

## The Film Connection - Chapter Five

The Assistant Director's role is often broken down into sub-roles such as the first assistant director, second assistant director, second second assistant director, third assistant director, the additional assistant director or fourth assistant director or key production assistant, and a number of production assistants. The assistant director differs from the director's assistant, who works with the director during the production process. Instead, all individuals involved in the assistant director's role are responsible for tasks such as scheduling, handling logistics, preparing the call sheets, checking cast and crew, and maintaining the overall order on the set. Therefore, the assistant director handles all the little details that can easily be overlooked, and makes sure that everyone involved in the production are under control.

The first assistant director (first or 1AD), is the highest "below the line" individual next to the unit production manager (UPM), who is responsible for the day-to-day budget and schedule. He or she supervises the second AD, and keeps the production on schedule, communicates with the crew, and maintains the safety and security of the staff and the shot. He or she also should be able to estimate how long a shot will take, whether it be a couple hours, a whole day, or many days. For example, a first AD might ask him/herself the following questions: *If we're filming a large battle scene outdoors which goes on for about 10 minutes, how long will that take to film? How will we make sure nobody gets hurt? What will the crew have to watch out for while filming? Will they need protection? We're only using this location... how will we make sure that nothing gets damaged? I better make sure that none of the actors hit the tree with arrows or else it will create continuity issues... or maybe we could just block it out.* By asking him/herself these questions, the first AD can ensure that the production will run smoothly day after day.

The second assistant director (second or 2AD) creates the daily call sheets from the production schedule. The call sheet lists all the names and contact information of everyone involved in the production, the location, date and time for when cast and crew should be on set, name of client, agency, etc. On set, he/she acts as a "backstage manager" by communicating with the actors, making sure they get made up and costumed. The second is also responsible for supervising the second second assistant director, the third assistant director, production assistants, and the extras. Possible questions a second might ask him/herself might be: *The first*

*set of actors are almost finished with filming. Should I get the second set of actors made up now? Is the production assistant doing his/her job? Have all the extras arrived on set yet? What will we do if this one extra doesn't show up? Does the first AD have anything he/she wants to tell me so that we're on the same page?* The second second assistant director (second second or 22AD) handles all other workload involved with a complicated production. The second AD might have so much to do that he/she will have to pass off some responsibilities to the second second AD, especially if working with a large cast. The larger the production, the more elaborate it is, and two separate call sheets might be needed instead of one. In consequence, the second AD and second second AD might split the backstage manager duties and both will work with only certain members of the cast, extras, and production assistants.

The third assistant director (third or 3AD) works with the first AD and communicates with the second AD to transport actors from the base camp, which is the area containing the cast, production, and hair and makeup trailers. He or she also arranges crowd sequences and oversees a number of PAs on set. The additional assistant director (additional or AAD) or fourth assistant director (fourth or 4AD) or key production assistant (key PA) acts as both the second AD and the third AD simultaneously, assisting both the 2AD and 3AD with additional work, especially if they're working on a large project. Another responsibility of an AAD is to work with the 3AD and 1AD for scenes that require a lot of logistics and extras. Lastly, the production assistants (PAs) accomplish odd jobs assigned to them by ADs. PAs are usually young people who are just breaking into the film world and do various errands and tasks necessary on set. They may work with all people on the set and be responsible for taking notes and consulting a number of different ADs about the little details. A PA might be told by a 1AD or 2AD to, "Ask everybody if they need a bottled water," or "Make sure nobody leaves food or drink around the area we'll be shooting." As beginning filmmakers, PAs should be observant, eager, and assertive. They need to understand that even little things such as slippery spills on the floor need to be communicated about and addressed right away.

The duties of an assistant director are divided into many roles because being assistant director is an arduous task. Therefore, it's crucial that the 1AD, 2AD, 22AD, 3AD, the AAD, and the PAs are working in harmony with each other and that each of them are working towards the same goal. Successful communication between all ADs will prevent many problems result in

an overall successful production. And when the production is completed, it will be a victory for everybody.