



## TIPS AND TRICKS OF THE TRADE

We're proud to be a sponsor of the weekly [Alberta Filmmakers Podcast](#). Featured guests and topics are must-listen content for aspiring or established filmmakers. Listen for our tips and tricks before the "News You Can Use" segment of the podcast. We'll share secrets and expertise from our years of experience as producers and service providers of SPFX, film props, molding and casting, and more. See below for a running list of our tips after each podcast is aired.

---

January 22, 2018 Our hot tip of the week is about something we've been making for years now, and people all over the world use it: blood. Number one kudo: it's washable. However, whether you're doing the FX, make-up, wardrobe or props, DO NOT start your clean up with wet wipes – that will only set the stain. Always rinse first with clear warm water and then use soap and warm water. AND you can realistically fake a blood spill with a reusable silicone blood puddle – no mess no stress.

January 29, 2018: Our hot tip of the week echoes the Boy Scouts motto "be prepared": Special effects testing is critical. You'll save time, money, and stress on set when you test before shoot day. Always try to replicate the exact environment you're going to be shooting in. Is it frigid cold? Do your test in frigid cold – or as close as you can. This applies across all departments. Careful testing in a similar environment reduces risk of failure and increases your confidence – knowing you are totally prepared the day of the shoot.

Feb 5, 2018: This week's hot tip is about your project's Chain of Title, the trail of documents that clearly shows the agreements detailing ownership. Like the title on a house it's your project's legal foundation and if you want to sell your film, the trail needs to be clear. Pitfalls to unclear chain of title? Poorly written – or no deal memos, no legal counsel, no purchase price and vague provisions. Investing in good legal advice up front will save you money, time and trouble in the long run.

Feb 12, 2018: This week's hot tip is about the Wild Card - the unexpected situation or element that demands a solution the day of the shoot. Spur of the moment problem solving on set becomes easier with experience. But preparing for it by being well-equipped, alert and observant will give you a head start. Cool and confident handling of the unexpected is the goal. Be ready to improvise a solution with a positive take charge attitude and your reputation for being professional and prepared on set will grow.

Feb 20, 2018: Hot tip of the week is about Heroes - the prop kind. A hero prop is the best looking, most detailed prop fabricated for the shoot. 2 or 3 of the same prop are often fabricated; the best one being the hero and the others back-ups. The hero prop must look totally real for close up shots so attention to detail is critical. Guns or other weapons need reproductions because of the weight of the real thing. Often cast out of rubber with a foam core, a hero weapon is easier and safer for the actors to use, especially for multiple takes. A perfect example is the axe DiCaprio used in The Revenant. Created by Bleeding Art, the prop was so realistic that you couldn't tell it wasn't real 'till you picked it up.

Feb 27, 2018: Our hot tip this week is about how social media has changed the game when it comes to audience engagement. Its accessibility has leveled the marketing playing field. Financing, development and the actual shoot are a filmmaker's focus. But it's crucial during this process to take your audience inside the project through social media,

engaging their interest long before the release date. Your filmmaking talent and skills are huge assets for getting attention on the multitude of platforms out there. When done well, these can result in growing your fan base bigtime. Just by experimenting with a new platform and posting a few animated GIF's of its characters Bleeding Art has received close to two-hundred thousand views in very short order. If you don't have integrated social media as part of your filmmaking plan, get on it now!

March 6, 2018: This week's hot tip is about grants. Yes, we hear the groans already. We're fortunate to have grant programs on this side of the border but they can be the bane of a producer's existence. Though at times eye-crossingly complex and time consuming, they're often what gets a project off the ground or into production. Best way to tackle a grant: start it early, and do it in pieces so you're not burning the midnight oil right at the deadline. Because you know what happens then? Computers go down and you have no time to get questions answered or applications submitted. Give yourself some breathing room – and always, always, have someone proof your submission. There's nothing like typos to make those reviewing your grant groan right back.

March 13, 2018: Our tip of the week is about persistence and passion. The 2017 Oscar for live action short was won by *The Silent Child*. Writer Rachel Shenton and Director Chris Overton worked for 12 years on this project. Rachel's passion to tell this story was fueled by her father's sudden profound deafness when she was a young child. "Overnight" success in the film industry usually means overnight recognition...but the journey to success can take years. Persistence and passion for your project is a must. Rachel and Chris pursued crowdfunding and their parents sold 1000 British pounds worth of cupcakes to contribute. It can be a long hard road but believing in yourself and having passion for your project will fuel your journey and inspire support – it just might not happen "overnight".

