

D-N/I-E:			D/I	P/E	D/I	P/E							
Scene:			70	71	72	74							
Page Count:			1/8	1/8	1/8	3/8							
Estimated Prod. Time/Hours:			12	3	24	8							
Title: <i>Endless Voyage</i>			Old Vietnam Bus	Vietnam Road	Old Vietnam Bus	Old Vietnam Road/Bus							
Producer: <i>name/company</i>													
Director: <i>name</i>													
Assistant Director: <i>name</i>													
Production Manager: <i>name</i>													
Part	Actor	No.											
Melissa	<i>name</i>	1	1	1	1	1							
<i>name</i>	<i>name</i>	2											
<i>name</i>	<i>name</i>	3											
Chau	<i>name</i>	4				4							
<i>name</i>	<i>name</i>	5											
Extras/Silent Bits													
Viet. boy (7)	<i>name</i>	21	21										
Bus driver	<i>name</i>	22		22	22								
Viet. man	<i>name</i>	23				23							
Extras/Atmosphere													
Viet. female	<i>name</i>	41	X	X	X	X							
Viet. male	<i>name</i>	42	X	X	X	X							
Viet. children	<i>name</i>	43	X	X	X	X							
Animals													
small pig			X	X									
chicken			X	X									
Stunts													
			X		X	X							

Fig. 3-13. Production board with movable strips, showing the transfer of information from the script breakdown sheets.

D-N/I-E:			D/I	D/I	D/I	P/E	P/E						
Scene:			70	72	72	74	71						
Page Count:			1/8	1/8	1/8	3/8	1/8						
Estimated Prod. Time/Hours:			12	24	24	8	3						
Title: <i>Endless Voyage</i>			Old Vietnam Bus	First Vietnam Bus Day	Sec. Vietnam Bus Day	Vietnam Road/Bus	Vietnam Road						
Producer: <i>name/company</i>													
Director: <i>name</i>													
Assistant Director: <i>name</i>													
Production Manager: <i>name</i>													
Part	Actor	No.											
Melissa	<i>name</i>	1	1	1	1	1	1						
<i>name</i>	<i>name</i>	2											
<i>name</i>	<i>name</i>	3											
Chau	<i>name</i>	4				4							
<i>name</i>	<i>name</i>	5											
Extras/Silent Bits													
Viet. boy (7)	<i>name</i>	21	21										
Bus driver	<i>name</i>	22		22	22								
Viet. man	<i>name</i>	23				23							
Extras/Atmosphere													
Viet. female	<i>name</i>	41	X	X	X	X	X						
Viet. male	<i>name</i>	42	X	X	X	X	X						
Viet. children	<i>name</i>	43	X	X	X	X	X						
Animals													
small pig			X	X	X	X	X						
chicken			X	X	X	X	X						
Stunts													
			X		X	X							

Fig. 3-14. Production board with scheduling information.

Arranging the Shooting Schedule

Most shooting schedules are arranged in accordance with several principles. The overriding goal of all planning is to stay within both the schedule and the budget to avoid delays and cost overruns. For this reason, the organization of a shooting schedule almost always centers on the actual shooting sites, that is, where the scenes are actually being shot.

This basic principle is violated only in rare instances. For example, if a certain actor is available only on particular days, the producer is forced to make concessions. The shooting schedule then centers on the star, and certain scenes that would otherwise have been shot in a more economical order are grouped together to accommodate the needs of the star. In general, though, for independent films, the production schedule revolves around the shooting sites.

In determining the shooting schedule, two other considerations are of primary importance. First, must a scene be shot at a particular time, as described in the screenplay? For example, must interior night scenes be shot at night? In many cases, interior scenes that do not show anything of the outside or that take place in rooms without windows, such as stairways or offices, can be shot at any time of day. It is frequently possible to block windows and thus create a night atmosphere during the daytime. In most cases, shooting interior night scenes during the day is less stressful and expensive.

Would it be possible to shoot night exterior scenes during the day? Many years ago, under low-budget conditions, these scenes were shot during the day with appropriate camera filters. However, today's sophisticated audiences will not accept such obvious trickery. In most cases, night exterior scenes should be shot at night. The development of highly sensitive film stock or the use of video make night shots less complicated and cumbersome than they were previously.

Day interior scenes, of course, can be shot at night, if necessary, provided that the actual exterior is not seen. It is possible that the shooting schedule might require night filming for logistical reasons, or it might be more economical. For example, a location may be too expensive for the production to return another day.

Before any decisions can be made and implemented into the shooting schedule, actual locations for the shoot must be found and secured by contract. All of this back-and-forth may seem confusing, and indeed for quite a long time during preproduction final decisions cannot be made because many facts depend on one other.

The second priority in scheduling is the availability of actors and the arrangement of their scenes. As most productions deal with SAG members, it is necessary to adhere to the rules of the SAG. The organization provides, free of charge, extensive information and documentation on these rules to all

producers who become signatories. It is also possible, though more cumbersome, to obtain this information without becoming a signatory.

