



I MADE A SHORT FILM NOW WTF DO I DO WITH IT

SECOND EDITION

(A GUIDE TO FILM FESTIVALS, PROMOTION, AND SURVIVING THE RIDE)

WRITTEN BY CLARISSA JACOBSON
FOREWORD BY AGUSTÍ ARGELICH

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CHAPTER 1

GET A GOAL OR BE A GONER

(preliminary first step to keep you focused)

I know this probably makes you feel like you're back in junior high, and I'm that really annoying teacher who's on your case, but seriously:

"What is your goal, what are you gonna do with your film? Focus ya delinquent!"

Trust me, kids, having a goal is gonna make everything so much easier. You put so much time into making your short, but the true marathon is the next eighteen months after you've finished it. There will be a massive amount of work to do to give it a life.

If you look around at the films that succeed it's not just about quality (there are tens of thousands of good flicks that never see the light of day and plenty of bad ones that do), it's also about the filmmaker's goal—knowing what they want to achieve.

- *Some people make short films to create. Is that you?*
- *Some people make short films to practice their craft. Is that you?*
- *Some people make short films to get interest in their career. Is that you?*
- *Some people make short films as a proof-of-concept for their feature. Is that you?*
- *Some people make short films because they can't afford to make long ones. Is that you?*
- *Some people make short films because . . .*

You get my drift.

Figure out why you made your film. When you figure out why you made it, you can figure out what you want from it—your goal—and that will drive you and your strategy.

Why do you need a goal and a strategy?

Promoting a film is tons of work and the only thing that will keep you doing that work, which is absolutely exhausting, is a clear reason to do so—a goal. The only way you are going to achieve that goal or have a chance at it is with strategy. If you have no goal, you are not going to do all the heavy lifting that's required to make it a success. You are going to skip promoting it, you are going to skip entering festivals that require too much work, and you are going to give up with a few rejections.

Further, if you don't know what your goal is you will not know what strategy to use to achieve what you want and that will frustrate you.

Figure out first and foremost why you made your film.

For example, I'm a screenwriter who made a short (vs. the director who is usually the helm—more on that in *Chapter 10*). I wanted to get interest in my feature screenplay—*Lunch Ladies*—a surreal, quirky comedy/horror with two middle-aged female leads, but the industry would often tell me there was no market.

I got sick of hearing that nonsense, so I decided I would save my money and make a proof-of-concept short based on the feature to show the powers that be that there were plenty of people who would pay to see *Lunch Ladies*—and they should fund it.

Every step of the process after the short was in the can was with this goal in mind:

1. *Email every blogger, podcaster, and magazine I could find that wrote about shorts and horror/cult film to get them to review it—why? Maybe some producer out there would read about Lunch Ladies and want to make it.*
2. *Prove Lunch Ladies has a market all over the world and money can be made from it (this is more drivel the industry loves to spout—that comedy doesn't play overseas). This drove my strategy to get the short in as many international festivals as I could.*
3. *Have a great IMDb page¹—Put up photos, film fest release dates, reviews, awards, key words, special*

¹ IMDb (Internet Movie Database) this is explained in more depth in *Chapter 2*.

thanks, etc. I figured anyone wanting to finance my feature would first go to my IMDb page to check out the short.

- 4. Make a website—Show industry folks how I would market the film because unless they see the potential, they won't get it (I had a school store, hairnet club, fan art page, geography lesson, announcements, and more). Websites also build legitimacy.*
- 5. Build a fan base—Get busy on social media so I can find my target audience and fans (it becomes crystal clear who they are when you see who follows you). If I know my target audience, I know who to market it to. If a producer knows there is a fan base and who they are, that helps to get it made.*
- 6. BE SEEN! It had to be seen. Not sit on my hard drive. It must play everywhere it could no matter how small or how big—because someone may see it and help.*

The goal of getting a feature made influenced all my choices in the festival run and gave me a strategy. I wanted to make the feature so bad that it kept me focused and excited, even when I was exhausted and didn't want to work. I would come home from my day job, write blogs for my website (each took about two hours, and I wrote over 200 over the course of the film), post on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter², populate

² I decided to move everything to BlueSky about two years ago when Twitter was rebranded as X and no longer have an account with them.

my Pinterest page, write reviewers, talk to fans, talk to other filmmakers, see other filmmakers' films, do interviews, and generally bop 'til I dropped.

After all these years of *Lunch Ladies* still kicking, I've now proven that its success on the circuit and out in the world was born from what I did above. The film is great (you gotta love your film or you may as well hang it up now), but there are lots of great films. It's the work I did that took it to the next level.

Have I achieved my goal of getting the feature made? Not yet, but I can't begin to tell you the doors it's opened—everything from my other screenplays being optioned, to appearances on France24 television, invites across the world to speak about the book and the film, and requests to be a juror at top festivals. Twice, I had interest in a *Lunch Ladies* series by major networks—one live-action, one animated, and I know more opportunities will come. It's been and continues to be an incredible ride. I'm not giving up—who knows what the future will bring?

Why did you make your film and what is your goal?

GET A FLIPPING GOAL!