

SUPPORT AN INDIE FILMMAKER

by

Jerod Brennen

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1 INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - DAY

A well-dressed young man strolls casually through a television studio, flashing a sickeningly sweet smile for the camera. He's dressed to the nines: suit, tie, and shiny black shoes.

This is ALAN SMITHEE, the next Sally Struthers, and he's here to ask for your support.

ALAN

Hi. I'm Alan Smithee. You may remember me from such great films as Appointment with Fear and Bloodsucking Pharaohs in Pittsburgh.

Snickering can be heard off-camera.

STUDIO CAMERAMAN (O.S.)

Sure they will...

Alan is hurt. He shifts to his natural voice, whiny and effeminate, as he talks to another person behind the camera.

ALAN

Chris? What did he mean by that? I'm not going to stand here and put up with any sh...

The camera abruptly cuts to a medium shot of Alan standing behind a SMALL PEDESTAL. Two small FRAMED MOVIE POSTERS stand upright on the pedestal. No larger than 8" x 10", they are from the movies he just mentioned.

Alan musters a nostalgic, faraway look, as he caresses one of the frames.

ALAN (cont'd)

Ah. Now those were the... good old days.

He pauses for a moment, lingering a bit too long on one of the pictures.

ALAN (cont'd)

(mockingly, to himself)  
Trust me, Alan. This part will open doors. Open doors my...

The camera abruptly cuts to the same shot of Alan, only later. He's obviously had a few moments to regain his composure.

Alan crosses his arms and taps one foot. He glances off to his right.

The camera follows his gaze, resting on a member of the crew: the SOUND GUY. He's fumbling with a boom pole, tangled in cables.

STUDIO CAMERAMAN (O.S.)

Waiting for sound!

The sound guy looks up at the camera and flashes a quick smile, hiding his embarrassment.

Another quick cut back to Alan, calm and confident.

ALAN (cont'd)

Filmmaking has changed  
immeasurably over the years.  
When I was starting out, I had no  
money for a formal "film school"  
education. I had to learn the  
hard way, suffering for my art.

The camera cuts to a close-up. Too close.

ALAN (cont'd)

(with pride)

I was an independent filmmaker.

The camera cuts back to the medium shot. Alan's tie is gone, and his top button is undone.

He walks over to a director's chair and sits down.

ALAN (cont'd)

The world of indie film can be a  
desolate landscape. Shunned by  
family and friends, independent  
filmmakers often suffer in  
silence. All the while, they  
keep their eyes fixed on the  
goal: the glamorous life of a  
professional filmmaker.

Alan hesitates and steps out of character. He stands from his chair and addresses someone behind the camera.

ALAN (cont'd)  
(frustrated)  
Glamorous, Chris? Do you know  
what it smelled like on the  
Raging Angels set? Ass, Chris.  
It smelled like ass. How  
glamorous is the smell of ass?

Another abrupt cut, back to the medium shot of Alan in  
the director's chair. His two top buttons are undone.

The pedestal from the previous shot is suddenly beside  
the chair. On its surface rests a framed black & white  
picture of a young man loaded down with film gear.

ALAN (cont'd)  
If these independent filmmakers  
are to achieve their goals,  
they're going to need your help.  
I'm here today on their behalf.  
With your support, we can help  
change the lives of these  
struggling artists. We can give  
them the support they so  
desperately need.

He stands from his chair and begins walking off to the  
right.

The camera cuts back to a wide shot. Alan is now walking  
toward the left. The camera dollies alongside him.

ALAN (cont'd)  
Of course, I could continue to  
describe their suffering, but I  
fear that my words simply  
wouldn't do their stories  
justice.

He pauses beside a large screen, the kind that teachers  
used to setup in grade school to show the kids  
filmstrips.

Alan steps out of character again, suddenly insecure.

ALAN (cont'd)  
Chris, I want to do that one more  
time. I want to try this thing  
with my eyebrows...

