

**Play it Green!**  
**How to make films**  
**cheaper and better?**

## Sustainable Green Film Production Model – outline of the concept we put to practice on Film Spring Open Workshop.



*Photo: Halina Holas - Idziakowa*

The film production system established over the years has not changed or has changed little in relation to the radically changing technology. The world is shaken by crises, industrial production is governed by sustainability and cost optimisation. Meanwhile, there is little change in the film world. The need for changes affecting the environment, as well as the technological revolution in the process of image recording has had no (or little) impact on the film production system. It is worth considering why this is happening, what are the reasons for the lack of modernisation and what should be changed.

At the Film Spring Open Workshop (350 young AV artists from all over Europe) we discuss it, analyse the reasons for the lack of changes and look for new solutions. We do not limit ourselves to theoretical considerations, but we have also built Mobile Film Studio Cinebus<sup>1</sup> as a

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1. It allows for the production of small, intimate films from the beginning of the shooting to the end of the film (Production and Post Production). It can be used to handle the set, including the directorial "preview" and character of the actors, as well as to assemble, archive, perform basic image manipulation and color correction, and sound the already finished film. The Cinebus can be used



methods of energy generation.

We want to apply the proposed model to contemporary low-key films and those made by young, debuting directors. The new, sustainable production model aims to protect the environment during filmmaking, and at the same time, thanks to the new organisation of work, to allow for creation of more films for less money, and thus offering more beginners the opportunity to start their careers, and the institutions that are set up to finance their films will propose and test the model of economic use of available funds.

We are convinced that one can make more films within the same amount of funds and thus offer more newcomers the opportunity to start a career.

### **Why the current film production system is wrong and detrimental to the environment?**

The analysis of the state of affairs should be started from the sources. The leading cinematography on the market is the American studio film industry. It completely dominates the world markets, generating the highest profits. Every student in a film school dreams of a career in Hollywood. Copying of American films is common worldwide. At the same time we copy American production standards.



*Part (ca. 60%) of the crew working on the movie "King Arthur".*

When we commonly use studio software to support production in Europe, we forget that it is built on a specific system in which the need for change is blocked by very strong American trade unions. Moreover,

studio cinematography is still very profitable, and thus the need for change is not urgent.



*The number of vehicles used for the production a SMALL American feature film.*

It is an open secret that an American studio film made in Europe would cost 40% less than in Los Angeles. I can assure you that it's not an empty statement, because the author of this essay has made several productions with budgets over 100 million dollars as a cinematographer. And he had the opportunity to learn in practice about the absurdities of the existing system.

It is worth noting that the situation is not better in Europe:

In "The 1920 Battle of Warsaw" we had over sixty shooting days. A historical war film, with a large number of extras, 300 horses, battle scenes, costs about eight million euros.

A year later, together with my colleagues from Film Spring Open, I made a German film, an intimate, also historical, nineteenth century, two actors

(not stars), few extras. Only thirty-one shooting days, or 50% less, and the film costed one million euros more than "The 1920 Battle of Warsaw".

The conclusion is not that in Poland filmmakers earn drastically less money than German ones. It also does not mean that the system of production and film production spending in Poland is good. It is simply "throwing money out the window", resulting from the absurd rules of production in these countries (and any other).

Unfortunately, talking about it out loud is a subject of concern for many people in Europe and the world who accept this state of affairs, because it puts at risk the *status quo* which is beneficial for the those who profit from it. And since the subject of this essay is the future of sustainable and technologically modern audiovisual production, I will limit my analysis to the following commentary.

The system of film production has evolved over the years and has been perpetuated over the years without any clean-up. We make films forgetting about the environment, as well as the need for organizational change, which should be enforced by technological change. The reason is trivially simple. While accepting the technical innovations, we do not want to change our comfortable and proven habits. Especially if they are comfortable for us. We do not notice that the changing world around us demands a revision of our (often deeply ingrained) habits and behaviours.

### The new is born from the death of the old



*The 3D models of our Cinebus that were to test the new organization of work and transportation of equipment, and to take into account the future installation of renewable energy sources.*

It's not only worth to talk and write about the new system. It has to proven in practice, and it's not only about the environment and the renewable energy sources, but also about the new, economic

organization of work.

The system built over the years is increasingly burdened with the lack of significant changes and often has a negative impact on the quality of works, i.e. it acts against the creators. I have no doubt that when a young director, who after several years of efforts makes their first film, creates a flop, it is often not because the Debutant is incapable (the great ones also make rubbish films). The reason is the system that works against him or her.

A debutant director starting the film gets information that the budget is, let's say, a million, but they don't know that between 40% and 50% of it is the money that will be vaporized by a badly functioning system. We won't see that money in the resulting film on the screen. If the director wanted to check how the money is spent, he will collide with the glass mountain of silence or the excuse of convenience for individual departments or rules built up over the years. And in fact, the environmentally harmful non-economic habits whose common denominator is "we always did it that way". The simplest example is that digital technology caused the appearance of new specialists on the set, but at the same time it did not cause the disappearance of those that prove to be of little use in the new system. The redefinition of the film professions, the re-modelling of the film-making system, and the use of environmentally friendly methods of transportation and energy generation can have extremely positive effects in terms of film quality and cost. This is a necessary direction of change for lean, environmentally friendly production.

Our future depends on whether we are competitive and whether we find a way to produce films for less money and in an environmentally friendly way.



*Photo: Filip Błażejowski*

For 8 years we have been talking about the future of cinema at Film Spring Open workshops. Our actions are not only about theory - we are building a production model that will not only make full use of the latest technological tools, but will also change our (often harmful) movie-making habits.

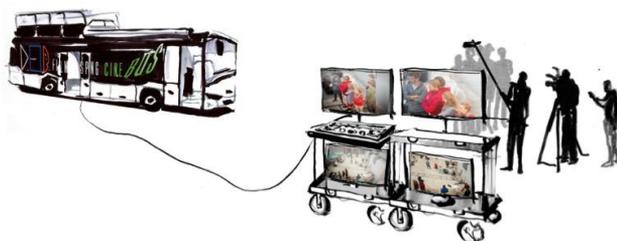


Photo: Filip Błazejowski, Agata Nawrocka, Marta Dalecka



*The mobile film studio built by us is a ready-to-use filmmaking vehicle, allowing for the turnkey production of a feature film, including transportation, filming time and postproduction. The next stage will be to equip it with PV panels.*

## Film production – the way it is and the way it could be

The production system comes down to a very simple rule: film production within a pre-defined budget creates technical and financial conditions for the director to "transfer" the script to the screen as soon as possible. This principle and the associated film production system has not changed for years. Films made with photosensitive and now digital cameras are produced in an almost identical way. The technological revolution has not brought about the necessary and significant changes in the way films are produced.

### **At the same time:**

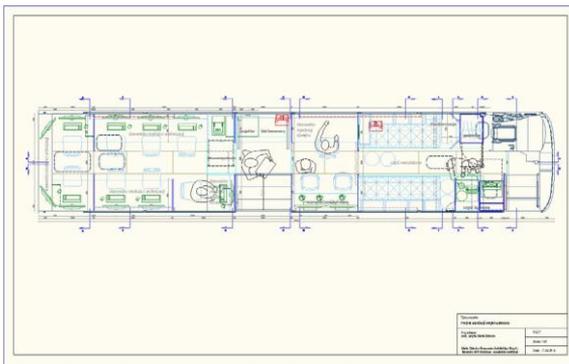
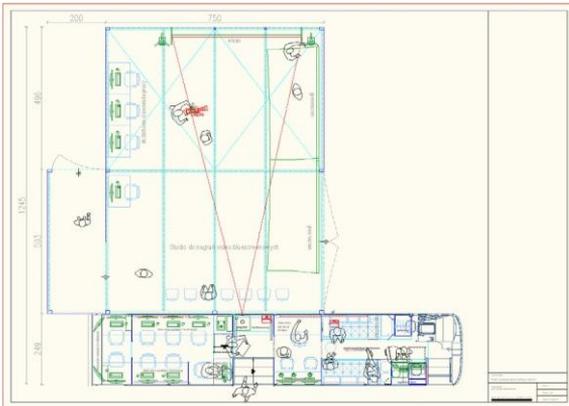
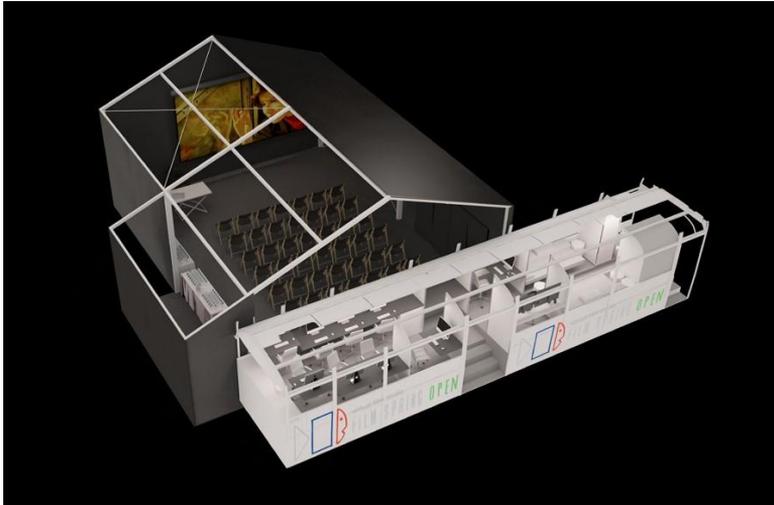
All over the world, good and bad films are made, and this is subject to evaluation and analysis. No one is concerned with analyzing the way films are produced in different countries, and these ways can sometimes be radically different.

