Wednesday, January 1, 2014

We'll Fix It In Post

Video editing software applications these days are chocked full of tools. Even cheap editing programs have built-in options for tweaking audio and video, and applying effects.

But, is it really such a good idea to rely on editing to cover your production mistakes or oversights? I'm gonna go with a big, fat "NO!" on that. For one thing, it is lazy. And, for another, it is foolish. Icarus, where ya going?

Don't worry, your editor won't be bored. There will be plenty of production fails for which to compensate — those things beyond your control. Uh, big puffy clouds plus a rotating Earth, anyone? Airplanes, crying babies, ringing cellphones, barking dogs. (These effects are best left to post production.) If you have a big budget with plenty of money for do-overs, great! Shoot, reshoot, and reshoot again.

No matter your budget or time constraints, give yourself every advantage of doing the shot as perfectly as possible in the field (or studio). That means adequately mic'ing talent, placing lighting and reflectors strategically, and tweaking both as necessary when your setup or shot angle changes.

And, for the sake of all that is good, establish proper audio levels (not too hot, not too cold) and white balance the camera before you start. Wear headphones to monitor the audio levels. Carry a respectable white-balance card, because it could be that no one is wearing a white shirt that day.

One thing you cannot fix in post is eyeline! When filming talent that is meant to be speaking to the viewer, you must get the eyeline established correctly. There really are no good editing hacks for this other than to edit around that video. During production, use a field monitor to give you the best representation. Camera eyepieces and onboard monitors can be very deceptive.

Above all else, be sure that you have planned well: scouted the location at the planned shooting time to see how the sun will affect you (time of day, physical obstructions); observed auto traffic or airline flight patterns, if applicable. Audio is king, and audio problems are a beast. Do try to get the cleanest audio that you can. If for any reason you don't have that luxury to scout ahead, be sure to bring plenty of gear (such as an assortment of mics and screens) to accommodate any challenges that might arise.

In other words, learn your craft! Oh, and remember, every time you say "We'll fix it in post," an angel (investor) loses its wings.

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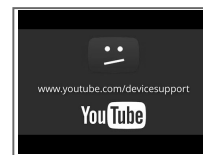
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