

## **ABOVE THE LINE**

Above the line refers to the positions of high importance – those on top of the hierarchy who have a lot of authority on a film set. Historically, this was done to separate the budget for these roles before a film was made from a separate budget that was created for the actual production.

### **EXECUTIVE PRODUCER (EP)**

Typically, the executive producer is someone who finances a film, but isn't 100% involved on the day-to-day creative process during production. For short films commissioned by businesses, this may be the CEO who signs off on the project

### **PRODUCER**

The producer is hired by the executive producer to ensure the movie is made correctly and that everything goes smoothly. A producer usually creates an initial budget and runs the logistics during production – in a sense, they're the equivalent of a project manager in a modern company.

Depending on the size of the production, there can be several producers on a movie, all of whom have their own areas of expertise (such as finance, location or crew).

### **DIRECTOR**

The director is the one responsible for telling the story and bringing it to life on screen. A director's responsibilities include working with the actors, answering interview questions, setting location and blocking, as well as writing shot lists and deciding on the film's overall look and composition. The director is responsible for the look, feel and mood of the film and works with all levels of creative talent and production members.

## SCREENWRITER

The screenwriter is responsible for writing the script or narration, or sometimes drafting interview questions for the director. This role largely depends on the type of production, whether that be a film, commercial, documentary or digital video, all of which may require the screenwriter to work closely with the producing team and director on elements such as mood, setting, and character descriptions.

The lines you always repeat from your favorite movies? You have the screenwriter(s) to thank for that.

## TALENT

Actors and actresses are huge assets to films. In many branded entertainment pieces, such as the Quiksilver commercials we produced, the talent were endorsed athletes who held long-term contracts with Quiksilver. For our Penny Skateboards videos, we were able to reach out to friends to cast the entire piece.

## **BELOW THE LINE**

The below the line crew are often viewed as being more expendable to the production and can be replaced more easily, if need be. They're typically hired only after a film or video has been given the green light. And although they're responsible for a majority of the day-to-day heavy lifting on a project, they typically only work in one or two phases of a film.

### **LINE PRODUCER**

The line producer works with the producing team and handles the budget, specifically by tracking and logging expenses.

On smaller productions, a line producer can be overkill if the film's producer can handle all production logistics and needs.

### **ASSOCIATE PRODUCER**

Associate producers help above the line producers with various tasks throughout the production process. Associate producer are often those who are working their up the chain of command. They may also be responsible for securing an asset for the film being made, such as financing, an actor or location. This is akin to a formal "thanks for the help!" from the executive producer or producing team.

### **PRODUCTION MANAGER**

Production managers are responsible for the physical aspects of production, but are not involved in any of the creative work. They're imperative to executing certain logistics, such as making sure gear and equipment arrive on time.

## ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Contrary to their title, assistant directors don't actually direct the film, but instead, run the day-to-day management. Their responsibilities include managing the shooting schedule and keeping the crew on track each day, as well as queuing up the background actors. Typically, only larger sets have room for one or more assistant directors.

## DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY (AKA, DP OR CINEMATOGRAPHER)

The DP works with the director on bringing the look, feel and mood of the film to life for your audience. DPs are responsible for all lighting decisions and the quality of the light (such as its shape, intensity, position and color). They provide input on camera angles, lens choice and movement.

DPs will also offer insight into which camera to use during production, depending on several factors. Most DPs will prefer different camera systems depending on the style of work being done, such as a commercial on set or a documentary on location.

## CAMERA OPERATOR

On smaller productions, the DP will also operate the camera. However, on larger productions, this task is often given to an operator who can help move the production along smoothly and increase everyone's speed.

## CAMERA ASSISTANT

Low budget productions will have a camera assistant, or "1st AC," before having a dedicated camera operator. ACs are responsible for helping the DP get the right lens for the shot, in addition to making sure any batteries, media cards and other accessories needed are ready for the next group of shots or

scene. They're typically tasked with building the camera at the beginning of the day and making sure everything gets put back in its place at the end. Depending on the number of cameras being used, you may also see 2nd and 3rd ACs helping the 1st AC.

## **GAFFER**

The gaffer works with the director of photography to help shape the light. Essentially, gaffers are in charge of lighting and will place flags, nets or diffusion filters on lights to control their color, softness and intensity. Gaffers traditionally manage the grips and electricians on set and usually work their way up to being DPs.

## **GRIP**

The grips are responsible for building and rigging lighting, dolly tracks and other lighting accessories. The key grip is in charge of other grips and reports to the gaffer. On smaller sets, it's common to have the same person handling the gaffing and gripping during the production.

## **ELECTRICIAN**

The electrical team handles getting power on set (usually required for the production's lights) and manages the power draw on the building or generator. Electricians will run distribution boxes strategically on set so that they're both safe and out of the way from other personnel.

## **DIT**

The digital intermediate technician (DIT) is what many people call the most important role on set. The DIT is responsible for transferring the filming data on the camera's cards to hard drives (note – plural). They usually have a

system for this process and back up each card a minimum of two times. They may also use programs like Shotput Pro that performs check sums of the data to make sure all files are there and are not corrupt.

Although corrupt data is rare, when it does happen, there's nothing that can be done about it. Therefore, DITs must work quickly and perform quality control checks throughout the filming process to ensure nothing's lost.

## ART DIRECTOR

The Art Director works with the Production Designer, Set Designer, Prop Master and others in the Art Department. The Art Director is responsible for realizing the creative vision set by the Director to give the film a unique look. Often times the Art Director is in charge of bringing a brand's look and feel to a commercial or entertainment piece.

## BOOM OPERATOR

The boom operator is easily identifiable on set – he's the one holding the microphone on the pole wearing headphones. The boom op's job is to get the microphone as close to the action as possible, without the equipment or its shadows showing up on camera.

## PRODUCTION SOUND MIXER

Finally, the sound mixers take all the audio inputs generated by the filming process and records them to flash media cards. They'll then place mics on each actor or character and record them on separate channels, giving them the ability to adjust the audio levels of each mic individually.

Good sound mixers will make sure all audio tracks are recording properly, providing much more flexibility in post production. They'll typically bring their own equipment and microphones, making the sound quality as good as possible.

Below-the-line crew refers to everybody else including:

Assistant director

Art director

Best boy electric and grip

Boom operator

Camera operator

Carpenter (theatre)

Character generator (CG) operator (television)

Director of photography

Costume designer

Composer

Dolly grip

Film editor

Gaffer

Graphic artist

Hair stylist

Key grip

Line producer

Location manager

Make-up artist

Production assistant

Script supervisor (continuity)

Set construction

Sound engineer

Stage manager (television)

Technical director (TD) (television)

Unit production manager [5]

Video control broadcast engineering (television)

Visual effects editor

## PRE PRODUCTION BASICS

1. BUDGETING
2. SHOOTING SCRIPT
3. PLANNING THE SHOOT
4. THE PLAN MEET
5. REHEARSALS/WORKWOPS
6. STORY BOARDS
7. CASTING
8. KNOW YOUR EQUIPMENT
9. LOCATIONS