To keep down production costs, day players (actors used for only one or a few days) should not become weekly players. For example, if an actor works in only a few scenes but these scenes are placed throughout the shooting schedule, that actor must be paid as a weekly player. The SAG stipulates that actors be paid higher fees when working as weekly players, even if they do not work more or longer than they would as daily players. Daily players become weekly players when their working days are fewer than 10 days apart. For example, if an actor works in a scene on shooting day 2 and again on day 9, he or she becomes a weekly player and must be paid for the interim time. If the scene on day 9 can be scheduled for day 13, the actor can be classified and paid as a daily player working on two days.

Other considerations come into play when designing the shooting schedule:

1. It is desirable to schedule less complicated scenes during the first few shooting days, especially if the film's crew has not worked together previously and must find its specific rhythm and chemistry. Easy scenes that feature dialogue rather than special-effects-laden action also allow the director to establish a style of working and communicating with the crew.

2. If the weather cooperates, exterior scenes should be scheduled before interior ones, which are independent of weather conditions and can be shot safely toward the end of the shooting period. If, on the contrary, all interior scenes are shot first and only exterior scenes remain, then uncooperative weather can lead to time overruns. Interior scenes should also be scheduled as backup scenes in case the weather does not allow exterior shooting. These so-called cover sets should ideally be available during all weather-dependent shoots.

Note that perfect conditions almost never exist throughout a production. The PM should be accustomed to quick improvisations and changes of schedule and locations. No production will serve perfectly all artistic, logistical, and financial considerations at the same time. Very rarely has it occurred that a film has been shot exactly within the schedule as planned on the production board—constant adjustments and changes are the rule.

3. The PM should try to exploit the natural flow and order of operation at a location. For example, if one scene takes place on the front lawn of a house, another in the hallway of the same house, and a third in the kitchen, then the first scene shot should be on the lawn, the second in the hallway, and the third in the kitchen, even if the continuity

of the screenplay is destroyed. This assumes that the crew has just arrived on location. If, however, the crew already has set up inside the house and will stay there for several days, then of course interior scenes should be scheduled before exteriors. It is best to avoid any unnecessary movement of equipment and crew. If the lawn scene must be shot at sunset, the scene should be scheduled at the end of the location shoot, when the crew must move out anyway and wrap that particular location.

4. As indicated earlier, on SAG productions, the use of actors may influence the shooting schedule. In addition, turnaround times must be observed. Turnaround time is the actors' minimum time off between consecutive shooting days. This time, also called the rest period, is 12 hours, and violators are penalized by the SAG. The turnaround period begins when actors are dismissed from the set and ends when they are required to reappear for makeup, wardrobe, and hair the next day.

After a six-day week at an overnight location, actors are entitled to a weekly rest period of 36 consecutive hours; this rest period extends to 56 hours on a local shoot. The SAG's "low-budget provisions" permit more flexibility in the latter case, as long as the actors waive the additional-pay provisions for work performed on weekends. Rest periods are, of course, desirable—though rarely kept—for the crew as well.

The structure of a single shooting day should also follow SAG guidelines; it is implemented by the AD on the set. The PM is usually not involved in scheduling lunch breaks. The SAG stipulates that a meal be called not later than six hours after the start of work (or after the 15 minute breakfast if work begins before 9 a.m.). A second meal must be called not more than six hours after the callback from the first meal break.

When these guidelines are followed, the shooting schedule comes into shape, and its requirements almost automatically fall into place. From here on, the production manager's full-time job is to have everything and everyone ready and available when they are needed.

Scheduling Software

Some IBM or Apple software programs on the market allow the PM and AD to perform on computers most breakdown and scheduling work discussed in this chapter. These programs usually permit the user to create customizable breakdown sheets, generate shooting schedules, and implement changes. In addition, they allow the user to view "what-if" previews. Although many of these software programs make the production manager's job easier, they cannot replace the

PM's knowledge and scheduling experience. Frequently, too, the PM must be in places where computer access or printouts are not available.

As much as it can be argued for the fastness and accuracy of the software programs, it remains true that by creating the first forms, breakdown sheets and schedules by hand the PM's knowledge of the production becomes much more ingrained and personal. It seems a wise procedure to go at it first the "old-fashioned" way (pencil and paper), then transferring to the software.

Now that the screenplay has been broken down and the shooting schedule designed, the PM has completed two vital steps in the process of creating an accurate production budget. The basic elements are known and can be calculated. These include the length of the shooting period, the number of day and night shoots, the number of weekend or overtime shoots, the number and sites of the locations, and the length and frequency of employment periods for actors and extras. Also known at this time are the requirements of the various departments (such as the art department), construction, props, equipment, and shooting ratio. As previously mentioned, the information contained in the screenplay, being transferred to the breakdown sheets and then automatically onto the production board's scheduling provide the basis for the next step of budgeting. Most software programs use industry standard budget forms, allow for individual specifications, may easily get transferred to foreign currencies, automatically provide re-budgeting whenever previous information has been changed and also implement flat and percentage fringe benefits, current taxes, current guild and union labor rates and "what if?" scenarios.

The next chapter discusses some tips for low-budget productions.