





Preproduction

WITH JIM SOTO

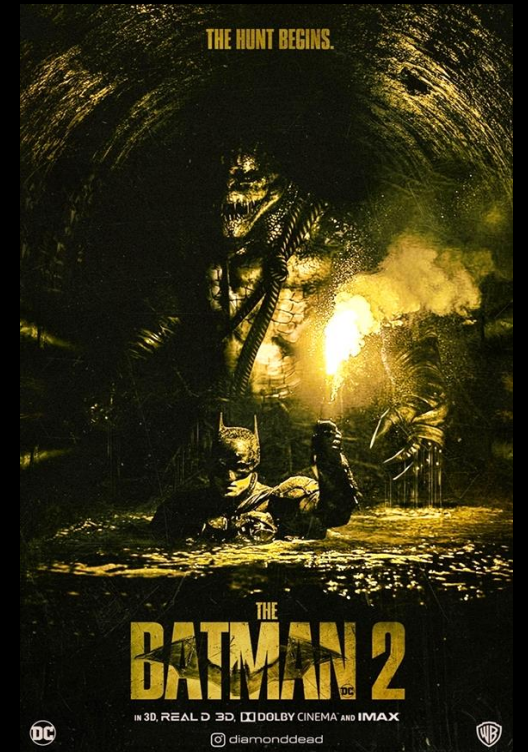




The process of preparing all the elements involved in a film formally begins once a project has been **greenlit**. Pre-production ends when the preparations end and the filming starts. Notice the word “formally”. Some informal preparation occurred previously during a stage called Development. During that stage there was little to no financial backing. During pre-production there is already some to full financial support for the project.



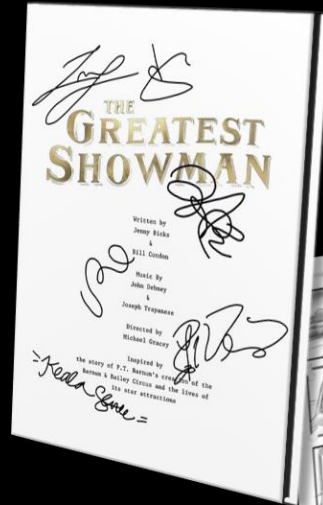
As we speak, according to Movie Insider, below are some of the projects that have been **greenlit** for production and are currently getting prepared for Principal Photography:



Financing will generally be confirmed and many of the key elements such as principal cast members, director and cinematographer are set. By the end of pre-production, the screenplay is hopefully finalized and satisfactory to all the financiers and other stakeholders.



During pre-production, the script is broken down into individual scenes, props and sets are built, all the locations, cast and crew members, costumes, special effects and visual effects are identified. After this is completed, a start date for principal photography will be established.

