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## *Production 101, film production with a great enterprising spirit*

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It is very easy in universities to forget the importance of teaching. It is easy for this to happen when the accreditation system almost exclusively recognizes research, as is the case in Spain, and teaching is relegated to a huge block of “others,” where teaching, transfer to society and management are practically diluted between them. With no small effort to find the time and little encouragement from his colleagues, still subject manuals come to light. Some are published by the universities themselves and so frequently valued as something minor, and others with great personal efforts from the authors.

This review wants to highlight the importance of manuals, the teacher’s book, the work “bible” that will make it possible for students to be great professionals tomorrow. Frequently we find university professors who use references from numerous authors to their own program, plagued by a multitude of citations, which on many occasions cloud the objective, in short, due to the almost obligatory nature of covering a teaching method, a concept, a working tool.

Production 101 is a genuine manual, without rhetoric, that achieves the aim of knowing the complex production process in its most detailed aspect. Benítez-Rojas presents a publication to be worked on, to become a work guide and bedside book for any self-respecting producer.

The manual is organized into 13 chapters and four final annexes. Ramin Zahed’s Introduction is direct and brief, in keeping with the content and the practical approach. Zahed introduces the author like this:

“Raquel, who is a well-respected producer internationally, is the founder and president of Toronto-based Comet Entertainment Inc., a global company that offers advice on obtaining rights and producing properties for the worldwide market” (...) She reviews all the various steps of a Project, from the earliest stages of development, through financing, clearing rights, hiring writers and artists, production, signing co-pro deals, and taking advantage of global tax credits, all the way to licensing, merchandising, distribution and residuals”. (p.1)

With this *Introduction* Zahed highlights the most relevant aspects of the content that the reader can easily locate in the *Index*. Chapter 1 begins with aspects related to copyright and addresses the issue that the author considers should be the first in the whole process. However, an introduction to the subject is missing, a chapter that gives in generic brushstrokes everything that the student will find on the pages, that serves as a map of its content, that gives it a context in the vast universe of the production. Still, the practical vision of Benítez-Rojas is clear, away from the academic constraint.

In this first chapter the author emphasizes the importance of having the rights to the work. The first thing is to register it as one’s own. The models vary depending on the type of adaptation, and you must know them and have up-to-date information. Registering the work is important because:

“[it] serves two purposes. First, it aids in the protection of the copyright as it can serve as useful evidence in a dispute requiring legal proof of ownership of copyright. Secondly, it makes others aware of the copyright claim” (p. 4).

The chapter raises an interesting topic in a very practical way, *Who Owns the Copyright?* In their first jobs, many producers and directors discover this issue when they have the finished film. They want to sign up for contests, festivals, promote it, and ‘happily’ provide the contact details of the person completing the form. Hopefully, the film has a cash prize and that person, who perhaps was not the most appropriate, is the one who receives the recognition and gets paid if the prize is in cash. How is it distributed? Who then pays the taxes on that award? It is important to be very clear about who the owner is, who has the copyright. Benítez-Rojas explains this concept clearly and directly and extends it regarding *Moral Rights*.

In this first chapter, it is worth paying attention to the distinction between audiovisual work and multimedia work, to take into account, the difference and the future explanation in relation to copyright.

The most relevant of the 13 chapters will not be highlighted here, in large part because the objective of the review is to encourage reading, not exhaust it or propose a review as an excuse to avoid it. However, continuing with chapter 2, *Legal Organization*, which links to the above:

“Normally, a producer is advised to set up a corporation. The primary reason behind this is to limit his/her liability, but it is often also necessary because incorporation is an essential requirement for most of the tax credits available, as well as for investors, banks, etc”. (p. 13)

This chapter explains step by step how to create a corporation. Without a doubt, she fully reveals a great experience that allows him/her to specify the most relevant content that any creator may need.

In Chapter 3, *Submission Forms*, she highlights the need for prudence in relation to documentation that is sent to a production company to “sell” his/her idea, his/her script, his/her work. Probably something that we teachers do many times in the university. Warn them that you cannot send everything, since ideas are the most precious thing. In fact, the author recalls, vindicates, and encourages them to be entrepreneurs and seek funding to develop their own projects. However, she focuses on the importance of filling in the submission document, the submission forms. If the entity to which we present ourselves has an interest, this basic information is enough. They do not have any more time for the amateur, but they are also not interested in losing control of their product.

