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ACTING FOR FILM AND **TELEVISION**

A Professional Guidebook

By
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To Jamie
For her friendship and support - D.W.

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ACTING FOR FILM AND TELEVISION

A Professional Guidebook

INTRODUCTION

I have been working in the Film and Television industry here in Los Angeles for close to 14 years now. In that time, I have done just about every job there is to do before, during and after a film is shot. Having said that, I've also managed to screw up every single one of those jobs at some point or another! I may not be the brightest bulb in the box, but I sure learned a lot by being a little dopey.

Please note that I am *very* aware that this is a relatively small community and I am most definitely *not* trying to offend anyone here (whether offense should be taken or not!) I tend towards the succinct and the direct in my day-to-day life, and I see no reason why my writing should be any different. Now that I've (hopefully) covered my bases here, let's get on with it.

I don't know if the problems I address in this book are getting worse, or if I'm just becoming more of a curmudgeon. My best estimate says 'both'. The lack of job skills is hardly limited to the actors I meet and work with – it's as widespread an annoyance as any other that I can see in this industry. Like I said before...I'm not sure if it's gotten worse in the last ten years, but it sure seems like it. My irascible nature aside, it's probably been exactly this bad for as long as filmmaking has been around.

Let's start with what this guidebook isn't. This is *not* a 'survival' guide for Hollywood or the entertainment industry in general. The idea of needing a 'survival' guide is actually quite absurd when you think about it. Los Angeles is a modern, major American city and the entertainment industry is just that...an industry. Imagine if someone were to pen a 'survival' guide for living in Detroit (well, maybe on that one) and how to navigate and avoid the pitfalls of working for the auto industry. Seems pretty silly, doesn't it? But, the analogy still fits...15 million people call the Greater Los Angeles area home and a very large percentage of them work in the entertainment industry.

It's hardly the African Serengeti.

Here is all the ‘survival guide’ you’ll need to live and work here. If it sounds like a scam, it probably is. Trust your instincts, pay your rent and do all the other stuff that you do wherever you happen to live right now.

Done.

This book is *not* a guidebook on how to get the best headshots, acquiring an agent, finding acting schools or getting into the Screen Actors Guild. Those are all things that are peripheral to the job of acting and don’t really have anything to do with actually doing the work of a professional actor. Like the aforementioned auto industry example, if you wanted to get a job for Chrysler, you might read a book on what clothes you should wear to the interview or how to scan the classified ad section of the paper more efficiently or even how to get into the United Auto Workers Union. I would, however, suggest that you learn how to actually do the job that you want to do.

Unfortunately, most books on acting are written by people who don’t work in any meaningful capacity in the entertainment industry. Generally, that makes them very well versed on things like headshots, getting agents, finding training and how to get into the Screen Actors Guild. In my experience, those are things that with a little thought and effort you can weed your own way through. In fairness, it can be daunting to figure that all out on your own, so by all means read one (or all) of the numerous books on those subjects if you like. But, ultimately I say that’s not what the job is all about.

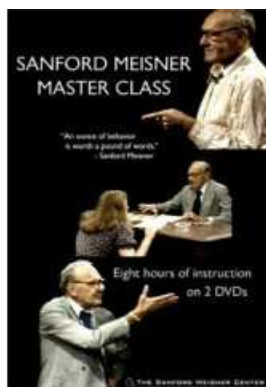
Believe me, there’s no shortage of amateurs that have all that crap.

This book is *not* about the emotional or preparation aspects of acting either. There are many fine books on that subject as well and wonderful schools all over that teach those techniques. My suggestion to you is to find one that suits you and pursue it with all your passion and vigor. As it is a highly subjective realm, I will try to forgo any

recommendations in that arena, but as I said earlier, I did train for two years in the Meisner technique myself. If you can get out of your own way, it seems to produce pretty solid emotional work and (at least at the school I attended) they make a real point of pushing the professionalism.