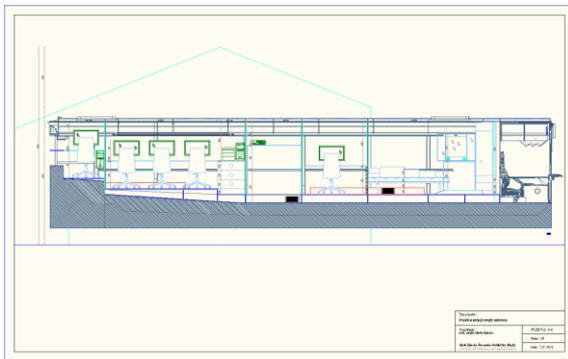
Why is this not the case? One of the reasons is very simple. A film producer or production manager educated in Poland or Germany will make films in his or her own country all his or her life and is unlikely to participate in another production system, because it is a local profession. A producer has practically no chance to compare different production models. He or she will not be able to personally study the Icelandic model of filmmaking, and films are produced there completely differently. Undoubtedly, in a more economical way.

Thinking about the future of film production we don't have to invent everything from scratch, it's enough to reach for the existing well-functioning solutions in other cinematography environments that similar to ours, and not necessarily mimicking the leading American one.

### **Examples:**

In Iceland the Cinebus is often the only vehicle on the set, and there (this applies to an intimate film, of course) is all the equipment needed for production, including a small unit and a social room. The luggage rack on the roof of this bus is often a convenient platform for shooting, but above all a place where the ladder rails, large tripods and lighting poles are stowed.





*Interior design: Marta Dalecka*

### **Mexican example**

Traditionally, the set is divided into technical professional groups: lighting team, electricians, grippers and dolly-drivers, etc. In Mexico they are one group under the supervision of the Gaffer. And it's not like in Poland, that when you shoot outdoors, the electricians loaf around or sunbathe, while the dolly drivers work hard and nobody helps them. The same situation, but the other way round, tends to happen in the interiors (especially small ones) where electricians work and the dolly drivers have nothing to do. In addition, due to technological changes, these professional groups will shrink. The cameras already have a sensitivity of 50,000 ISO, and the light from Ipad is sufficient for lighting. System changes are essential. The material and human resource savings in the Mexican and Icelandic systems are obvious. And these are some of the many examples to be used in the Sustainable Green Model of Film Production.

### **Equipment and the means of transportation**



*Drawings: Marta Dalecka*

The motto "Create more and better, using less". In film production it concerns mainly means of transport. Currently, each department arrives on the set in its own truck or van. So we have a light truck + power generator, a gripping truck, an orderlies truck, an operator's van and a sound van, a van for film archiving and recording. We have a vehicle for make-up and costumes. We have vehicles for passenger traffic. Separate means of transport are used for the set design and production department. With large films, this large number of means of transport is only partially justified. The problem is that it does not decrease with small productions. This is due to habits and the departmental model of film production.

Each production department is an independent fiefdom so an attempt to merge the individual departments and thus force savings will meet with opposition. The equipment stored in lorries on the filming set usually has a lot of redundancy (tools for performing various works on the plan, ladders, practicables, masking agents, etc.) as well as tools that are supposed to be used for the realization of a given project, but in fact they never leave these vehicles in a significant percentage, because in fact they are stored there for the so-called "just in case". The problem is that you have to pay for all this. This excess of tools and means of transport is a burden on the environment and the film budget.

*Photo: Marta Dalecka, Paweł Jasiński, drawings: Marta Dalecka*



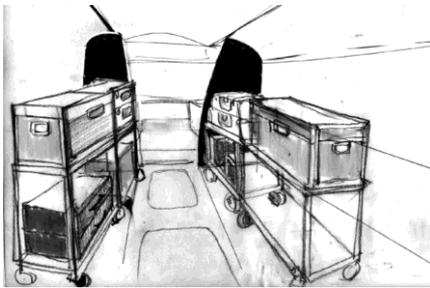
*Cinebus with generator on a trailer and the tent stowed on the roof ensures independence in terms of energy and logistics*



*Under the whole area of Cinebus the stowing space is equipped with handy drawers*



*A lift with the Magliner*



*A linked rack system with dedicated superstructure for various types of equipment (grip, lighting, camera)*



*Prototype of one of 12 transport racks*



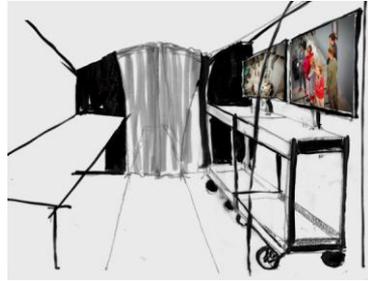
*All tables in Cinebus are foldable, providing storage space equal to 2.5 trucks*



*Stowing compartments in the floor*



*Mobile director's view*



*Director's view in Cinebus*



*Allowed stowage load on the roof is 1000 kg. Possibility to load long equipment (Stands, tripods, jib arm, rails)*

### How it could be

Many changes concerning tools and means of transport will automatically force the redefinition of film competitions, as well as the implementation of Previs. This will be described later in the essay.

We propose and are conducting study tests to make the Cinebus the basic vehicle on a small film set. A bus that meets most of the needs of a small film production.



**Namely:**

- Editing room
- Color correction
- VFX
- Serwer for Intranet
- Video Village, simultaneous recording and archiving



Transportation of all equipment (recording, audio, grip, set desing)

PV panels



On bigger projects – a generator towed by Cinebus



One make-up station



### Coffee & Snack bar

- Screening hall in the tent which simultaneously may serve as a greenscreen studio, equipment store, production and postproduction space

New AV on-the-set communication system based on mobile phones Cinebues is equipped with Selfie TV system and generates its own Wi-Fi even in places with no access to telephone network or infrastructure.

Every member of the crew will be able to communicate:

- One-to-One
- One-to-Team
- One-to-All
- Video streaming to all receiving devices on the set (smartphones, tablets, laptops and workstations)
- Video material transfer
- Current and ongoing film edit version + Previs
- Video materials of the second team.



Fot.: Marta Dalecka

### How to "Play Green" in practice?

Taking part in various panels on ecology in the film, I have a feeling that another "fashionable" topic appears, where potential environmental changes are treated as a necessary varnish on the existing production

model. Listening to the speakers I have the impression that they are talking about cosmetic changes without seeing that we are marching into a bog. That the patient is seriously ill and a new make-up is not enough. That we will not reduce the number of vehicles on the set as we will not reduce the number of professionals working. That we will not create more while using less as we are stuck in the departmental system, because this kind of thinking has an impact on the amount of materials and tools in film production. In order to change the way of production we have to take a very deep and critical look at the existing way of making films. To analyse the existing state of affairs.



*Fot.: Andrzej Waluk*

### **"Risk Management" - a system of control over what is created**

Let's take a look at what a young director's path to making a film looks like these days. Well, in order to make a film, he spends between eighteen months and five years cruising between a lot of people, telling the same story over and over again, pitching to potential investors. And when the "zero hour" finally strikes and the filming starts - this young director very often does not know what he or she is doing. Their attitude to their script is the attitude of a person who had to tell the same joke repeatedly without end. Their sensitivity to their own script is already nonexistent, because it has long worn off over the years. The director is already just a repeating machine. The script is no longer a new romantic partner, there's no fascination – it is a state of mind shortly before the

divorce.

This is the state of mind of a young director starting his film... And the production system prevents them from controlling what they do. I'll remind you of the rule mentioned above:

A film production within a pre-defined budget creates technical and financial conditions for the director to translate the script to the screen as soon as possible.

This "shortest given time" is a kiss of death for many projects (and directors).

Krzysztof Kieślowski was not a man of poor health. After 12-14 hours of working on the set he went to the editing room and worked another 3-4 hours at night. He did it because he was aware that a real work of art has "its own life" and what he, as a director, "has in his head" is a totally different vision. He knew that the only way to check what kind of film he was making was to edit it in parallel (at the time it was technically impossible to do it directly on the set), and to do a working review, checking what had already been shot. Unfortunately, no organism can survive many years of work without sleep.



From my own experience (as a cinematographer I made 70 feature films) I know that great directors have their own methods of controlling the filming outcome. They are critical of their own vision and ready to change it at any time. I know good directors who were able to change the main actress after three or four days of shooting, because they came to the conclusion that she is the wrong person. A young and especially a debuting director is often unable to make any moves because they have a "template" in their head. And when they finally get to the start of production, they have to make their film as soon as possible within a limited financial resources. And by doing so, they perpetuate all the

mistakes that have occurred at the stage of the script or "in their head". A young director of an award-winning film told me how after 3 weeks of the film the shooting was interrupted for financial reasons. He was shocked and became suicidal. Having nothing better to do, he sat down in the editing room and started editing the film. And then he realized that the film was going in the wrong direction. He sat down and started rewriting. When he got the means to finish the film, it was an altogether different one from the original idea.

*"My film is so good because they suspended my production due to lack of money. I had time to analyze my mistakes."*, he said. I made him realize that it was nothing new, because, for example, Woody Allen used to make all the films in this way: two or three weeks of shooting, then he let the whole crew go, edited, checked what he had, added dialogues, brought everyone back and finished the film. Polish Oscar-winning "Ida" was also made this way. Because of the bad weather the production was halted and Paweł Pawlikowski used the break to analyse the footage and change the script.

The question can be asked why, especially with debutant films, a break is not planned and is not paid for? And it would be a tool to save many potential projects. A tool that would give time for initial editing and for the reflections and possible script changes that come from this phase.