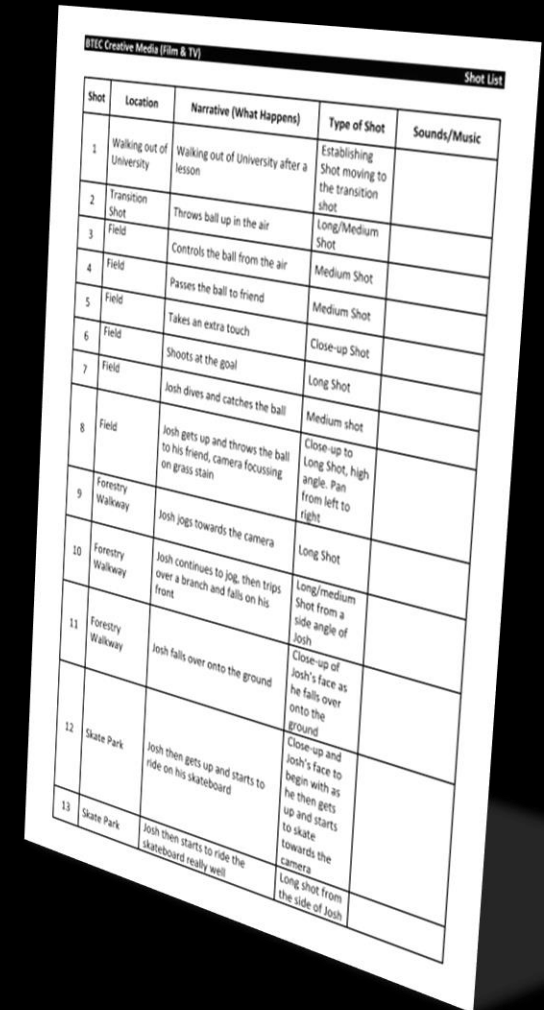


EDITING SCRIPT	PICTURE	TIME	AUDIO
1	CJ Farmer's back	05	Ambient Sound - VO from interview: "Well I never really thought about it, my father was a dairy farmer and so was his father..."
2	LS Farmer walking toward barn	07	Ambient Sound - VO from interview: "I guess it just runs in the family."
2A	CU of Tractor	08	Ambient sound Farmer walking
2B	CU Farmer opening gate	04	Ambient sound gate opening
3	MS Farmer Bob Langwell standing next to row of Dairy Cows (super frame lower 2")	10	Interview continues: Answer to question: "Why did you become a dairy farmer?" - and how "I'd could at this time..."
4			



The Shot List

A shot list is a list of the shots in a given scene or scenes. Unlike storyboards, which show images, shot lists give short written descriptions of shots in the order in which they will actually be filmed. Shot lists are very useful planning tools. They help filmmakers plan similar shots (e.g. all the close-ups of one actor's face to be used in the movie, or all exterior shots of the same building) at one time, even if those shots do not appear together in the finished film. This minimizes the time spent changing camera set-ups during shooting.



Shot	Location	Narrative (What Happens)	Type of Shot	Sounds/Music
1	Walking out of University	Walking out of University after a lesson	Establishing Shot moving to the transition shot	
2	Transition Shot	Throws ball up in the air	Long/Medium Shot	
3	Field	Controls the ball from the air	Medium Shot	
4	Field	Passes the ball to friend	Medium Shot	
5	Field	Takes an extra touch	Close-up Shot	
6	Field	Shoots at the goal	Long Shot	
7	Field	Josh dives and catches the ball	Medium shot	
8	Field	Josh gets up and throws the ball to his friend, camera focussing on grass stain	Close-up to Long Shot, high angle. Pan from left to right	
9	Forestry Walkway	Josh jogs towards the camera	Long Shot	
10	Forestry Walkway	Josh continues to jog, then trips over a branch and falls on his front	Long/medium Shot from a side angle of Josh	
11	Forestry Walkway	Josh falls over onto the ground	Close-up of Josh's face as he falls over onto the ground	
12	Skate Park	Josh then gets up and starts to ride on his skateboard	Close-up and Josh's face to begin with as he then gets up and starts to skate towards the camera	
13	Skate Park	Josh then starts to ride the skateboard really well	Long shot from the side of Josh	

With a shot list, your entire production runs more efficiently because everything gets shot based on the location and setup, as opposed to the order scenes appear in the script. A shot list is similar to a storyboard because it identifies what's being shot. A shot list can be distributed to cast and crew and gets the director, cinematographer and the rest of the crew on the same page, especially when shooting the scenes that haven't been storyboarded.

Shot List									
Scene #	Shot #	Description	Shot	Angle	Lens	Movement	Location	Time	Audio
1	1	John Doe sits alone at his desk.	Medium	High angle	35mm	Static	INT.	DAY	Boom
1	2	Hearing a noise outside, John turns to look	Medium	Dutch angle	35mm	Static	INT.	DAY	Boom
1	3	John's feet walking across the room	Close	Low angle	85mm	Dolly	INT.	DAY	Boom
1	4	John reaches a window	Medium	Eye level	35mm	Static	INT.	DAY	Boom
1	5	From outside, we see John looking through the window	Wide	Eye level	55mm	Pan in	EXT.	DAY	Boom

Scouting Locations



Once scriptwriters, producers or directors have decided what kind of scenery they need for the various parts of their work that is shot outside of the studio, the search for a suitable place or "location" outside the studio begins.



The location scouting process begins very early in the creation of a film, before all the stars have been cast or even greenlit. Some start a good three to four months before filming begins, but it's not unusual for a scout to start even earlier than that.

Location scouts also look for spectacular or interesting locations beforehand, to have a database of locations in case of requests. Location scouts often negotiate legal access to filming locations. Familiarity and ability to make use of local resources and a network of capable support are vital even before shooting begins.



Building Props & Sets



Sets are designed and built by the Production Designer in close collaboration with the Director. Sets will provide the visual and tactile spaces where characters interact and the film's events transpire. Can you recognize the movies any of these iconic sets belong to?



Check out this time-lapse set construction for the Final Battle set at White Sands in New Mexico from Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen.

