

## **GOLDEN RULES OF MOVIE MAKING**

<http://www.moviemaker.com/>

### **Jim Jarmusch's 5 Golden Rules (or non-rules) of Moviemaking**

Rule #1: There are no rules. There are as many ways to make a film as there are potential filmmakers. It's an open form. Anyway, I would personally never presume to tell anyone else what to do or how to do anything. To me that's like telling someone else what their religious beliefs should be. Fuck that. That's against my personal philosophy—more of a code than a set of “rules.” Therefore, disregard the “rules” you are presently reading, and instead consider them to be merely notes to myself. One should make one's own “notes” because there is no one way to do anything. If anyone tells you there is only one way, their way, get as far away from them as possible, both physically and philosophically.

Rule #2: Don't let the fuckers get ya. They can either help you, or not help you, but they can't stop you. People who finance films, distribute films, promote films and exhibit films are not filmmakers. They are not interested in letting filmmakers define and dictate the way they do their business, so filmmakers should have no interest in allowing them to dictate the way a film is made. Carry a gun if necessary.

Also, avoid sycophants at all costs. There are always people around who only want to be involved in filmmaking to get rich, get famous, or get laid. Generally, they know as much about filmmaking as George W. Bush knows about hand-to-hand combat.

Rule #3: The production is there to serve the film. The film is not there to serve the production. Unfortunately, in the world of filmmaking this is almost universally backwards. The film is not being made to serve the budget, the schedule, or the resumes of those involved. Filmmakers who don't understand this should be hung from their ankles and asked why the sky appears to be upside down.

Rule #4: Filmmaking is a collaborative process. You get the chance to work with others whose minds and ideas may be stronger than your own. Make sure they remain focused on their own function and not someone else's job, or you'll have a big mess. But treat all collaborators as equals and with respect. A production assistant who is holding back traffic so the crew can get a shot is no less important than the actors in the scene, the director of photography, the production designer or the director. Hierarchy is for those whose egos are inflated or out of control, or for people in the military. Those with whom you choose to collaborate, if you make good choices, can elevate the quality and content of your film to a much higher plane than any one mind could imagine on its own. If you don't want to work with other people, go paint a painting or write a book. (And if you want to be a fucking dictator, I guess these days you just have to go into politics...).

Rule #5: Nothing is original. Steal from anywhere that resonates with inspiration or fuels your imagination. Devour old films, new films, music, books, paintings, photographs, poems, dreams, random conversations, architecture, bridges, street signs, trees, clouds, bodies of water, light and shadows. Select only things to steal from that speak directly to your soul. If you do this, your work (and theft) will be authentic. Authenticity is invaluable; originality is nonexistent. And don't bother concealing your thievery—celebrate it if you feel like it. In any case, always remember what Jean-Luc Godard said: “It's not where you take things from—it's where you take them to.”

## Steve Buscemi's (Lucky) 13 Golden Rules of Moviemaking

Note: The following “rules” are from the unbalanced mind of a relatively novice moviemaker.