And by the way, it is worth emphasizing that in the head of a particularly debuting director there is a constant need to "shoot" as much as possible. Very often this footage is completely useless for the final version of the film, and thus we waste energy, time and materials.

### **The score and the performance. The way it is in the film industry**

The basic document, the score of the future film, is the screenplay. The format was created and petrified many years ago. The screenplay is a base for funding films. At the same time, we all know that often a very good script results in a poor film (poor cast is enough) and a poor script can turn into a good film.

We also know that 100 different directors would make 100 different films based on the same good script. Some very good ones, others good enough, and many bad ones. The chance that the money invested in the script will be wasted is very high. And it does not have to be that way, because new technology gives new solutions. Just look at the changes that have taken place. We have tools (unavailable in the past) that allow

us to make a rough draft of a film. A previsualization of the future, often costly, project - reducing the risk of creating a piece of junk. I will write much more about it later, but here I will confine myself to saying that I do not think that the production of a previs would be yet another barrier on a sufficiently difficult path to fund film. Previs should be made as an internal "creation". Videos from actor rehearsals (btw. mandatory in the Anglo-Saxon system and absent in other countries) also, so that each of the creative members of the crew can have "their" contribution. The composer should provide a model of the score, operator the cinematographic ideas etc.

In making a previs, the director and the producer of the film will achieve something that is certainly not a finished film, but it is also no longer just a piece of paper with a text on it. It is not without reason that in the studio system in all high budget productions, the film is previsualized in 100% in animatics are made, and the companies specializing in such productions spring up like mushrooms.

The availability of ever cheaper digital cameras and cheap storage media makes us shoot more material. The material selection process becomes more important than it used to be in the past, in the era of film stock-based cinema,. Thus, the role of the script, from which the ready film usually deviates in many places, is weakened. From my own experience, I can say that in European cinema, it varies between 20% and 30% from the original text. Working in the current system, the director has little chance of controlling what has been filmed. An incredible number of takes are made, more and more often in a multi-camera system. But as the Director does not have time for this, , the material selection falls on the shoulders of the film editor. An editor who works in a traditional model in an assembly room away from the set and often starts to work after the shooting is finished. And yet today's technology makes it possible to edit directly on the set – when the shooting is still in progress. All you have to do is move the editing onto the set (one of the many functions of Cinebus), and the director and other filmmakers will have a chance to control what is being created, and also to select the material on a daily basis. Thanks to this, you would avoid taking so-called "just in case shots", just because they may be useful. Each director is nagged by creative anxiety: will I not run short of editing material? Everyone tends to take lots of unnecessary shots. Editing on the set will undoubtedly reduce the tendency to film large quantities of material just in case. The saving of time and money is evident, not to mention that a talented and sensitive director will be able to distance himself from the original vision

that has petrified in his or her head, as I described above. Why is nobody doing this?

Because that is the tradition!

### Chaos, or how the cinematography is done in the film

I will begin my call for profound changes in the process of film production with what is closest to me, i. e. with my own profession (cinematographer). Because in this example we can see clearly how film professions and their role in the production process change over time. Technological changes, new technologies are crucial for the cinematographer and it is possible to observe on the grounds of this job how many of them were there – and what a mess reigns in the production departments of the film responsible for its visual side.

In the beginnings of the film industry, the cinematographer was a technician, but in fact a crank-turning person. In the silent movie era, the director was the author number one, he was the only creator of the film's vision. The Cinematographer only manned the camera and turned the crank. With the advent of sound the director was burdened with additional responsibilities, but the cinematographer remained only a technical visual specialist. Despite the fact that in the following years many prominent artists of cinematographers appeared in the USA, this profession did not regain its rightful place in the film studio system, but continued the heritage of technical profession.

It should be remembered that the way films are made in the United States and Europe varies considerably, which is often forgotten. In European cinema, the cooperation between the director and cinematographer looks completely different. Poland is a special case in this respect.

A specific, partner relationship between director and cinematographer evolved in the Polish cinematography as a kind of idiosyncrasy, because it is difficult to find sources from before the World War II of such a model in Polish cinema. It is mainly a legacy of the Łódź Film School, where for years there were only two faculties: cinematography and directing<sup>2</sup>. The kind of cooperation that was established there had an impact on Polish cinematography. The difference of Polish cinema was also determined by the fact that over the years it had a patronage of the state, which, of

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<sup>2</sup> In the past the acting department was on a street distant from the Film School.

course, was a negative phenomenon in political terms<sup>3</sup>, This specificity of Polish film production meant that the experiment (an excommunicated term in Hollywood) of searching for a new form was very welcome. Especially in the visual layer. This resulted in the fact that the cinematographer during the Polish Film School era was usually a co-author of the screenplay. Of course not the screenplay in the meaning of the first draft of the script, but subsequent versions of the screenplay. He was expected to find an original vision for a particular text. As a result he had his creative contribution. His role went far beyond technology. It was only by making his first films abroad that Krzysztof Kieślowski realised that things are different in Poland and Europe, that the Polish cinematographer, unlike his foreign colleagues, is someone who has worked on the text much earlier, that he brings ideas and often not only visual ones, that it belongs to his duties. And Kieślowski was probably the first to include this in the subtitles of the film: cinematographers appeared as co-authors of the screenplay.

Marek Żydowicz understood this when establishing his festival, where cinematographers are treated as true artists. Unfortunately, this situation is an exception, because, as I wrote above, the cinematographer himself is treated as a technician, especially in the USA – and to add to that as a technician whose influence on the final shape of the piece is decreasing, due to the development of digital image recording and processing. Unfortunately, this American model is becoming established in world cinematography. The cinematographer's position is shrinking dramatically.

The existing and increasingly advanced post-production tools cause that what American cinematographers pride themselves on as their creative contribution, i. e. film lighting, ceases to be their sole domain. I will give you an example from my own work. Harry Potter's plan was created in the studio to decorate the forest. I planned to make this image more dimensional by introducing streaks of sunlight, which would give it a more "gothic" character. Thus, very strong lighting units were pulled in, which (in my opinion) were interestingly illuminating this forest. After the shooting one of the producers, whose task was to make sure that the

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<sup>3</sup> Despite pressures on the authors, not many propaganda films were made. Polish filmmakers, having no possibility to honestly describe the reality, was looking for new ways of expressions. Colloquially speaking, Polish films were made more for festivals than for the audience. At the same time all around the world, especially in America, a the cinema was defined as a form of business that has to bring the return on investment.

filmmakers didn't get too far from the "truth" about Harry Potter, or from the world described in the books, came up to me and said that according to his calculations the scene we had just realized could have taken place at 3 p. m. at the latest, while the direction of sunlight in the film suggests that things are already happening around evening. It was completely absurd, because in this very place time did not play any dramatic role! I defended my vision, but unfortunately, during the editing of the copy, I found with surprise that all these streaks of light were painstakingly removed, frame by frame.

Colour or lighting applied by the operator can be converted during the post-production period, not only in Hollywood, into completely different ones. This is just how films are currently made. This allows for access to wide array of available digital tools and different kinds of professionals who have an impact on the final image. For a long time already the authorship in a film has already been a group effort, not an individual one.

That is why, as I have already written above, American cinematography, copied all over the world, has an even more drastic, industrial model of risk control. The producers realised that the document which is the basis for thinking about future film production organization, i. e. the script, is not enough in any way to assess the value of what really is being created. And producers first and foremost seek the security of their investment. One of such security measures is the ability to see the film before it is made.

It is therefore obligatory to create a storyboard, and at this moment animatics - a film made by additional artists, people who are familiar with CGI, concept artists who have some kind of narrative talent. The result is that the director, a cinematographer on set, is practically forced to do exactly what has already been drawn or presented in the animatic. In typical production the cinematographer does not participate in the previsualization phase, as they are invited to participate very late – for financial reasons.

### **Distributed authorship and money**

In an ideal situation (which is not attainable) the director is someone who is responsible for the whole project. But he doesn't compose the music score himself. Most often, and this was the case with the Polish model, he is responsible for the dramaturgy of the whole, for guiding and motivating actors, while the cinematographer's domain was the visual

setting. His task was to filter the script through some specific visual style to support the dramaturgy of the film. At least that was expected from the operator in the Polish model. The director decided, of course, but he always expected visual proposals from the cinematographer.

Unfortunately, this simple system is not implemented due to financial reasons. The person who gets involved in the film first is the set designer. This is seemingly logical, because decorations must be created before the process of filming begins. But leads to the situation where the set designer often has a greater influence on the film's visual shape than the cinematographer.

The DoP is often employed when most of the set is already built. Anyway, even if they he happens to appear earlier, the decisions what and how to build are not in his competence. The artistic freedom of the cinematographer is limited to lighting the finished objects and actors! To be fair towards my set designer colleagues – it must not be forgotten that there are many outstanding artists among them. But it is also worth remembering that they are not there on the set. They just pop in to consult with the director the future decorations. This is simply their mode of operation and they don't have time for more. They often don't know whether the decorations they create are used dramaturgically in a given story or whether they are technologically efficient, i. e. whether they make filming easier or more difficult for the film crew.

I don't want to criticize this group of great artists, but the tendency is that the set design is often made "for life" rather than for the dramaturgy of a particular film. I have the impression that this is sometimes due to a lack of drama education - set designers often forget that a given decoration is about only one angle, about one bathroom, and so on. Instead, whole rooms are built. An obvious waste of materials! A lot of money is spent on something that will be invisible on the screen. This arises indirectly from the professional habits of stage design designers, who get in the profession after graduating from schools of fine arts or architecture. These are universities that certainly do not educate students in the visual dramaturgy of a film.

