy filmmaking and can potentially cost more

(b) Beside what I just mentioned... Why rehearse?

(i) everyone goes onto the set the first day with a shared understanding of your vision

(ii) with tight budgets you’re dealing with 2-3 takes vs. 19+ marathon as you explain the characters and their objectives on set

(iii) You are not doing the bad habit of “dump-truck directing and providing your editor with 19+ takes of one shot

(4) and you save money by shooting less days and being in post-production less time

(5) Producers like Directors that are efficient and stay within preordained filming timelines and budget requirements - in other words, it won’t hinder you when looking for your next directing opportunity.

III. Final Thoughts

The most effective directors work by

• being well prepared

• having a strong vision

• share that vision

• encourage the crew and actors to participate in the process by each contributing their best effort and creativity.

End of Meeting: 8:00PM