

PRODUCTION

Film production or the production of motion pictures in the Philippines encompasses three stages: **preproduction**, **principal photography**, and **postproduction**. Each phase is separate from the other although their activities may overlap in the course of movie production.

Preproduction involves the acquisition of the rights to the material (story, play, historical account, etc.) to be filmed, the writing of the screenplay or scenario treatment, as well as budgeting, casting, location hunting, the building of sets and preparation of props, costumes, and special effects. All contracts and negotiations for services of talent and personnel as well as rentals of equipment, studio facilities, and laboratory process are finalized in the preproduction stage. The availability of film stock must be ensured to avoid delays during film production.

Principal photography is also known as production proper. This is the actual shooting phase of the film production. It begins with the first **take** on the set and ends with a **wrap** or **pack-up** on the final shooting day. Upon completion of the principal photography phase, the shooting unit's work is done but the rest of the film personnel may still be involved in post production.

Postproduction refers to activities after the raw film stock has been exposed. These include laboratory processing and printing, editing, projection, sound transfers, sound effects, dubbing, mixing, optical transfers, and the final processing that produces the composite mix. The process ends with the "marrying" of sound and picture in one film negative, from which copies are made for distribution and exhibition.

Once the film material is acquired by the producer, the director comes into the scene to get the project moving. The director orchestrates the work of all the artists and technicians involved in the making of a film. He/She is the supreme commander, chief executive officer, and unifying force of the whole enterprise. He/She is involved in and consulted on all phases of the production—from scripting and casting to shooting, dubbing, and mixing—until the final married print or composite is declared fit for exhibition.

Scripting is the phase where the film project is committed to paper as a guide for shooting. Based on the final script, budgets are allocated for each stage of production down to the last requirements of each shooting day. Casting ideally should follow scripting, but most producers deem it wise to build a project around a so-called dream cast, premised on the performers' box office potential or proven track record. Whatever casting is still deemed necessary is confined to minor roles. A number of scriptwriters have learned to create characters based on the strengths and limitations of actors chosen for the project.

Consumable material like film stock (negative, positive, dupe negatives, sound negatives) and magnetic recording tape must be accurately estimated. Enough film stock should be made available to cover retakes, mishaps, and technical errors. Facilities such as laboratories and dubbing studios must be ascertained, as they likewise play a vital role in the completion of the film. Transportation must be arranged, not only to deliver equipment and personnel to the

LOCATION FILMING. The forest of Los Baños in Laguna provides a fitting backdrop for LVN's *Engkantada*, 1948, starring Jaime de la Rosa, Lilia Dizon, and Lillian Velez. (LVN Film Archives)



location, but also for the retrieval of equipment, delivery of work to labs, and the like.

Location filming includes both interior and exterior shooting and can cover both controlled and uncontrolled action. With controlled action, where the director can stage every shot when ready to shoot, the technique may be similar to that of studio production. In uncontrolled filming, a thorough assessment of the location is crucial to the production. Where the cinematographer must shoot a piece of unrepeatable action as it is happening, with no chance of a retake—say, a parade or sporting event—practical questions such as camera positions and lighting must be decided prior to actual shooting. Permits or photographers' passes may be required to shoot in certain locations and should therefore be obtained in advance. Police clearance might also be needed in some circumstances. Provisions must be made for transportation, food and lodging for production personnel. For big scenes which require more than one camera, another Arriflex and accessories or an extra shooting unit may be contracted for in advance.

The kind of budget a film gets usually depends on the type of film as well as the bankability of its stars. Aside from the director's fees and those for the principal cast and supporting players, items such as wages, overhead, transportation, overtime, insurance, copyright fees and other clearances, music rights, library stock footage, and special effects like prosthetics must be costed accordingly. When the overall picture of the approved budget is clear, the money available for the basic production materials must be analyzed in relation to the film script.

The production proper consists of two types of activities: the essential cinematographic procedure which gives this phase its name, and a number of peripheral concerns during the shooting which vary according to the production personnel directly involved in their execution. On a day-to-day basis, these include scheduling, assembly of cast and crew, setup, shooting, pack-up, and viewing of rushes or dailies.

The **call slip** signifies the start of production proper. This is issued by the assistant director of the film and delivered by a legman acting on orders of a schedule master. The call slip indicates the date, time, and place of assembly; the sequences to be shot as indicated in the script (which has been furnished the players beforehand); props and costumes to be used; and other details. The call to report to the set may also be relayed by phone or telegram if personal contact is difficult; this will depend on arrangements previously made by the schedule master with the stars or performers concerned.

The assembly is the next stage. In major projects, this is not a mere matter of getting everyone together, but rather observing the hierarchy of positions and, whenever possible, making the most of the considerable waiting time involved. The lower one's position is, the longer one has to wait in the course of a day's shooting. Thus, a call for a major star may be at noon, while the others would be required to come in early in the morning; shooting may end by afternoon, but some of the crew may have to stay on until sunrise of the next day.