March 20, 2018: This week's tip is about our need as filmmakers to explore the process behind the illusion. 24 frames per second is our legacy standard. The result is an art-form that has kept people spell-bound for over a century. The illusions created by the camera, editing or projection are supported by sets, costumes and lighting. Actors, directors and producers are show people and if successful, are experts at using artifice to their advantage. As filmmakers we experience the illusion and then are compelled to critically analyze it - going behind the curtain to explore the techniques and crucial roles played by the vast number of people who pull the strings. We create the illusion as a way to tell our stories and as special effects people we make the unbelievable, believable.

March 27, 2018: This week's tip is about the path to becoming a pyrotechnician. Most filmmakers at some point in their careers need to blow something up on screen; it could be as small as a spark or flash or as big as a major explosion. Either effect – or anything in between – requires that a government certified pyro-technician be in charge on set. Certification begins with taking a one day, federally approved course before applying for a Fireworks Operator Certificate, and finishes when you complete a 4 year apprenticeship. There are no short cuts on this path, as pyrotechnics aren't for semi-trained hobbyists or people who want to "wing it". Only professionally certified technicians can make the Big Bang happen legally and safely for all.

April 3, 2018: With three key female staff, one who is co-owner of the company, our tip this week is really a shout-out...to all the females working in a predominantly male industry, or those who want to work in it. Taking the words from Kate Walshe, company director of UK based Millennium FX: *"It's a hugely competitive industry so don't hold back, BE SEEN. From a young age, girls are taught not to make waves. This sort of programming needs to be unwritten so FUCK IT – MAKE WAVES. Being visible means producing work that people like me will see and take notice of."* The mantra is: **Gender is irrelevant** - So just get out there and do it!

April 10, 2018: Our hot tip this week is really a heads up about the evolution of stop motion animation as a contemporary art form. Wes Anderson's stop motion film *Isle of Dogs* not only opened the Berlinale Film Festival in March – a first in their 68 year history – he also won for Best Director. Despite this recognition, critics are struggling with the fact that the ages old art form of stop motion animation has a rapidly growing adult audience. The unique and authentic visuals created by stop motion are a very effective counter-point to the ubiquitous CG, and often have more

emotional resonance. It's exciting that we're moving away from the assumption that filmmaking for adult audiences is live action only.

April 17, 2018: This week's hot tip is about distribution. I mean, what's the point in making something if no one sees it right? Long gone are the days of gunning for a theatrical release. Want to reach a bigger market? Think digital. When you get your head out of the theatrical pie in the sky – or Netflix for that matter – there are literally hundreds if not thousands of opportunities to show your work to audiences worldwide. The times they have a-changed – and you need to as well when putting together the business plan for your film. Yes it can be overwhelming to sift through the markets, the platforms, the grants, but what a great time to be making your own work. You're not limited by a few gatekeepers anymore, the world is truly your oyster. Think big. Think global. Expand your sandbox.

April 25, 2018: Our hot tip this week is for the prop builders out there. Being prepared to modify, repair and reinforce that special prop that took weeks to build and could take minutes to ruin on set is key. Recently a carnivorous piece of furniture we had created needed instant effective repair after devouring an actor...luckily we knew just how to perform the needed surgery that allowed the shoot to continue. You always do your best to build in the strength the prop needs to handle the stress and strain, but have your repair kit with you at all times and then watch the action to spot the problem and fix it before it becomes major surgery.

May 1, 2018: Our hot tip this week highlights some fast financial facts about Canada's cultural industry. As a filmmaker you contribute to:

- A direct economic impact of \$59.3 billion – 3.1% of our GDP – 8 times larger than sports at \$7.2 billion!
- Employing over 704,000 people – the estimate for sports is 120,200

These facts are from a recent Hill Strategies study published in Arts Research Monitor. When they talk about cultural industry they include: audio-visual and interactive media, visual and applied arts, written and published works, live performance, heritage and libraries, sound recording, and the fine arts. We should be loud and proud and knowing the numbers is important as we each use our voice to promote our industry as a key Canadian economic driver.