As sets are built, so are the props also. Prop refers to any moveable item meant to be visible on film. This huge range of objects includes:

- **Dressing Props** - the furniture, drapes, flooring, etc., used to dress sets
- **Hand Props** - items which are used or held by Actors
- **Hero Props** - objects central to the action in a scene
- **Stunt Props** - replica items made of soft materials
- **Mechanical Props** - which may move or illuminate

Props also include weapons, such as guns and knives, and greenery and foliage including trees and plants.

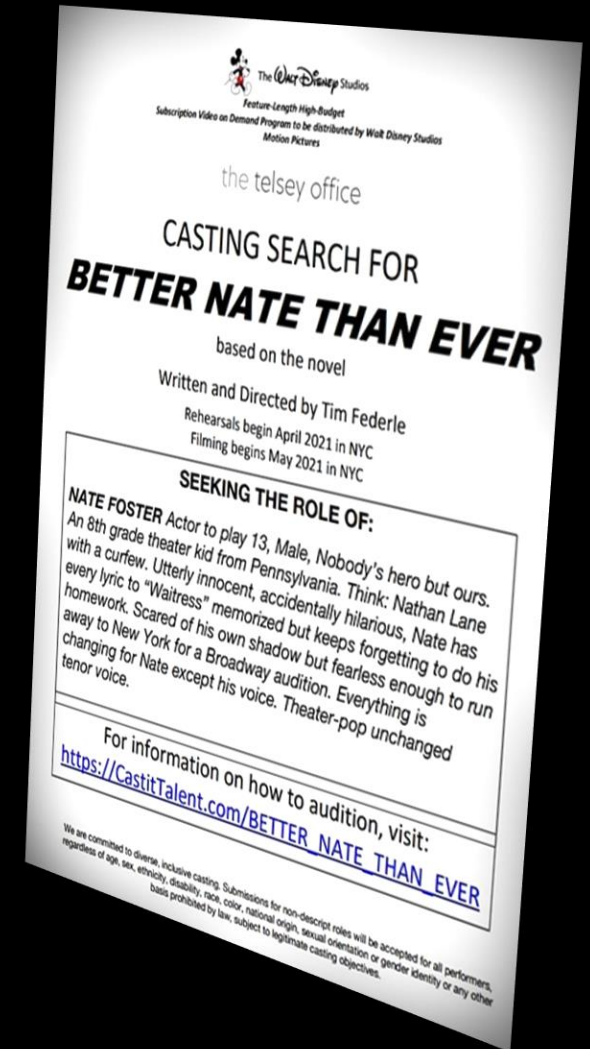
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Usually a Properties Dept. is tasked with the creation, operation, and maintenance of all props. Props can also be built by FX companies under contract with a studio or a producer.



Hiring the Cast

Hiring actors is typically done by a casting director, with input from a director, producer, or studio. **Casting calls** are notices made to the public or to casting agencies regarding acting jobs for an upcoming production. Struggling actors usually find out about them by following the trades, getting on mailing lists or signing with casting agencies. Agencies that specialize in providing extras for film provide one possible way to break into the industry.

