Chapter 16 - Working with Actors - Quiz

1. What should be your process to find the strongest actors for your project?

The casting process involves hiring a casting director that will find between 100 and 200 actors to audition. Then you will come in to observe the final 10 or so and allow them to be creative and then ask them to act a certain way for a scene etc. Also, make sure that they seem easy to work with.

1. What is the job of the casting director?

He or she will go through all of the actors and actress headshots and then select the ones they want to come back for callbacks for the director to make a final decision.

1. What is the best way to handle the audition process?

Be sure to be positive with the actors and gauge how well they take instruction since you will be working with them a lot!

1. What is the purpose of a table read? This is simply when the director has all of the chosen actors get together for the first time to read through the script together a few times to see how is the chemistry.
2. What type of language is most useful when directing actors on-set, and why? Use action words or verbs not adjectives because this will cause if you say words like “ look more happy or sad, in only causes the actors to make a face that may be a false behavior for that scene in the movie and the audience can tell and won’t like it.
3. Why is it important to understand the purpose of a scene BEFORE discussing it with your actors? Because a director has to know what emotion the scene is supposed to create and what’s at stake and what is there to get out of the scene that leads it to the next scene. This will allow the actor to be director properly and bring out the right drama for that scene from the other actors.
4. What is the purpose of Uta Hagen’s "six questions a director must be able to answer"? The point of the questions is for the director to be clear what the story is about and what each scene is about in order to tell that story.
5. Why is it important that you as the director, as well as the actor, understand a character’s background when playing a scene, even if that background is not explicitly stated in the script? Because it gives the actor enough information in order to really tackle that scene!
6. How do you keep actors from getting bored of doing the same thing over and over again? Allow them to take frequent breaks to get a snack and a drink. Also, you can use a stand in to prepare for scenes so as to not burn out the main actors.
7. Write 500 words on your own philosophy of working with actors. How do you plan to handle them? What will be your process?

Well, first of all, I believe finding the right actors and actresses for your film is crucial! So with that in mind, you really need to treat them like your best friend! Remember, they are helping you to create your dream and to hopefully make money and be profitable. I would treat all of them with respect. I would be open to their input as well if I feel that they are sincere and it will benefit a scene or the overall quality of the film shooting. I used to audition a long time ago when I was younger for musical theatre so I have some experience with directors. When you get treated kindly by a director you are more likely to try your hardest to make things work. Also, it is really important to have a cast that is compatible. One rotten apple can really spoil the bunch! And that is a challenge for a director to deal with. I also had the privilege of co-writing and directing a short film with a friend of mine in 2008. We advertised the auditions in the college newspaper at the University of Georgia in Athens. We had a really good turnout. My film partner and I setup a table to register the applications and receive their headshot and/or acting resume. We had rented a conference room in a nearby hotel to the college and had chairs setup for the wanna be actors. Once everyone was seated, we picked and choose the appropriate actors to come up and act out a scene together. We were observing the individual actors for their effectiveness in their part as well as the synergy with the group. From there, we would add and subtract until we felt we had narrowed it down to the ones we liked the best. Then we repeated this process until we had the cream of the crop. Then we had those selected actors all come up together for a final audition. The room was tense. We did provide light refreshments and drinks for those participating. We also asked that the audience be quiet and respect when it was their peers turn to go up and act. This worked well. In the end when we were ready to make the announcement, we had everyone wait outside in the hallway and we called the winners in one by one until we had our final cast!

As a director, I always want to be humble because really a good film is a collaborative effort with so many people. It is a symphony that needs a conductor, violins, trumpet, drums, piano and so on. All must work together in the best harmony to stay in tune and for the audience to see and feel the magic!

As has been stated in this chapter, my method for helping an actor in a scene is to best try and describe what is happening in the scene and why, and let the actor’s creativity decide how to interpret. This way they actually get to act and not be told how to make faces! Lol