May 8, 2018: We all know that one of the biggest challenges as filmmakers is getting our projects financed. We also know that many people are producing short form web series. This new method of distribution removes many of the traditional gatekeepers. Another plus is its eligibility for the new Canada Media Fund web series grant. The CMF as it's known, has an Experimental Stream for funding second or later seasons of web series. It may seem like a ton of work to explore this avenue and there's tough competition - but they want your work, and to promote Canadian content. They have \$352 million dollars to spend in 2018/19. The time investment could result in a huge payback for your project.

May 15, 2018: The most fundamental component from which everything else flows on a film or series is the script. The script is the blueprint that the actors, crew, and producers use as their guide for all preparation, planning and budgeting. If the script isn't nailed down well in advance or is arbitrarily changed during the shoot, it creates a chaotic situation that erodes the cast and crew's ability to deliver their best work. A perfect example of this not happening is the legendary Game of Thrones. All scripts were written well in advance for the entire season. No changes made. Everyone knew what they had to do. And as anyone who has watched the show knows, it is executed perfectly. Nailing down the script well in advance of the shoot can mean the difference between chaos and success.

May 22, 2018: This week's tip explores one of the best weapons you have for producing an amazing film. Have you ever wondered why a scene in a film isn't working for you? The pros will spot it right away. The crucial element that takes a scene from dreary to dynamic is the lighting. Strategizing the visual elements of each scene, the mood to be conveyed, what you want to focus on, is all for naught if the lighting doesn't shine. Fog and atmosphere show up vividly with back light, but look like lens aberrations with front light. Snow and dust look great with side and front lighting. Drama can be enhanced with extreme side lighting and little fill. Colour can make something dramatic or comic. Investing time and talent in lighting the scene will enhance all the elements with a dynamic result.

May 28, 2018: For the next three weeks of tips, we've asked a few local directors for their top tips. We touched on the subject of grants in an earlier podcast in March, but as we know it is really a key part of the puzzle when making a film so it's not surprising it has resurfaced again. This week's hot tip is about looking at grants from a new angle. "In your search for funding, you are going to get lots of rejection letters. Don't be discouraged. Instead, think of grant writing as a new way to think about and develop your projects and the grant money itself as a bonus." Great point, coming from Producer and Director Anna Cooley of Erratic Pictures.

June 4, 2018: As with last week's hot tip, we ventured into the community to ask some local directors what their top tip is. This week's comes from director Michael Peterson. "When making comedy, don't trust the cast and crew to decide what's funny or not. Often times what makes people laugh on set isn't the same as what works when you're in the editing room. So, the only thing you can trust is your own gut for what works as you'll be the one dealing with it in the editing room." Excellent point. You always need to be of two minds - thinking about what's working on set but also for the editing that's coming.

June 11, 2018: We've taken a break from writing our own tips for the past three weeks to talk to local directors about what they see as a hot tip. The last one this week is from director Sandi Somers of Spring Street Films. "Always take a creative risk, and exit your comfort zone. When you do that, you learn, you grow, and you develop new and exciting skills." That's not only a great tip for filmmakers but also for life in general. It's easy for us to operate in our comfort zones and as painful as it might be, stepping outside of that is the only way to grow. Remember, if you have a great tip, get in touch with the folks at Bleeding Art and let them know and you too might end up being quoted on our podcast.

June 18, 2018: This week's tip is about how to get a different perspective by getting outside your regular community. Take a break from the film scene and check out the goings-on in other industries. The Inventures Conference in Calgary a couple weeks ago is a great example. Called a "must-attend conference for creative minds" it was a sold out event that brought together research, innovation, commercialization, capital access, experiential learning and entrepreneurial communities to share and discuss successes, best practices, opportunities and ideas that will shape our future. So how does this relate to film? There's a bubbling ecosystem of high tech and digital advances that are going to impact everything we do in film. Exposing ourselves to different perspectives and industries is critical if we don't want to be left behind.

