

## PRODUCING FOR FILM

Nick Cruz, Joel David, and Rosalie Matilac,  
with notes from Pio de Castro III, Bienvenido Lumbera,  
and Nicanor G. Tiongson

Updated by Jose Javier Reyes,  
with notes from Johann Vladimir J. Espiritu

**Producing** refers to the process of preparing for, shooting, and completing the film. Film production 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 appointment of a director who will be on top of the whole process of production, the writing of the screenplay or scenario treatment, as well as budgeting, casting, location hunting, building of sets, and preparing props, costumes, and special effects. All contracts and negotiations for services of other talents and personnel, as well as rentals of equipment and studio facilities, are finalized in the preproduction stage. When 35 mm film was the format for filmmaking, the availability of film stock and laboratory services had to be ensured to avoid delays during film production.

Transportation must be arranged, not only to deliver equipment and personnel to the location but also to retrieve equipment, and the like. Location filming includes both interior and exterior shooting. Permits are usually required 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 that require more than one camera, 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 budgeted accordingly.

**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 other film personnel may still be involved in postproduction.

Postproduction refers to activities that include editing, sound transfers, sound effects, dubbing, and mixing. When film was the raw stock, a lot of laboratory work was done during postproduction, including optical transfers and the final processing that produces the composite mix. This traditional process ended with the "marrying" of sound and picture in one film negative, from which copies were made for distribution and exhibition.

The main person in charge is the **producer**. In the Philippines, the producer of a film may be any one or all of the following: the owner of a movie company, the investor or financier of a movie production, the highest executive in a multimedia company who is specifically in charge of the entertainment art and/or its most dominant platforms, the individual who makes the necessary arrangements for the making of a film or motion picture, or the person who is accountable for the success or failure of the movie in terms of box-office receipts and/or critical acclaim. Often, two or more of these functions are handled by one person.

Those who assist the investor of a film are the following. The **executive producer** is the individual in charge of the finances of the film from its moment of inception to development. He or she is the officer entrusted by the producer to ensure proper budgeting, disbursement, and even designing marketing strategies to put together and sell the film. The **supervising producer** is the conduit between the executive producer and the **line producer**. He or she is usually given the task of following through the project from inception to postproduction. The line producer is given a budget to deliver the film from preproduction until the finalization of the producer's cut. He or she answers to the supervising and executive producers and must ensure that the movie's quality is maintained while keeping within the budget. The **associate producer** works hand in hand with the line producer. He or she assists in the negotiations for below-the-line talents, technical and creative crew; helps prepare the budget; and coordinates with the production manager and postproduction coordinator. In the Philippine cinematic setting, however, the distinctions among these positions and occupations become blurred for practical and economic reasons.

Although it is the **director** who dominates the entire filmmaking process from conceptualization to postproduction, it is the wishes of the producer that are carried out to the final cut. The hand that guides it all along the way is the director's, but the producer retains the authority to revise the director's work, either by ordering

cures (changes) after seeing the daily rushes, or by taking control of the final cutting and assembly of the workprint.

In the early days of cinema in the Philippines, the producer was also the director of the movie. The pioneer Filipino producers Jose Nepomuceno, Vicente Salumbides, and Julian Manansala bought or prepared scripts, hired artists and technicians, and themselves acted some parts, designed sets, and handled cameras as well as editing and laboratory equipment. They generally attended to all the details of production aside from directing the actual shooting scenes. As the industry progressed, the need to expand the territory of manpower to include other people in the preparation, production, and distribution of films also became apparent.

With the advent of the talkies and the rise of movie studios, what had been a craft took on some of the trappings of an industrial enterprise. Producers like George Harris and Edward Tait, Nepomuceno's American partners in the first Filipino all-talking film, *Punyal na Ginto* (Golden Dagger), 1933, hired directors like Manuel Silos and Carlos Vander Tolosa to make movies for Philippine Films. In Parlatone Hispano-Filipino, Nepomuceno started the trend of hiring a production manager to oversee studio operations. He convinced silent film producer Vicente Salumbides to come out of

retirement and take charge of production at Parlatone. After his stint with Parlatone, Salumbides formed his own company, Salumbides Film Company Ltd, and produced the memorable classic *Florante at Laura* (Florante and Laura), 1939. Another producer whom Nepomuceno trained as production manager was Luis F. Nolasco, who later organized Nolasco Bros. Pictures and produced *Fort Santiago*, 1946, and *Siete Dolores* (Seven Sorrows), 1948.

