

# Film Credits

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It is not uncommon to see audiences in film theatres immediately get up and leave upon the conclusion of the image part of the film, instead of staying a little longer in their seats and read the on-screen film credits--that is, the listing of the personnel who were responsible for making the film (as well as names of all the members of the film cast). Why is it so important to stay and read the credits? Because not doing so is like reading a book without wishing to know who the author is; or listening to music without being concerned about who made the music, or appreciating a painting without bothering to find out who the painter is. There is, here, the following assertion being made: that the viewer/listener has an ethical responsibility, in terms of decency and courtesy, to know the name of the artist behind the art (even if only for a brief moment) that he/she is enjoying. (How would you feel if you were the artist and everyone enjoyed your art--whatever it may be, music, films, paintings, etc.--but refused to acknowledge your existence.) It is absolute arrogance, based on crass ignorance, to refuse to know the artist behind the art.

Now, talking specifically about films, there is no single person who wears the hat of the 'film-maker,' but rather there are many persons who wear that hat. In other words: today, more than ever before, all feature films are truly the product of a joint effort involving scores of people (besides the actors); more than any other art medium the film is the physical incarnation of a massive collaborative effort. (Even films produced by independent filmmakers are rarely immune from this fact.)

In light of the foregoing you must get to know the film credits of films (not documentaries) screened in this class. However, in order not to make this requirement onerous, you must get to know only the names of the people who traditionally receive, what I call, **principal credits** (see below).

I also want you to pay close attention to the placement of the principal credits in the film, because even that is an artistic decision. For example, some filmmakers will place the principal credits at the very beginning of the film before any image has been projected, while others will start rolling the principal credits simultaneously with the projection of the images. Some film makers will allow the story to unfold for a while and then begin to slowly flash the credits one at a time. (Personally, I like this approach because it reminds audiences in a dramatic way that there are actual people who are responsible for making the film they are, presumably, enjoying.) Recently, some filmmakers have been rolling the principal credits at the end of the film.

**For the purposes of this class**, the following film personnel, listed alphabetically, make up the principal credits:

**Art director:** The person who is responsible for designing sets and costumes. On big budget films the art director will work under a production designer. On smaller budget films the art director will also be the production designer.

**Casting Director:** The person responsible for determining and finding appropriate actors needed for a film.

**Cinematographer:** Person responsible for the overall quality of the photographic image on the screen by being in charge of the camera and lighting. (Also known as the 'director of photography' or 'lighting cameraperson.')

The cinematographer does not necessarily operate the camera; that is the job of the cameraperson.

**Composer:** composes the original music that is to accompany the film; works closely with the director;

**Director:** translates the screenplay into the actual film that he envisions through direction of the actors, the cameraperson, production designer and so on, and he is also the boss of the film crew;

**Editor:** The person who is in charge of putting the film together so that the narrative flows logically. Working with the director the film editor produces the final cut of the film by selecting and assembling individual pieces of film (the positive work print); also responsible for ensuring the synchronization of voice and sound tracks;

**Producer:** supervises all aspects of filmmaking (from screen-play ideas through film shooting to film marketing) for those financing the film; However, not involved with the creative aspects of filmmaking that the film director is responsible for.

**Production designer:** responsible for designing the final look of a film by working closely with the director; supervises the search for locations, designs the sets, and supervises construction of the sets as well as handles such other aspects related to the visual look of the film as decoration, costumes, hair, make-up, etc.;

**Writer:** writes the screenplay, which involves creation of characters, dialogue, dramatic situations, etc. in a film story.

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