

Article: *Diary of a Media Student ... or, what on earth am I going to do when I get out of education???* ... by Ben Koziel (*written in 2009-2010*)



I studied at university for a degree in Drama, Film Studies and Creative Writing - and my passion for film lead me to apply for a job with a catering company in a studio whilst on summer break before starting my third year.

During my time working behind the bar I met many interesting people, like the producer who was more than happy to read my script and give me feedback. Studio mailrooms always have a notice board where production jobs are advertised, so I checked this out daily; it was there that I found an advert for a runner on a short charity film and jumped at the chance.

The first two days of filming was on location in a house close to the studio. I was very eager to work and made sure that I was always on hand to help, I was boom operating for most of the shots and set up other microphones when it wasn't possible to get great sound with the boom. Between shots I also helped to set up for tracking shots and helped to dress the set - I also managed to get my friend a job as a runner as they needed more help on the second day.

Just before we started filming I met a rigger at the bar who was working on a larger feature production. He offered to introduce me to the production manager so, after my shift at the bar, I walked down to the set and met the production manager who gave me her details and asked me to send her my CV (*Resumé*). A week later she set me up with a day's work experience as a sound trainee.

It was a real contrast from working on the short charity film to working on a big budget period drama. I was constantly asking questions and offering to help so I could learn as much as possible; the crew were very friendly and very willing to teach.

Then the production coordinator from the short charity film e-mailed to let me know further shooting dates. She sent the cameraman's compliments about the way in which my friend

and I had worked on his last production and offered us jobs as trainee grips. They gave our original runner jobs to two other of our friends who were looking for film work.

The twelve hour days needed to film this production were a shock to me and my friends, being students we weren't used to this level of work but it was very enjoyable! It was also very physically demanding as we were not only assisting the cameraman but also helping the art department put the set together and anything else we could turn our hand to. However, I didn't mind and I enjoyed every minute of it - it was very educational and an all around great experience.

I have then applied for a part time job in the television section at the studio, through contacts made during the summer, as something else to further my career whilst I do my final year at university. This has been a fantastic experience for me, I have met many producers at the bar and gained myself a large catalogue of contacts for the future - and they have all said that they look forward to hearing from me in the future - which gives me confidence for the career path I wish to follow.

The advice I would give to any student doing a film related course is to get a summer job in the film environment, whether it is on the sets, behind the bar or anywhere where you will get the chance to talk to people within the industry...

### **The Sequel! ... I've Graduated, now what? ...**

After graduating from university and now having a fairly good CV with several work experience projects in television drama, short films and studio work - and having a large stack of contacts - I honestly thought finding a job in the industry wouldn't be a problem ... I was wrong!

I returned to the job in the canteen at the studio where I had had worked during the summer break the year before, expecting to meet a familiar face and be invited to join a production company - but it isn't as easy as that. I was offered a couple of days on a short film with a company I had worked with previously but unfortunately, due to the short notice of the dates of the shoot, and not wanting to risk my job for a couple of days' shooting I had to reluctantly decline.

Every day I take a CV into work and more often than not I have a chance to pass it on to somebody however, I very rarely get a response. It wasn't until I had a week away from work because of a car crash that I was given an opportunity for a great job. I had gone through a book of production companies, emailing every single one - about three hundred in total. Some email addresses had expired as the book was about four years old, some didn't email me back, a few said they will keep my CV on record and one even emailed me to say: *'Almost every independent producer is struggling. You're on a hard road ... sorry to be so negative but the recession has kicked out most of my optimism. I wish you all the very best for your career'...*

This really put a downer on things until I received phone calls from two other people. One wanted to help me with my CV and give me advice. The other is a BAFTA nominated television producer. He invited me for an interview to be a junior researcher for a new show which was about to start, however I was unsuccessful as he had managed to get the team he had worked with on a previous series. Regardless of the outcome, I was happy to have had the opportunity to make a new contact.

I am searching job sites everyday hoping to get something soon - but I have only just graduated and I know that I will eventually get the opportunity to showcase my talents and do what I love. I have now learned that these things take time, it is not something that you just walk in to.

***After several years of using all of his contacts to find film work, Ben's credits to date include: 'Into the Woods', 'Skyfall', '47 Ronin', 'Muppets Most Wanted', Avengers: Infinity War, American Assassin, Their Finest, Doctor Strange, The Brothers Grimsby, Spectre.***