Often, decorations are built that are inadequate to the needs, but on a budget that is still substantial at the beginning of production. The operator appears in production when the avalanche of money has built up momentum and the producer wants to stop it. At this moment, the money game starts between the heads of individual departments and production. The cinematographers and other heads of departments participate in this game in a similar way - they protect themselves just in

case and the level of security depends on the size of the film budget. Silo thinking instead of comprehensive approach burdens not only the budgets of the film and in effect has a very detrimental environmental footprint.

### The sometimes dirty money game

The head of any of the departments is aware that he cannot allow himself to be surprised by any unexpected need of the director. He doesn't organize equipment, furnishings and decorations exclusively for the needs of the film, but secures himself with an excess that will allow him to sleep well in the night, but also earn money. They spend as much as they are allowed by the producer, who very often does not understand their real needs. He spends as much as he can. If the movie budget is increased due to the participation of a star, for example, this automatically translates into further funds for additional equipment. However, this has nothing to do with whether these measures are really needed. This is the same old song all over again: the producer, who decides about the money, is really not fully familiar with the technology. He is not aware of collusion between post-production companies. His knowledge is based on a comparative analysis of other films of a similar scale. The operator, but also heads of other departments know the system well and often "bleed" the producer, claiming that they need a lot of light, cranes or other equipment. Often the number of costumes is exceeded by 20% or too many make-up materials are ordered. The set designer builds four walls of a room mock-up instead of one corner that is really needed. Money is being spent, and you do not see that on the screen!

In relation to the principle that I am writing about from the outset, film production within a predetermined budget creates technical and financial conditions for the director to transfer the script to the screen in the shortest possible time

Every Head of Unit secure themselves as much as they can, because during the implementation there is no time to replenish the resources, and they are not able to assess what may be really needed, because the screenplay does not provide this information. They did not work with the director before, so they do not know his way of working. So as they can, they try to protect themselves by excess. As a result, a significant percentage of the equipment does not leave trucks. It remains stored there, just in case.

The principle of parallel decision-making of individual production

departments makes it necessary to turn to the director to decide on every trifle on the film set. This has particularly bad impact on the decisions related to the visual dimension of the film. So what if the cinematographer came to the conclusion that the whole film is to be made in subdued colours, if the film's costume designer made a bright red dress for the actress, the set designer additionally painted the walls of the interiors in yellow. The director is always the decision-monger, and he's always right.

The director responsible for the viewer's emotions in the cinema must additionally answer thousands of questions like in the example above, and it is obvious that he often does not focus on certain topics, because it is perhaps important, but secondary in the most important sphere, i. e. the dramaturgy of the work and shaping the characters. Moreover, the director knows that many mistakes made on the set can be corrected later in the post-production process. He believes that he can allow himself to treat visual dilemmas as secondary ones, because he can change this later.

The architecture of filmmaking has always been complicated, but nowadays it is even more complex. Technicians and CGI specialists are needed. We need a whole group of new specialists who also influence the image in the film. In positive, but also but also negative way....

To sum up, the conviction that the cinematographer decides about the visual layer has long since ceased to be true. But it's not just about the position of the cinematographer in the team! In fact, nobody is fully responsible for the film's visual side. On a typical commercial film set, if we are not dealing with a "visually thinking" director, the authorship of the film's vision is distributed, individual departments responsible for this part of the film's architecture struggle for greater influence on the final outcome of this work. Obviously, this has a negative impact on the artistic and financial side of the film, and on the environment. Can this be changed? I believe that I have a detailed description of these changes in the second part of this essay.

As a means of example, the market for postproduction software grows and the software itself becomes increasingly easy to use, but the prices for such services do not budge.

### **Actor Previs, or how to control the quality of the work in the making**

Regardless of necessary production changes it's worth thinking whether

there are tools that will provide us with better control of the quality of the film in the making?

I think so. Provided that the final document constituting a foundation for the making of a film will not only be solely the script. I start from a deliberately exaggerated assumption that 'no one reads scripts'. Their huge number and small production capacity, which we have in our country, but also in the whole of Europe, causes that very few valuable screenplays make it through the sieve of editors and project selection groups. Moreover, with a large number of scripts, texts by well-known authors have the upper hand.

In the past the script, as the final document before the film was made, was a necessity. Today everyone has a camera in their pocket and can use it to create a sketch of the future film. Shoot the rough draft, hiring actors (including those we plan to employ) or naturals. Such a sketch – the actor *previs* – of a film that is to take place on a ship on a rough sea, for example, the future director can make in his apartment. In short, we propose a system in which the documents on which the film production is based is not only a screenplay, but the rough draft version – a *previs*. Something that can be displayed on the screen to distance oneself from a fixed idea, to test your narration. It is a model similar to Hollywood storyboards or animatics, but it was produced for a penny by future film makers, not by hiring extra professionals. The *previs* is made with the help of actors, not animated characters<sup>4</sup>.

Thanks to the production of the film sketch, sponsors will know much more about the shape of the future film. The director will be able to define its emotional impact. On its basis, the cinematographer will be able to deduce where the camera plays a dramatic role and where it is only an ornament. He will know where to keep distance from the actor's face and where to be closer. This method of filmmaking will result in savings. The draft film will provide you with information on which parts of the room in a given decoration are needed and which parts of the room will simply not perform. The set designer will not build "for life". And the operator will calculate exactly what amount of light will be needed for a specific scene. He won't order an extra light that will lie uselessly in the truck. A draft film (*previs*) is, therefore, also a form of a financial sketch and will have a positive environmental impact.

*Previs* of a film will also allow to better evaluate the film's screen time,

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<sup>4</sup> Mixed techniques are possible, and sometimes even recommended.

because we often make films that are too long. The directors prepare themselves for the project for a long time - they write consecutive versions of the script. And on the set they often add additional scenes and episodes, because new and fresh ideas come to their minds. They usually make too much additional material that will be rejected anyway, because the backbone of the film is fixed, the film is bound by the main storyline and cannot be packed with too many additional threads, and the length of the film may not exceed 1 hour and 55 minutes.

In addition, the rough sketch will give us control over what we do, even if we do not shoot the film chronologically. During the shooting of the movie we will be able to put the already "seriously" filmed scenes into the existing previs, which will give us a chance to evaluate the whole film and not individual scenes already during its production. The evaluation of only scenes is often confusing especially for young film makers.

We want a system in which every young person, who comes with a text: script, short story, novel, could realize their first film version for no money at all. They can do it using the simplest technology, even a mobile phone, with the help of relatives, unless any of the actors would want to "train" the role..



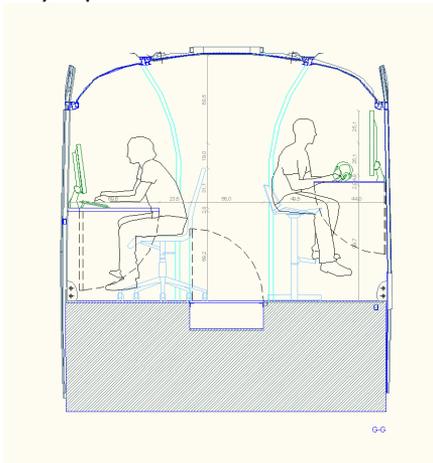
*Photo: Filip Błazejowski*

Previs is a film sketch of the future movie.... The foundation of the new system. It is not only the script and all its supplements such as folders of objects and other iconographic materials (mood boards) that will become the basic "document" of the future film.

We are convinced that such a system will not only make it easier to produce the future work, but will also help future directors, already at the previs (rough sketch) stage, to notice the mistakes and dramatic shallows of the future work, which is already being realized professionally and for

considerable funds. We are deeply convinced that in this way we will protect many young filmmakers from making weak or even misconceived films.

The fear of the new, the unknown will hinder the implementation of these tools and the changes we are postulating. These concerns are partly justified. Many professionals will have to change their old habits. But I do not think that there is an alternative. In addition, I do not believe that previs should be used for external evaluation. Nor should they in any way replace scenarios.



*Interior design: Marta Dalecka*

### How to make a previs?

Previs is a record of a feature film story made with any kind of unprofessional camera. The shooting does not have to be connected with shooting locations envisaged in the script. A movie at sea or in the desert can be made in any room. It is enough to write a text that informs the viewers where the action is taking place. It would be advisable to have the actors scheduled by the director, but in lack thereof (i.e., the lack of money for them) they may be played by substitutes in Previs. The editing denseness of the scenes does not need to match the final product, either. It is usually sufficient to have mastershots arranged in order. Complicated action scenes (accidents, chases) can be replaced by a relevant board with a description, or an appropriate piece of storyboard included in the previs. On the basis of the right to quote one will be able to use scenes from already made, well-known films as references to the scene that we are going to make (with the information where the video comes from,. The condition is only the internal presentation within the

group making the film.

### Advantages of Previs

Previs is a plan, or vision, of the future film much more precise than the script – it is the film’s roadmap.

Every reader of the script in a way builds their own vision of the future film. And surely everyone on its basis would have directed a different film. Often these visions (interpretations of the text) distort the message of the script, are immature, shallow or ignore the rules of dramaturgy. We know that good scenarios can make bad films and vice versa. That's why screenplays assigned to well-known and respected directors get a better treatment.

Good screenplay + Good Director = certainty of a good, perhaps decent film

Good screenplay + Unknown Director = a lottery - a good work can be obtained, but equally often a misguided one

Thanks to previses (rough draft versions), a young director is able to prove and defend his vision of their (debut) film.