Between call time and shooting, setup has to take place. This involves all arrangements for the shoot, divisible into several overlapping functions. The first is production design, which involves set design, procurement and installation of props, costuming and makeup, and supervision of the film's visual look. The second is cinematography, which deals with lighting, camera positioning and movement, arrangements for field-sound recording, choices of film filters, lenses, and magnetic-tape usage, camera loading, and a number of other technical preparations.

The arrival of the major performers actually signals the start of the day's shooting. Conversely, the non-arrival of the principal star would upset all schedules, with the entire cast and crew being ordered to pack up. In very rare instances, the actor or actress is replaced or the role deleted from the script so that shooting could go on. Before a take, a minimum amount of rehearsal may be necessary, especially when the dialogue or the blocking or the camera work is complicated. Once the director is assured that the actors have gotten their parts right and that on-the-set movements are workable, a shoot, called the first take, is called for; if the take does not work through no fault of the shot's conception, subsequent retakes are ordered until the director is satisfied. A print is then ordered along with calls for the next set-up.

The pack-up or wrap is ordered after the last setup and take for the day (or night) is announced. Call slips are handed out for the next day's shooting. The director, cinematographer, and their staff proceed to the studio to view the dailies or rushes (the results of the previous day's shoot) together with the film editor. These are assessed in relation to the totality of the film project. In this activity, the postproduction phase begins to overlap with the production proper.

Postproduction in the Philippines underwent an important change in the late 1960s when the sound studio became more actively used for artificially processing entire sets of sounds for whole film projects. Before this, producers relied heavily on original sound during filming, a practice that is coming back in vogue.



MODERN TRENDS.
Laser-disc technology enhanced the production value of Director Lino Brocka's *Orapronobis*, 1989, starring Phillip Salvador and Gina Alajar. The film was not shown in the regular theater circuits in the Philippines. (Lino Brocka Collection)

Actually, postproduction itself involves a series of studio or laboratory work. The very first activity during this phase is when the film processing laboratory receives footage exposed in the location with orders to "print it." This means processing a negative and striking a positive, now usually in color, for postproduction personnel to work on. (Up to the 1960s local producers were still using black-and-white rushes for their work prints; the cost of color film has since become cheaper, while the price of black-and-white stock has increased because of the price of silver.)

The rest of the postproduction activities involve continuous editing and projection of rushes, re-recording, dubbing, musical scoring, sound effects scoring, mixing, opticals, superimpositions, titles, and other laboratory work.

Once a work print is declared satisfactory, it is returned to the laboratory for optical printing together with the negative; here magnetic sound is converted to an **optrack** (optical track) beside the frame, color values are balanced according to preaccomplished timing orders, and other optical effects such as fades, dissolves, superimpositions and titles are done. The resultant positive or answer print is then tested on preview audiences. Print copies are subsequently ordered, bookings are finalized, an exhibition permit is secured, an advertising or publicity campaign is launched.

The equipment currently being used for local shooting is basically of the same kind used in Hollywood: the Arriflex camera and accessories and the Nagra for recording sound and dialogue within the film setting. The only difference is that local equipment is at least 5 to 10 years older than the latest

models, which in 1992 cost from ₱1 million to ₱1.5 million.

Because of the big capital outlay, only the established producers like Sampaguita, LVN, Premiere, Viva, Regal, Seiko, Lea, Imus, FPJ, and Cine Suerte have their own film production equipment and unit personnel to man them. Independent producers who make only one or two movies a year depend on outfits which are in the business of renting them out. Among these are All Scope Cinema or JBC, Bukang Liwayway, X'Or, and JE. These studios used to make movies but now concentrate on the business of renting out film equipment.

In 1992 the prevailing rental rate was ₱50,000 for 30 shooting days. Cine Suerte, which has the most modern equipment, charges the highest rental fees at ₱120,000 per project. Producers who release films only to the domestic market cannot afford to rent such modern equipment. They have to allocate a bigger portion of their budgets for the talent fees of lead stars than for the technical requirements of production. Peak season for the unit rental business is from October to November, before the Metro Manila Film Festival, and in summer when the weather is ideal for outdoor shooting.

Video technology has introduced new possibilities for extending the life of a film. A title could now be transferred to a video "master" for broadcast or reproduction in video format. Recent laser-disc technology, which guarantees a longer life for the stored sound and images, has been applied, as of 1990, to at least one Filipino film, *Orapronobis* (Fight for Us), 1989. Practitioners in both film and video are also looking forward to the use of laser technology in production. Some of them, though, still have recourse to the

ASPECTS

controversial practice of computer coloration, the application of color values to black-and-white film images that have been transferred to video. ● N. Cruz, J. David, and R. Matilac. With notes from P. de Castro III, B. Lumbera, N.G. Tiongson