Cut to medium shot of Alan, wrapped up in the arms of a burly GAFFER. Alan is sobbing, his back to the camera. The gaffer is gently patting Alan's back with a gloved hand.

GAFFER

(To Alan) No, they don't look like drunken caterpillars. (To the crew) C'mon, you guys! Give him a break!

Abrupt cut, same shot, no gaffer.

ALAN (cont'd)

(sullen)

Let's watch a few behind-the-scene clips, showing the trials of independent filmmaking.

The camera unsteadily zooms in on the blank screen.

2 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

A video camera pans around a large kitchen, taking in the cast and crew of a small production.

ALAN (O.S)

Young independent filmmakers often have families of their own. Establishing a balance between family and filmmaking can be extremely challenging.

The camera settles on an eager DIRECTOR speaking to a YOUNG ACTRESS.

DIRECTOR DAD

In this scene, you're putting away groceries. There's a killer in the house, but you don't know that. I need... oblivious intensity. Calm, unaware. I need you be the epitome of a housewife.

DIRECTOR'S WIFE (O.S.)

I need you to be the epitome of a husband and get these people out of our house. The kids are getting hungry!

DIRECTOR DAD  
(annoyed)  
Five minutes! This is the last  
shot of the day. I promise!  
Besides, the kids are doing fine.

The director looks over his shoulder.

DIRECTOR DAD (cont'd)  
Michael! Keep that scrim up!

The camera pans to a group of very YOUNG CHILDREN, the  
oldest no more than five.

MICHAEL struggles to balance a scrim twice his size, as  
JOEL fights with a boom pole. SAMMIE and SYDNEY play  
with a pair of headphones.

MICHAEL  
(abashed)  
Sorry, Daddy.

3 EXT. CITY SIDEWALK - DAY

A MAN stands panting, holding a FAKE KNIFE in his right  
hand. On the sidewalk at his feet lies the STILL FORM of  
another man.

ALAN (O.S)  
Another challenge these brave  
souls face is securing locations.  
Without the funds for or  
knowledge of permits, indie  
filmmakers are often forced to  
shoot guerilla-style.  
Unfortunately, this can yield  
unpleasant consequences.

GUERILLA DIRECTOR (O.S)  
Cut!

The camera keeps rolling as the actors instantly relax.  
The director steps into the frame.

GUERILLA DIRECTOR (cont'd)  
(to the actor with the knife)  
That was excellent! Excellent!  
We're going to need one more  
take. This time, I need you to  
scream at the top of your lungs  
when you stab him. Don't hold  
back!

The actor nods unsteadily, looking over the director's  
shoulder. The director turns to see a BICYCLE COP  
walking his way.

The camera follows the director.

GUERILLA DIRECTOR (cont'd)  
(stepping toward the officer)  
Evening, officer. Can I help  
you?

BICYCLE COP  
You runnin' the show here?

GUERILLA DIRECTOR  
Yes, sir. I'm the director.

BICYCLE COP  
We've received some noise  
complaints from the residents.  
You're going to have to pack up.

GUERILLA DIRECTOR  
(nervous)  
Pack up? Absolutely. One more  
take, and we'll be on our way.

BICYCLE COP  
By pack up, I mean pack up. Now.

GUERILLA DIRECTOR  
I understand, but...

BICYCLE COP  
Do you even have a permit for all  
this?

The cop reaches for his CITATION BOOK. The director  
makes eye contact with the cameraman and nods.

GUERILLA DIRECTOR

Permit? Ah... yeah. Sure. I've got it right... here!

The director takes off down the street at a DEAD RUN. The cop drops his citation book to the ground and gives chase. The camera stays in place, but swivels to follow the chase.

The pursuit ends as the cop TACKLES the director. With his face pressed against the sidewalk, the director YELLS.

GUERILLA DIRECTOR

Action!

The CAMERA quickly SWIVELS back to two confused actors.