This tool will help you to better evaluate:

- The attractiveness of the future film from a distributor’s (viewer’s) perspective
- The structure of the future work
- Its length
- The attractiveness of characters and their development associated with the film’s events
- Quality of dialogues
- Assess the proportions between the main and secondary themes - the dramatic power of the film

Moreover, rough draft films will make it easier to:

- find resources for future production (Distributors, Television and Film Finance Institutes, sponsors, etc.)
- assess the real financing needs for the project
- find and communicate with future creative collaborators (actor, set designer, cinematographer, composer) who may at this stage present the models of their future work, e.g. the composer might provide a sample of his music, the cinematographer in one of the scenes might present his idea for visual narration etc.
- Thoroughly assess the proportions between what is live and what has to be generated or added with the use of CGI.
- In the course of shooting the final movie, the possibility of

replacing scenes performed on the set for those made in the previs will make it easier to control the quality of the emerging film. “The flow of emotions” between the emerging film and its future audience. It is always a problem in the psychological drama, shot not in a chronological order, to assess on what emotional level the actors (their characters) end or start the scene in relation to the whole chain of dramatic events – and the films are not realized in accordance with the the story’s chronology. Previs will make it easier to control this process.



*Photo: Wiktor Obrok*

### Previs's drawbacks?

The script has to be written anyway, so previs becomes an additional obstacle on this difficult path to making the film.

We do not propose a system to replace the script-based selection system. Previs's aim is to be an internal film outline that helps filmmakers to build and control a shared vision and makes a good planning tool, also in the financial scope, of a future film. It is no different from the American animatics. It has their presentation advantages, but it undoubtedly outperforms these tools in sketching the emotional impact of a future film<sup>5</sup>.

In 99%, typical scripts do not describe the visual side of a future film. As previses are not a finished works and are not created for public showings, it will be possible to use scenes from famous films based on the right to quote, as a reference to scenes that the future filmmaker plans to perform. Such a possibility will make it easier to evaluate the direction of the search and interpretation of a future work.

We believe that with previs, directors will be able to find creative

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<sup>5</sup> Animatics are made almost solely as computer animations, in specialized software. There are several companies specializing such services on the American market.

collaborators or funds for the production of their films, e. g. by product placement.

Like any new element of the system in operation, it will undoubtedly face opposition from those who function well in the current system.

The rough draft film system is not intended for them, it is intended to facilitate the start for young people and the quality control of the film that is being made.

We believe that our proposal will be accepted especially well by the young generation of filmmakers if they understand that there it does not create another barrier on the way to their desired debut.

For many artists, making an semi-finished product may be viewed as an attempt to strip the creative process of the natural element of every creative endeavor, i.e. the tension and mystery related to the act of creation.

Unlike other art disciplines, making a film is an expensive undertaking. Money wasted in a bad project is a loss not only for the producer and the patron, but also a "kiss of death" for the debuting director. Films cannot be kept in the sock drawer , as is often the case with books.

The so-called "creative mystery" often leads to the fact that the whole creative team does not fully know what the director is all about. Everyone merely follow the director's instructions. Previses clearly outline the director's interpretation of the script.

Making previs can kill a project instead of helping. Nobody publishes their notes for a future novel.

Yes, I am aware of that. That is why it should not be mandatory. Previs production should not abolish the traditional (scenario-based) method of accepting the film for realization. Previs should not be shown publicly. They are to be used for consultation, agreement with other staff and more precise budgeting.



*Fot.: Beata Marciniak*

### Another utopian idea with no chance for implementation?

For many years now, we have been carrying out utopian (from the point of view of mainstream cinema) projects at our Workshops and so far this has been successful (3D, Interactivity in cinema, Game Developers' meetings with filmmakers, VR - expanded reality, modern digital post-production, Virtual Film Studio, interactive projects).

As a Film Spring Open, we want to persuade young filmmakers (and many of them are our participants) to make such drafts. We want to produce films in the new system and this may be a sufficient incentive for young filmmakers to respond positively. That's why we have built the Cinebus, a mobile film studio to support Modern Film Production. In this way, we will be able to test the value of risk control with a previs in practice. We have no doubt that potential young film producers may like the idea of a previs as a test case before investing substantial funds. We believe that for many producers, a "penny" investment in the realization of a previs may turn out to be a practical tool for testing the chances of a given project in distribution, its advantages, but also disadvantages, which - thanks to the rough draft version - could be removed during the realization process..

### Previs - New Workflow.

The script of course still exists and follows, as always, the selection path. We assume that a previs is an additional phase of internal development. That is, we propose to make films in the traditional order, that is: Directing it to production and obtaining funds on the basis of a script, and only then the director together with their closest employees prepares the previs. Thus, the previs is created in the internal working mode only for the crew executing a given project. As in the case of scenarios, a previs may (should) be modified during the preparation period until the ready-for-production version which is satisfying for everyone. Budgeting, the filming, selection of objects for the film, set design and construction - all this is done also on the basis of a previs, not only the screenplay.

The phase of preparation for the film and all its elements should be related to Previs.

- The DoP could also try their visual ideas.
- We include the outline of the musical score proposed by the composer.
- Prepare editing versions of previs (alternative structures of the

future work)

- Establish proportions between the main and side themes.
- Check the length of the work



*Photo: Adam Strzelecki*



*Photo: Beata Marciniak*



*Photo: Beata Marciniak*

### **The filming**

The film's editing takes place directly on set and each time we exchange pre-assembled scenes for those working with Pre-vis.

The so called screening of materials is always a screening of a whole previs "updated" with newly filmed scenes. That is, each time we watch the whole film - a patchwork consisting of new scenes and scenes from previs + any ready VFX - visual effects, or their mock-ups.

Scheduled break after 30%-40% of the planned shooting time. During this period, confrontation of the initial version of the infinite film with the test audience (or a potential distributor). Discussions about the direction in which the film is going. Implementation of corrections to the remaining schedule of shooting. In addition, a preliminary colour correction. Preliminary music editing.



*Photo: Beata Marciniak*

## Final editing and post-production of audio and visual equipment.

As traditional, but with a re-designed scope of responsibilities of individual professionals (as described below in the chapter "Film Professions").

### The drawbacks of a new work plan?

**The system was supposed to be economical, and there are new elements adding cost from the production point of view – making a previs, a scheduled break in the filming.**

Our calculations show that the money spent on previs production will result in savings. Previs will be a much more accurate "document" of the film than a script, thus facilitating planning. It will ensure more precise calculations of what will really be needed to make a particular film.

A break in filming is an idea to make it easier to control and improve the quality of a future film. This is another element of managing the risk connected with film production. The industry has a saying, 'Risk management costs money, but lack of management costs even more'. We believe that if the interruption is well planned, it will not increase production costs. Please note that the break does not increase the number of filming days. During this period the team returns the equipment to the rental company, so we do not pay for it. The technical team has a planned and unpaid (or barely paid) break. In addition, the interruption automatically shortens the postproduction period. In addition, the filmmakers will be spared from shooting additional "just in case" scenes at the end of the filming period, which is a standard behavior of almost every beginning director and is an additional burden for sustainable production.



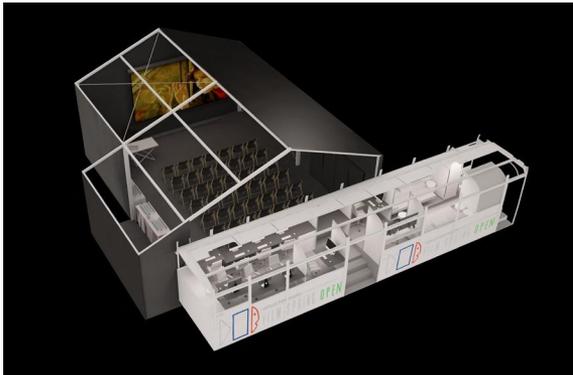
*Fot.: Beata Marciniak*

**Like any new system, this one will too drown in our habits. Even if there is something valuable here, nobody will want to implement it.**

We are aware of this and that is why the Film Spring Open Foundation, in the form of a "case study", wants to test this model in practice. This document is also a working document for discussion and will be amended.

Practical and documented actions (production of the film) will be an test of this theory, and will also allow for its modification.

Please note that our model of change is much deeper than the structure described above. We also want to redefine the system at the level of all film professions, as described below.



*Interior design: Marta Dalecka*

### **The organisation of the new model**

We have to think what can be done at the crossroads of responsibilities of different departments on the set, because this is where conflicts often arise, leading to the waste of time and materials, and therefore money. At the beginning of this essay, I described the mess that reigns in the departments related to the visual side of the film. But the chaos is not only the scourge of cinematography-related departments. We would like to propose a slightly different division of responsibilities on a professional film set, suggest changes in the way individual members of the creative and technical team perform their work. This redefinition of film professions must be based on a different system of work. Part of this new system is described above. The following comments will relate to professions and transport.

### **Film professions. How is it and how could it be?**

We want to use a system that is adapted to the current momentum of

technology development. This momentum often leads to the fact that the number of professions in film production is increasing rather than decreasing. There are professions, inscribed in the current system, which often have nothing to do on the set. For years I was making German films where the cinematographer's team consisted of two people. I did the filming and operated the camera. My assistant, Henryk Jedynak, managed the focus, loaded the cassettes and was the driver of a car in which we had all the equipment. Films made today on the same scale require, apart from the cameraman, cinematographer and his assistant, the DIT, who sometimes is also responsible for archiving (but not always) and is for the video (video assist coordinator) previewing and the second operator's assistant (clapper loader) responsible for cabling, reporting and clapping. Another example: The role of a costume designer in contemporary film is often limited to the fact that he visits the actor's apartment before the film begins and in such actor's closet chooses their private belongings as a costume for a scene. In a small-scale contemporary film, this is the end of the costume designer's work, because all the rest of his duties connected with costumes are taken over by a wardrobe assistant. Of course, there are films in which the role of a costume designer is significant, but does this mean that we have to involve them in every film?



