

DISC WIZ

DIRECTING VIDEO INTERVIEWS AND "WHAT IS B-ROLL?"

* LETS PLAY 20 QUESTIONS

Believe it or not¹, most topics can be covered in 20 questions, or less.

Get your personality in front of the camera, mic on lapel. Now, ask your pre-planned 20-or-less questions and let her/him answer.

CAUTION: Never (ever) ask any question she/he can answer with a simple "yes" or "no." Don't go through that door. Write questions in advance of the interview that force'em to talk. Use opening phrases like:

1. Describe for us ...
2. Tell us all about your ...
3. Give us an account of ...
4. Explain how ...
5. Account for us, if you will ...
6. (You get the idea)

* LISTEN TO THEIR ANSWERS; THEN ASK FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

As the off-camera interviewer, you are able to - and should - ask more questions. Later, the editor can cut out your questions, to make it seem like it all came from your on-camera subject. Again, NEVER² ask a yes/no question.

CAUTION: Spontaneously firing off on-the-spot follow-up questions requires careful attention on your part. Leave your 20-question list for a moment, to listen to your subject's answer. If his/her answer demands further probing, go ahead and ask more questions -- but NONE that can be answered with ... (you know what).

Don't sweat asking a dumb question. Remember, through the magic of editing, your questions will likely never see the light of the laser, so to speak. The goal is to get your subject to talk.

After you "get what you want"³ go back to your "20 Questions" and continue where you left off, unless some have now been answered or you got even better stuff than you expected in dreaming up your list.

ALWAYS wrap up your "shoot" with an open-ended opportunity for your subject to talk about the stuff you did not think of putting on the 20 Question docket.

Invite her/him to "have the final word" in all of this process. But, don't fall prey to the common approach of asking questions like:

- A. Do you have anything to add?
(He may just take out a calculator)
- B. Can you sum up this topic for our viewers?
(its bad form to assume you have a "viewer" at this point)
- C. We're almost out of tape. Did I miss anything?
(reveals the budget)

These are poor, low-energy questions that beg for poor, low-energy answers.

You know the interviewee's "buttons to push" now that he/she is "warmed up," so push 'em! And PERSONALIZE:

"Listening to you, I get the feeling _____. Correct me if I'm wrong ... Is there a reason you didn't mention ... ? By now, I bet people are going to wonder ..."

Your role just switched from interviewer to audience. You just injected a shot of adrenalin into the "end" of the about-to-get-wrapped-up session. Like a great date, plan this one right and you may be surprised at what unfolds. Keep the camera rolling ... this is the stuff tears, applause and Awards⁴ are made of.

Think of this final wrap up as a "Curtain Call" for your subject. From such moments come great Sound Bites! And...you can create a lot of tease and attention "up front" on your DVD Main Menu, later on, using clips of these most-human-of-all-moments.

* WHAT IS "B-ROLL" FOOTAGE?

Glad you asked. It's what makes a TV dinner a 4-course banquet. What makes a boring, channel-changer "Talking Head" a Great Moment In Cinema. In other words, if you dream of winning that award, don't forget to shoot "B-Roll" footage.

Let's talk post-production for a moment. ("Post" is producer-director talk for everything that goes on after the end of

shooting and/or recording). Your editor will create a "rough cut" of your DVD production, once all of your "assets" for your DVD are done, gathered, ready and delivered to the editing room.

When your editor tackles the interview you've shot, he will have in his/her hands your list of questions, revised by you with your directions as to where this interview - in edited form - will likely appear on your DVD: what order, how long, etc.

If all you shot was the interview - no "B-Roll" - then no editor will have much fun. Why? Because all editors need eye-gawking visuals to cut into the interview. We all get tired of watching a "Talking Head." So give your editor video "B" Roll shots of WHAT your interview subject talked about. If he/she described how they write the music, record an album or set up for the concert, SHOW THAT STUFF GOING ON. Now, your editor is a "Happy Camper."⁵

You and your editor will soon be sitting down together (if only by internet) to partake of the joyful task ahead: putting the DVD show into the exciting and creative "Rought Cut" stage.

Fortunately, you shot so much fantastic "B" Roll footage, you and your editor enjoy a feast of riches. The interviews themselves are worth the price of admission; and once your video surgeon excises the excesses: Wow!

PRODUCTION TIP: Buy at least two (2) tapes for each interview shoot. Put all the Interviews on Tape #1; then reserve Tape #2 for all of the "B" Roll footage for each interview. This will save lots of time later for your editor as he/she "captures" and "logs" all of the great stuff you got. The Boss will also save money and you can brag that you belong to a rarified, select group: the Under-Budget Producers/Directors League.⁶

Always keep your final product in mind as you direct your interviews and be sure to capture enough B-Roll. We can assist you with this stage of your production with pro experience. Call or e-mail us to discuss your project and we'll provide a comprehensive Quote!

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Nobody is better than the Disc Wiz[®] team at joyfully and productively collaborating with you to keep your creative process flowing and your new DVD on budget and on time. We never quote you a price, then place your project on a conveyer belt for "assembly." At Disc Wiz[®] we're on a first-name basis in an ongoing working relationship with you, as the producer. When you call or e-mail us, you are always communicating with a person- not a department.

Want more DVD pre-production, production, post-production and marketing tips? Send us an e-mail and we'll send you our growing "DVD Producer's Q&A" at no charge. Send a new Question and we'll publish it - with our Answer - in this free internet resource for DVD writers, directors, camera operators and producers.

† Receive updates regularly by visiting www.discwiz.com and sign up for the newsletter.



¹ Ripley

² Ever

³ Ruthless, self-serving network news phrase

⁴ Academy, bonus, money, fame, more money

⁵ Yogi Bear

⁶ Not really a group, yet, but let's start it up and I'll nominate you and you nominate me

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