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Independent Film Producing: The Outsider's Guide To Producing A First Low Budget Feature Film

By Paul Battista

Lucrifacio Books, \$25.95, 244 pages

Creative artists whose passion is film face an obstacle that painters, writers, actors, singers, and dancers do not: they need enormous amounts of money to pursue their art. Paul Battista, an attorney who has counseled first-time filmmakers, has written an excellent guide to making a low-budget film in an incredibly competitive and oftentimes confusing business.

The first part of this useful guide provides an overview of the more creative aspects of film-making, especially screenwriting. I learned here that a screen writer can register his script with the US Copyright Office on-line for a modest fee! Battista is brutally honest when it comes to assessing the chances of successfully selling a script. Discussing a prestigious screenwriting competition, he notes that “over the last twenty years, less than 10 per-

cent of the finalists' scripts have been made into feature films.” So, this book is for people who are serious about making a feature film . Very serious. It is to the author's credit that he lays out the seemingly insurmountable obstacles in producing a first film. One valuable insight is where he demolishes the myth of credit card-financed films. “For every story of a filmmaker who gambled and won at credit card roulette, there are thousands of filmmakers whose personal credit is damaged for many years, precluding him or her from obtaining credit for...a home or other personal expenditures.”

The bulk of the book is for those hard-headed individuals who will do whatever it takes to see their work on the big screen. There is chapter after chapter on the myriad business aspects of film making; setting up corporations, tax subsidies, union and guild contracts, profit participation and more. Even if a determined filmmaker finishes a film, getting it seen can be an ordeal, and distributing a film is discussed in detail.

If I was an aspiring filmmaker making my first independent film, this book would be close by at all times. It isn't a perfect book, however. A little trimming would have been beneficial. Battista tends to repeat certain observations and points.

Quiet on the set. Action!