If you are interested in learning more about the Meisner technique, there is now a wonderful DVD available that is the only known footage of Sanford Meisner teaching his master class. I highly recommend this to anyone who is interested in acting in general, as Sanford Meisner is arguably one of the best acting teachers there has ever been. Check it out [here](#); the link will take you to Amazon.com.

Sanford Meisner's Master Class DVD



This guidebook *is* about the job of acting. What it entails, what is expected of you on set and why. I give real life examples from real life professional situations that I have seen and / or dealt with in real life. No B.S. or hype, just the facts, as it were. You might not like what you read, but it's the way it is...if you don't want to believe it, you'll find out sooner or later. Maybe.

Hopefully not after wasting a lifetime chasing a 'dream'.

CHAPTER 1

Acting is NOT a Dream, it's a Reality!

1

The entertainment business is real. It is a multi-billion dollar industry that employs hundreds of thousands of people around the world. And, right now, the best of the best of those people are here in Los Angeles. Having said that, make no mistake when you set out to be an actor...

The professional actors and actresses in Hollywood are the best in the world at what they do.

Now, usually when I make that statement, the first rebuttal that inevitably comes flying out of someone's head goes something like "well so and so is a terrible actress, and she made it" or "Actor X couldn't act his way out of a ticket, but he's working all the time". To which I usually reply, "You may not like their emotional work, but I guarantee you their professional ability is phenomenal". That is usually followed with a snide "Professional ability? *Scoff* What

‘professional ability’ do you need? Acting is *easy*, the hard part is getting discovered.”

Keep telling yourself that pumpkin...oh, and I’ll have the steak... medium rare please.

I’m going to dive into a subject here that I just love when talking about acting to the uninitiated. And that’s baseball. Now, don’t fret if you’re not sports minded, neither am I...but I do love baseball, especially for the acting analogies. Baseball is a game that nearly anyone can play. I’ve seen 70-year-old men out on a softball field having a grand old time. I’ve also seen children as young as 3 or 4 playing the same game with the same basic set of rules. Within that age range, there are literally hundreds of thousands of people playing baseball in this country at various levels. The same can be said for acting and as such, I’ve seen children as young as 3 or 4 acting on stage as well as people well into their dotage doing the exact same thing. In between the young and the nearly infirm, there are literally hundreds of thousands of people acting in this country at various levels as well.

This is where it starts to get funny. I can watch people act *or* watch people play baseball on the same little TV set that sits in my living room. Neat, eh? As for the baseball games, people watch them for many reasons, but I sincerely doubt *anyone* would be watching them if they weren’t the *best* players around. We *know* what the amateurs look like (anyone who’s been to a company softball game can attest to this) and it’s not nearly as much fun to witness.

In fact, it’s usually pretty embarrassing for everyone involved.

The same can be said for acting...would you go and pay money to see a feature film that had the talent level of the last school play you saw? I sincerely hope not...but hey, you never know. Some of you might not even be able to tell the difference in either case.

The bigger point is this: The entertainment industry, especially the acting portion of it, is the *only* industry I know of where someone can merely *claim* to be one of the players and be treated as an equal (by the public at large) regardless of experience, ability or skills.

Imagine if you will... a man walks into a bar and states to the first pretty young lady he sees “Hi, I’m a major league baseball player”. To which she replies, “Ooh, how nifty...what team do you play for?”

“I don’t really play for a team yet.”

“But you have though, right?”

“Not really, but I did play varsity baseball in high school”

“...Oh, then how are you a major league baseball player?”

“Well, it’s more like a way of visualizing myself, you know. I mean I *do* go to the batting cages twice a week, and I found this amazing hitting coach there. I also play softball with my friends at the park every other Saturday. I watch baseball games all the time *and* I read the sports page every Sunday. Right now, I’m working on networking with other major league baseball players to help me find baseball jobs. It’s tough but, it’s my passion you know... something in me just tells me it’s ‘right’. It’s more like a calling, I always knew watching baseball as a kid that it’s what I’m supposed to be doing with my life. Hey, I just got some new baseball cards made up, they look really professional, want to see one?”

