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The roles of producer and director: Differences and similarities

Emma James · Thursday, November 26th, 2020

If you're a big movie fan or avid TV watcher, you might know all the actors in your favorite shows and movies. However, there are many people involved in the process of bringing a film to completion many of whom are never shown on screen. Two of those prominent roles are producer and director, but what is the difference between the two job roles?

[David McKenzie](#), producer of *Masters of Illusion*, and *Purgatory* has over 100 credits as a producer. He also has directing credits, including for *Hate Among Us*, which won an Emmy.

What does a producer do?

A producer will be involved in all aspects of the production; from finding the story, getting funds to make the film, creating and sticking to a budget, putting the cast and crew together, to organizing and attending meetings with everyone involved on the project. Although he or she will not be able to do everything, they will oversee every part of the production. That includes post-production, such as special effects and promotion and distribution of the final product. Much of the production relies on the producer.

If the budget is miscalculated, this can take money away from other areas of the production and have an impact on the whole project. Choosing the wrong cast and crew can cause friction in a setting where many different personalities clash but are forced to work together in close quarters. That can cause problems on set and, in extreme circumstances, can lead to crucial members of the cast or crew quitting. Having to recast or replace them can result in delays and extra costs, or scheduling problems with those involved in the production for a set time, being unable to work on the filming due to other work commitments.

So, it's important for the producer to make the right decisions and manage any potential problems before they affect the often-rigid schedule. They will generally have to be a people person because of the need to communicate with a variety of individuals on different levels, sometimes having to negotiate with difficult people or solve problems. Because of the intensity of the role, there will often be people working closely with the producer in roles such as executive producer, co-producer and assistant producer (to name just a few).

What does a director do?

While the producer has a more technical and management role, the director gets to focus on the

creative side of filming. Starting with the script, he or she will have a say in the shooting script. This is the order the scenes are filmed in, which often isn't the same order they will be shown in the final version. There can be several reasons for this: including conflicting schedules or saving on the cost of travel (shooting multiple out of sequence scenes in the same set or location at the same time). They will also have a say on the way the script is translated and will focus on any revisions that may be needed. They will work closer with writers and other creative members of the team, as well as the producer, to achieve the desired mood of the film. For example: dealing sensitively with difficult subjects or ensuring that scenes intended to be funny hit the mark, or don't cause unintentional offence.

Some similarities

Both the director and producer will be involved in casting. Although the director will be responsible for working closely with the cast to ensure they understand the characters they are playing and any other aspect of the role. The producer will be less involved in the creative side of production. Both roles are crucial to the production, and neither one could manage independently of the other. Ideally, both will agree on the choices because both will have to work closely within the vision for the film, and with the people chosen for the production.

Many of the best films are those where the producer and director have been able to get along and manage the roles effectively without clashing. Even productions with a lot of potential can fail if the producer and director fail to work together, and instead clash on important decisions. Some films or shows will have someone in both roles, and if that person has the required skills, that option can be one way of avoiding the problem but it can, however, increase the workload.

Taking on both roles

This is an appealing option for indie filmmakers with a **low budget**. You need to be adaptable to pull this off, but the reward is, you get more control over your project, you don't have to pay someone else to take on one of the roles and can avoid clashing with someone who may have other ideas about how the project should be carried out.

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