1. Ask yourself, “Am I sure I want to make this movie?” Then ask yourself, “Why?” A good follow up question is, “Am I insane?”
2. The script is everything—a living thing that needs to breathe, to be fed and to grow. Take care of your script; don't let anybody mess with it.
3. As Abel Ferrara once said, “A script ain't a movie.” Okay, so maybe the script isn't everything. But it's a good start.
4. It's not a bad idea to make a short film before you attempt a feature. But don't think of it as your “calling card film.” It can of course become that, but it should be your first film, first. Make the film you want to make—not the film you think financiers will be impressed with.
5. Be aware: Finding financing for your feature can be a potentially soul-crushing endeavor. You may find yourself in a sterile room, pitching your film to a humorless executive and desperately blurting out stupid things like, “Well, you know, it's kinda like Leaving Las Vegas meets Barfly.”
6. No two movies should ever meet each other.
7. Okay, no shit, as I am writing this, I get a call from my agent saying there is a “situation” brewing that could possibly undo the financing of the current film I am slated to direct—a remake of the Theo van Gogh film, Interview. We already lost the original Dutch financing a few weeks ago and I'm scheduled to start shooting in a couple of weeks. This also happened two years ago with my previous film, Lonesome Jim. We lost our studio deal in the eleventh hour. Luckily, InDigEnt, a New York-based, Mini-DV movie company, came to our rescue. The budget dropped from \$3 million to \$500,000 and our shooting schedule of 30 days was reduced to 17, but we were able to make the film we wanted to make. Financing never comes easy. Trees Lounge took a good five years to find its way and my second film, Animal Factory, based on the great Eddie Bunker book, took three years. What? You never heard of the film Animal Factory?
8. Try to get a good distribution deal.
9. Number 9 makes me think of John Lennon. If there's one business that's perhaps more challenging and insane than the movies, it's the music industry. And yet there's all this inspiring work from artists like Lennon, Joe Strummer, Nina Simone, Thelonious Monk and countless others. It's true in film, as well. I know John Cassavetes didn't have it easy. Buster Keaton? It's the love for his work that kept him going, not the opening weekend box office receipts. Whenever I get down, I think of the great ones and their struggles against all odds, fighting an uphill battle against commerce and mediocrity, and it gives me strength.
10. Find the back issue of MovieMaker that lists the rules (or non-rules) of Jim Jarmusch. He rules. He's never made a film he didn't put his complete heart and soul into—and he's able to make his living at making movies! I admire any director who makes his living solely from directing. I'm fortunate enough to earn a decent wage by occasionally playing psychopaths in other people's movies, allowing me the luxury of not having to depend on the movies I direct to put food on the table. I especially admire independent directors like Tom DiCillo and Alexandre Rockwell, who never stop trying to create their own way.

11. Let people do their jobs. Phil Parmet, my friend and cinematographer, told me that once. If you give your crew the responsibility and opportunity to do their best, and you appreciate their efforts, your film will only benefit from their collaboration. Hire the best people to fulfill your film's needs, then trust them to do their jobs.

12. If the scene you are about to shoot is troublesome, take the time you need to figure it out. This may mean clearing the set of the crew and producers so that it's just you and the actors. Sometimes the organic instincts of the actors can solve a problem in blocking or problematic writing. But not always. In any case, allow yourself to be surprised by your actors

13. Actually, I have no rule number 13; it's just my lucky number. I guess if I had to come up with a rule number 13 it would be: Break a leg. And don't be superstitious.

### **Gus Van Sant's Six Golden Rules of Moviemaking**

1. **PRODUCERS** Be strong. Confident. Get enough sleep. And relax. You should feel comfortable, even when you don't know what you're doing. (And that might be most of the time.) Don't be a wimp! Don't let the bean counters push you around. Don't worry if people are talking behind your back and rolling their eyes—they won't understand until the film is finished.

2. **STAND UP FOR YOUR IDEAS.** Be direct, as in being a director. One of the reasons directors can lose a debate over an issue is because they're not clear about their ideas, or they may, out of frustration, invite aggressiveness by digging in when they don't need to. Take it easy, but don't let them tell you how to make your movie.

3. **MONEY PARANOIA** You can control the budget, too. Everybody's doing it, so why not you? Go through the budget line by line, and decide if the items in there are things that you really need—or need more of. The heads of all the departments will try and steal as much as they can from the line items in the budget, even when it's not their line item. That is their job, to fight for their department. It's initiative, but they should be stopped by someone like you, because the producer doesn't necessarily care, or may be in cahoots with them. Don't let the art department steal the special effects line item to build a set that you don't need.

4. **ACTORS** The actors in your film are helpless and they know it. They will perhaps act out because of this. You are in a perfect position to help them as the true authority on the set. Don't be a self-important asshole. You have the control in this particular area, whether you want it or not. The actor crying on your set is perhaps doing so out of an intense desire to make you happy. Help them to make you happy by being as clear as you can. Make the directions simple. Pretend that you know what they are talking about when you don't actually know, then tell them what you want them to do.

5. **SCRIPT** The script is an idea, not a finished reality. Take liberties with it. Take advantage of stuff that is coming to you that is not written on the page. You can't make a movie that is alive if it's pre-planned. You will ruin it if you try. You have to loosen up and see why the things happening in front of you are good for the project, not bad. If bad things are happening in front of you, shake things up. Write some new lines—or improvise.

