

NOTES FROM A-Z OF MAKING A SHORT FILM

FUNDING

- Apply with a fully formed idea ideally with a screenplay
- Consider writing a creative brief
- Prepare some visuals
- Know your idea characters and story inside out
- Collaboration makes you stronger
- Be creative with your funding

DEVELOPMENT

- The script is the cheapest thing to get right
- Consider multiple funding streams
- Do a budget and keep it up to date
- Establish partnerships
- Be flexible

PARTNERSHIPS

- Know what you want and what you can offer in return
- Know your project inside out
- Know the value of what you're asking for (to you) and the burden to them
- Accept they'll probably say no (they'll have lots of requests like yours)
- Accept there's likely to be nothing special about your project
- Be clear
- Make it personal
- Keep your promises

ACTORS

- Write a profile for each character
- Include a synopsis and details of key behind the scenes talent
- Know when you want to shoot
- Detail the time commitment
- Don't forget acting is someone's JOB
- Add in some sweeteners (taxi)
- Know what 'an offer' is
- Consider your pairings
- Have backups – nothings set in stone until the camera rolls
- Be professional

AUDITIONS

- Be professional
- Pick somewhere private and accessible
- Offer refreshments
- Give auditionees guidance (they're not mind readers)
- Send them a chunk of script / improvisation ideas in advance
- Video your auditions and take stills
- Expect to be asked questions (even about money)
- Not everyone will be prepared to audition – you might have to cast on their merits

PLANNING

- Set targets and make a schedule
- Decide on filming dates and try to stick to them
- Remember the triangle!
- Try to think of contingencies (what if the weather is bad? How can you shoot efficiently?)

PUTTING A TEAM TOGETHER

- Play to everyone's strengths
- Leave the ego at home
- Remember most people aren't being paid (much)
- Define everyone's roles early on
- Delegate
- Call in favours (politely) when you can
- Be conscious of what each team member wants to get out of it.

LOCATION HUNTING

- Carry out rigorous recces
- Be aware of potential audio issues (flight path, train lines, schools etc)
- The camera lies – use that to your advantage!
- Use as few locations as possible
- Treat locations with respect
- Be realistic with owners (especially over time / disruption)
- Think about parking / access / permits (especially in London)
- Make sure you're insured (even more vital if filming in public)*
- Take pictures of locations

* We used <https://www.performance-insurance.tv> they offer cover for shoots of any size / budget / duration.

LOCATIONS USED IN DARKLIGHT

- Anne and Sarah's house (in/out)
- Sarah's bedroom (a set)
- Fish and chip shop
- Car crash location
- Local park

THE LOOK

- Intimate
- Lonely
- Vintage
- Darkness
- Col
- Natural
- Orange

THE SHOOT

- Always make a shooting schedule
- Be realistic – it always takes longer than you think
- Avoid unit moves – they eat up time
- Be prepared to adapt on location
- Have someone keep an eye on time
- Don't work people like dogs
- Feed people well. Really well – and have proper breaks
- Allocate a room or venue as a 'unit base'
- Work safely

NEXT STEPS

- Say thank you
- Work out how much debt you're in
- Hold a premiere
- Send copies to cast crew and supporters
- Make a festival plan
- Make another film

FESTIVALS

- Be aware of premiere policies
- Don't post your film online without a password
- Find out about the best festivals for your type of film
- Make a calendar of festivals (inc closing dates)
- Make a press pack and update your website
- Make copies of your film in different formats (web-ready, DVD – both PAL and NTSC)
- Sign up for festival submission sites
- Create posters and flyers
- Start saving up
- Prepare for rejection