

THE PRODUCTION CAST & CREW

To achieve the incredibly high quality we see in movie theatres today it takes a fine oiled machine that employs hundreds of artists and technicians -- each with a specific job. Here's a quick look at the major players and a summary of what they do.

Producer: The producer usually originates the idea and finds the money to make the film. The producer also hires cast and crew and not only supervises the production process but the film's distribution and theatrical release, as well.

Screenwriter: Screenwriters develop original screenplays or adapt existing material such as books or plays. Sometimes a screenwriter is hired to write a script. In most cases, however, a producer purchases a spec script which has been submitted to his office by the writer or an agent.

Director: The director breaks down the screenplay, visualizes how the film should be shot and works with cast and crew to carry out his vision. The director is a movie's main creative force.

Unit Production Manager: The unit production manager reports to the producer and is responsible for scheduling and budgeting the film. PMs also handle permits as well as the day-to-day running of the production office.

Continuity Supervisor: The script or continuity supervisor works closely with the director to ensure that shots will cut together in the editing room. This involves taking photos and notes to help establish continuity of props, action and movement.

Casting Director: The casting director chooses actors and works out their contracts. In most cases, the producer and director are also involved in the casting process.

Actor: The actor's job is to create a believable character from the screenplay. The actor does this with a sense of the role and input from the director.

Director of Photography: The director of photography (DP), or cinematographer, works closely with the director and is responsible for the photographic look of the picture. In small films or documentary films, the DP may operate his or her own camera and adjust light as well. In studio films, the DP instructs camera operators, gaffers and grips on how to arrange shots and lighting.

Production Designer: The production designer is responsible for designing sets and the overall look of the film. Usually a team of designers are involved in this process.

Assistant Director: The first AD is responsible for the overall cast and crew shooting schedule. During a shoot, the first AD assists the director in preparing for each shot. Additional ADs may be hired.

Editor: The editor is responsible for putting together all the shots. The editor generally screens each day's film footage (called dailies or rushes) and edits while the picture is being shot. (However, most of an editor's job occurs after principal photography when he can be supervised by the director).

Composer: The composer writes a score to enhance the mood and style of the screenplay.

Location Sound Mixer - A location sound mixer has a very important job, using an audio recorder and microphones to record and mix dialogue during shooting. Often, location sound mixers are assisted by a boom operator.

Camera Operator - The camera operator operates the camera based on instructions from the director or director of photography.

Camera Assistants - The duties of a camera assistant include pulling focus, changing film stock, cleaning camera equipment, filling out camera reports and slating shots.

Gaffer - The gaffer is not only in charge of electrical work but also works closely with the DP to create a look, style or mood through lighting. The gaffer is usually assisted by a best boy.

Key Grip - The key grip supervises the grips who set up and adjust camera and dolly equipment on the set.

Production Assistants - A production assistant is a general assistant. This role is considered an entry level movie position.