

# THE FILMMAKER'S HANDBOOK

A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE  
FOR THE DIGITAL AGE

FOURTH EDITION

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A PLUME BOOK

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# PREFACE

If you look at how storytelling in movies changes over time, you can see moments when new technology has made new kinds of narratives possible. Sometimes it's a seismic shift. The introduction of sound in the 1920s transformed scriptwriting, film acting, and editing. Or it may be more gradual, but just as dramatic, like the way digital has led to documentary and fiction films that would have been technically or financially impossible before.

As a filmmaker, you find that changes come so fast these days that it's really daunting to try to tell stories while having to learn and master so much about your craft. This book, which is for beginners and for working professionals, can help you. Inevitably, some parts won't be as current as the latest information on the Web, but the book offers something most websites can't: a view of the entire filmmaking process from beginning to end. It will give you the foundation and language to understand new developments as they come along.

*The Filmmaker's Handbook* started out almost thirty years ago, and through the editions it's become a stockpot of ingredients added and removed. In 1984 Ed and I wrote the first edition about working with celluloid film. After that, Ed bowed out of working on the book and in 1999 I wrote an expanded second edition to include analog video; in 2007 I did another major expansion to introduce digital, doubling the size of the original book. David Leitner—a talented filmmaker and explorer of technology—contributed his expertise to that third edition and to this fourth edition. As of this edition, I've had to jettison a lot of material about once-proud film, which is painful. But digital is the future and the book is already a doorstop (or the e-book equivalent).

The world of moviemaking is really made up of many separate but related worlds. I've tried to address the needs of fiction and documentary filmmakers, who may be creating work on their own or as part of a large organization, to be shown in any number of ways, for profit or not.

In a sense, all moviemakers start out as independents. More often than not, beginners must become versed in all aspects of production—shooting, sound

recording, editing, raising money, distribution—simply because there’s no one else to perform these tasks. Learning all the facets of filmmaking has advantages no matter what your future career is in movies. In fact, with shrinking budgets and the growing power of technology, professional moviemakers are often expected to have a range of skills that go well beyond traditional job categories. This book is written with the assumption that you may be performing all the tasks of making a movie, or that you’ll at least want to understand them. And of course, it’s a reference: so read what concerns you and skip the sections that don’t.

For help along the way, thanks go to Mark Abbate, Benjamin Bergery, Richard Bock, David Brown, Michael Callahan, Elvin Carini, Claude Chelli, Frank Coakley, Victoria Garvin Davis, Bob Doyle, Stefan Forbes, Sandra Forman, Patrick Gaspar, Len Gittleman, Alfred Guzzetti, Arnie Harchik, Bruce Jacobs, Sam Kauffmann, Rudolph Kingslake, Dennis Kitz, Mark Lipman, Julie Mallozzi, Greg McCleary, Ross McElwee, Matt McMakin, Eric Menninger, Robb Moss, Graeme Nattress, Michael Phillips, Sami Pincus, Adam Schatten, Moe Shore, Tim Spitzer, and Serena Steuart.

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