

How to work in film, and not live in L.A.

Contributed by Stuart Krempin

Want to work in film, but live somewhere far far away from Los Angeles? Well chances are you might not have the golden opportunity to live in this film Mecca, believe you me I can understand that it is a trifle challenging to say the least for a large group of us. It is expensive to live there, it is expensive to eat there, gas is expensive… Don’t remind me. Anyhow, you are certainly not dead in the water, read on to learn why.

I can think of no real bigger challenge than finding work when it comes to working in movies, at the start that is. It is not really brain surgery though, trust me I have worked for a handful of incompetent saps! It is just not as conventional as your old fashioned job hunt. God, thinking about it I recall reading an article on how to find work after college. It seemed more like you were supposed to crop dust your resume over downtown and hope for the best. Then you had to fill up your interview schedule, trying not to overlap, and pray that the company that finally bit wasn’t McDonalds. All I have to say to that is screw nine to five, that corporate nightmare just isn’t for me. So what exactly does this example have to do with you, well I just want to let you know that if that’s your tactic, then you mind as well just send over your resume to the king as well… Of Burgers. Alright maybe I made that joke twice but I mean it! Well alright enough with the pessimism. Let’s get to the juice. First, there is a couple of things to consider. 1) In almost every big town there is a news station. It might be a good way to gain production experience, yes I know it’s not what you’re dreaming about but guy from Kansas, it’s going to be hard to get cool work unless you get your butt to somewhere where cool work exists. 2) Los Angeles is getting a bit overzealous with location fees and rental costs of equipment, not to mention that it is pretty difficult to film every scenario within the state limits. It is not uncommon for a production to go on location, there are many movies shooting all over the place ALL the time. There are also film studios popping up here and there, showing a definite outward trend. 3) Well you’re going to hate me for this, but I would honestly suggest just trying to save up some dough and move somewhere where filming happens. I am not solely suggesting that Los Angeles is your only bet… Just that it is your best bet. 4) People like you and me are always shooting independent movies, everywhere I see. Curious? Just check out CraigsList.com, I can’t tell you how much people I see looking for help on a daily basis. It would behoove you to at least gain a glimpse of what production life is all about, and I can’t recommend enough the beneficial nature of volunteering. Sucks you aren’t going to be making any money, but you sir will be making friends, gaining experience, having fun, and creating film. Which is what it’s about in the first place! Ok, with that sittin’ there in your cranium let’s put that information to use and see if we can’t get you a freakin job. Yes, the moment of truth! Depending on which of the above your interested, you really only need one tool (pause in excitement) the internet. Well let me tell you, within the last five years things have really happened as far as our friend the internet is concerned. Like myself, we all realize that the internet is the communications medium of today, so where do you think people go to post jobs nowadays in the first place? If you guessed the internet you get one golden star! While eventually it is not going to be like this. How it works is you get a reputation after a while and people will be giving you a call requesting your professional services. For now your going to want to explore these internet places. Craigslist – Well this is really the first stop, honestly though Craig’s List rocks. It is truly a one stop shop for anything and everything, including most importantly for this article job opportunities. I know for a fact that in Los Angeles you really needn’t search further than this site, as pages and pages of job opportunities appear every day for production and other introductory film positions, but it is also a good start for those states not particularly so saturated with filming. Remember, a phone call is often better than an email. While a film office is no doubt going to be busy and the guy on the other line probably doesn’t have time for small talk, a more personal representation of the emotionless resume your about to fax is never a bad thing. Make sure to ask if the person could pass on the resume, and tell them you’re ready to work rain or shine, tomorrow morning if necessary! The Local Film Board – You will probably need to whip out your cell phone for this one. Basically most film boards carry a book of contacts for local people who are film industry professionals. For one shoot I was on we hired solely on the thick book of phone numbers and names for production assistants. I recall sitting there for hours leaving messages and our fax number so we could get some resumes to review for the shoot. And believe it or not the North Carolina film board supplied quite a list. So whatever it takes get on that list. Check here on this site for an index of film boards, it is by no means a complete list but it will give you an idea of what to Google at the very least. And in case you are wondering, the local film board is responsible for getting filming permits for shoots which are required for each and every location. And they also aid the film industry with directories, that of which you should be on! Local film friendly Colleges – If you are by a college that has a media department, or better yet a film department you need to scope them out. Check out their website to see if there is a job board. Many colleges help students by hooking them up with people who need your services. You will want to get in on that action. Here is a link to a list of film personnel sites, make sure you check all of these for the possibility of work. As a last resort, if all else fails you should definitely find some film related companies in your local area. Things such as camera equipment, expendables, location services, travel agencies, craft service and catering companies. Give them a call, hang around their place. They are no doubt talking with film productions, try to get a phone number… Hell if you’re lucky enough you might catch a production assistant on his way to pick up some gear, make small talk and ask about volunteering or ask for the office number. Don’t be a stalker though, even though this is pretty close to it. Those are some thoughts, hopefully you can find work in your neck of the woods. If not remember not to give up until you have made it down to Los Angeles. Questions and comments for this article will be answered, so please feel free to write!