

The CLUES Blog

by Christopher J. Musser

September 15, 2020

First of all, we were going to post most of the below without a lot of additional thinking, but things have recently changed, fundamentally and constantly, that have occasioned a re-evaluation of our film-making ambitions: Namely the continuing, extreme incidence of wildfire locally and in the rest of California.

It has become quite clear to this science-trusting and fire-fighting trained human being that we have reached the climate tipping point forecast so long ago by global warming research.

When I bought my house 6 years ago in Clearlake Oaks, there hadn't been a community threatening wild fire in 22 years, which burn scar you can still see driving in.

However, in the last 5 years I have endured numerous recommended or mandatory wildfire evacuations: <http://www.pressdemocrat.com/news/8471093-181/spring-valley-residents-weary-of?gallery=8472642&artslide=7>

I was threatened by wildfire again a few days ago by a structure fire that had spread to vegetation a little more than a mile a way, with hundreds of fires burning all over Northern California, underwent yet another evacuation advisory just last week, have had to wear a mask to go outside to perform necessary tasks for months, and there's 4 months to go in fire season.

I believe we may only have 10 years or so before we lose dependable electricity and the ability for government to service all of the people who need help, especially out in the country, which point can be a harbinger of societal breakdown and rising crime.

There are mitigation strategies, such as batteries for my existing solar etc. which I am exploring now.

However, don't say it's the apocalypse, because "Christians" have been predicting that ever since the death of Jesus Christ, even though he preached: "You can not know," so if you say it's here now, you're doing the devil's work.

I may not have the time to create and share the (at least) 4 films I want to make; I'll leave that in God's hands.

'Cause sans fires, here's what I originally was intending to do (creatively) when I moved here 6 years ago:

Make "The Silver Splitter," then make a million dollars selling it, easily fund "SummerFun" (which I can shoot on Clear Lake) and make a lot more money selling it, be treated like Jordan Peele, quickly make "Falling" with lots of Academy Awards, then shoot the biggest film ever: "The Seal of Kunduon."

Heck, I could do that all before I'm 80, and still not need depends, and find a young cute starlet who likes to cuddle (or maybe a long-lost lover) to share it with!

Then of course, I could buy a small second house on Mt. Tam in Marin somewhere; with views and a helipad. (No, I don't want to learn how to fly; I might have to call REACH and want a place for them to land.)

This would be my second house, a reasonable expectation for a healthy and careful man in the county where he was raised, who's worked hard for over 50 years, to use as a vacation spot or an alternative if his first house burns down.

Here's the problem though: the median house in Marin is somewhere north of \$1.5 million with an "M," and I'd have to pay cash 'cause I'm getting a little old for payments, and would actually like to retire some day!

So, I'll have to become a 1 or 2% er. And even though it's not money, it's the LOVE of money Timothy says is what's wrong with the world, must people I know who *have* money, especially for a long time, tend to love it, too.

However, at the beginning of a long career, for me at least, it would seem to be great timing, and would catch a man who used to admire Charlie Sheen at a time when he was old enough to have seen everything, and knows better, too!

With the release of our first promotional video:

<http://mussercommunications.com/mcpages/mcvlogs.html>, the path to producing "The Silver Splitter," has reached an important inflection point: transition from asking for other people's help (phase one), to producing "The Silver Splitter," myself, where I accept all of the creative responsibility and employ other trades people to help in the production, after acquiring, legally, professional investment.

Phase one was about re-connecting with many old creative friends: comedy, theater and film people, many of them very powerful and influential still. The plan was to acquaint them with my work (especially my writing) and seek their counsel and participation, in a

low-key “re-connecting with old friends,” kind of way.

And that’s been a wonderful two-year journey, but I’m glad it’s over now and I can move on to phase two.

Because I realized before I even began that *no one’s* going to help a 70-year-old man who doesn’t drive and is living on social security make a feature film when he hasn’t made one before; someone who hasn’t even made a *short* film in over 40 years; in the middle of a pandemic, all while receiving mandatory wildfire evacuations regularly in summer.

You’d have to be crazy to help that guy, right? That’s *so sad*.

