

LLOYD KAUFMAN'S GUIDE TO B MOVIE MAKING FOR BEGINNERS...

Ever wanted to produce your own fantasy flick? Never had the know-how to nail it? Troma's Lloyd Kaufman is here to help...

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THE HEAD HONCHO OF TROMA FILMS, and the director of such esoterically titled creature features as *The Toxic Avenger* (1984), *Sgt Kabukiman NYPD* (1990), *Tromeo And Juliet* (1996) and *Poultrygeist: Night Of The Chicken Dead* (2006), Lloyd Kaufman has been a major name in the B-movie business for almost 40 years. Having written numerous self-help books on how to "make it" in the wild and wonderful world of low budget filmmaking (example: 2003's best-selling *Make Your Own Damn Movie*), *SFX* caught up with the great man to find out the secrets of making your very own backyard monster movie...

1 START WITH A GOOD SCRIPT

I think the most important thing for anyone who wants to make it in this 'biz' is to have a strong screenplay. People forget that - especially in this day and age of digital miracles. You see, cinema has become democratised now and anyone can make his/her/its own movie - and in the inevitable burst of enthusiasm that this has created, a lot of budding young directors forget that a good script might also be necessary. But if someone is going to sit through your film for 90 minutes they should be entertained - so start with a good story.



Lloyd checks his script in *Father's Day*. Very wise.

2 BE TRUE TO YOURSELF

Do what you believe in otherwise you may as well be selling shoes. "To thine own self be true" is a little phrase coined by some guy called William Shakespeare, the author of *101 Moneymaking Screenplay Ideas*, which is also known as *Hamlet*. I believe it is a bestseller and your readers should probably pick it up and learn from it. That aside, I have always followed Shakespeare's advice and tried to do stuff that reflects me. My films tend to say something about Lloyd Kaufman's soul - so the movie *Poultrygeist: Night Of The Chicken Dead* is an attack on certain fast-food restaurants. And as a vegetarian that was important to me.

3 INCLUDE SOME INTERPRETATIVE DANCING

Interpretative dancing is important. If you watch my movies carefully you will see there is quite a lot of interpretative dancing in there. I think it wins over the audience - that's why I was so eager to include it in my movie *The Toxic Avenger Part II*. That film is not one I am especially proud of - but I had a feeling people would like it more because there was a spot of interpretative dancing in the background. It is a subtle psychological thing.

4 DON'T EXPECT YOUR ACTRESSES TO UNDRRESS

Sure, at Troma we have shown audiences some fine naked ladies over the years but a lot of B-movie filmmakers think this is the answer to all their problems. Well it isn't: showing women's breasts will not necessarily make your movie any better. If it did then you would see lots of companies, with flop films, going back and reshooting nude scenes. Your actresses might also slap you for asking. So be careful with this one.



Lloyd's *Poultrygeist: Night Of The Chicken Dead* has its knockers...

The great psychiatrist Harriet Tubman wrote quite a lot about the power of interpretative dancing. That is even more important to your sci-fi film than good looking women.



5 DON'T USE LOTS OF GORE

Lots of gore might mean your movie will be successful, and cause a bit of noise, but I wouldn't count on it. There is this little monster film from many years ago called *Frankenstein*, by James Whale, which has influenced all of us ever since and if you go back and watch that you might be surprised to see there is nothing gruesome happening onscreen. Don't get me wrong, we use blood in a lot of our movies - *Tromeo And Juliet* has quite a lot of it for example - but it is usually done as part of the plot and not just there for the sake of it.



Tromeo And Juliet: Shakespeare would have bought the first ticket.

6 PAY ATTENTION TO SOUND AND LIGHTS

I see a lot of first-time filmmakers not using microphones properly and it is very frustrating. They think that the sound on the camera will be fine as it is and that is absolutely not true. So get a cheap mic and stick it on a mop: that way you have an instant boom mic. Good eh? Then push that next to someone's mouth and, voilà, you will have good sound. Also pay attention to lighting. Again, our new media is so forgiving because you can film anywhere with a digital camera - but that doesn't mean that your movie looks good. Chances are it looks shit if you are not using proper lights. Paint with lights, okay? ➔

7 SHOOT ON LOCATION

Shooting on location, *real locations*, is an important part of any film. If you are making a monster movie – or any kind of sci-fi film – then they require a certain effort from the audience to suspend their disbelief. But if you have real locations then the audience will have one foot in reality and that will help sell them the story. So with a movie like *Poultrygeist* we used a real fast food establishment to shoot in – and although it is a crazy, crazy movie it has genuine, real looking locations and that helps the viewer immerse themselves in the plot. Also try and get a permit to shoot on location if you can. We learned this lesson when the police didn't take nicely to a fat naked man with a small penis running around Times Square. Oops.



Poultrygeist: a movie for vegetarians. No, really.

8 ALWAYS CARRY A DIGITAL CAMERA

I carry one of these with me all the time – alongside handcuffs and a pair of women's underwear – because I used to hang out with Andy Warhol. Indeed, he was the one who told me that you should never stop filming what is around you. And if you see our DVD of *Poultrygeist* there is a feature-length documentary called *Poultry in Motion: Truth Is Stranger Than Chicken* – and some of that is filmed from my little digital camera. At certain points I would just take it out and begin shooting. It will give you some extra bang for your buck when it comes to doing the DVD supplemental features.

9 ALWAYS CARRY A TOXIC AVENGER MASK

You always want to carry a Toxic Avenger mask with you. Carrying a Toxic Avenger mask will bring you very good karma.



Toxie and Lloyd: a beautiful friendship.

11 SPECIAL EFFECTS DON'T NEED TO BE EXPENSIVE

Got no money? That doesn't have to be a problem when it comes to creating your monster. You should not try and recreate *Alien* on your miniscule budget – remember that. In fact, I think an interesting way to create a creature is by using a lot of toilet paper and mud. I learned this by spending a year in the Republic of Chad when I was younger. Out there, I stayed in the African bush and the Chadian people used a lot of mud on their bodies. Occasionally I would indulge in that too and if you put mud on people, and let it set all over their bodies, it can also be pretty scary. If you check out a movie called *Zombie Island Massacre* – which Troma distributed – there is that technique in motion and it cost absolutely nothing. There are a lot of people out there trying to copy *The Toxic Avenger* or whatever and you are much better off doing things simple. The celebrated French chemist Louis



Love means never having to say you're ugly in *Tromeo And Juliet*.

Pasteur said, "There is an easy solution to every problem" and he was right. So use mud and a bit of body paint if you have no money – the result is surprisingly good.

12 DON'T LOOK TO FORMULAS TO GAIN SUCCESS

You should not look for any formulas to make your film a hit and you should take no one's advice either. After all, it is probably going to be wrong. So you shouldn't even listen to what I have been saying. The best rules are to have no rules and that is often how the greatest genre movies get made. **SFX**

10 NEVER GIVE UP

If you want to make movies then you need perseverance. At Troma we make movies for the future. When you make films which Eli Roth, Peter Jackson and Takashi Miike are inspired by, sometimes you are too far ahead of the curve. But if you believe in yourself then all will be good. I know that some films which I have directed have had a hard time getting distribution and when I first brought *The Toxic Avenger* to the Cannes Film Festival, we did not get one offer for international distribution. But a year later, after *The Toxic Avenger* had been a big hit in America, we had a buying frenzy. And not only did we make a lot of sales from lots of countries we raised the cash to make some sequels as well. That is a result. So perseverance is the most important part of making movie. As Woody Allen said, "Success is 80% just showing up".



Lloyd's new film *Father's Day* doesn't look controversial in the slightest...