And then *she* says in all seriousness, “Oh, *cool!!!!* I’d love to see one of your baseball cards. I totally know what you mean; my roommate is out here doing the major league baseball thing too. It *is* tough, but you just have to hang in there. You never know when you’re going to get your big break, right? I mean it’s just a numbers game after all.”

If you heard this conversation for real, you’d probably fall over from thinking how stupid it all sounded. But, I actually hear that same conversation about acting everyday in this town and watch smart people just eat it up.

It never ceases to amaze me.

Acting at the professional level in Hollywood requires at least the same amount of work, skill, dedication and perseverance as it takes for a baseball player to play at the Major League level.

If you think it takes anything less, you're fooling yourself. You'll kindly notice I didn't use the word 'luck' either.

There's a saying in the industry that goes, "We are the creators of hype, never the victims of it". Don't *allow* yourself to be a victim of the hype! Understand that your television set is *very* misleading. The images you see on television and in movies are illusions. Don't make career or life choices based on those illusions. The monsters in 'Lord of the Rings' weren't real, people aren't really getting shot and aliens aren't really invading. But, Hollywood is so good at creating those environments, those illusions, that they are nearly seamless. And, that's a big part of the problem. If you saw how hard the actors were *really* working and what it took to even be there to begin with, the show would be a flop! They *have* to make the difficult or impossible *seem* natural or there is no illusion. Like a ballet dancer balancing on her big toe with a smile on her face...

The illusion of a natural, lack of effort is essential to visual story telling but it's still just an illusion.

The illusion of the screen even carries over to the baseball world (or *any* professional sport really). Even though you can actually *see* how hard a baseball player is working on screen and compare yourself to that, the players are still making *incredible* plays *seem* routine. That's because the work they're doing *on* the field is a mere *fraction* of the work that's occurred *off* the field.

Don't believe me, try and turn a 'routine' double play sometime.

Take a moment here and honestly look at yourself. With *your* current skills in *baseball* (I know you're not a baseball player, just play along here for a second), what do you imagine the *bare minimum* effort would be to get *you personally* to a level to merely not be embarrassed playing in the majors?

Well, let me help you out here...I believe (depending on your general physical health) that if you put 2-3 hours a day, 6 days a week for the next 2 to 3 years, working out with professional coaches, hitting instructors, fielding instructors and playing the game with other professional baseball players, you'd probably get pretty close. Tack another 4-5 years of regular time on the professional field in competition and you may begin to get comfortable and actually start to look 'ok' out there. Seriously.

Now, are you willing to do that for your acting?

Because that's *exactly* the level you say you want to play at and that's *exactly* what it will take. Bare minimum. Do more, be relentless in your pursuit and you'll get better faster. Do *less* and you won't even garner a second glance in this town, because there are *literally hundreds of thousands* of people living here already doing just that.

And most 'actors' in town are doing *much* less. Still here?

Chapter 2

Your Co-Workers and Common References

2

Before we get into the meat and potatoes of the job of acting, let's take a few quick moments to introduce you to your (future) co-workers and the terms that they use and / or refer to themselves by. I will endeavor to expand on any 'lingo' when I reference it in later chapters, so there's no need to memorize this stuff. It is merely to get you acquainted in the short term.

First off, let's cover the various jobs that people do on a professional film set:

Producer: This guy (or gal) is the big boss. Generally speaking, the person with this title bears overall responsibility for the production. However, the bulk of their time is spent dealing with 'above the line' issues. 'The line' is the divider between what are considered 'fixed' costs (below the line costs include things like the crew, non-starring actors, locations, food, equipment, travel and the like) and 'variable' costs (the above the line stuff like the screenplay, the principle actor salaries as well as the producer and director's salaries.) They can hire

and fire everyone on set and are in charge of both the ‘front office’ (the room where the administrative functions of the shoot are handled) and production (the actual physical production of the movie or show.)

Unit Production Manager (UPM): This person generally oversees the ‘front office’, and their focus is usually on the ‘below the line’ expenditures. They are basically the accountants of the show and as such, their primary job is to say ‘no’, or ‘find a cheaper way to do it.’ Seriously. They report to the producer.