And without an agent? “*You’re not just crazy, you’re certifiable!*”

Yet some very talented people *already have*.

It’s illegal in California to ask for money to make a film, including pre-production, without forming a company first (typically a LLC or Limited Partnership) to be able to market to a professional investment class (millionaires). And that costs \$5,000.

(That’s because soon after movies became popular, handsome young men in L. A. were getting rich old ladies drunk and asking them for “seed money,” and telling them they’d make them stars to boot!)

So, phase one consisted of contacting a lot of people I hadn’t seen in years, and asking them for their interest, and if they’d “attach” themselves to the project so I could leverage their reputations and referrals to ask for even more help making “The Silver Splitter.”

Like I say, a couple of very talented people did that, because they believed in me (I guess I’ve still got the touch).

But I’m so high risk in such a risky business that I can’t morally take one penny from a friend or family. So, I will only “market” my work to a professional investor class, and you can do that on crowdfunding websites now for free. Including raising the cost of forming a Limited Partnership.

Especially when you’re a good writer and can make effective videos, and now I can.

That’s why this is such an exciting time for me. And boy is there a lot more video coming.

(BTW I know how to *sell* a project, too: I averaged \$250,000 a *month* in sales at Redwood Chevrolet in Novato, California *30 years ago*. I once sold two matching Corvettes to a husband and wife *who didn't need them*, in an afternoon, for over \$100,000. Asking someone, especially a professional investor, over the phone for part of \$30,000 to help me make something I believe will make him or her money is not a stretch for me at all).

So, during phase one a number of very talented and successful people helped me with their time and advice, and in at least one case, a lot of work and travel.

However, I didn't realize those people would ask me to give up creative control in compensation.

Negotiating this process Chris has discovered he is a *curmudgeon*, and so is most everyone else he has contacted so far to help, especially the "Old farts."

Producing a collaborative creative work at a high level involves working with artists; that's the rub.

An OLDER artist is a particularly egotistical and self-important being. (Not that we don't like old artists, we happen to be one, too.)

But herding cats is the nature, and one of the main challenges, of making a movie, and herding old, artistic cats, can be a real chore, sometimes.

I have an old-fart-friend who started consulting as sound designer and composer, who got antsy about having a couple examples of his work online (that he told me he didn't like, after sending them to me and approving them to be posted). He didn't know that's forever (considering the wayback machine).

He asked me to remove his work and I did, even though I have performed and admire his music, told him I believed he had the capacity for greatness, and he had once asked me if he could *live* with me.

I have all the emails in the world showing he was fully informed and had granted me the permission to post his work; and this wasn't on Social Media, either, this was on a website where I control the visitation, but he's not educated enough to understand the difference.

He was so worried that people would actually *experience* his music, that I had to advise him that he's so unknown online that no one would have any reason to even *look* for his

work in the future, although my website statistics show about 0.035 % of my visitation still clicks on his old links, so I wonder who that is?

Another old-fart-friend who teaches improv started helping me in pre-production, but he's so afraid of his creative efforts being viewed online that he delivered the ultimatum IN CAPS, NO LESS that he wouldn't collaborate with me transferring creative works (promotional videos, edits of the film, etc.) over the cloud.

He told me he required *hard copies* (what does that even mean?) delivered to him when he physically visited for pre-production work, even though he lives hundreds of miles away.

Good luck staying on schedule with that method of operation, and what about Bill Murray saying you have to be able to die over and over again to be a comedian? What about *improv*?

Then I had a young-fart-friend, with meager experience (although a graduate of a good film school with lots of desire and good creative sensibilities) tell me he wouldn't work on the project for (mostly) deferred compensation unless I *story boarded* first (for a film about three people talking in a car!)

Read what negative stuff Werner Herzog and John Ford (four Academy Awards for Directing) and other famous film makers have to say about story boarding—and what about “Nashville,” and French New Wave?

Story boards can be scratched out on the set when the script isn't descriptive enough, along with the required prior discussion, to argue and agree on the correct blocking. And with cheap devices and digital editing you can deliver multiple takes economically, and provide different edits for consideration, easily, too.