It was Nolasco who spurred Rep Pedro Vera to establish Sampaguita Pictures in 1937, bringing with him such big names as Elsa Oria, Rogelio de la Rosa, Mike Velarde, and Carlos Vander Tolosa. A year later, Doña Sisang Buencamino de Leon established LVN Pictures. By 1940, Filipino movies had become a mass entertainment phenomenon, attracting more investors and financiers who assumed the role of industrial film producer. J. Amado Araneta, who bought out Harris and Tait's shares in Philippine Films after the Americans bowed out of movie production, expanded the concept of industrial film producer by bringing into the fold an assorted group of movie directors ranging from politicians and journalists like Nick Osmeña and Hermenegildo Atienza to playwrights and theater personalities like Severino Montano and Lamberto V. Avellana. The concept of a director as filmmaker—that is, one whose involvement



Filippine Films Studio gate, ca 1935 (Cesar Hernando Collection)



Pedro Vera of Sampaguita Pictures  
(Mila Vera-Reyes Collection)



Narcisa Buencamino-de Leon of  
LVN Pictures (Mike de Leon Collection)



Ciriaco Santiago of Premiere Productions  
(Digna H. Santiago Collection)

in the making of films is creative rather than business-oriented—evolved with this group. This is seen in some of the movies produced by Philippine Films before the outbreak of the Pacific War: Avellana's *Sakay*, 1939; Atienza's *Hating Gabi* (Midnight), 1940; and Osmeña's *Magdalena*, 1941. Respect for the director as creative filmmaker was the principal concern of Dr Ciriaco Santiago when he established Premiere Productions in 1946. His studio gave the director more latitude, autonomy, and cinematic freedom. Premiere became the home of such outstanding directors as Ramon Estella, Cesar Gallardo, Consuelo P. Osorio, and the late National Artist Gerardo de Leon.

Movie stars who achieve a certain degree of stature in the industry can become producers of their own picture and exercise total control over the production. Rogelio de la Rosa was among the first to do this when he left Sampaguita to form RDR Productions.

Fernando Poe Sr also pioneered in setting up his own Royal Productions, which made such films as the war epic *Dugo ng Bayan* (*I Remember Bataan*), 1946, and the fantasy film, *Darna*, 1951. Following his death in 1951, his son Fernando Poe Jr became an actor and eventually set up his own FPJ Productions, which became one of the country's major film companies.

Among the actor-director-producers, the most successful are Manuel Conde with his *Genghis Khan*, 1950, and Juan Tamad series; and Eddie Rodriguez with his love-triangle dramas like *Kapag Puso'y Sinugatan* (When the Heart Is Wounded), 1967, and *Ang Padrino* (The Godfather), 1984.

The list of successful **actor-producers** include Joseph Estrada (JE Productions and Emar Pictures), Dolphy (RVQ Productions), Ramon Revilla (Imus Productions), Susan Roces (Rosas Productions), Amalia Fuentes (AM Productions), Nora Aunor (NV Productions), Vilma Santos (VS Films), Chiquito (Sotang Bastos Productions), Lisa Moreno (Virgo Productions), Vivian Velez (Amazaldy Films), Lito Lapid (LL Productions), Armida Siguion-Reyna (Reyna Films), Charo Santos (Vision Films), and Rudy Fernandez and Lorna Tolentino (Reflection Films). Their more successful efforts have resulted in movies that won critical acclaim or at least set box-office records: Emar's *Ito ang Filipino* (Behold the Filipino), 1966; FPJ's *Asedillo*, 1971; Imus's *Nardong Putik*, 1972; NV's *Tatlong Taong Walang Diyos* (Three Godless Years), 1976; JE's *Bakya Mo Neneng* (Your Wooden Slippers, Neneng), 1977; VS's *Pagputi ng Uwak, Pag-itim ng Tagak* (When the Crow Turns White, When the Heron Turns Black), 1978; and Rosas's *Gumising Ka ... Maruja* (Wake Up ... Maruja), 1978.

Before their assimilation into the Philippine Movie Producers Association (PMPA), these producers were known as **indies** or **independent producers**, which in movie parlance was the opposite of major. The indies made only one or two pictures a year against the major producer's dozen or more films. They did not own movie studios or equipment but only rented facilities and shooting units, and they did not have stars on exclusive long-term contracts. But the number of the indies grew so that, sometime in the 1960s, the PMPA was changed to the Philippine Motion Picture Producers Association

to accommodate them all. Membership swelled from the original Big Four to more than 40.

