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Chapter 5 – Hierarchy of a Production – Quiz

1. Spend some time researching exactly what it is an AD does. What are their responsibilities, why are they so vital to a production?

There are many responsibilities that is required of an Assistant Director (AD). He/She is responsible for the getting the rest of the crew working well and doing their job. This person manages the rest of the crew and is in charge of answering any questions others may have before getting to the director. They set the guidelines of the production behind the scenes with setting a set schedule, being apart of the planning process of the film, help with the budget, work right next to the director to ensure that things go as planned along with many more qualities. The AD’s prepare the work schedule for everyone on set and makes sure they are on time and ready with whatever the director asks. It is apart of the AD’s job to have the answers any of the crew members may have. They keep the rest of the crew up to date with what they are going to do next after and/or before a scene is finished.

It is important for the Assistant Director’s to manage the time well and make sure they do not go over the given budget. The AD’s work alongside every other one of the crew members ensuring things work smoothly on set. They must make sure that everyone is doing their job. If there are any safety regulations that need to be addressed, the AD’s will let the crew know and be aware of the procedures. Before a scene is shot, the AD’s have to make sure that the set is quiet and will not be interrupted.

Being an Assistant Director is a lot of work, but it gives those who want to be an AD the opportunity to learn so many different things. Those wanting to be an AD need to have their priorities straight and make sure they are able to manage everyone apart of the film. There may be 10-100 people working on a set, and it is the AD’s job to make sure everyone is doing what they are supposed to be doing and that they know what is going on. They are basically everyone else’s manager other than the director.

While on a set, there may be more than one Assistant Director, but they all must work and collaborate with the First Assistant Director to make sure things are going as planned. The work load would be divided to one or more other AD’s below the First AD. Sometimes, when there is a big production taking place, it is helpful to have more than one AD on set taking care of the rest of the crew. They all manage and help each other make sure that things work out smoothly with little to no issues on set.

Assistant Directors are vital to have on a set because there needs to be someone in place of a production to make sure things go smoothly. It is not an easy job, but there needs to be someone responsible for the work behind the scenes while the director has his/her main focus on what the film will look like at its end result. Without an AD on set to help the director manage the crew and help with the making of the film, there are always high possibilities that the rest of the crew could fall behind, not do their jobs, put a lot of extra burden on the director, and so many more things that would make a film set fall apart. There always needs to be someone there to manage everyone else and make sure things work out in the end, and the Assistant Directors are the ones that are responsible for that task being done.

1. Define in as much detail as possible what “below the line” means.

The term “below the line” would refer to the film crew. They are the ones responsible in putting and getting the filming done doing all the physical work, such as doing the camera work, placing the sound, making sure the sets look the way the director wants it to, the producers working together getting things in place and everyone else responsible for their certain duties on set. Those “below the line” are the ones who follow what the director and assistant director instructs them to do. They mainly go to the AD’s to answer any questions.

1. What are the must-have qualities of a PA? Why are they so important on a film set?

It is crucial for a production assistant (PA) to be punctual, very responsible, reliable and able to work well with everyone on the set. PA’s need to work well under stress, be aware of their surroundings and what is going on, being able to catch something before being told to do it, own up to the mistakes they may have made, and keep that line of professionalism.

These are all aspects that every crew member should uphold, but it is crucial for the PA’s to maintain these qualities, because they are the ones who need to keep the rest of the crew happy, getting the little things they may need such as water, coffee or perhaps a snack when they know there’s going to be a long day of shooting.