But you have to be open to magic that you didn't expect or look for.

I don't have the money or time to storyboard a 300-shot script; that's a deal breaker for an ultra-low-budget production.

Then I had a middle-aged-fart with lots of experience in theater and film unable to commit for months for an important role (pending financing and scheduling) too, effectively holding the project up for ransom.

Heck, some curmudgeons never returned my calls.

However, most of the reason to seek participation from creative friends in phase one has

been to let them know I'm still alive and still have creative ambitions, and I've done that, quite effectively, our website visitation and the fact that Academy Award recipients return my calls proves that.

So, like I say, we're moving on, just like we *expected* to.

I'm going to wax and wane now ("Wax on, wax off?") with some old memories working for Lucasfilm, Ltd., the ones that started us down this road of perdition, and describe in detail some of my fundamental beliefs about film making and art.

I'm going to drop some names--not many--completely appreciatively, and describe the real benefits of performance and creative work, and the influence many of those people have had on choices made, and why we know what we're doing, and why "The Silver Splitter," is right on schedule.

I knew early on I wanted to be a writer. In fact, after reading Dylan Thomas' "Lament," there was no turning back; that's how I wanted my life to be.

Though I was always skeptical of fame and *big* money. Some of my experiences at Lucasfilm confirmed that.

When I got an interview with George and Marsha Lucas at their San Anselmo home in 1980, for Resident Caretaker of Skywalker Ranch from the offices of a friend, Charlie Kuhn (a good friend of my family and the man who gave me my first job), I jumped at it.

Charlie had refurbished Parkway House in San Anselmo (the town where I was raised, after being born a day before in San Francisco) for George and Marcia and had also started building Skywalker Ranch. I believe their main connection was that Charlie's father was a well-known property master for the Hollywood studios.

And George and Marcia Lucas were so gracious, and spent hours talking with me, and I got the job. I was working for the Boy Scouts of America as Resident Ranger of 2,500 acre Camp Tamarancho in Fairfax, California at the time, which was a much bigger facility, then.

After about a year living on the ranch while it transitioned to an administrative facility and the first studios were being built, I was transferred to George's original (northern) administrative facility in San Rafael on Kerner Blvd: Five buildings, from A to D.

D Building was Industrial Light and Magic.

C Building was the computer division, which became Pixar. I started performing security and housekeeping services for all the buildings for General Services.

And because I had earned George's trust, I had the keys to everything, even the art room, where Joe Johnston and other famous artists and film makers story boarded George's future.

And let's get one thing straight: there's only ever been one filmmaker at Lucasfilm Ltd. They told me that when they *hired* me.

So, of course, I immediately started making a film, "Clues." And I learned what I was doing by watching what was going on in the studios.

And although I didn't abuse the opportunity, I often spent significant time peering at story boards. And I would inspect a new story board and watch that shot being shot later, down in the studios, and the models and mattes being constructed they would shoot them with, and I would see those shots as they were edited, and star fields and cloud-chamber effects being added, etc.

Then later I would see those shots in the movie, after release. They used to throw those story boards away, until too many people were dumpster diving behind D Building, and they started shredding them.

I still have a few.

I'm sure he won't remember this, but I once ran a vacuum cleaner into Michael Pangrazio's foot while he was finishing one of the most famous matte paintings in history. I said "Oops, sorry." and he said, "No problem, Chris," and went back to touching up the painting of the warehouse where the Arc of the Covenant is being stored at the end of "Raiders of the Lost Ark."

I used to stare at that and other paintings for a long time, too. In the best room in ILM, way back in the back, where no one ever went after work hours.

Even better, while I was living on Skywalker Ranch, Hal Barwood and Mathew Robbins had an office in the ranch guesthouse in the Farm Group, and they had a script library. They were filming *Dragonslayer* in San Rafael and other locations I provided security for. Late at night after everyone was gone, I used to read their scripts.

One was a first draft of a screenplay by Melissa Matheson of a movie titled "E.T." Another one was a shooting script of "E.T.," dated exactly six months later. And when George premiered that movie to his employees the day before its release, and bought us

all a lavish party afterward at The Cannery in San Francisco, what I saw onscreen was exactly what Melissa had written.