6. **PHOTOGRAPHY** Don't get cuckoo with the lights; you don't really need them anymore. Film stocks today can handle wildly different color temperatures and low light levels. Keep the pace lively. Don't waste too much time making the shot look perfect, moving objects on surfaces, playing with the blocking—just shoot it. Don't over-think. Get a really good director of photography, but don't fight with him. He has the same control over you that you have over the actors, so he can make you cry.

## **Neil Jordan's 12 Golden Rules of Moviemaking**

1. Films used to be about sex, violence and cigarette smoking. Smoking is no longer permissible and sex is barely permissible, so you'd better get good at violence.
2. The word "fuck" in an actor's mouth is hardly worth the effort. You'll be asked to cut it or be given the wrong rating. If you win the fight and manage to keep it, you'll have to overdub it for the television versions with "freak," "frig," etc. Try getting an actor to say "motherfrigger."
3. Prepare everything and you'll be amazed at how much of it ends up on the screen. Write it, draw it, note it, talk it out. Then keep shooting until you make sure you get it—even down to the weather and the available light.
4. You'll be held responsible for everything that ends up in the finished film. So if people tell you it doesn't matter, don't believe them.
5. There is no longer any difference between the independents and the studios. That was eliminated sometime in the 1980s. Most independent movies now are put through the same grindhouse as the studio projects.
6. To entertain an audience is never a crime.
7. To challenge an audience is never a crime.
8. To bore an audience is a crime punishable by extremely low figures in the top two boxes.
9. Work with good actors and make sure you like them. If they are good, their instincts about the script you've written are often better than yours.
10. Remember what a good time you're having. Making a film is the greatest antidote to boredom yet invented.
11. Always tell the truth on the set.
12. Never tell the truth on a junket.

## **John Waters' Golden Rules of Moviemaking**

### *Writing the Script*

1. No comedy should be longer than 90 minutes. There's no such thing as a good long joke.
2. Thinking up characters is easy; the narrative (what makes a hit) is always the hard part.
3. Never make a film about your grandmother unless she's a serial killer.
4. The first draft of your script should never be read by anybody. What you call your "first draft" should be your third, fourth or even tenth pass.
5. If you can get an NC-17 rating without using any sex or violence, you'll be called a genius.

### *Raising the Budget*

1. Never hate the rich. Poor people are not known to invest in movies.
2. Pot dealers are usually movie buffs and make for good silent partners.
3. Never ask a friend or family member for money for your film if you don't think they have a chance to make it back.
4. When you try to sell your film with a treatment, always include a mock-up of an ad campaign so you look like you're thinking like a money person.
5. Pay for the music you use in your soundtrack now. It costs a lot more later if you don't.

### *Directing*

1. No matter what you've heard, contention on the set does not lead to creativity.
2. Go to a lot of trouble to make friends with the neighbors before you shoot on location. Throw them a party. Let them think they'll be discovered.
3. Having sex with any member of your cast is a bad idea—crew is better.
4. Teamsters will beat up people off the set if you ask them quietly and politely.
5. When directing a big star, never show fear. They want you to tell them what to do.

### *Promoting the Film*

1. Who cares which photographer shoots you for each magazine? It's the retouch budget that counts.
2. If you are a bald director, make sure you have a baseball cap handy to wear on set because electronic press kit crews will always want to film you from behind to "see what the director sees."
3. On international press tours, never tell customs inspectors you're in their country for "business"—the red tape hell will smother you like an avalanche.
4. You can't be friends with film critics, no matter how much they like your first movie.
5. Movies people like at film festivals are not always the ones they like in real life.