*Photo.: Filip Błażejowski*

## **Gaffers, Grips, Orderlies.**

### **As it is**

Everyone sees it. Some work and others do not. On the outdoor set, more work is done by dolly operators and grips. The gaffers are sunbathing. In small interiors it is exactly the opposite. Each of the lorries of these film departments holds the same tools (ladders, platforms, magic arms, T-stands, ropes, camouflage nets, shovels, etc. ltd.

As it could be

We want to use the Mexican model where there is one technical department which is responsible for all the work on the plan (lighting ,gripping - driving, cranes, construction works) This will undoubtedly influence the optimization of work especially in case when we want to use the second team (as described below). It also cuts down on the means of transport and the quantity of tools transported to the set.



## Sound Operator

### As it is

It is rare for the Sound Operator to be interested in the preparation work on the film. He usually appears when a large part of the preparatory work is completed. Such approach leads to the following:

Often the filming objects that have been selected prove useless due to noise coming from the outside, which do not allow to make a direct sound recording.

Lavaliers are never or hardly ever placed in an actor's costume before the filming actually starts. In this way, when everyone is ready to start filming, the Sound Operator starts to install his equipment. By the way, he often comes to the conclusion that "the costume rustles" and it is not possible to install a microphone on it. Waste of time throughout the entire filming process may add up even to one full shooting day.

The Sound Operator records a lot of "sound effects" that nobody exactly listens through in the process of editing and post-production. Audio postproduction prefers to choose the effects from an archive, because it is a quick choice.

Discussions on the set (sometimes this is necessary) on which is more important in a given scene, sound or image, are often devoid of context, because the sound engineers do not study the script from the storyline and drama point of view.



### As it could be

The sound in the film is just as important as the image. And the effectiveness of the Sound Operator's work should not slow down the shooting process. We propose that one person should be responsible for the whole sound engineering process.

To do so, the Sound Operator should start his work much earlier. His duties should not be confined to technology.

We propose that this profession should evolve more in a creative direction (Sound Artist). The sound, like the picture in the film, should be designed and made (supervised) by one person.

We want him not to finish his work after the filming is done, but to personally perform or, if this is impossible, oversee the editing and sound editing process (Re-recording mixing). He has one orientation, which he recorded additionally during the shooting. What are the effects and background effects.

Editing on the set will make it easier to select valuable sound material on a regular basis.



*Photo: Beata Marciniak*

We suggest that placing lavaliers in costumes takes place at the beginning of the shooting day and is the same standard operation in the daily schedule as the make-up.

Selection of filming objects should always take place in the presence and with the approval of the sound artist,  
The sound artist should be involved in the discussion on the style of the future film. Previs should at least be discussed with him from the standpoint of the audio needs of the future film.

## Editor

### As it is

I have already written a lot about it, so I'll make it brief. Nowadays, the images (shots) that make it to the editing room are still semi-finished products which require further processing. The editing room becomes the decision-making place concerning the shape not only in the structural sense, but also in the visual sense. The amount of filmed material allows to collate many different editing versions of the same film. A captured image can be subject to any visual modifications and additions.

Due to the development of technology, film editing is a much more important profession than it used to be. (The amount of the material filmed)

Currently, the editor is editing the film away from the plan. Often due to the excessive responsibilities of the director, he takes over some of his functions (material selection, for example). It happens that an editor appears in a film after the cinematography is finished, which is an even worse situation.

The current model of this profession does not allow to control the quality of film production already in the course of its realization. And that is what we want to change.



## As it could be

Editing on set of the footage, coloured and with preliminary VFX<sup>6</sup>, where scenes in previs are replaced with those edited in a working mode. All this is done under the supervision of the director and the rest of the team, and the effects of his work (pre-edited) are available on every portable device (smartphone or tablet).



The film's eyes, i. e. the professions responsible for the image.

At the beginning of this essay I wrote about the mess that reigns in the "visual" departments of a film. We want to replace the current system of distributed authorship with one-man responsibility. We want to create a system where one person (in agreement with the director) takes over responsibility for the whole visual side of the film. Things have become so complicated and the development of technology has brought such a significant revolution that it is not worthwhile to think about how to refresh something that has been building up for years and there is no chance of cosmetic changes anymore. A general renewal should take place..



Phot.: Beata Marciniak

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<sup>6</sup> Program DaVinci Resolve 16 allows for parallel processes of editing, colour correction and VFX effects

## The cinematographer



### As it is

This profession is defined variously in different countries (different scope of responsibilities). In Poland, in comparison with other local industries, there is an individual model of doing this profession. The cinematographer in Poland is more of an artist, and in Europe and especially in the USA more a technician. Due to the development of technology, the reputation of this profession is deteriorating. New professionals have emerged, whose impact on the image is often greater than that of the cameraman (design specialists in previsualization, CGI and computer graphics artists). There is even a new profession – the virtual operator, i. e. the specialist in filming in the virtual environment. The cinematographer's influence on the image is becoming ever narrower and even the traditional cinematographer's domain, i.e. the light, can be completely transformed in the postproduction process (virtual light). To save themselves, the cinematographers flee into the world of new tools and gadgets, which are not always necessary to make a given film. If we don't get ready to revise the definition of the profession of the cinematographer, it will cease to exist the same way that the cobblers did.



*Photo: Beata Marciniak*

## As it could be

The cinematographer-artist (Visual Director) is ready to take on many more responsibilities, but at the same time to become an artist responsible for the overall visual shape of the film.

Thus, we want to create a new profession. Visual Director is the person who will be entirely responsible for the visual side of the film. It is not important whether the origin of this new specialist will be in set design or cinematography. It is important for them to redesign their approach to their previous profession so that they can face new challenges. In a sense, a Visual Director would be a continuation of the position they once held in the Polish system as the Cinematographer.



*Photo: Filip Błazejowski*

## Visual Director



### The scope of responsibilities of the Visual Director:

In small movies, Visual Director will be responsible for both cinematography and set design. In other words, they will be responsible for the visual side of the film from the very beginning to the end of the post-production process.

Defining the film style agreed upon with the director.

Take or supervise photos for the previs (This is not mandatory)

Selection of iconographic materials (photos, videos) as visual references for the future film.

Supervising or creating a story board, animatics (if necessary)

Performance of visual tests of the future film (including CGI manipulations).

Preparation of set design and selection of filming objects and locations

Lighting in the film and deciding what part of this work will be done in postproduction.

Working with the camera

Or the scope of responsibilities on the set, as it is today.

Post-production (colour correction, other image processing)

Supervision of CGI effects.

### Set designer

The model we write about relates to small-scale films and the idea of merging the professions of cinematographer and set designer may be used only in small productions, where the filming takes place in natural objects/locations with usually no set construction. It should be remembered that at present a lot of films are made in this way and this is particularly true of first-time filmmakers.

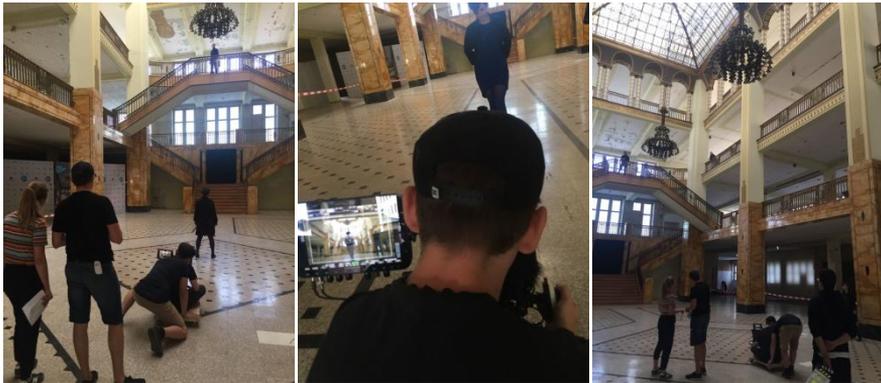
### As it is

The set designer is somebody who builds the world in which the action of the film is to take place. Nowadays, not everything is being built in the world of film and there is an increasing wave of bankruptcies among big film studios, because the funds for the production of films are getting smaller and smaller (Alwernia). More and more often the role of the set designer is limited to the selection of existing objects or locations and their possible modification. (Furnishing and repainting). In addition, a significant part of the set design is taken over by post-production CGI. What we see behind the windows of our set constructions or filmed locations is "added" after the completions of the filming. The same is true with the multiplication of objects or their deformation, not to mention the filming of scenes in a completely virtual environment. The set designer in the current system is somebody who rarely visits a film set. Their task during the shooting process is to prepare subsequent objects for the filming. Due to their scope of duties (definition of their profession), they are educated and experienced only in stage design. There is no professional training to prepare them from the filming perspective, e. g. in the area of lighting. Having no drama education, they often build or prepare elements of set construction that won't be of any use in the film. Their vision of the future film often differs significantly

from that of the cinematographer. The reason may of course be on both sides, but this is why we encourage the use of this model especially for small-scale films, where these two professions merge into one – the artist responsible for the visual side, Visual Director. I would like to stress once again that it is not important whether the origin of this new specialist will be in set design or cinematography. In the current system, the sets are prepared from the stage and boiling them from the lighting side begins with the start of the photographs, which is a colossal loss of time.

### **As it could be**

See above for Visual Director.



*Photo: Film Spring Open*

### **Interior designer**

As it is

The right hand of the set designer. In small-scale films he has more work than a set designer, as the sets are rarely built from scratch. The interior designer proposes changes in the arrangement of filming objects and locations. They introduce changes in furniture and decoration of walls and floors, preparing these objects for the filming. They introduce new furniture, if necessary, by hanging paintings, lamps, carpets and other props. They are also responsible for bringing the object to its original state prior to being rented for filming.