I realized then that a good writer could imagine a movie completely before it was shot. Alfred Hitchcock was famous for that, too, and he was famous for drawing his own storyboards.

And even though some people can *improv* their way through a movie like Bill Murray (I learned that from Harold Ramis at a screenwriter's class sponsored by the Mill Valley Film Festival), most people he directed are like Rodney Dangerfield, who want it completely thought out and scripted, first, before they can rehearse it. So, there's room for improv, but starting out, you have to have a good script.

It's *required* to make a first feature, and although it's taken me a long time to be confident in my writing, I am now.

I can write a good script in a week. And probably because I haven't been *successful* yet, I've never had writer's block and have a good +/- 10 story projects I will be finishing in the future. It's said to become really successful, you need a *slate* of films.

I own a big slate.

I also got to watch Ben Burt and Gary Summers mix the audio for the scene at the end of "Raiders" when bolts of lightning shoot through all the Nazis, in their studio in San Anselmo. I understand studio sound quite well. And I cleaned and provided security for the studio where Carole Ballard was editing "Never Cry Wolf." It was littered with scripts, story boards, editing equipment and edits etc.

But here's a couple of things I learned about fame and success: George would often get out of a hot Ferrari, sweating, when he pulled into the Farm Group, at the end of a short drive after eating lunch in Fairfax. I asked him why he didn't just leave his windows down when he parked for lunch? He told me if he left his window open even a crack, people would drop scripts in his car.

Then there was the day I was patrolling the construction sites and drove down to the newly installed front gate, opened it from my truck, and found a strange scene: a woman, a neighbor, standing across Lucas Valley Road and staring into the ranch. There was a prayer rug, a lit candle, a bottle of wild flowers and a bible opened to a particular underlined passage (forget what it was) lying there next to the gate.

I asked her if she knew who had left it there, and she said "Yeah, the naked guy who just ran into the Ranch."

I never found him, although I reported it to Marin County COM, and searched diligently.

Here's an even better story: I once drove Michael Jackson and (I believe) two of his brothers around Skywalker Ranch for a couple of hours, showing them everything.

Michael was collaborating with George on Captian EO, and arrived for the next day's 4th of July party.

George introduced us in the Farm Group, (although I was so awestruck meeting Michael I forget the other men's names) and we hopped into Eric Weston's Land Cruiser and I took off, and drove a couple of hundred yards down the dirt road to where bulldozers were scraping out a large building pad. I stopped, turned to Michael and said,

“See those bulldozers, Michael? That's where they're going to build the research building, which will drive the transition from analog to digital film-making.”

The man sitting next to Michael, who was sitting on the rear bench seat on my side of the car, turned to Michael and said, “See those bulldozers, Michael? That's where they're going to build the research building, which will drive the transition from analog to digital film-making.”

Michael turned to him and asked “When will it be done?” The man turned to me and asked, “When will it be done?” I told him “2001.” He turned to Michael and said, “2001.” Micheal turned to him and said “Wow, and he turned to me and said, “Wow.”

That's how protected Michael Jackson was; I felt sorry for him, when I realized that he needed that kind of insulation to protect him from his rabid fans, and how natural it was for me, it felt, communicating with him that way. For over two hours I had a conversation with Michael Jackson, sitting 4 feet away, without ever once addressing him personally.

But working at Lucasfilm for nearly four years I also got a crash course in how to make a film you can't get anywhere else in the world, for love or money, and they paid me well (mostly in one-sheets and T shirts), to get that education, too.

And when I finally bought a house 6 years ago intended to give me the stability to finish pre-production and seek the funding to produce “The Silver Splitter,” the first step I took was connecting with people I had known at Lucasfilm Ltd, and had helped me on “Clues,” my first (and so far only) film. There's 20-Odd Academy Awards in those credits.

I was wondering if anyone would remember me.

One of the first people I contacted was Bill Kimberlin, who cut the negative for “Clues” and was supervising editor at ILM for 20 years.