## **Wim Wenders' 50 (that's right, 50) Golden Rules of Moviemaking**

1. You have a choice of being “in the business” or of making movies. If you’d rather do business, don’t hesitate. You’ll get richer, but you won’t have as much fun!
2. If you have nothing to say, don’t feel obliged to pretend you do.
3. If you do have something to say, you’d better stick to it. (But then don’t give too many interviews.)
4. Respect your actors. Their job is 10 times more dangerous than yours.
5. Don’t look at the monitor. Watch the faces in front of your camera! Stand right next to it! You’ll see infinitely more. You can still check your monitor after the take.
6. Your continuity girl is always right about screen directions, jumping the axis and that sort of stuff. Don’t fight her. Bring her flowers.
7. Always remember: Continuity is overrated!
8. Coverage is overrated, too!
9. If you want to shoot day for night, make sure the sun is shining.
10. Before you say “cut,” wait five more seconds.
11. Rain only shows on the screen when you backlight it.
12. Don’t shoot a western if you hate horses. (But it’s okay to not be fond of cows.)
13. Think twice before you write a scene with babies or infants.
14. Never expect dogs, cats, birds or any other animals to do what you’d like them to do. Keep your shots loose.
15. Mistakes never get fixed in post!
16. Final cut is overrated. Only fools keep insisting on always having the final word. The wise swallow their pride in order to get to the best possible cut.
17. Other people have great ideas, too.
18. The more money you have the more you can do with it, sure. But the less you can say with it.
19. Never fall in love with your temp music.
20. Never fall in love with your leading lady!
21. If you love soccer, don’t shoot your film during the World Championship. (Same goes for baseball and the World Series, etc.)

22. Don't quote other movies unless you have to. (But why would you have to?)
23. Let other people cut your trailer!
24. It's always good to make up for a lack of (financial) means with an increase in imagination.
25. Having a tight schedule can be difficult. But having too much time is worse.
26. Alright, so you're shooting with a storyboard. Make sure you're willing to override it at any given moment.
27. Less make-up is better.
28. Fewer words are always better!
29. Too much sugary stuff on the craft table (or is it Kraft?) can have a disastrous effect on your crew's morale.
30. Film can reveal the invisible, but you must be willing to let it show.
31. The more you know about moviemaking, the tougher it gets to leave that knowledge behind. As soon as you do things "because you know how to do them," you're fucked.
32. Don't tell a story that you think somebody else could tell better.
33. A "beautiful image" can very well be the worst thing that can happen to a scene.
34. If you have one actor who gets better with every take, and another who loses it after a while, make sure they can meet in the middle. Or consider recasting. (And you know whose close-ups you have to shoot first!)
35. If you shoot in a dark alley at night, don't let your DP impose a bright blue contre-jour spotlight on you, even in the far distance. It always looks corny.
36. Some actors should never see rushes. Others should be forced to watch them.
37. Be ready to get rid of your favorite shot during editing.
38. Why would you sit in your trailer while your crew is working?
39. Don't let them lay tracks before you've actually looked through your viewfinder.
40. You need a good title from the beginning. Don't shoot the film with a working title you hate!
41. In general, it's better not to employ couples. (But of course, there are exceptions!)
42. Don't adapt novels.
43. If your dolly grip is grumpy or your electricians hate the shot it will all show on the film. (Also, if you're constipated...)
44. Keep your rough cut speech, your cast and crew screening speech and your Oscar speech short.

45. Some actors actually improve their dialogue in ADR.
46. Some actors should never be forced to loop a single line. (Even Orson Welles wasn't good at that.)
47. There are 10,000 other rules like these 50.
48. If there are golden rules, there might be platinum ones, too.
49. There are no rules.
50. None of the above is necessarily correct.

### **Kevin Smith's Seven Golden Rules of Moviemaking**

1. Edit while you're still shooting. On every flick since Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back, I've been editing while still in the midst of production. I'm not talking about some hired editor piecing together an assembly while I'm on set, either. I mean that whenever I'm not shooting, I'm in the editing room with my footage. While the crew is taking 15 minutes to an hour to set up the next shot, I'm behind the Avid, putting the flick together.
2. Chop while rolling. It's all upside when you're editing while you're shooting, as you'll know right away if there are any shots missing. More than twice over the course of Clerks II, I was able to grab cutaways or re-shoot coverage a mere 48 hours after wrapping on a particular scene, thanks to chopping while rolling. Two days after wrap, I had a fine cut of the flick because I'd spent the entire shoot editing whenever I wasn't on set (during production I average three hours of sleep a night).
3. Show your edited footage as often as possible. Another benefit to cutting while you're still in production is that it affords you the opportunity to share the scenes with the cast. Until they see cut scenes, the film is solely theoretical to them. Give the actors actual scenes to watch and suddenly they can see the film taking shape, too. If you're lucky, the cast will get pumped seeing how well all their stuff is turning out and you'll enjoy the trickle-down benefits: A freshly-inspired troop of performers who'll come in every day and give you even better performances.
4. Include the cast (and crew) in on the editing process, too. I'm not saying they should all ride shotgun at the Avid, but once you've got scenes cut, roll 'em for the cast and crew. In some cases, they might provide insight you hadn't thought of yourself. At the very least, it will convey how collaborative you can be and foster good will amongst the people who are already eager to help you realize your vision.
5. If you're shooting a talky picture, spare no expense on the sound recorder. Without special effects or stars, your dialogue is the selling point of your flick. Therefore, it behooves you to hire the best sound recordist/mixer you can afford. Same goes for your boom guy/girl: Don't cheap out.
6. Never fish off the director's pier. Don't shag the help. Better to tug one out in your trailer than create an environment of weirdness by dipping your pen, or having your pen dipped, in company ink. After the flick has wrapped, hold a circle jerk/daisy-chain/gang-bang with the entire crew if you like. But while you're in production, keep it all business.
7. Don't make Jersey Girl. Trust me on this one.