Director: This person is in charge of ‘production’ and their duty is to actually make the movie. Part of their job is to constantly ask the unit production manager for money, to which the UPM will say ‘no’. See previous example. Seriously though, they hire the production crew and oversee all aspects of production before, during and after photography.

Assistant Director (AD): For all intents and purposes, they are traffic cops. The AD is responsible for getting people where they need to be on set. This includes doing the daily ‘call sheets’ (the list that breaks down what actor needs to be where and when) and keeping track of the shooting schedule. They report to the UPM when they are not yelling at someone.

Director of Photography (DP): Sometimes referred to as a ‘cinematographer’ (it’s a point of contention that I won’t get into here) this person is in charge of the camera crew and reports to the Director. They are responsible for actually ‘shooting’ the movie.

Camera Operator: They are responsible for the technical aspects of using the camera equipment, and as such, they actually run the camera. He or she reports to the DP.

Focus Puller / 1st Assistant Camera Operator: This person maintains all of the camera equipment and it’s associated accessories. They are also responsible for ‘pulling focus’, which is to dynamically set the focus on the lens when a camera or subject is moving.

Clapper / Loader: Sometimes called a ‘2nd Assist’, they load the film and keep records on all the film stock, whether exposed or not. They ‘mark’ (place reference markings on the ground to tell an actor where to stand) actors and ‘slate’ (an audio / visual reference board that details the broad production information and features a ‘clapper’ at the

top which makes a sharp noise when closed quickly) scenes. The 1st and 2nd Assists report to the DP.

Gaffer: Sometimes called the ‘Chief Lighting Technician’, is in charge of the electrical department and implements (and sometimes designs) the lighting requirements of the shoot. They oversee the **Electricians** and report to the DP.

Lighting Technician: Places all of the lights and fixtures that will be utilized during filming. Responsible for the generator and providing electricity for all work lights on set and in support areas (like the catering area, or your trailer.)

Key Grip: This person is in charge of the grip department, which is responsible for ‘rigging’ (mounting a camera or lighting equipment to stands, poles, cars, people...whatever lights and cameras need to be attached to) lights and equipment. They too report to the DP.

Grip: Under the supervision of a Key Grip, the Grips are basically responsible for rigging equipment and on-set safety in regards to things falling over. Many specialized grips will operate cranes, boom arms (stationary camera platform used to elevate a camera), and dollies (mobile camera platform on wheels.) It is of some note here that the grips may set up the rigging for the lights, but only the lighting tech or the gaffer will actually place and / or focus them.

Script Supervisor: This person is responsible for the script and ensures that everyone on set has a current copy. They are also responsible for maintaining physical continuity (ensuring specific physical conditions of the actors and / or set are recorded and thus, able to be repeated) on set. They coordinate with the 2nd Assistant Camera and the **Production Sound Mixer** (see below) to ensure accurate slate information as well as producing the ‘line script’ (a version of the script which denotes what film rolls have covered which portion of the script.) They are also responsible for the daily reports to the ‘front office’ regarding what material has been shot, the actual times and breaks during shooting and any ‘wild’ (without any specific synchronous relation to the film) tracks. They work mainly with the Director and are somewhat of a liaison between the director and the front office.

Production Sound Mixer: Responsible for recording sound on set, including all dialogue, wild tracks and sound effects. They run the sound equipment and monitor for problems in the sound recordings. They report to the Director.

Boom Operator: Assistant to the Sound Mixer, this person is responsible for microphone placement and will sometimes use a manual ‘fish pole’ type device to place the microphone at a distance, or a larger, mechanical version called a ‘boom’.

Sound Technician: Generally responsible for running the cabling on the sound equipment, they will often be called on to perform the tasks of the Boom Op or the Sound Mixer.

Production Designer: They are in charge of the overall ‘look’ of the production. The Production Designer establishes everything from wall color to costume design.

Costume Designer: Designs the costumes (not to be trite.)