June 25, 2018: Knowing your audience can mean the difference between success and failure of your film project. For this reason, Culture Track – the groundbreaking new survey of Canadian cultural consumers that explores the unique proclivities of Canada's audiences – is well worth a read. Initiated by the Canadian Council for Business and the Arts, this study is the first of its kind in more than two decades. Based on interviews with more than 6,400 culture-goers from coast-to-coast it looks at how Canadians define and interact with the arts, providing critical insight into their motivators, deterrents, preferences and more. Our favourite is: While fun, novelty and escape are desired attributes of a cultural experience, relevance is a pre-condition for success. Audiences won't consider participating if they don't feel connected to the content or experience. Read it at [businessandarts.org/culturetrack](http://businessandarts.org/culturetrack)

July 3, 2018: If you haven't been paying attention to the news lately, you may not be aware of the trade dispute between us and our neighbours to the south. Given the almost daily rhetoric, you could be forgiven for this. However, as a Canadian and as a filmmaker, you should heed what's going on. Aside from the fact that costs will be rising if you're importing products from the US for your shoots, this is an opportunity to rethink how you're doing things – and with whom. This is a much longer post than what we have room for here, but in a nutshell, now is the time to support local, and to set up partnerships and distribution arrangements with countries other than the US. Yes we're tiny compared to the mammoth US, but we could be doing so much more to build our industry and films and creative and economic capacity here at home.

July 9, 2018: This week we offer food for thought about the human element in effective script writing. "What people really want to see is local, authentic storytelling..." suggests Georgia Brown, head of UK-originated scripted TV for Amazon. "They want stories and characters that resonate." In Canada, local can mean anywhere in the world, as our

cultural mosaic opens the door to creating stories that begin anywhere but find resolution through the Canadian experience. Audiences' brains are wired to relate to Aristotle's 2500 year old three act formula: evoke pity, generate fear, reveal catharsis. They aren't watching the actor in a role, they're watching themselves through the character's journey – and in doing so are rehearsing their own emotional experience; always a good reminder that the script must connect with the audience at a deeper level.

July 16, 2018: This week we're challenging everyone to take a new perspective. When making movies, web series, or other content, "doing it on the cheap" has become an art form in and of itself. When asked for their hot tips, Canadian Screen Awards Best Web Series nominees focused on how to get a series filmed with minimal resources. Recruiting cast and crew who share your vision may guarantee their willingness to go above and beyond for little or no compensation. Using your ingenuity to stretch your budget is great, but asking people to work for free or at less than a living wage and expecting suppliers to donate or cut prices is a race to the bottom and not the way to create a sustainable industry. The artistry that can be realized in a low-budget indie film is undeniable, and big budget certainly doesn't mean high quality, but the concept of the starving artist is a centuries old species we'd love to see go extinct.

July 23, 2018: Many people say they want nothing to do with politics or the government. In last week's cabinet shuffle Minister Mélanie Joly, who oversaw the Creative Canada policy framework, was moved to Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie and Pablo Rodriguez was appointed the new Minister of Heritage and Multiculturalism. Although this change is not apt to alter policies in the short term, he may put his own stamp on the industries in which we work. As filmmakers we're fortunate to be able to access provincial and federal funding for the content we create. This financial support, adherence to municipal regulations, and other government-related issues all point to the fact that being informed about all three levels of government is important. There's no need to get into the nitty gritty political battlefield to be aware of what's going on. But knowing who the players are and what's happening in all three levels of government is simply the smart thing to do.

July 30, 2018: The moment you've been working towards has finally arrived; you've received a contract from a major distributor or broadcaster. At that moment when all you want to do is sign it and pop the champagne, it's essential to take a deep breath and *read every word*. Every single word and punctuation has meaning in a contract so take the time to review and understand what you're signing. It goes without saying that you should also have your lawyer review the contract. We know a situation where this wasn't done and the creators found out too late they had signed away all their rights and no longer owned what they created nor any ancillary content from the original series. Contracts are binding and once they're signed there is no going back.

August 6, 2018: We're hearing a lot about diversity and inclusion these days, not just in the film industry, but in all industries. It is important that we take the time to think deeply about what this means to us as filmmakers and to take more than token action. What is our role and responsibility for having other voices and perspectives in our lives and our crews and our scripts? In a recent business affairs webinar put on by TELUS Storyhive, they talked about this and what exactly diversity and inclusion means. "In the context of film and storytelling, it means "...creating and sharing stories where people of all backgrounds feel seen, heard, included and accurately represented and running organizations with inclusive representation and business practices." In what feels like an increasingly divided world, we could all be doing more in our own personal and work lives to create the needed change.