LOCATION CAMERAMAN (O.S)

C'mon! Action!

The actor with the knife looks at his counterpart and plunges the fake knife into his stomach. He lets out a PRIMAL ROAR as the dead man clumsily slumps to the ground.

4 INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A young actress's face fills the screen. Her hair and makeup look as though they were done in the dark. Without a mirror. By a trained monkey.

She's smiling flirtatiously, loving the limelight.

ALAN (O.S)

Yet another significant struggle of indie filmmaking is finding an audience. Without an audience, many budding filmmakers fail to realize the merit of their work.

The actress steps away from the camera, establishing a medium shot. She's dressed in an Oscar-style gown, complete with costume jewelry.

CLOCKWORK ACTRESS

(bubbly)

Well, here it is. The big premiere. I just finished editing my first film, Introspection. It's based on the true story of a beautiful young woman, me, who defies her Mennonite parents to pursue a career in acting. I had a hard time leaving anything on the cutting room floor, but I was finally able to trim it down to 223 minutes. Without credits.

The camera follows her as she backs toward the couch. Over her shoulder, a MAN and WOMAN are sitting together on the couch.

They are bound with DUCT TAPE and gagged with BANDANAS.

The actress positions herself in what she thinks is the center of the frame. She mouths the word "here?", and the camera nods along with the cameraman's head.

She resumes her performance, paying no heed to her captives.

CLOCKWORK ACTRESS (cont'd)

I'm a little disappointed that no one RSVP'ed, but I was able to rustle up a couple of lucky souls for the big night.

She moves to stand behind the man, placing her hands on his shoulders. The man's eyes scream in terror.

CLOCKWORK ACTRESS (cont'd)

This is Pete, my brother.

She shifts her hands to the woman's shoulders, smiling in appreciation.

CLOCKWORK ACTRESS (cont'd)

And this is Alex, my only friend.

Alex starts struggling. A gruff voice erupts from behind the camera

BULLDOG (O.S.)

Hey!

Alex's eyes widen, as an enormous KNIFE creeps into the left side of the shot.

BULLDOG (O.S., cont'd)  
You gonna hold still, or you need  
a little help?

Alex freezes. The knife eases out of the shot.

BULLDOG (O.S., cont'd)  
That's what I thought. (Suddenly  
sweet) Go ahead, princess.

The actress beams. She tilts her head to one side.

CLOCKWORK ACTRESS  
Bulldog, sweetheart, I'd be lost  
without you. Thank God for the  
Internet!

She blows him a kiss. Suddenly, she remembers her audience and resumes the performance.

The actress moves to stand in front of the couch, facing her captives. When she taps into her emotional reservoir, hands over her heart, it's readily apparent why no one RSVP'ed.

CLOCKWORK ACTRESS (cont'd)  
I would like to thank you, my  
fans, for showing your unwavering  
support. The day will come when  
this face graces screens all over  
the world. And when it does,  
I'll think back to this day, to  
the real reason I'm doing this.

She pauses for effect. Alex and Pete remain perfectly still, their eyes shifting to the man holding the camera.

CLOCKWORK ACTRESS (cont'd)  
I'm doing it for you.

She reaches for a roll of SCOTCH TAPE. She uses it to tape her captives' eyes open.

She then reaches for the remote control. Pointing it at the DVD player, she presses play.

CLOCKWORK ACTRESS (cont'd)  
And now, on with the show.

Alex and Pete scream through their gags.

5 INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

DANNY stands in front of the camera, dressed in JEDI ROBES and brandishing a store-bought LIGHTSABER. A StarFleet INSIGNIA is pinned to his chest, and a COMMUNICATOR is clipped to his belt.

KARL, a closet sci-fi geek, stands behind the camera, adjusting the zoom.

KARL (O.S.)  
Dude, this isn't going to work.

DANNY  
Just shut up, Karl! It will too work!