As it could be

The interior designer in the new system should be the closest associate of the Visual Director. Their responsibilities will remain similar, but will become part of a transparent system, or at least the part of it that is responsible for the visual side of the film.

The scope of their duties will not differ significantly from those currently

performed, and the system in which they will work is described below (Second Team)

### Costume designer

As it is

In contemporary film their work is often limited to the choice of private clothes from among those that hang in the actor's wardrobe.

As it could be

Not every film needs a costume designer. The director, together with Visual Director, can take on this role.



*Photo: Adam Strzelecki*

### 1st director assistant

**As it is**

The profession, which used to be called "Second Director" in Poland, was awarded the number 1. First Director Assistant is a professional position which in the American system has little in common with directing. Their responsibility is in production and the person for the job is usually chosen by the film producer. Their role can be described, with little exaggeration, as the role of overseer, whose task is to whip up and enforce the speed of work on the plan. In the studio system, the First Director Assistant receives a bonus for making films on time. Their position on the set is indisputable. In fact, it is the First Assistant Director who decides what happens on the set. They are a specialist in the thicket of U. S. trade union and professional laws and are the one burdened with planning the filming schedule. As we can guess, this plan often has nothing to do with the drama of the work that is being created. Often, background scenes have more time allocated than those crucial for the storyline. No wonder that this role and such "clandestine" positioning of the First Assistant

Director on the set, as officially the Director's representative, was eagerly taken over by European producers and the current production system.

### **As it could be**

In a small film (but not only) the "First Assistant Director", or using old terminology, the Second Director is the person who unambiguously represents the interest of the film, i.e. of the Director.

They should be elected and trusted by the Director. They should be present and active during the preparation of the film for the shooting.

The responsibilities of the Second Director in the new system:

- Aid in the implementation of the previs
- Help with casting. Screen tests.
- Preparation of the filming set together with the director, but also, of course, the producer.
- The second director in the course of filming (applies only to small-scale films) is responsible for the directing in the second team (more details below).
- Help in selection of scenes for editing
- In big scenes, where both teams work together, they are responsible for the direction of the background.

### **Set secretary, or: reports, reports and reports**

They used to be the person registering the behavior (the gestures of actors) so that when implementing the reverse shots, the actors could repeat them exactly in the same place. Currently, this role is fulfilled by image recording. The recorded material can be viewed at any time and the actor can precisely repeat their behaviour. In addition, the film is often shot in a multi-camera system, where the necessity of repeating the same behaviours is unnecessary. The set secretary now describes what has been done on the set in special reports. However, the number of fields and descriptions to be filled in by the Plan secretary is superfluous. Nobody or almost nobody reads it. It was supposed to serve the editing team in understanding what has been done on the set, but once the editing is established on the set, it becomes redundant. The part of the description that is made by the set secretary could be used by VFX, but there are no such items in existing forms. The VFX Supervisor prefers to make the right measurements themselves, because the accuracy of such measurements shortens the working time in developing the effects.

We often film using cameras without operator (Crash cameras) these cameras are switched on much earlier and record minutes of bland

material to catch something that is valuable and only takes 0.5 seconds, e. g. an explosion. The set secretary does not have the tools to select these moments. Their archiving documentation does not provide for such description, and there are no tools to make it. Nowadays, the work of the set secretary shows clearly how technological changes should force the evolution of a profession, and how we are stuck eye-deep in the old system.

## Director



### As it is

I have already written about the reasons why people who are often talented are defeated in this profession. So I will limit myself to saying that the European model of a film director is the military model. The director is a general on set, and is always right. If they announce to their team that, in their opinion, black is not black and that, in their opinion, "black is actually white", their team will conceal their true opinion and will concur. This model of the infallible director is fundamentally different from the film studio model, where the control of both the producer and the studio financing the film is much greater. The director is a professional rented by the studio/producer and their typical contract provides the option of releasing them from duty at any time. It is quite common for the directors to be stripped of the right to the so-called "final cut" - the final version of the film after editing. Of course, it doesn't mean that the studio model is better.

### As it could be

The model we put forward gives the director a tool (previs) with which to control their vision of the film, which is usually inaccessible to others. The way in which he wants to transfer the script's text onto the screen is usually concealed in their mind and not readily communicable to other people.

Previs is a method to discover these mechanisms and make them public. We want to build a team-based system rather than a military one. The

whole team will be aware of what is expected of them. They will be more aware of the message of the future work and its style, even if these elements are not addressed explicitly.



*Photo: Beata Marciniak*

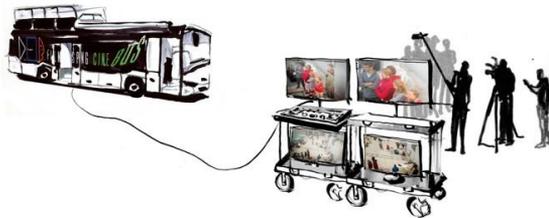
Editing on the set, in turn, is an element in which the director can refer (through screening) at any time to the full overview of the emerging film. A break in filming serves a similar purpose. These new tools are designed for the comfort, and not control, of the director's work!

The aim of redefining film professions is to ensure that the director is not overloaded with thousands of often unnecessary questions. Both the established hierarchy concerning visual professions and a different model of assistants (Second Director) are to serve this purpose. (I know what I'm talking about, because I did the filming in many beginners' films).

By the way, in Germany I met with a very interesting system of presenting the working materials in one of the films. The screening did not take place every day after the filming, but once a week on the weekend and were combined with a breakfast for the whole team. In such a more relaxed atmosphere it was easier to distance oneself from the work done and also to evaluate a slightly longer piece of work. However, the most important is the control on the set and for it to be effective it is necessary to design and build a modern decision-making centre, which is what we commonly call "Director's Preview" and everywhere else it is called "Video Village". We built such a prototype in Cinebus. The "Center" should be well communicated with other post-production activities located in Cinebus. And it is not only about previewing the cameras on the set, but also about the ease of check/seeing "on the run" how a given shot is assembled with the rest of the footage. Or a preliminary assessment of the combination of what is live and what is CGI.

We've built such a prototype on two magliners (to fit easily in an elevator) easily "visually" communicated and at a distance of up to 300

meters with the other departments in Cinebus and the set. Without unnecessary and time-consuming work, the director and other crew members will be able to keep an eye on the emerging film not only from the point of view of the current shot, but also the function of the shot as a whole. The director will be able to assess the color correction and preliminary CGI effects, or refer to the moodboards and check what is currently being recorded by the second team.



In the old times, before becoming a master, the apprentice had to go on a professional journey in order to see other ways or ideas for crafting with other masters in the profession. In the age of mass communication, only apparently does it seem to us that we know everything, because it is enough to google it. Nobody makes a comparative analysis of various production systems that exist in the world. And on top of that the only template that everyone willingly follow is the American studio model.



*Photo: Andrzej Waluk*

## Producer

I believe that in the European cinema it is a mistake to use American production software, because they are built for a different production reality. One of the numerous examples I have written above is the example of the First Assistant Director. It should be remembered that

studio-based filmmaking (USA) is built on the economic calculation, resulting from the position of this industry in the world. Studio films are made to earn money and this is usually the case. In Europe, the producer makes money by saving on the production of films, because very few films generate profits. Quite a glaring example is the fact that in studio films, the director almost always gets a chance to improve an already finished film in the form of additional shots, and making them takes sometimes a few days. In Europe, this tradition is almost nonexistent, and for a very simple reason, because making these extra shorts eats away the producer's income. We can claim that the quality of a finished work is not entirely the aim of European film production, because the producer makes money from savings. In addition, the producer is an easy prey for price manipulation. They cannot and do not know everything, becomes a victim of price collusion (fees of post-production companies) or manipulation of managers of individual departments described above.



*Photo: Beata Marciniak*

### **As it is**

An outdated, rigid process of film production

Copying models of the rich and based on an obsolete model (negative role of trade unions) of the US film industry; it should be remembered that the Americans can afford it because it is still very profitable.

Application of production software created for high-budget studio films. This is particularly nonsensical in small films.

Non-transparent economic models, the goal of which is to generate maximum profit already in the production of the film, and not the revenue from future distribution. The issue of quality in the film produced in this way is secondary for the producer.

Protection of own interest. Savings to which the producer forces the heads of individual departments are rarely implemented in their own, production division.

### As it could be

This whole document contain the description of these changes.

The modern model of future film production should be transparent, a system whose ultimate goal is the quality of the produced work.

### The second team - how to speed work without losing in quality control



The American system of production of high-budget films is based on two teams. The production is based on the assumption that the most valuable time on the set is the period when the actors cast in the main roles (stars) appear on the set. Due to the star-sized fees, the crew can't afford to shoot the so-called they can't afford to make cutaways, or even countershots for "less important actors" in. The second team shoots all long shots (actors are replaced by body doubles), "plates" that are needed for VFX, close-ups or even whole scenes that are rated as less important for the finished film.

In practice, however, this system has many other advantages. In action films, where the second team usually films enemies (like the Somalis in "Black Hawk Down"), their much more important role is to "clean up": the director with the editor, watch the already edited scene orders to make additional shots needed to edit the part.

We would like to propose a system in which the second team would be responsible for labor-intensive tasks that do not require the presence of the director, also for the above mentioned "cleaning", but most of all, and this is a novelty in this system, for the preparation of the next set object/location for the filming. That is why it is so important in the new system to redefine film professions.



Let us follow in practical terms the nature of these changes.