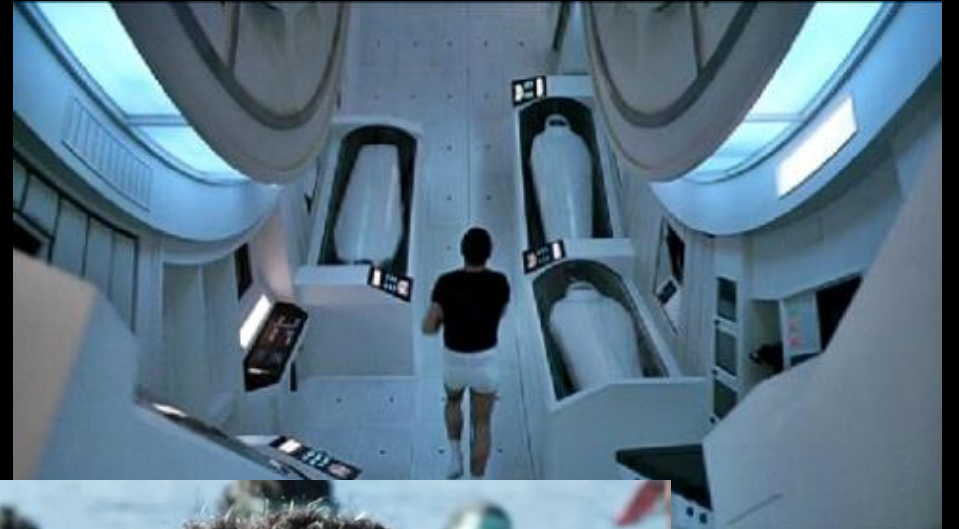


An experienced actor with an agent should get auditions from casting calls. A-list actors do not attend casting calls and are usually attached to projects through inside dealings before the project gets greenlit. Casting calls are commonly used to complete a cast. The process can involve a series of auditions before a casting panel, composed of a producer, director and/or choreographer. The casting director will consider both the talent of the individual actors and the “chemistry” of their combination.



Identifying Special & Visual Effects

Some movie scenes need **special effects** (sfx) or **visual effects** (vfx), because they require elements that would be too dangerous, impractical, or impossible to shoot in real life. It could be something as simple as a wisp of smoke from a gun or something as complicated as a rampaging kaiju destroying a city.



With the advancements in sfx/vfx, anything is possible today. However these scenes need to be recognized early on in order to make the necessary preparations before production.

Can you guess what movie is this scene from?



Special effects are mainly of two types: optical and mechanical. Optical effects (or photographic effects), are techniques in which images or film frames are created photographically or in post-production. Mechanical effects (also practical or physical effects) are usually accomplished during the live-action shooting. It includes using mechanized props, scenery, scale models, animatronics, pyrotechnics and atmospheric effects such as: wind, rain, fog, snow, clouds, etc.



Visual effects refers to digital post-production computer generated imagery, or CGI. Directors hire FX companies that have the ability of producing the kind of sfx/vfx they envision. Notable sfx/vfx companies include:

- Animal Logic
- Framestore
- Digital Domain
- ILM
- Weta Digital



Moving Towards the Shoot

Production Office (U.K.) B22 Limited Pinewood Studios, Pinewood Road, Iwer Heath, SLD 0NH, United Kingdom Tel: +44 (0) 1753 656 086 Fax: +44 (0) 1753 656 957		<div style="text-align: right; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">007⁵</div>																																																													
CALL SHEET # 6		TUESDAY 15th JANUARY 2008																																																													
DIRECTOR Marc Forster		UNIT CALL: 07:30 **ON SET**																																																													
PRODUCERS Michael Wilson, Barbara Broccoli		CREW BREAKFAST: FROM 06:30 RUNNING LUNCH AVAILABLE: 12:00 - 14:00 **CONTINUOUS WORK PERIOD**																																																													
WRITERS Neal Purvis & Robert Wade and Paul Haggis																																																															
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS Anthony Wayne, Callum McDougall																																																															
UNIT BASE: BACKLOT BEHIND 'S' STAGE																																																															
LOCATION: 'S' STAGE		Production Supervisor: Jeremy Johns (+44 7850 772 332) Production Manager: Janine Modder (+44 7850 739 244) Production Co-ordinator: Carissa Newman (+44 7768 016 356) Production Co-ordinator (UK): Paige Chaytor (+44 7797 345 781) 1 st A.D.: Michael Lerman (+44 7917 401 007) 2 nd A.D.: Toby Hefferman (+44 7955 566 815) Ben Dixon (+44 7876 441 007) David Pinnington (+44 7831 259 704) Location Manager: Neil Fulton (+44 7850 785 045) Assistant Location Manager: David Seaton (+44 7973 725 873) Transport Manager (UK): Phil Allchin (+44 7836 204 547)																																																													
LOCATION NOTES:		SCL 0601 58: 16:12																																																													
WEATHER:																																																															
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At some point in pre-production there will be a **read-through of the script** which is usually attended by all cast members with speaking parts, the director, all heads of departments, producers, and publicists. This organized reading of the script in which the speaking parts, stage directions, voiceover, and scene headings are read out loud will be the first time the cast hear their lines spoken.



Notice the huge amount of resources, energy, and activities that have been spent so far, yet not a single scene of the movie has been shot. However, the preparation to shoot the movie can make the difference between its failure or its success.



RESHOOT

1. Why is Pre-production important?
2. What does it mean for a film to be “greenlit”?
3. Which seven important events take place during this stage of filmmaking?
4. What purpose does a shooting list serve?
5. Explain the casting process.
6. What distinction can be made between sfx and vfx?



Next:

THE CREW

Jim Soto © 2023