

## THE IDIOT'S GUIDE TO COVERING SET

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### Before the Shoot:

- Introduce yourself to the department heads.
- Tone meeting: This is led by the writer. Before your tone meeting, go through the script and highlight the emotional/tonal moments that need to be hit in each scene. As you go through the script with the director, make sure you go over any character dynamics that may not be obvious. TIP: this is also a good time to discuss any actor/performance concerns prior to the shoot. Cover everything you need to, but don't drag it out too long. Tone meetings that go over an hour and a half make everyone crazy.
- The night before: Go through the scenes that will be shooting the next day. Make sure you know the characters' motivations/history/where they're coming from. So when you're asked questions on set by the director, actors, costume, etc., you have a solid answer.
- The day of: Show up at least 15 mins before call. It will give you a chance to check the set and give you a head start on any possible problems. If you see an issue with the set, talk to the director. Some directors rehearse before official call time, make sure you're informed if this is the case.
- You should have on hand: the script, the crew list, the one-liner and the call sheet.

### Day of:

- Get your sides (copy of scenes shooting that day) from the 2<sup>nd</sup> AD. I like the big sides. It helps if you're scribbling line adjustments and need actors to see it.
- Rehearsal: Each scene is rehearsed before it is shot. The director goes through the scene with the actors on set. They will first read it through, then block it (i.e. determine who stands where and how the actors will be moving through the scene.) You should ALWAYS be at rehearsal. TIP: Stand next to the Script Supervisor. Scripty is always good at finding a spot that isn't intrusive or gets in the way of camera angles.
- If you have a problem with the way the scene is blocked or the actors' decisions within the scene, talk to the director between rehearsals. (Note: the actors tend to just read their lines during rehearsal, so you will not see their actual performances until you're shooting the scene.) Try not to interrupt in the middle of rehearsal. Give them one or two tries, because often any issues you have will self-resolve as the actors/director work things out.
- Lighting & Set up: The time between rehearsal and shooting. It could be ten minutes or an hour. This is the PERFECT TIME to talk to the director about any

concerns you may have about the upcoming scenes. There will be time for the director and crew to make adjustments, and you are avoiding talking about potentially sensitive things while the actors are on set waiting on you.

### Shoot:

- Your home is video village with the director, DP and Script Supervisor. There will always be a chair and a Com Tek (headset) for you. If there isn't, see the 2<sup>nd</sup> AD or props.
- Performances: The director usually starts with a wide shot before moving in for coverage. Don't worry if the actors aren't giving it their all in wide – many of them use it as a dry run for their close ups. But if there's a thing that an actor is doing repeatedly that is an issue, tell the director.
- Notes to the director: If you have issues with a performance/set dressing/props/costume, tell the director first. Do NOT note an actor directly unless the actor seeks you out. If that happens, try to bring the director into the conversation. TIP: try not to whisper conspicuously to the director immediately after a take if it's about an actor's performance. Actors will know you're talking about them and become very paranoid very fast.
- Actor line adjustments: If it doesn't change the meaning of the line, it's usually fine. Ditto for small adjustments to help staging/continuity. If it's a bigger adjustment that changes a character's intention or voice, then call us. Most actor concerns are usually resolved by talking the scene through with them.
- If you see a problem with hair, makeup or wardrobe on screen, find a rep from the appropriate department and tell them. One is always on set.
- If you feel that the director is refusing to take a note you feel is important, get the Producing Director or Line Producer involved. Or call the showrunner. You don't want the Showrunner looking at shitty dailies and asking where the hell you were.
- If you have to leave the set in between set ups, tell the 2<sup>nd</sup> AD to give you a ten minute warning so you know when they're about to start shooting.
- If there are line adjustments for production, etc. Give the line change to the script supervisor and tell the actors as soon as possible. If it's a small change, it can wait till the actors are on set. If it's a big change (i.e. changing a chunk of a longer speech that shoots that day), get it to them immediately.
- TIP: If anything stands out in a positive way – a performance, costumes, sets, be sure to let the actor/crew member know.

Misc

- Beyond the stuff that's getting shot, if you see any problems on set (e.g. seeing 150 extras under the sun with no shelter), definitely inform the ADs. And if they don't fix the issue, call the Line Producer.
- Friay raffle. Some crews collect a raffle drawing on Fridays. Throw in a bunch of money, but don't take a ticket. No one likes the LA writer/producer who walks away with the money bucket.
- Your last Friday. Totally optional -- The director and writer usually split a treat for the crew. A coffee truck or ice cream or something. It's a nice way to thank the crew and makes those late Fridays a little more bearable. You'll want to figure something out a few days before – coordinate with the Line Producer's assistant.
- On our show, we had writers covering set write daily set reports. It's a good way for the other writers to stay abreast of what's happening, and ensures there are no rude surprises when we watch the dailies.