### **As it is**

In the traditional model, after selecting (or constructing) the sets, the set designer together with the interior designer and prop master prepare the location for filming on the eve of commencement of work on a given object. The set or location is decorated with furniture, repainted, furnished with necessary or decorative props.

The next day, the proper filming team appears, starting with lighting up the set, followed by (it often happens in parallel) the actors' rehearsals and the actual filming.

### **As it could be**

We want (and this model has already been partly tested on the set of Natalie Portman's film "A Tale of Love and Darkness") to propose for small-scale productions (or especially for small-scale productions) a model of the second team, whereas the list of such team's duties would be much longer. We want to build a more efficient system with much fewer specialists. I mentioned one of its elements, the Visual Director. I would also like to remind you that it will not matter whether their origin will be in set design or cinematography. In the new system, the Visual Director and their Assistant (currently the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cinematographer) will be responsible for the entire visual side of the film. Likewise, the Director will have their trusted partner (2<sup>nd</sup> Director). The obligation to prepare, and later dismantle, the next set or location will fall on these two closest assistants (a novelty).

But most of all, the Second Director and Assistant Visual Director will be responsible for the filming of the second team.

### Let's follow the workflow of the new system.

Selection of the filming object/location by the Director and Visual Director

Discussion on necessary changes in the facility (The Second Director and Assistant Visual Director should already participate in this part of the work)

At the time when the first team is filming in the location "A", the Visual Director assistant prepares the location "B" for both in set design and lighting (a novelty and significant saving of time). So they do all of the work previously discussed with the Visual Director. Their work is much easier because they use a previs, so they know what and how will be needed for the film.

The first team arrives at the location prepared not only from the stage design point of view, but also in the technical aspect (preliminary lighting, VFX blue screens)

When the first team finishes shooting the scene in location "A" and moves on to location "B", the Director's Assistant and Assistant Visual Director continue ("clean up") with the still unmade shots in location "A". After they have finished, they return the location to its original appearance. It was this particular model that we applied on the set of Natalie Portman's film, which resulted in the situation that on the last day of the film we didn't have anything to shoot – a situation practically unheard of on the set of a debut film.

A new communication system will assist in synchronising and interpreting of tasks. The film set in the new system will be equipped with an Intranet (Cinebus) and a communication system (including video streaming) ensuring direct viewing of the first and second team's footage. This will allow the director to control the work of the second team.

### The role of Film Spring Open.

Every theory needs to be tested in practice. Not all elements of the new structure can be introduced immediately. Compromises are also inevitable.

In order to ensure that the whole discussion on our idea does not end with a theoretical bargaining, we want to test our system in practice. We want to make a feature film (selected and in consultation with our partners), which would be a practical test of the proposed changes. Only in this way can we present our model to the film community in a responsible way. We want to properly document the whole process from

both the descriptive side (a making-of) and production documents, including cost calculation and comparison with existing project cost estimates of the same scale.

*Sławomir Idziak*

*13.12.2017*



*Phot: Filip Błażejowski*

*Cinebus, or an equipment transporting vehicle, but at the same time a film production studio was built thanks to the support of the Ministry of Culture and the Polish Film Institute.*

*Partners: PSC, Makonline, KBF, Krakow Film Commission, Legal Culture.*

*Interior partners: BoConcept Kraków and Katowice, Smeg, Abet Laminati, Blum, Selt, Dicson.*

*Technology partners: Canon, HP, Sony, CamSat, GLC, Akurat Lighting, Black Magic, Digital Republic, Kingston, Maxon, IT Service, Samyang, Benro, Graphic. pl, Adicam, Neil Corbould Special Effects.*

*Main contractor: Solaris*



Współfinansowanie:

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Dofinansowano ze środków Ministra Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego oraz Polskiego Instytutu Sztuki Filmowej

Description of the New Production Model was commented by the award-winning director, cinematographer Wojtek Staroń:

*I was happy to read your text "How to make films...".*

*I absolutely agree with your words. You are referring to things that I have been thinking about, experiencing and trying to put into practice since the beginning of my journey. Being a bit of an outsider in the film world in Poland, which repulsed me with its thoughtlessness and pompousness, I tried to look for my own ways to give me and the director creative freedom.*

*I'm writing to you so that you know that I feel exactly and understand your attempt to think about film making, also trying to put it into practice (of course in arthouse cinema in my case).*

*For years now, the word "professionalism" in Poland has been synonymous with following a straitjacket model, a cliché, in order to give a false sense of security to producers. For me, it is on the contrary: professionalism is the ability to think out of the box and to flexibly search for the best solutions with the minimum of resources needed. Over the years I learnt that from documentary filmmaking, although these films often went beyond the form of a classic documentary and became feature stories (e. g. Argentinean Lesson distributed in cinemas in the USA).*

*I am glad that you are writing about the need to match the crew to the equipment and subject matter of the film.*

*As a cinematographer and director of documentaries, I tried to transfer the experience of the ability to choose the minimum of means to achieve the maximum effect in the frame, on stage and in film, to the feature films in which I was the cinematographer and which were co-produced by our company (together with my wife Małgosia, whom you met in the UK, we set up a company after returning from England in 2007). We have worked with the Mexicans (El Premio - which was shown at your FSO workshop in 2011) and the Argentineans (Refugiado premiering in Cannes, Condor for the best Argentinean film in 2014). Both films were made by small teams (about 20 people, one/two small lorries/buses, electricians also operating the dolly, etc.) and were prepared both from the production and aesthetic point of view precisely and with full creative freedom. They cost less than 700 thousand USD, yet you did not feel the lack of funds in any division or shortage of shooting time. Diego Lerman, a director of Refugiado was editing the scenes at night, just like Kieślowski did, so that the film was almost ready and submitted to Cannes just a week after the filming was*

done. These co-productions have given us an extraordinary experience, which we would like to graft in films made in Poland, but it is not easy. I recently had a negative experience in Poland with Darek Glazer's film *Mur* (The Wall), which was his debut, when the production was "eating away" the director, not giving him time to reflect, driving and limiting the possibilities of documenting and selection of locations to a minimum, and lobbied for the wrong actors. Added to this was the lack of inspiring artistic coaching. I worked on 4 feature debuts in Poland and three of them had the same problem.

We are thinking together with Gosia how to work differently for the good of films, but we are not the types of "loud people", about whom you write that they are quickly make themselves known in the industry – our paths in Poland were longer, we often feel somewhat unfit for the current environment, so the process of securing the funds is long, we squeeze as much as possible from minimum grants, but our films give us a lot of satisfaction.

I also notice an extremely important matter, which is the communication between the cinematographer and producer - often these two are able to impose the right momentum of work on the set and in preparation of the film, determine the number and type of crew and equipment. If, in your letter to the PSC, you are rightly warning against the weakening role of the operator, then perhaps it is here that you should look for the reinforcement of our role - as a person responsible not only for the visual side, but also for the composition and type of crew and equipment. Perhaps it may be worthwhile to insist on close cooperation in a three-part team: producer-director-cinematographer. Today, young producers often approach the film as a creative adventure, they are our friends, they keep our side; in the old model, many directors to some extent were disrespectful to producers, who were, moreover, mainly "cold-hearted" guardians of the budget.

The only thing that I find debatable (although interesting) is the 'previs' you are writing about. It seems to me that this system will be useful only for some of the projects in which dramaturgy, situation and film action is somewhat more important than atmosphere, acting or impressionism. I also know that many young directors work on the principle of creating a unique momentary energy, in which the script is only an inspiration for actors looking for the essence of characters. They often reject events in

*favour of registering a "spiritual state" (the concept of slow cinema) - if this happens during the previs, there is a risk that it will not be captured again in the final film. On the other hand, I certainly believe that every rehearsal with the camera and actors, or filming rough takes fr serve the cause and I am in favour of that. If you can practice the rhythm of a story that is so important for your personal creative style, it would be great.*

*I just wanted you to know that you have the backing of friends and supporters of your ideas!*

*Although I don't like to write letters, I felt an impulse, because we need to fight for the better future.*

*Warm regards,*

*Wojciech Staroń*

*What interested me in the New Production Model is the systemic change of thinking about the way of making micro-budget films. The point is that this model is not only an attempt to make a film for less money, but also involves a number of changes that make such production possible. It is possible, not only for economic reasons, but at the same time well-prepared for production. The process of film financing is demanding - it sometimes takes several years to complete the budget. In order to make good films, you need to have the skill and learn so that you do not make the same mistakes with subsequent productions. This is difficult to achieve when films are made every few years. By a number of changes I mean organizing the work on the film in such a system that step by step you realize the assumptions with awareness of the possibilities and limitations of the micro-budget film model. The organizational and realization issues are closely connected with each other in order to achieve a common goal. The production is prepared in such a way that, despite the limited resources, it can fulfil what was intended. Not every film has to be a masterpiece. Not all films are made for commercial purposes, and the success of a film is not measured only by its economic result. There are films that should be made and it is worth creating such conditions for them. The creation of such tools as Cinebus provides an opportunity to operate in professional conditions and learn the most important thing: the workshop and teamwork skills. It is worth to test and develop such tools, and look for new ways that can affect not only savings, but also the quality of films.*

*Magdalena Kamińska Balapolis*

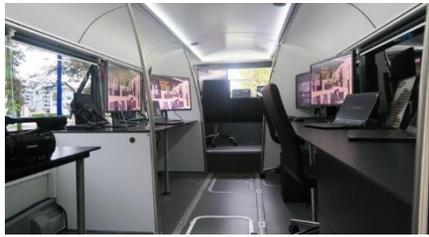




Photo: Filip Błażejowski, Marta Dalecka, Konrad Wójciów, Andrzej Szypulski



*Photo: Joanna Pieczra*