The Art Department:

- **Art Director:** Supervises set construction and all associated people in that realm (painters, plasterers, landscapers, sign makers, greens people, etc.)
- **Set Decorator:** Is responsible for choosing interior set decoration including things like furniture, wall hangings, light fixtures and the like.
- **Set Dresser:** These people actually ‘dress’ the set by setting up the furniture, wall hangings, light fixtures and the like.
- **Property Master:** Is in charge of all ‘props’ used during production. They provide most items an actor will interact with during a shoot, including magazines, food, sports equipment and even firearms.

Location Manager: This person is primarily responsible for locating (sometimes known as ‘location scouting’) and making arrangements for the use of any ‘off the lot’ (not on a property under the Studio’s control) locations.

Production Assistant: Not to be disparaging, but basically a gopher. As in, ‘gopher this, gopher that...’ Sorry, I couldn’t help myself. They

carry out basic administrative functions and do little odd jobs around set. Be nice to them, it's good karma!

These are the bulk of the people you will be interacting with on a day-to-day basis. There are (obviously) many more people that factor in making a film come to life, but they aren't generally people you will be interacting with regularly as an actor. Some of those jobs are the **editor, sound designer, and sound and dialogue editors.**

Bear in mind here that most of these people work on film sets on a regular basis. They know their jobs inside and out and have (probably) been doing them for years. They will (rightfully) expect the same from you. Don't forget that...

So, now that I've loosely defined *their* jobs, let's precisely define *yours*.

CHAPTER 3

The Actor's Job Defined

3

The job of a lead actor in a feature film is...

To deliver a physical and emotional interpretation of a screenwriter's work, in line with a director's vision, while maintaining long-term physical and emotional continuity.

You'll notice I used 'lead actor in a feature film' to pen the example. The same general requirement exists for all film and television actors to varying degrees, but the lead in the feature film will, in my opinion, be taxed the furthest by the aforementioned job requirements.

When I say 'feature film actor' I mean an actor that is one of the principle characters portrayed in a marquee attraction motion picture. By *feature*, I mean a picture that is or will be widely distributed, nationally or internationally, to play in movie theaters. The *film* part refers to the fact that, despite any claims to the contrary, 99.9% of feature films are distributed on *film*, regardless of acquisition format.

I only pause to define it because of the preponderance of ‘wannabes’ to declare any 90-minute long film or video a ‘feature film’, which, they are not. These are ‘feature length videos’ at best. As in, they are the same length as a feature film and they will be distributed on video only (again, regardless of acquisition format.) Likewise, the actors in such pictures are not ‘feature film actors’.

Just so we’re clear.

And, yes, I am aware that *some* major productions do end up going ‘straight to video’, but that still doesn’t change the definition. Movies of the week, television shows, low budget foreign releases and your best friends ‘indie’ just don’t count. Sorry.

Feature film acting is the most difficult because of four things:

- 1- Feature films are long.
- 2- They are generally shot single camera.
- 3- They are shot ‘4-wall’, which means all four walls of a set can or will appear.
- 4- The environment in which the audience sees the final product is very controlled and unforgiving.

Allow me to elaborate. The average film shoot for a major motion picture takes 60 days. Each day a film crew captures enough material to equate to about 60 to 90 seconds of *screen* time. You read that right; out of a 12-hour (usually longer) day they cover a minute’s worth of material.

The level of precise physical and emotional continuity required by the actor is extraordinary and it has to remain consistent. You will do scenes over and over and over again in rehearsal, blocking rehearsal, camera rehearsal, during photography and all the associated resets and ‘coverage’ that that entails. Not to mention the fact that most scenes are shot out of sequence and many locations will require multiple

emotional and physical states that will need to blend seamlessly with footage that could be shot a month later.