In Chapter 4, *Securing the rights*, the reader will find a helpful *Option and Purchase Agreement Sample*. In Chapter 5, *Assignments*, an *Assignment and Waiver of Rights: Sample Agreement* is very comprehensive with several basic aspects that producers should consider. And finally, in Chapter 6, *Non-Disclosure and non-Circumvention Agreements*, she provides up to three fundamental agreement models throughout the process.

From chapter 7 onward a second part of the manual begins. Although up to this point legal aspects have been dealt with that will make the film a formal project, from this chapter on, the concept is to make the film a viable project with possibilities of realization. Chapter 7, *In search of the money*, explains each of the factors that must be considered and that in the 21st century is practically mandatory in the process: bible, target audience, format and episode length, logline (pitch), brief, characters, setting the stage, etc. Others like the teaser, the test, the trailer, the promo, or the pilot are also covered. All this is covered without covering practical economic means but providing materials for its achievement. Although complete, this chapter really provides little detail, hence the breakdown that follows with the chapters on *Co-Productions* (Chapter 8), including a model agreement. The process of analyzing existing agreements between countries for international co-production that facilitate the entire process, in addition to the aid that each country may have to encourage relations with other countries for specific projects, are highlighted. Of great practicality is the model of the co-production agreement that is added at the end. Chapter 9, which could well be considered here or before Chapter 7, *Budget and Schedule*, is almost an introductory one, discussing concepts that correspond to the production under development during filming, if they serve as the basis for *Insurance* (chapter 10).

There is no doubt that one of those topics that most concerns the author is Chapter 11, *Distribution*, given the development of numerous factors to consider. As she explains, it is about satisfying an artistic need, but we also have others to cover:

There are many reasons why we produce a show, but I think that the two main ones to artistically express our ideas to a broader audience and get our message across in the best way possible, and to make some money while doing it. Some people can make a living by doing this as a full-time job, and for that, it is essential that we obtain revenues from the exploitation of the property in different media. We are in the business of storytelling, but we also need to pay our bills. So, to be successful, we need to sell what we create, and there’s an industry for that” (p. 107).

This chapter is one of the most complete and the distribution agreement model that is presented is especially noteworthy. It even includes a brief glossary of fundamental terms to understand how far the possible extension of concepts that must be considered goes. It is followed by the rights of distribution, rates, transmission materials, confidentiality, guarantees, account system, distributor rights, etc. As if that were not enough, it culminates in Chapter 12, on *Rights Acquisition*.

The last chapter, 13, *Merchandising*, addresses the aspects of the exploitation of the work beyond the film. As the author says, it is about getting the most out of the work that has involved so much effort and money. This material not only fulfills a promotional function, but, well managed, it can generate income in some very interesting cases. Although this chapter is at the end, it should not be considered after production, because it even addresses previous aspects such as product placement, which could be considered in previous agreements.

Taking into account the return that in some cases merchandising may bring to the film, think of Disney. This merchandising chapter is somewhat incomplete, but it cannot be forgotten that it is not a commercial book, but a manual for students designed for a course. Those of us who dedicate ourselves to teaching know that everything that we could cover over a few months is never exhausted.

The annexes and model contracts and other documents at the end of almost all the chapters are accompanied in most cases by the sources from which they have been extracted, so that the interested party only has to go to that main source to update document templates.

Without a doubt, *Production 101* is an example of a manual for teaching the business production process, written in the

context of the Canadian case, but equally practical for any other territory and to establish comparisons of those who dare to co-produce with Canada, since it resolves aspects about the operation in the case of this country. The lapse, albeit briefly, in coverage of the promotion phase of the films is almost unforgivable, being aware of the unquestionable percentage that must be allocated from the budget. Perhaps because the author's vision is completely related to the sale of the product, to the business return and not to the cultural one. Perhaps here, for example, promotion at film festivals is not contemplated, because it involves spending with practically no income. Although the sale is interesting and necessary, the quality filter is passed by the large television content producers or managers, among others, but the quality filter of the critics and the public should not be forgotten. Again, it is worth remembering the purpose of the manual and the temporal limitations implied by the delivery of this content and, consequently, how it affects the content of a manual.

If the book that is presented is a diamond in the rough, it is, without a doubt, the enterprising spirit with which it is written that is important; and the message that nothing is given to us, and everything depends on personal effort and the importance of knowledge of the entire cumbersome world of administrative bureaucracy to ensure that the film Project has the best ending.

## Referencias

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