Producers often have to contend with the dichotomy between art and popular entertainment, creativity and commerce. Faced with the question of survival in a highly competitive industry, director-producers choose to be pragmatic, putting commerce above creativity. But serious artists desiring greater freedom in their work tried to make the transition from director-filmmaker to director-filmmaker-producer. To this group belong producers like Eddie Romero (Hemisphere Productions), Lino Brocka (Cine Manila Corporation), and Mike de Leon (Cinema Artists). Despite the many pitfalls that beset them as director-producers, they have produced such classics as *Ganito Kami Noon ... Paano Kayo Ngayon?* (This Was How We Were ... What Happens to You Now?), 1976; *Tinimbang Ka Ngunit Kulang* (You Were Weighed and Found Wanting), 1974; *Maynila: Sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag* (*Manila: In the Claws of Light*), 1975; and *Itim* (*The Rites of May*), 1976.

The more successful producers who are neither stars nor directors have skills for conceiving viable film projects and marshalling the necessary resources. Jose R. Perez of Sampaguita, Marichu Maceda of MVP Pictures, Lily Monteverde of Regal, Jesse Ejercito of Crown Seven and Seven Stars, Espiridion Laxa of Tagalog Ilang-Ilang, Vic del Rosario of Viva, Robbie Tan of Seiko, Emilia Blas and Teodorica Santos of Lea, Orly Ilacad of OctoArts all belong to this group. Known as a star builder, Dr Perez transformed unknowns into outstanding movie personalities, among them Gloria Romero, Lolita Rodriguez, Dolphy, Susan Roces, Amalia Fuentes, Eddie Garcia, and Nora Aunor. His achievement has been emulated by other producers like Monteverde, del Rosario, Tan, and later, by German Moreno in television.

In the 1990s, trends in moviemaking among the major studios point to the importance of line producers. Where there is need to coordinate the mass production of films, a great bulk of the responsibility in the hands of the producer is relegated to line producers. As the producer's representatives, they see to it that important activities of filmmaking are undertaken only with their approval. The line producers think like producers, motivated by the commercial viability of a project and the need to meet the playdate. They keep the budget low with their direct involvement in the production: difficulties are foreseen and remedied early, and crippling delays are averted during production and postproduction.

However, the landscape of producing changed with the rise of power of the multimedia companies. When television became the most dominant medium, the whole landscape of film production in the Philippines changed.

Whereas before there was a distinct difference between film and TV stars, the merging of the two media relegated the big screen as a feeder of content for the much wider and more encompassing television business. TV networks began to have their film production outfits to be able to provide movies to be shown in both their commercial as well as cable channels. Examples of these are GMA Films, established in 1995 by GMA Network Inc, and Star Cinema (also known as ABS-CBN Film Production Inc), which was founded in 1993 by ABS-CBN. As the digital age opens more and more possibilities in terms of platforms, there is a greater need for multimedia networks to create products to fill their requirements, which now include viral as well as short-length entertainment by demand in smart phones, tablets, and personal computers. Due to economic effects created by this demand, there has been a decline of film production among the previously major film companies, such as Regal Films and Viva Films in the recent years.

With the introduction of inexpensive digital video (DV) technology in 1999 and its widespread use by 2005, filmmakers could afford to produce their own films, whose production cost would usually be from two to three million pesos. To many of them, this meant liberation from the clutches and dictates of commercial producers who lorded it over the filmmakers because only they could afford the price of celluloid. With DV technology, filmmakers were now free to pursue their artistic visions for their films. With grants given by the Cinemalaya Philippine Independent Film Festival and Cinema One Originals starting 2005 and other grant-giving bodies later, indie films blossomed from 2005, accounting for the greater majority of films produced from 2005 to the present. And because many of these films are marked by originality and artistic integrity, they have been recognized by prestigious local and international award-giving bodies. Among the companies established by indie filmmakers are Center Stage Productions of Brillante Mendoza, which produced *Kinatay* (*The Execution of P.*), 2009, which won for Mendoza the Palme d'Or for Best Director at Cannes Film Festival; UFO Pictures of Raymond Lee, Jade Castro, Ned Trespeces, Emmanuel de la Cruz, and Michiko Yamamoto, which produced the multi-awarded *Ang Pagdadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros* (*The Blossoming of Maximo Oliveros*), 2005; and Quantum Films, which produced *Kubrador* (*The Bet Collector*), 2006, and co-produced *Ang Babae sa Septic Tank* (*The Woman in the Septic Tank*), 2011. ✨