## **Errol Morris' Five Golden Rules of Moviemaking**

1. If you know the answer to a question, why bother asking it?
2. Shoot others as you would have them shoot you.
3. Nothing is so obvious that it's obvious.
4. Look for the unknown in the familiar.
5. Truth is not guaranteed by style.

## **Billy Bob Thornton's 15 Golden Rules of Moviemaking**

1. Don't do the popular thing. Don't be derivative. Do what you're strongest at. Do what's in your core.
  2. Know your history. For a lot of young filmmakers, they only know what goes back a few years. Know the foundation of the world you're working in.
  3. No matter how old you get, how many movies you do, never stop being a fan. Because that's what excites you. It's what drives you.
  4. Read the great novelists. When I was growing up I read the great southern novelists—Faulkner, Caldwell, O'Connor. Also Steinbeck and Dickens. They really inspired me, man.
  5. Independent film has a singular vision, a real point of view. That's what I like about it.
  6. Don't bitch and moan that you don't have the money to make your movie. If you're going to make an independent film now, you have to look at yourself as a new filmmaker and do what's necessary. Things have changed, so that goes for all of us. I just look at it like I looked at it when I made *Sling Blade*.
  7. Work with people you love. This movie I just did (*Jayne Mansfield's Car*) we were in Georgia in the summer and it was hot and we didn't particularly have enough time. It was hard, but my family was there, and I was able to work with people I love, like John Hurt, Robert Duvall, Ron White, Robert Patrick, Kevin Bacon. That was key.
- Billy Bob Thornton  
Stills from *Jayne Mansfield's Car* credited to photographer Van Redin.
8. You have to be willing to walk away. If they say "We understand that you're making a rabbit but we really wanted a water buffalo," just walk. But you have to mean it. If you tell somebody to kiss your ass, don't do it as a bluff because you might get your heart broken.
  9. Don't take what you do for granted. It's a privilege to make movies. From "Action" the first day to the last take on the last day, between those two bookends, it's an amazing and beautiful experience.

10. Stay grounded. I don't do the red carpet thing that much, I don't party much. I'm not part of that society. I have an eight-year-old daughter and when I'm home I'm in dinosaur land. That makes it a lot easier.

11. The most essential thing is having life experience. If you don't, you'll have nothing to write about, nothing to say. Experience life and you'll discover the stories you want to tell. An eclectic life experience is the most valuable thing you can have as a filmmaker.

12. Don't do it for the money. That's not to say I don't appreciate the money. I never in a billion years thought I'd make the kind of money I've made in this business. But you need to have a balance. Make a living but do what you love and the money will come.

13. Make movies that you'd want to see. My business IQ is probably about a 22, but that's okay because I make these movies for the people who do want to see them. And I hope they get the chance to see them in the theater, too.

14. Pick your collaborators on gut instinct. It's like when walking into a party and you look around and go "I can't talk to that guy, or that guy, or that guy. But oh, over in the corner—I know him. I get that guy." It's just a feeling, and you need to go with it.

15. Maintain the wonder of a child. And dream. I wasn't a good student, I always had my head in the clouds, but I've always had dreams. And I still do. When you stop dreaming, that's when you die.

