

# Orange County Film Festival

## *Creating An Award Winner*

It is a common understanding among filmmakers that it is not the look of your film, but its content and story that garnish an award winning spectacle. However, all technical aspects of the film should be taken very seriously, from picture, to sound, to encoding and so on. A dedicated filmmaker would never want technical deficiencies to take away from his storytelling. Most of technical problems arise in the production and filming phase, not using a tripod when one is necessary, using gain accidentally or in place of lighting, incorrect color balancing, etc. However, much of what was not expected or done wrong in production can be adjusted if not fixed in post. Here is a list of 10 things to keep in mind during your post production in order to produce a final product worthy of praise.

### **1. Gaps in Editing**

It is perhaps the easiest problem to fix and one of the most common problems in student project, especially ones done in a time crunch, which basically means all of them. Sit down and watch the project once through, keep a keen eye out for any black holes between edits as well as other editing problems. It could really help to turn off your speakers and focus on the image alone.

### **2. Color Consistency**

If little editing gaps are most common in student projects, then color inconsistencies are right up there are the second most common issue. Generally time restrictions force editors and directors not to get to a color correction phase, however, it is a very noticeable portion of the experience for the viewer. Whether you use the 3-way color correction filter in Final Cut Pro, 3rd party plug-ins, or even Apple's Color, make sure to take the time and go through this step. You can correct for any unbalanced color temperature, make blacks richer, add contrast, and give your film an overall signature look.

### **3. Aspect Ratio**

This should not be a problem if you are using all P2 DVCPRO 720 source footage captured on FilmEd equipment, using the right settings for your sequence in Final Cut Pro. However, if you are using multiple formats as source footage, it is important to keep a close eye on this matter. The aspect ration can be changed for individual clips under the motion tab inside the viewer.

### **4. Audio Levels**

Your video is made up of two parts really, Video and Audio. Don't forget the latter. Many seasoned professionals argue that audio makes up 51% of a work. This is because it's easier for one to notice an audio problem, then a video problem. Bad audio automatically labels a project as unprofessional, while people tend to tolerate sub-par video, sometimes because we are used to bad video, as in most of YouTube. Make sure your audio levels are consistent and don't go from a whisper to a shout, unless you want it to be that way. Also, look out for over modulation, constant hiss in the audio, and background noise. All those problems can be fixed to a great degree within Final Cut, Soundtrack, and Pro Tools, you pick which one you like.

### **5. Titling**

Good titles are important, no doubt about it. But don't let your titles overpower your work, use them to inform the audience, and to give credit where it's due. There is absolutely nothing wrong with Wes Anderson inspired yellow blocky titles, but there are plenty of things wrong when your titles are as long if not longer than the duration of your actual content, or when they come with funky effects that distract from the story, or when they simply block the most of the video, the list goes on.

### **6. Effects**

Use them when you need them, not whenever you feel like it. Chances are your cut looks better when it's a hard cut, unless you are using an effect for a purpose, such as a dissolve to show the passage of time. Take it from the people who are going to be judging your work, we have seen the effects, pretty much all of them, so don't use an effect to show it off.

### **7. Running Time**

Shorter is generally better. If you can tell your story and have it make sense in half the time, we like to

see it that way too. More so, it's a scheduling issue, if we can fit two very good projects in a ten minute slot for instance, we will do that instead of fitting in one very good one. So, you are literally increasing your chances just by cutting down. So, don't make our provided maximum running time for your category the actual time for your submission, if possible that is.

#### **8. Encoding**

This is really boring, we agree. And it's very complicated with literally hundreds of settings and probably a million of different ways to do it, we doubly agree. Therefore, we have made a guide for you to take advantage of. Once again, assuming you use a discrete P2 workflow, these steps should be super simple and straight forward. Let us know if you need any additional help, email [ocff@filmedacademy.com](mailto:ocff@filmedacademy.com) for specific problems.

#### **9. Peer Evaluation**

You have probably spent the last good portion of your time working on this project. You can barely remember the names of people in your crew and it's half an hour before you have to submit your work. Chances are you are too involved in the story to be able to accurately judge its flaws at this point. It is vital for you to bring a friend, or parent, or sibling, who knows much less than you about this project, show them the work and ask for their opinion. Not only can they point out parts which are unclear, which could be fixed with an insertion of a shot, or taking one out, but they can also point out many of the technical problems talked about above.

#### **10. Rules are Rules**

There are principles that stand at the core of our festival. They are put in place to insure a positive atmosphere that is suitable to everyone from your little brother or sister to your grandparents. We understand if you're a big fan of grizzly horror films, or gun toting westerns, and look forward to see those films from you later in your career, but for now, please make sure your film goes along with the guidelines set forth. In the past we've had several incredible films disqualified from competition because they included weapons, violence, etc. We have to make that phone call telling you we love your film, but can't accept it, please help us not to have to.

#### **Here are the rules, just in case you needed to see them one more time:**

- Your video is APPROPRIATE and does not include any use of weapons, drugs, alcohol, nudity, sex, excessive violence, or material deemed to be offensive to categories of individuals based on their religion, ethnicity, race, sex, or sexuality.
- Your video must be created between January 1, 2009 - December 1, 2009, and was not created as part of the Summer Workshop program.
- The video you submitted is done by those who are credited.
- You will NOT post any of the work you submitted online (ie. Facebook, Youtube, Vimeo etc.) until after the film festival.