

Daren Seifert

I Need Some Assistance!

The Assistant Director, or the AD isn't a crew member you hear about outside the film set. As with many of the crew members on every set a lot go unnoticed unless you're there in the fray of it all. Once you're there you learn quickly how precise each take is, and how many different members it takes it make it flow smoothly. If the preproduction isn't thoroughly done then you can bet the Assistant Director will have his/her hands full. Although i've only been on one true, blue film set, it was enough for me to realize how important preproduction is. Without it, it stresses out the entire crew, and makes for a lousy time. If preproduction does fail, it is important to have an amazing Assistant Director to pick up the slack and make it unnoticeable to the crew.

The daily routine of an Assistant Director is to track the daily process of the film against the production schedule. By doing this they can tell how much more room they have for the rest of the shoot. This is important because mistakes do happen. Re-shoots are inevitable. It's important to realize if you're behind or ahead just in case you can fit in a re-shoot somewhere to keep on schedule. Call sheets are sent out every day. They're filled with basic information on the crew and schedule of the day. It's the Assistant Directors, or 2nd assistant directors job to send these out accordingly.

The director must be focused at all times and shouldn't be bothered for minuscule problems that may arise. The Assistant Director acts as a middle man between the director and the crew and also does routine checks on the cast and crew, making sure everyone is content. If someone doesn't show, or schedule is off because of someone, the Assistant Director will be there to find out what's going on and how to keep produc-

tion flowing. The Assistant Director is usually the one to “call the roll”, which is basically the current state of the set. If a certain part of the crew is the reason for the delay you could hear the AD shout “waiting on...so and so”. When the crew has finished assembling the set, make-up, props, lighting, and consistency of shots, you will hear the AD making final checks. When the AD inevitably shouts “Quiet on set” that means within any moment the camera’s will be rolling and all the crew must keep noise to a minimum. Typically after that you will have the sound crew roll sound, then the camera crew will get in focus and begin rolling as well. Once the slate is in focus and snapped the director or assistant director will call for action, and perhaps background action. After the scene is filmed “cut” will be called. This will usually be done by the director or assistant director, but also the camera crew if something is discovered or conservation of film/ hard drive space is an issue.

The assistant director is sometimes confused with the assistant to the director. These are not the same positions and both have entirely different skill sets. The assistant director is an actual position recognized by the union while assistant to the director is not. The assistant to the director is usually someone close to the director. They can be there for more personal help outside the set or creative help on set. Every person of the crew can shine at any moment. Film production is one of those magic places where anything can happen at any moment. The more focused and in-tune you are while on set, the more room have have to grow. And making good with the assistant director is never a bad thing!