Remember me? He had put me in his book, the definitive tome on ILM, “Inside The Star Wars Empire, A Memoir.” I’m on pages 14-15, and if you buy one and read it, on page 15 Jane Bay (before working for George, Governor Jerry Brown’s assistant) actually said “Larry,” not “Lawrence.”

You can order one on Amazon, and it was just released in paperback, although I believe you can still get autographed hard copies from the bookstore in Mendocino that Bill prefers you patronize.

The first building built on the ranch was the Farm Group barn 50 feet away from the refurbished bunk house I lived in while resident caretaker. And the first production person I ever met on the Ranch was Dennie Thorpe, who recorded “foley.” I had never heard the word before meeting her, but her job was to recreate sounds that weren’t usable when the originally action was recorded with an analog field recorder, usually a Nagra, industry standard at the time.

In “Dragonslayer,” there’s a scene where several knights in armor (if I recall correctly) clamber down a flight of interior steps in a castle.

Problem was, the sound recordist didn’t notice there were cows mooing in the background, outside.

Mooing cows isn’t the correct ambiance for knights running through a castle to save a damsel (or anyone else) in distress. So, because its easy to ADD sounds to a soundtrack, but (at that time) nigh impossible to take sounds out, they had to re-record the entire segment.

And re-recording their footsteps, drawing their swords, etc. is called foley.

What Dennie did was sprinkle sand and other materials onto the cement barn floor, and put on different types of shoes, and watching a video of the knights running down the steps, mimic their footsteps by recording hers on the barn floor in sync. And she did her best to make her footsteps sound like theirs should have sounded like, sans cows, to give to the editor to cut in.

I remember she let me record a couple of footsteps, too, although I can’t tell if what’s in the finished film is me, or not.

Just as important, Howie Hammerman and Gary Summers in the sound department lent me a couple of microphones and a Nagra to use as a field recorder when I shot "Clues," too. However, the Nagra sat in a corner of the stage, never used, because I didn't have the time to show anyone else how to operate it, and I was shooting 16mm film on one of COM's Bolexes. But I recorded foley on it later, in the theater in C building with Craig Good, my sound designer, who also worked for General Services.

And after consultation with Craig I used the Nagra to record voices for ADR, or Automated Dialog Replacement, which is actually how most film soundtracks are recorded, anyway, and how I had to make "Clues," because I didn't get to record any field sound. Who would'a thought?

So, there's not a lot of mystery remaining to me about how to make a feature film, but of course, I'm open to suggestion, and always will be, and will treat my cast and crew with all the respect in the world for their advice, but when the creative buck stops, now and forever, it will always stop with me.

Enjoy!

January, 2019

We're giving *in* (a little bit) but not up.

We've missed the rain for principal photography for "The Silver Splitter," which will be gone by April, and we want that bad weather for our look, so we're not going to make the Mill Valley Film Festival for 2019.

(Except, heck, we could fund for another 50k and still shoot somewhere like *Idaho*, depending on the weather.)

However, if we cast and shoot by the end of this year/beginning of next, we could make San Francisco, or even Cannes, before Mill Valley in 2020. Then there's Sundance after that.

And we have to finish "The Seal of Kunduon" and redo our recordings now that we have a studio--and finish the full-length script, too--so we're going to slow down a little bit and have a little more fun doing this.

Which is, really, the only reason to be working this hard!

We've also realized we use *way too many* exclamation marks, and this could put off serious investors, but at our age, we feel blessed that we can get this excited about

anything.

Enjoy!

November, 2018

We're not afraid of being men at Musser Communications; neither are we afraid of listening to intelligent women so that we can understand their concerns and treat them (and ourselves) better.

We're doing our best to do that by reading a number of scholarly articles by female authors. Two of the best are a Daily Beast article by Maria Dalvana Headley, "Him Too? How Arthur Miller Smearred Marilyn Monroe and Invented the Myth of the Male Witch Hunt:" <https://www.thedailybeast.com/him-too-how-arthur-miller-smearred-marilyn-monroe-and-invented-the-myth-of-the-male-witch-hunt?ref=scroll?ref=home>, and Sarah Nicholson's "The problem of Woman as Hero in the work of Joseph Campbell:" <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0966735010384331>.