ALAN (O.S.)  
In an attempt to emulate their idols, many aspiring filmmakers struggle with the elusive beast that is... special effects.

Danny assumes a battle stance.

DANNY  
Alright. I need you to throw that nerf ball at me. I'll tell you when to go.

He closes his eyes and takes a series of deep breaths.

KARL (O.S.)  
This is stupid, dude. We should be modeling the cruiser.

DANNY  
Dammit, Karl! We have to do this first! I need to practice tracking motion in After Effects.

KARL (O.S.)  
C'mon, Danny! Admit it. You don't know what you're doing.

DANNY  
(explosive)  
Yes I do, Karl! This is exactly  
how Lucasfilm does it.

KARL (O.S.)  
Says who?

DANNY  
(with authority)  
The force dot net, that's who!

There's a moment of silence behind the camera. Karl's  
just questioned that which is never questioned, and he  
knows it.

KARL (O.S.)  
(abashed)  
My bad, dude. I didn't know.

DANNY  
Well, you do now.

Danny resumes his battle stance.

DANNY (cont'd)  
Alright. Let's do this thing.

He takes another deep breath, closes his eyes, and  
exhales steadily.

When he opens his eyes, the focus and determination  
behind them is frighteningly serious.

DANNY (cont'd)  
Engage.

Pause.

KARL (O.S.)  
What?

DANNY  
(impatient)  
Engage!

KARL (O.S.)  
You can't do that, dude. You  
can't cross universes like that.

DANNY  
(shouting)  
Just shut up and throw the damn  
ball, Karl!

A NERF BALL comes flying into frame and beans Danny  
between the eyes.

He drops the lightsaber as his hands go to his face.

DANNY  
Ow, Karl! Not so hard!

KARL (O.S.)  
Track that, ass goblin.

6 EXT. RED CROSS - DAY

The instantly recognizable Red Cross logo fills the  
frame. The camera pans down to the profile of a young  
man, our desperate director, mid-stride.

ALAN (O.S.)  
And all indie filmmakers learn  
early on the struggles associated  
with financing a movie.

GIRLFRIEND (O.S.)  
You sure you're up for this,  
baby. You don't look so hot?

DESPERATE DIRECTOR  
I'll do what needs to be done.  
This movie is my ticket, my El  
Mariachi.

GIRLFRIEND (O.S.)  
Mmmmm... Say it again...

He pauses mid-stride and does his best Antonio Banderas.

DESPERATE DIRECTOR  
My... El Mariachi...

She giggles, and they start walking again.

When they reach the front door, he pauses and turns to  
his girlfriend.

DESPERATE DIRECTOR

Wait here, beautiful. I'll be  
back in a few.

He winks and kisses at the camera, before turning and  
entering the building.

She turns and starts looking around the parking lot  
through the camera lense.

GIRLFRIEND (O.S.)

(to herself)

El Mariachi... El Mariachi...

She giggles again.

Then, hearing the door open behind her, she turns to see  
the director being escorted from the building by a nurse.

DESPERATE DIRECTOR

Look! I know I've already been  
here twice this week. Can't you  
make an exception?

The director's jacket is off, and he's in a short-sleeve  
shirt. Track marks are visible on both arms from so many  
donations.

NURSE

I'm sorry, sir. Our policy  
dictates...

DESPERATE DIRECTOR

Screw your policy! I've got two  
more days with an Arriflex SRII  
before the rental contract  
expires, and my actor isn't  
available until Thursday! If I  
don't extend the rental, the  
whole project falls apart!

NURSE

I truly am sorry, but there's  
nothing more I can do.

The nurse walks back inside the building.

The young director spins around, huffs, and turns back to  
the building. He raises his arms.

DESPERATE DIRECTOR

(shouting)

Come on! There's got to be  
something I can donate!

With his arms still in the air, he pauses to look down at his crotch.

7 INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - DAY

Alan is sitting in the director's chair again, medium shot. His sleeves are rolled up, and his shiny black shoes have been replaced by a pair of Converse All-Stars.