### **Robert Rodriguez's Five Golden Rules of Filmmaking**

1. Creative people are notoriously the slowest to adopt new technology. That's how it's always been. Creative people on one side, technical people on the other. Creative people aren't technical, technical people aren't creative and they always need each other. New technology comes up, creative people run away from it and it takes them so long to adopt it. But when they do, they never go back.

2. You can get a much better perspective on the business by being outside of it. George Lucas told me the same thing. He said, "Just because you live outside of Hollywood, you're going to come up with ideas and techniques they'll never think of in Hollywood."

3. I tell people making DV movies at home, use it for practice. Don't even try to get it distributed unless it's fucking fantastic. If not, just keep cranking them out. Get better; get better at storytelling. It allows you to do what I did when I started out, which is make a ton of movies for nothing. And you get so much better at it after a while, you can write them and direct them and you know the structure. You just need to learn how to do it and you learn by doing.

4. Film is horrible, so most definitely HD changes shooting style because it's not horrible. Then you stop shooting film and you go, 'Well, why aren't they doing things this way?'

5. I'm all about freedom in art. [the guilds] want to control it. I'm from Texas, so when someone tells you which way to ride your horse, you think 'I'll just go to a different ranch. You guys are riding it backwards anyway.'

## Alexander Payne's Golden Rules of Filmmaking

1. Read the last chapter of John Huston's *An Open Book*, and *Kazan on Kazan* by Michel Ciment: They contain the whole diatribe of "Travel, live, fall in love, get your heart broken," and say it better than I can.
2. There's no prescription—everyone's path is different. D.W. Griffith did not go to school. What's important is to make film.
3. Utilize the availability of digital cameras, and the huge amount of filmmaking knowledge available in books and on DVD extras. It used to be that if you liked *Casablanca* in 1943, you never saw it again. You just had to remember it for the rest of your life. Now you can watch it over and over again. It's miraculous!
4. Study the great films and consider why they're great. Memorize your favorite film shot by shot: when the music comes in, when it goes away, how long a look it held before cutting away to create emotion, and the dialogue. You won't then go make that film yourself, but you'll develop a mental spice rack over time.
5. The last thing you want is a brilliant DP who's an asshole—that's asking for trouble.
6. The beauty of collaboration is the quality and questions that you ask each other. I don't bark out orders to be executed. The different department heads of a film deduce the film from me, and I from them.
7. Within the type of two-hour narrative cinema we generally talk about, all components are important (a bad score can sink a movie, for example). But of primary importance are screenplay and casting. Those are also the two elements that generate the most problems in the editing room. You don't have problems because you used a 50mm lens over a 35mm lens for a shot. You have problems because your screenplay is unsound or your casting is wrong.
8. I arrive at a set before the actor and sometimes before the DP, and I act out the scene for myself on location. That way I have some idea of what the actors are going through, and can guide them more thoughtfully.
9. One of the oldest, best pieces of advice is, "Always get your entrances and exits." When shooting a close-up, make sure the actor can enter and leave the shot.
10. You get more with honey than with vinegar. Because I have more fun making films than doing anything else in life, I've found that the fun I have is infectious.
11. It's hard to say what comedy is. I have no idea—I know it when I see it.
12. They try and try to change your mind, and in the moment you change your mind, they lose respect for you.
13. You have more power than you think.

## **Things I've Learned: Thelma Schoonmaker**

1. To live life before you become a filmmaker—really live it—is the most essential experience you should have before becoming a filmmaker. Experience all kinds of people and behaviors. In terms of special training to become a filmmaker, one should study classic films and learn from them. That is how Scorsese became the filmmaker he is.
2. Don't make a movie unless you have something burning inside of you to say—like Scorsese's *Mean Streets*, which is so personal and powerful and ground breaking.
3. When seeking out collaborators, talent is vital. But there are a lot of egos in filmmaking and everyone has to learn how to work together in spite of them.
4. As an editor, put the most focus on the screening process, and then debriefing people afterwards to find out how the film is affecting them. Then re-cutting and screening again and again until you get it right.
5. The attempts to ruin a film with bad ideas are a constant problem in today's world—or maybe they were always there. I love the constant challenge Scorsese presents to me with each film. I have to grow and adapt to that challenge.
6. It is simply not true that recruited audience previews can necessarily give you an accurate picture of how well a film is working. The film isn't ready yet, the audience has not been prepared for it, and if it is tough, they may not "like" it—but that doesn't mean it isn't working.
7. Always express gratitude for the work that your peers are doing. Filmmakers often don't feel they have the time to do that, but it is essential.
8. I learned from Michael Powell to never talk down to our audiences—to never "dumb down" a movie. He said that audiences are actually way ahead of us and as filmmakers, we must try to be ahead of them—to surprise them and make them feel our movies, not tell them what to think.

