

The Kid Stays Out of the Picture

I'll start by giving you the lesson I learned about all of this: You'd better love, and I mean *love*, the world of filmmaking if you plan on making it your career.

In those dark and hazy days after my undergraduate education was complete, and I was playing my Generation X (remember that?) card for all it was worth, I one day decided on a course of action that I thought would pretty much set me up for life. I was going to become a film director. New York University offered at the time, and probably still offers, a series of summer programs covering the different disciplines associated with the art of filmmaking. I signed up for a six-week course informally known as "Sight and Sound," which taught the very basics of working a 16-millimeter camera and taping unsynchronized tracks of sound to "lay over" your film footage.

And I must say I was excited at the prospect of going to study at this prestigious film school where my favorite director at the time, Martin Scorsese, once studied. If by the end of six weeks I was prepared to make a film even half as good as *Goodfellas* or *The Last Temptation of Christ*, then I figured the tuition was (my parents') money well spent. A couple of things though caught me by surprise along the way.

First there was New York City in the summertime. The heat that New York produces during the summer is like nothing I'd ever experienced. It seeps into you, wilts your clothing, and has you sweating by nine o'clock in the morning. I've experienced hotter, but not denser. Add to these conditions the

fact that filmmaking in New York (on the amateur level anyhow) involves hauling your own equipment around, up and down subway stairs and across the Avenue of the Americas, and you've got a pretty good picture of the physical demands that I never saw coming.

Then there was the technical side of things. A movie camera, it turns out, has to be charged and loaded with film before it can be used. Who knew? Before turning us loose on the streets of New York to make our respective masterpieces, we all had to be proficient at loading and unloading film and versed in the correct use and proper care of all the school's film equipment. This was a momentum breaker: it was tedious and, in the case of learning to load film into a camera, harder than expected.

Moving on, it turns out that in order to make films you have to collaborate and plan and scout locations. In other words, there are a lot of logistical matters to take care of before you can shout "action" through your megaphone. This can be tricky and, in the case of shooting in New York, even a little dangerous. I remember one afternoon shooting some footage in a dubious-looking playground in Alphabet City when a homeless man approached our crew (we were broken up into teams of four) and asked if he could be in the film. He asked if he could defecate on our leading lady. I showed him that day's shot list and told him I didn't see it happening, all the while hoping he wouldn't lunge for our camera or one of us.

Editing your film was enjoyable. It was calming, after a day of fighting the

battle outside that is New York, to hole up in a quiet and darkened editing suite and play your footage on the Steenbeck editing console. It was a place to work but also a place to recuperate and daydream about future award acceptance speeches. Of course, after spending hour after hour cutting film and splicing it together, moving this section here and then that section there, you went a little crazy from lack of sunlight. Editing takes stamina, come to find out, and lots of it.

And then it was glory time. Each afternoon our short films were shown for the entire course section to critique. Some of the efforts were interesting, but the majority were what you'd expect: out of focus, poorly edited (some editing splices of a few films unraveled while on the projector), and about as imaginative as butter and toast (most of our films were knock-offs of chase scenes or music videos we'd all been weaned on). After your film was screened you took questions at the front of the classroom from your fellow students:

Question: "Why did you shoot that last scene that way?"

Answer: "Uhhh, well, it, uh, I really don't know."

"Sight and Sound" was a revelation for me. It cured me of my fantasy of being the next Martin Scorsese—rest easy, Marty. It's hard work making movies. And when you're trying to make them in New York City in the summertime, well, you find out if you love it or not.

—Dave Korzon