August 13, 2018: One tip we haven't touched on thus far, yet is one of the most important elements when producing a work: SOUND. We discovered just how important this was putting together the trailer for *Skeleton Girl*. It took us a very long time to get a visually impactful assembly, but it was the sound design that made it work. In many horror films, it is the sound track that makes the movie, not just the image. Sound design can lead, mislead, and shock the viewer in ways that an image can never do. Visual is just one part of the overall experience, but with a good sound design an ordinary scene can be knocked out of the park. We write this the day after working with the fantastic Frank Laratta at Propeller Studios on the sound for an upcoming trailer, and who will again work his magic on our series *Twisted Tales for Demented Children*.

August 20, 2018: Although we talked about social media in a past tip, we haven't addressed its importance as an avenue for leveraging your behind the scenes assets. Instead of thinking of the final film, series, or other content in isolation, think about all of the work that goes into planning and execution and how you can use that as content to promote your project and to build your fan base. We learned how fascinated fans were in our process by posting an SPFX behind the scenes blog after each episode aired for seasons 1 and 2 of Wynonna Earp. Show snippets of early drafts of scripts, write about your financing journey, post some pics of your storyboards. People love getting a peek behind the scenes. It is not going to take away from the final film, but instead builds audience engagement early and to a deeper level.

August 27, 2018: This might seem like "common sense" but sometimes sense is not that common. Our hot tip this week is: **get out and see lots of films** – not just theatrical releases but short films, web series, documentaries and other productions that are outside your chosen genre. Many of us become film buffs because we've spent a lifetime watching films, but sometimes we fail to venture outside our comfort zone. It's important we do that so we can figure out what works and what doesn't, what resonates and what plants the seed for a future film we might shoot. What are people talking about and seeing in other parts of the world? There's so much we can learn by experiencing something new - and watching different films is a great place to start. There are lots of film festivals in Alberta - all fantastic opportunities to get out and do just that!

September 4, 2018: In an earlier tip we talked about being prepared with a Plan B for when things go sideways. We recently experienced this very situation. A client contacted us early about ordering a custom made product. We knew it would take at least a day to make so we kept checking in with the client; also the shoot was three provinces away so shipping time was a big factor. Late in the afternoon, less than a week before shooting day we finally got the go ahead. This gave us one day to make the product so it would be ready for overnight shipping to deliver it the Friday before Monday's shoot. Talk about cutting it close. An overnight courier was booked and paid for, the item was picked up and then went MIA for almost a week. We know last minute decisions can be common in the film industry but when an item is needed that is absolutely critical, plan ahead, be prepared when issues arise – and have a Plan B when they do.

September 10, 2018: This week's tip writer recently experienced the power of art when attending a performance by Austrian pianist Philipp Scheucher. In an interview before his performance, Mr. Scheucher talked about how, in these troubled times, bringing people together in a concert hall is a way of finding peace, if only for the length of the concert. This is the power of art on the human experience. A concert hall, theatre, gallery or watching a film with others in a movie theatre can deliver the same communal experience. Like many other art forms, attendance in movie theatres is down, but at a time when the search for peace seems an impossible task perhaps escaping to the movie theatre is just what we need. To gather as human beings to appreciate the art being made on the screen is one way, albeit briefly, to find peace in the power of art. (To see the interview and live stream performance, [click here](#)).

Slight Hiatus...

October 22, 2018: This week's tip is all about the credits. If you're an indie filmmaker, you may be the one that is preparing the final credits. And maybe it's at the end of a long post production period. You're tired and done and ready to rest and move on. Well, not just yet. Those credits and their accuracy are critical. We all know that the crew does yeoman's work, breaking their backs and putting in ridiculously long hours. So to be in the theatre, thrilled to have worked on your film and then to see their name spelled wrong is like pricking a balloon and watching it very quickly deflate. It takes nothing to have a proper editor or colleague who has an eye for this to review your credits. Not to mention offending the very people that helped make your film, it comes across as unprofessional and sloppy. You took the time to plan everything else, take just as much time to make sure those who should be credited are – and properly. That kind of attention goes a long way.

**we create cool.**



Check us out: [www.bleedingartindustries.com](http://www.bleedingartindustries.com), Shop 24/7: [www.shopbleedingartindustries.com](http://www.shopbleedingartindustries.com)  
Bay 3, 3815 61 Ave SE, Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2C 1V5 P: 403-236-0025, E: [info@bleedingartindustries.com](mailto:info@bleedingartindustries.com)