## **Paul W.S. Anderson's Rules Can Be Deadly**

1. Bodycount, bodycount, bodycount.
2. Remember to kill someone or blow something up every 12 minutes.
3. Paint with broad brushstrokes. "Finely observed" and "elegantly crafted" are for Swiss watches, not American action movies.
4. Never make a movie in a country where they don't have Starbucks. It is hard to get your blood/caffeine ratio to the required level without a venti triple shot.
5. Drink Red Bull on set, but never in the editing room. It will make you feel like you are having a heart attack.
6. Never have a driver who looks more tired than you do. Closest I ever came to being killed on a movie was when my driver fell asleep at the wheel and almost drove us off a cliff. Fortunately, I

was still awake. This is where adhering to rule #4 really pays off.

7. Always learn some of the local language. Most of my movies are made abroad; “please” and “thank you” in German/Chinese/Spanish/Italian/French go a long way.

8. Always shave during the shoot. It makes you look prepared and in control.

9. Never shave during post-production. An unshaven, slightly disheveled look reassures the studio that you are putting in long hours in the cutting room.

10. Try and wrap early once every week. Finishing just 10 minutes early earns forgiveness for all those hours of overtime every other night.

11. Always book a super techno crane—60-foot, not 30.

12. Never shoot with 12 cameras when 15 will do.

13. Whoever said “less is more” was wrong. More is more.

14. Never apply these rules to anything other than action films. The results could be disastrous.

### **Danny Boyle’s 15 Golden Rules of Moviemaking**

1. A DIRECTOR MUST BE A PEOPLE PERSON • Ninety-five percent of your job is handling personnel. People who’ve never done it imagine that it’s some act, like painting a Picasso from a blank canvas, but it’s not like that. Directing is mostly about handling people’s egos, vulnerabilities and moods. It’s all about trying to bring everybody to a boil at the right moment. You’ve got to make sure everyone is in the same film. It sounds stupidly simple, like ‘Of course they’re in the same film!’ But you see films all the time where people are clearly not in the same film together.

2. HIRE TALENTED PEOPLE • Your main job as a director is to hire talented people and get the space right for them to work in. I have a lot of respect for actors when they’re performing, and I expect people to behave. I don’t want to see people reading newspapers behind the camera or whispering or anything like that.

3. LEARN TO TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS • Ideally, you make a film up as you go along. I don’t mean that you’re irresponsible and you’ve literally got no idea, but the ideal is that you’ve covered everything—every angle—so that you’re free to do it any of those ways. Even on low-budget films, you have financial responsibilities. Should you fuck it up, you can still fall back on one of those ways of doing it. You’ve got Plan A to go back to, even though you should always make it with Plan B if you can. That way keeps it fresh for the actors, and for you.

4. FILM HAPPENS IN THE MOMENT • What’s extraordinary about film is that you make it on the day, and then it’s like that forever more. On that day, the actor may have broken up with his wife the night before, so he’s inevitably going to read a scene differently. He’s going to be a different person.

I come from theater, which is live and changes every night. I thought film was going to be the opposite of that, but it’s not. It changes every time you watch it: Different audiences, different places, different moods that you’re in. The thing is logically fixed, but it still changes all the time. You have to get your head around that.

5. IF YOUR LAST FILM WAS A SMASH HIT, DON'T PANIC • I had an obsession with the story of 127 Hours, which pre-dated Slumdog Millionaire. But I know—because I'm not an idiot—that the only reason [the studio] allowed us to make it was because Slumdog made buckets of money for them and they felt an obligation of sorts. Not an obligation to let me do whatever I want, but you kind of get a free go on the merry-go-round.

