

Walkie Talkie Chatter

Contributed by Stuart Krempin

To somebody that hasn't been around a movie set for long, walkie chatter can seem like a completely different language. In a way it is, this is the language of the set. Below, I will demystify some of the more common terms and phrases that you will be hearing a lot of.

Echo the call: The act of repeating the Assistant Director's commands from the walkie. The First Assistant Director will say such things as "rolling", "cut", "pictures up", "that's a wrap", and it is the Production Assistants duty to repeat these by yelling them out where their lockup position is.

Grace: Lunch is taken very seriously on a set given all the union regulations and hungry crew. The common rule of thumb is lunch is served six hours after the general crew call. Every once and a while, grace is called before lunch. It is basically production, i.e. the Director and the A.D.'s asking for an extra eleven minutes of filming before lunch. All the crew must agree on it and if it takes them longer than eleven minutes to wrap things up for lunch, penalties will begin to be incurred in the form of overtime money to the crew.

10-1: If you're in the bathroom, and somebody asks "what's your twenty", it is not suitable to say, "I am taking a leak in the can". Saying "I am ten one" is a more polite version, denoting that you're in the restroom taking care of number 1.

10-2: Same thing as ten one, yet this one denotes that you're taking care of number 2.

10-3: No, this doesn't specifically mean you have explosive diarrhea, it just means your going to be a while.

Flying in: This is an exaggerated term used when talking about somebody or something going somewhere. i.e. "John is flying into set" or "the call sheet is flying in".

First team: Represents the cast of any given film, commonly used in this way, "first team is flying in to set".

Second team: The stand-ins for the main actors.

Stand In: Most actors have a stand in, which is another actor who shares the features with the person whom he is standing in for. Such features include height, hair color, build. Their purpose is to imitate what the main actor will be doing for any given scene to aid the director and D.P. in pre-visualizing the scene for lighting and camera angles without bothering the main actor.

Extra / Background: Both mean any individual who does not have a speaking role in the film who is participating in a scene. This includes people in the distance at a mall, or they can even have direct contact with a speaking actor.

Copy that: Term used meaning "I understand", "sure", "I'll do that", and "you got it".

Picture is up / Stand by for Picture: This is the final stage before the actually rolling of the camera and sound where Make-up and Costume will have the ability to get in final looks to make sure everything is ready.

Rolling: The cameras are filming, and the sound is speeding. This is where you see the Second Assistant Cameraman use the clapboard to sync the camera and sound together.

Cut: The cameras have stopped filming, and the sound has stopped speeding.

Spinning the dials: This is used in such instances as when the crew has broken for lunch. A Production Assistant will go to every channel on the walkie letting the crew know it's lunch time.

Hit the trucks: Used primarily when talking about distribution of the next days call sheet. If somebody tells you to hit the trucks, it means to distribute it to all the equipment trucks where the crew hangs out after wrap. Such trucks include grip, electric, prop, camera, and so on.

Checking the gate (chicken at 8): Sometimes dust can land in between the lens and the film in a camera. Checking the gate denotes taking off the lens, and using a flashlight to check the feeder to see if any dust has been caught in it. If there is, anything that was filmed on that roll must be done again because there is no way to tell how much of the film was messed up.

Keying the mic: You key the mic every time you use it to talk. Every once and a while somebody will be accidentally keying the microphone without knowing about it, and this could go on for five minutes before they are found and made aware. This consequently will lead to some pretty entertaining eavesdropping from time to time, refer to Walkie Rule 1.

Lock up: This is one of the main functions of a Set Production Assistant. On every shot there will be a number of lockup positions where the P.A. will stand making sure that all crew are aware of whether or not there is filming going on by echoing the call. The P.A. will then make sure nobody makes any sound that could be heard to either disrupt the sound quality, or the actors concentration.

M.O.S.: Apparently there are two conflicting stories as to where the acronym came from, one involves a German director who doesn't have the best grasp of the English language, and the other is based in Latin or something like it. Either way it means that the next shot will be done without recording any sound.

Martini: When you hear somebody say this on the walkie, usually the First or Second AD, that means your on the last shot of the day. This, in old time filming, would actually be celebrated with martinis by the film upper management.

Going Hot: This means that the special effects team is getting ready to blow something up. Could be for something like a squib (somebody getting shot), sparks, or an actual explosive.

Hot Set: If a set is hot, this is warning not to touch anything because it is still being used for a shot. So don't move any of the set dressing or props or you will get yelled at.

I recall on one of my shoots, we had some flour on a mirror with a cheap razor to imitate, well you know… Anyways, the set was hot and one of the "ever so brilliant" P.A. hotshots started to chop up the flower with the razor and pretend to make rows. He thought he was too cool until the Director, yes DIRECTOR told him off big time. Needless to say, he was not hired on the Directors next film, and let this be a lesson to you. Hot set means don't touch, even if it means missing out on an opportunity to make you look like a jackass in front of all the cute actresses or handsome actors.

Fire watch: On bigger budgeted shows, security will be posted throughout set during the shoot. Yet every once and a while a Production Assistant will be posted where all the equipment is on a set during lunch, to make sure no strangers steal or mess around with it.