He opens his mouth to deliver a line, but stops at the direction of someone behind the camera.

STUDIO CAMERAMAN (O.S.)

Waiting for sound!

The camera pans over to the sound guy again, still wrapped up in his cables. This time, he snaps.

SOUND GUY

Look! You want sound, you're  
gonna shut the hell up and wait  
patiently, or so help me God I  
will beat you and beat you with  
this boom pole until you bleed!

The entire set goes absolutely silent. Very slowly, the camera pans back to a stunned Alan.

STUDIO CAMERAMAN

(quietly)

We'll roll in just a minute.

Cut to Alan in the director's chair, back in character.

He's laying it on thick now, despite his disheveled appearance. He musters up all the fake emotion in his B-movie bag of tricks.

ALAN

Right now, there are thousands of  
independent filmmakers all over  
the world, struggling to get by.  
They can't do it on their own,  
but you can help.

He stands and walks to the pedestal. This time, a laptop computer sits in place of the picture.

ALAN (cont'd)  
(imploring)  
Logon to the Internet today and  
visit this website.

He gestures to the bottom of the screen, where the URL [www.temperedzealot.com](http://www.temperedzealot.com) appears.

ALAN (cont'd)  
By making a small donation,  
you'll become a part of a growing  
effort to empower independent  
filmmakers, turning their dreams  
into a reality.

Again, he breaks out of character. The emotion's gone.

ALAN (cont'd)  
I'm sorry, Chris, but this is  
pathetic. This is truly...

Abrupt cut to close-up of Alan. The emotion's back.

ALAN (cont'd)  
In the end, though, it's not  
about the money. It's about the  
pride that these filmmakers will  
know when they look up at the big  
screen and see their names, their  
stories, their dreams.

Once more, out of character. Emotion gone.

ALAN (cont'd)  
Speaking of money, when am I  
getting paid for this gig? I've  
got a car payment due next week  
and I'm a little short.

CHRIS (O.S)  
Actually, I've been meaning to  
talk to you about that. I didn't  
get as much birthday money as I  
thought I was going to this year,  
and...

ALAN

(wary)

Chris? I am getting paid for  
this, right? Chris?

CHRIS (O.S)

Absolutely. Just as soon as I..

Alan growls. Without another word, he turns and walks  
off the set.

Chris comes into frame, following Alan.

CHRIS

Come on, Alan! You can't leave!  
We're almost done!

A door slams in the distance. Chris stops short and  
lowers his head.

STUDIO CAMERAMAN (O.S)

What now, chief?

Chris turns to look at the camera.

Cut to a close-up of a black & white 8" x 10" headshot of  
Alan Smithee. The mouth has been cut out, and Chris's  
lips protrude through the hole.

CHRIS/ALAN

The journey of a thousand miles  
begins with one step, and the  
production that will make an  
independent filmmaker's career  
begins with one small donation.  
Visit this website today. Make a  
difference in a young filmmaker's  
life.

Cut to a medium shot of the director's chair and  
pedestal. Chris and his cameraman are striking the set.  
The camera is still running.

CHRIS

I'll load the footage into  
Premiere this week. Should have  
the first cut edited before the  
weekend.

STUDIO CAMERAMAN  
You got releases from everyone,  
right?

CHRIS  
Releases?

STUDIO CAMERAMAN  
Yeah. Signed consent forms.  
Permission to show the finished  
product?

CHRIS  
Oh, releases! Sure. Sure.  
I've... uh... I've got those in my  
car.

The cameraman shakes his head as he folds up the chair.

STUDIO CAMERAMAN  
Look, I was afraid to say  
anything, but sound on that last  
shot was all over the place. I  
don't know if we can use it.

Chris picks up the pedestal. Both men walk toward the  
camera and out of frame.

CHRIS (O.S.)  
Not a problem. I'll fix it in  
post.

THE END