Here's a simple example: A man eating in a restaurant sees his wife with another man in a restaurant across the street. Angered, he charges out without paying, blustering past the wait-staff who try to restrain him. He pops out onto the street and tries to cross, but the traffic is heavy. Infuriated, he ducks and dodges his way across, actually getting bumped by a car hard enough to fall on the hood. After brief words with the driver, he scrambles to the other side of the street, peers in the window of the restaurant, but his wife has left. He goes into the restaurant and asks the waiter her whereabouts, but the waiter doesn't know.

In the real world of film production, that scene could be filmed on three different days, during three different weeks at three different locations and the viewer would never be the wiser. The actor, meanwhile, has to match his emotional and physical state perfectly, for each segment, after he may have filmed hundreds of other scenes in between. And that's just one part of his job, but I'll cover that later.

Now then, just think about the number of 'set-ups' in the aforementioned scene when you only have one camera. I'll be brief here, but just to properly 'cover' (get all the necessary footage of) the man at the table seeing his wife across the street would entail a full shot, a medium shot, a close-up, an extreme close-up, close-ups on the man's hands, on tableware that he's playing with, his feet shuffling, playing with his tie, anything the director felt would best convey the man's 'condition'. And that just covers him sitting there. That doesn't count the shots around the room that he may or may not be in, of other diners that he might see, food passing by, waiters serving people etc. Each time the camera moves is another set-up, which can vary greatly in time, but the actor has to look the same on every single one.

The difficulty with shooting '4-walls' is not to be dismissed either. For one, screen direction becomes a major issue when the camera 'turns around', i.e., crosses the *line of action*. Screen direction in a nut-shell is the means of determining which direction someone on screen should move or look in relation to a person, place or thing that they are interacting with. Strictly maintaining those lines of action is very

important in helping audience members remain spatially oriented while viewing a film. Sudden shifts can be jarring and ‘pull’ people out of the film experience, which as you will see in a moment, is a big no no.

While screen direction is usually well covered between the script supervisor, the director and the camera people, most experienced feature actors will know the ‘lines of action’ and be able to point out if something is amiss. Also, you must remember that the number of takes required to get proper ‘coverage’ is already extensive, now we have one more direction to shoot in as well, which only adds more.

The reason for shooting ‘4-walls’ and the extensive coverage is due to the need to *immerse* an audience into a *visceral experience*. To put it simply, when you watch a good motion picture, you become *part of* what’s on the screen. In contrast, when you watch television, you watch something *happen* on the screen.

The conditions under which the motion picture audience sees the film helps add to that immersion. It’s dark, the screen is huge, the sound is loud and the outside world is shut off almost completely.

Anything that happens on screen that makes the audience aware that they are an audience is not tolerated in professional film production.

What is the audience going to do if you lose them? Sit and be bored? Bad. Leave? Bad. It’s not as if they can go make some spaghetti, feed the cat and come back in a few minutes after they make a call to Aunt Sue. If you lose the audience, you lose money and at best filmmaking is a calculated risk anyway.

It takes an actor of exceptional dedication, skill and most importantly *experience* under those *specific* filming environments to pull that job off well. That experience takes years to accumulate, which is why nearly all of the young ‘stars’ of today have been acting since they were kids. That’s how they learned their trade, but I’ll expand on that in a later chapter.

By comparison, television simplifies the matter greatly for actors, although it adds it's own complications. Things that make television less demanding are:

- 1- The shows are generally shorter.
- 2- They are generally shot multi-camera.
- 3- They are generally '3-wall' sets.
- 4- The story lines generally run to completion week to week.
- 5- The environment in which the audience views the final product is much more forgiving.

I say 'generally' for most of these examples, because truth be told, television is much more sophisticated than it was even 10 years ago. There are many more shows that are shot 'single-camera style', usually two-cameras on Steadi-cams (a mobile camera platform attached to an operator that allows stable photography while in motion) and many are doing '4-wall' *style* production.

The big differences still remain though...just by the nature of the production schedule, television shows *can't* shoot the same coverage as a feature film. A typical four-camera sit-com will shoot an entire episode in one evening. Even accounting for rehearsals during the week, it's still nowhere close to a feature film. Within that rushed schedule, having multiple cameras always covering the action on only three walls creates what amounts to a sloppy product. Not that they set out to create shoddy work, it literally can't be helped under those conditions.

