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SCATTERFLIX

**documentary
film workshops**

@scatterflix.com

by jeanne Pope



DOCUMENTARY FILM PRODUCTION

PRODUCTION OUTLINE FOR DOCUMENTARY

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BFA_ TEACHERS - China

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THANK YOU

JEANNE

*“In feature films the
director is God;
in documentary films
God is the director”*

Alfred Hitchcock

Part 2

DIY DocFilm Workshop

PRODUCTION OUTLINE

Hello, and Happy New Year, 2021

This is part 2 of a 4 part, step-by-step guide in DIY, low-budget, hybrid, documentary film production.

YOU WILL FIND THE WORKSHOPS @
<https://www.scatterflix.com>

The online workshops have tips, techniques and links to get you started on your journey. I am using my new documentary project, *Waiting for my brain*, on my brain surgery in China, which is in production as of December, 21st, 2020, as an example.

The workshops are adapted from the ones I use with my colleague Wang Ying at the Beijing Film Academy Modern Creative Media College, China, with our first year students. They have never made a documentary and many have never touched a camera before. They are ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS ... and end up with great work.

I hope you enjoy the documentary journey. Thank you.

JEANNE

The process can be broken down into 4 parts.
We call the process

The 4Ps

- Pre-production
- Production**
- Post-production
- Promotion

**Sometimes pre-production and production
entwine with each other*

Make it Happen

Take

Action

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PRE-PRODUCTION - Preparation for your documentary

Idea. Approach/style/genre. Narrative/visual storytelling. Getting to know your subject. Research & archives. Location scouting. Legalities & Release form. Funds. Equipment

PRODUCTION - Collecting the material to make your documentary

Filming – interviews. Collecting audio. Pick-up shots. Sorting out footage-images

POST-PRODUCTION - To add the touches which brings the documentary alive

Editing. Color correcting. Sound mix. Output. Mixing Media.

PROMOTION - Getting your work seen

Festivals: www.filmfreeway.com. Cinema. DVDs. Social Media. Posters. Vimeo. Youtube. Website. Other platforms.

AT SOME POINT ALONG THE WAY YOU WILL WRITE A SYNOPSIS OF YOUR DOCUMENTARY

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In documentary pre-production and production may be crossed intricately together

You may begin to shot the moment you find an interesting subject and research as you go along

Make a film schedule

A timeline

- You know what you want to film
- You have done your research
- You know your subject.
- You know your locations
- **You might have already begun some preliminary filming**
- You understand the legalities and the need to have a release from your subject
- You know the genre, the style, the approach
- You have watched different styles of documentary

NOW - begin your story

With “Waiting for my Brain” I began the first day I was diagnosed till today. (I will continue to film even as I edit)

I have my camera ready all the time and film each confinement, my feelings, and those around me.

PREPARE YOUR EQUIPMENT - [\(link\)](#)

- COMPUTER
- EXTERNAL HARD DRIVE
- CAMERA - CELL PHONE
- AUDIO RECORDER

- BE PREPARED TO SHOOT HOURS OF FOOTAGE
- BUY A NEW EXTERNAL HARD DRIVE FOR YOUR FOOTAGE. (IMAGES) **AT LEAST 1TB**

Fall in Love with your film A Roll & B Roll

The Production stage is when you begin to shoot your film and gather all the information you need in images.

- (A-Roll) We film our subjects and interview them.
- (B-roll) We film other images which will compliment our documentary and make it flow.

The Ball Is In Your Court

Sometimes the two stages, pre production and production intermingle in documentary.

In my latest documentary, “**Waiting for my Brain,**” on my brain operation in China, 2019, I filmed the moment I arrived in the hospital. It was my only chance to do so. No point in waiting. It was **now** or **never**.

I did one sit down interview just before I left the hospital with Dr. Wang, my surgeon. For the rest I followed the life in my room, the nurses coming in and out, day coming up, night falling down. This is called **A Roll**.

Going through my footage and downloading it all onto my new hard drive, and into my Final Cut Pro editing software, I am beginning to think of the **B Roll** that I am want to film

- When I came out of my operation I was so sick. I literally saw digital images in front of my eyes. I want to reconstruct these moments with archival footage.
- I also will be linking Covid19 and confinement in my film, as I am estranged from China and waiting to go home. I am reflecting on these **B Roll** which will give my film more depth.

Film Techniques

Find your Establishing shot

The Establishing Shot is a standard shot size. It gives the viewer the widest perspective on the world you will share with us:

I begin with an establishing shot of my school in China, then I come into the last class I will teach before my operation. We meet the students. I will get close to some of the students faces.



Tips

- Interview as many subjects as you can. Interview yourself.
- Find film footage which covers the same subject.
- Film real-life events as they happen. This gives weight to your work
- Do not be afraid to FILM. FILM. FILM.

- [Link for Interviewing techniques](#)
- [Using Found footage](#)

It is often hard to know when to stop filming. When is enough, not enough, how to judge it.

I will cover all this and more in the new production workshops

MIXING MEDIA

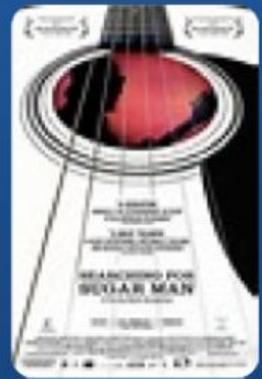
Mixing Media is when we take different elements to weave them into our work. [See Hybrid workshop](#)

[“Searching For Sugarman,”](#) the 2013 Documentary is a prime example of hybrid or mixing media.

The first 10 minutes use Drone. HD. Super 8
Rich sound design, animation. Talking heads.



MIXING MEDIA
ANIMATION
RECONSTRUCTION
VOICE OVER
SUPER8 FOOTAGE
STILL PHOTOS
MUSIC



LEGALITIES & THE RELEASE

Make sure you have RELEASE FORMS

Before you begin weeks of work, make sure you have the **OK** from your subject that you can film them. The same applies for any private location. This is called a release form, which must be signed and dated.

Basically you are asking for permission to film your subject or location. You are also asking to use their image and voice, *meaning their comments*.

A release form also gives you the right to edit the footage (images) in the way you desire. If your subject is an artist and you film their work, you need to include **use of all media in your release. You can find many examples of a release online.** I will go into in-depth detail about this in the workshop as it is so important to understand.

I **URGE** you to make this a priority. You can also film your subject “on camera” stating that they give you the right to film them. [Template from Scatterflix Workshop](#)

[What Are Your Rights as a Documentary Filmmaker? A Primer on Permission](#)

Article is from NO FILM SCHOOL.



“That’s it for now”

www.scatterflix.com

THANK YOU

You can find the [Pre Production & Production Workshops here:](#)

Sign up for the workshops

Documentary filmmaking is such a huge subject with so many different approaches; **this is mine** and an approach which works well for the students I have taught with Wang Ying, my colleague at the BFAMCMC since 2015

I hope it will work for you. *jeanneX*

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**Happy New Year
to you all**