6. DON'T BE AFRAID TO TELL STORIES ABOUT OTHER CULTURES • You can't just hijack a culture for your story, but you can benefit from it. If you go into it with the right attitude, you can learn a lot about yourself, as well as about the potential of film in other cultures, which is something we tried to do with Slumdog Millionaire... Most films are still made in America, about Americans, and that's fine. But things are changing and I think Slumdog was evidence of that. There will be more evidence as we go on.

7. USE YOUR POWER FOR GOOD • You have so much power as director that if you're any good at all, you should be able to use that to the benefit of everyone. You have so much power to shape the movie the way you want it that, if you're on form and you've done your prep right and you're ready, you should be able to make a decent job of it with the other people.

8. DON'T HAVE AN EGO • Your working process—the way you treat people, your belief in people—will ultimately be reflected in the product itself. The means of production are just as important as what you produce. Not everyone believes that, but I do. I won't stand for anyone being treated badly by anyone. I don't like anyone shouting or abusing people or anything like that. You see people sometimes who are waiting for you to be like that, because they've had an experience like that in the past, but I'm not a believer in that. The texture of a film is affected very much by the honor with which you make it.

9. MAKE THE TEST SCREENING PROCESS WORK FOR YOU • Test screenings are tough. It makes you nervous, exposing the film, but they're very important and I've learned a great deal from using them. Not so much from the whole process of cards and the discussions afterwards, but the live experience of sitting in an auditorium with an audience that doesn't know much about the story you're going to tell them—I find that so valuable. I've learned not so much to like it, but to value how important it is. I think you have to, really.

10. COME TO THE SET WITH A LOOK BOOK • I always have a bible of photographs, images by which I illustrate a film. I don't mean strict storyboards, I just mean for inspiration for scenes, for images, for ideas, for characters, for costumes, even for props. These images can come from anywhere. They can come from obvious places like great photographers, or they can come from magazine advertisements—anywhere, really. I compile them into a book and I always have it with me and I show it to the actors, the crew, everybody!

11. EVEN PERFECT FORMULAS DON'T ALWAYS WORK • As a director your job is to find the pulse of the film through the actors, which is partly linked to their talent and partly to their charisma. Charisma is a bit indefinable, thank God, or else it would be prescribed in the way that you chemically make a new painkiller. In the movies—and this leads to a lot of tragedy and heartache—you can sometimes have the most perfect formula and it still doesn't work. That's a reality that we are all victims of sometimes and benefit from at other times. But if you follow your own instincts and make a leap of faith, then you can at least be proud of the way you did it.

12. TAKE INSPIRATION WHERE YOU FIND IT • When we were promoting Slumdog Millionaire, we were kind of side-by-side with Darren Aronofsky, who was also with Fox Searchlight and was promoting The Wrestler. I watched it and it was really interesting; Darren just

decided that he was going to follow this actor around, and it was wonderful. I thought, 'I want to make a film like that. I want to see if I can make a film like that.' It's a film about one actor. It's about the monolithic nature of film sometimes, you know? It's about a dominant performance.

13. PUSH THE PRAM • I think you should always try to push things as far as you can, really. I call it "pushing the pram." You know, like a stroller that you push a baby around in? I think you should always push the pram to the edge of the cliff—that's what people go to the cinema for. This could apply to a romantic comedy; you push anything as far as it will stretch. I think that's one of your duties as a director... You'll only ever regret not doing that, not having pushed it. If you do your job well, you'll be amazed at how far the audience will go with you. They'll go a long, long way—they've already come a long way just to see your movie!

14. ALWAYS GIVE 100 PERCENT • You should be working at your absolute maximum, all the time. Whether you're credited with stuff in the end doesn't really matter. Focus on pushing yourself as much as you can. I tend not to write, but I love bouncing off of writing; I love having the writers write and then me bouncing off of it. I bounce off writers the same way I bounce off actors.

15. FIND YOUR OWN "ESQUE" • A lesson I learned from *A Life Less Ordinary* was about changing a tone—I'm not sure you can do that. We changed the tone to a kind of Capra-esque tone, and whenever you do anything more "esque," you're in trouble. That would be one of my rules: No "esques." Don't try to Coen-esque anything or Capra-esque anything or Tarkovsky-esque anything, because you'll just get yourself in a lot of trouble. You have to find your own "esque" and then stick to it.