The only thing that makes it tolerable to watch for any length of time is the home viewing environment. Unlike a theater, you have commercial interruptions, traffic sounds, the dishwasher running, people talking and just the general din of modern life. Coupled with the small screen in well-lit conditions and the sound coming out of a 4-inch speaker, the audience just isn't as focused on what's going on.

Glaring errors that would jar an audience member out of their seat on a 40-foot screen can go unnoticed on the small one. The way television

gets around most of these mistakes (as well as acquiring a lot of footage quickly) is by shooting multi-camera. The effect of having multiple cameras running enables the editor to 'cut around' physical and emotional mis-matches much more easily. Plus, on each take they are getting all of the principle actors on set doing their thing all at once. This gives the editor a lot of room to find the principle player's dialogue and reaction footage to tell the story with.

As far as physical and emotional continuity are concerned, television is far more forgiving and there is almost never a need to maintain that continuity over great lengths of time and through many disparate and incongruous shooting conditions. That is primarily the reason that most feature film actors can work easily in television, while many television actors struggle to go the other way. Don't get me wrong, television folk are working hard, but it's a different kind of work.

Here's a simple example of the difference between the way a feature film and a television show might approach a scene. Let's say it's a scene where Fred and Mary are going to have an argument. Fred is already home working on some papers. Mary is going to come in; they are going to have an argument and then Mary's going to leave.

In the television show, we would most likely see:

A wide shot of the exterior of the building (the establishing shot). Cut to a close up of Fred working on his papers. Either pull back or cut to a wide shot of Mary entering the apartment. Mary crosses to Fred and we cut again from wide to a medium two-shot (a shot of both of them from about waist up.) They start to fight and there is a succession of close-ups showing Fred being mad at Mary and vice-versa. Cut back to a wide shot as Mary storms to the other side of the room. Toss in a couple more close-ups as they argue across the room. Cut back to wide as Mary gets fed up and leaves, then back to a close-up to see how upset Fred is over the whole mess.

In the feature film, we would most likely see something like this:

A wide shot of the exterior of the building. Cut to a shot of a picture in a frame showing Fred and Mary, followed by a perfectly still shot of

the empty dining room with the sun coming in through the window. We can hear the clock ticking in the stillness as the camera trucks down the hallway and around the corner to the living room where Fred is working on his papers.

Cut to a close-up of Fred chewing on his pen, then a close-up of some financial statements he's working on. Cut to another close-up of Fred rubbing his head in consternation. Fred (and the audience) hears Mary call from the front room. A medium shot of Fred trying to compose himself, followed by a quick close-up of him hiding a document under the pile in front of him.

Cut to a shot over Fred's shoulder of Mary entering the room. Mary removes her scarf and walks over to Fred. Cut to a quick shot of Mary tossing the scarf in a chair, followed by a close-up of Mary's finger running along the back of the chair that Fred is sitting on. Now, cut to a tight two-shot of Mary putting her arms around Fred. They start to argue. We stay tight on Fred as Mary gets mad and storms across the room.

Cut to a close-up of Mary retrieving her scarf from the chair, followed by a full shot of Mary taking her place across the room. We then see a close-up of Mary twisting the scarf in her hands, followed by a succession of interspersed wide, medium and close-up shots as she and Fred fight.

A medium shot of Mary getting fed up cuts to a wide shot of her departure. Cut back to a close-up of Fred showing how upset he is over the whole mess.

I think you get the point.

As you can see, the footage requirements between the two situations are going to be wildly different. Four cameras, in just a couple of takes, would cover the entire scene filmed on the television stage. One camera would be rolling to capture the scene from the feature film point of view and would require dozens of set-ups and probably three times as many takes.

At the end of the day, the television crew is already wrapped and getting ready for the next week. The film crew just covered a two-minute scene. The demands on the actor are commensurate, I assure you. So, now that you know a little more about what the job *is*, let's get to what it's all about in a practical sense.

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