Great reading, men!

October, 2018

Here's a better version of "Clues," the one we always wanted to make.

We rushed the first digital, YouTube version to show a director, although, since then, we've managed to find all of the missing sound effects, another page of credits (!), an important clue: "Rene drove Kevin downtown to pick up his car, that meant they *both* had alibis," and fixed most of the sync, a problem exacerbated by combining tracks when it was digitized.

After spending a lot of time learning Lightworks v. 14, we've integrated everything into the film, and we're now confident we can put "The Silver Splitter" in the can a month after PP.

We hope you like this version, which will be "final," until we have the money to restore the negative.

Enjoy!

July, 2018

Reality check:

I recently contacted an old friend of mine, a terrific artist, and asked him if he would like to be involved in making "The Silver Splitter." His response, although not completely unexpected, was a little disheartening. He declined, and couldn't do that without telling me he thought what I was doing was *so sad*. And although he didn't qualify this any further, I believe he meant the prospect of a man of my age (68) enlisting the help of other old farts to pursue a young man's (and since Katherine Bigelo, woman's) game was embarrassing and fated to fail.

But last year was my 50th High School Reunion, and some of the people I contacted seemed older than me, and quite "retired," as in "nothing more to do in life." However, I still feel like I'm an 18-year-old sometimes, working hard around my house and property every day of my life, after a life spent in swimming, martial arts and other athletics. In fact, I'm busier, physically, than I ever have been.

And I don't have children; it sounds to me like maybe he's trying to live now through his, something my parents did that I often resented. My mother and father lived into their late 80's, and were both very active until just a few months before their deaths.

So, what should I do? Should I just roll over and give everything up because I'm "retired?"

Hell no; that's not what I think anyone should do when they age. Life is better when you're older, and I consider "quitting winners," an everyday process. I have asked the good Lord to let me work until I'm 100, so there's still a chance I can move this wonderful world with my thoughts and ideas. I won't stop trying until I do.

"The Silver Splitter" has evolved into a discussion of the role of men and women, and sexual harrassment (after all, Jessup is a rapist, n'est-ce pas?) And he has adopted the role of a "conservative," for his ruse, while Susan and Harvey are "liberals," (and all profess to be Christians) and we're attempting to further the discussion entertainingly, which is needed now.

Their interactions in the car, and in a long restaurant scene when they stop to eat and dance to a "country" jukebox, will contrast attitudes from the coasts with attitudes of people from the heartland, and we're trying to do that in the context of inspecting, and

respecting, their freedoms and beliefs.

So yeah, we're not slowing down.

The project has progressed to the point where we're seeking financing, and I'll attempt to contact people from my present, and past, for their interest and advice. So if I call, or message you, or friend you on Facebook, or pin you to Pinterest, etc., feel free to reply, or not.

Full speed ahead!

Enjoy,

Chris

November, 2017

It's passed by in a flash, but I need to reminice on the long, long, long, long, long, long, long (as Harrison Ford would say) path to getting "Clues," from it's first day filming in 1980, up on Youtube.com this past October.

This is important to me so, still having ambitions in popular media, and working in a collaborative medium, I can figure out why the process didn't go the way I first imagined it, especially why the hell it took so long to "finish."

I think to myself, "If you were so proud of your friends' time, talent and participation, and the opportunities available to you, including "Clues" appearance in the 1984 Mill Valley film Festival, why the hell did it take until 2017 (but who's counting, right . . .) to distribute it?" That's right, thirty-seven years.

I realize now that's wholly because I didn't know what I was doing, because I was just starting out. Everyone else involved were already accomplished starving artists, and did their jobs quite professionally from the first day on.

Ninety percent of "Clues" was shot in one, long, first day in the College of Marin's Fine Arts Center. It was supposed to be a plus-or-minus \$1,500, 1 or 2 semester production for Judy Gartman's 1980 Filmmaking Class. I enrolled soon after I was hired as Resident Caretaker of Skywalker Ranch on July 1, 1980, by Lucasfilm, Ltd. Like most people, I loved movies and saw a great opportunity; and "Clues" quickly mushroomed into a commercial, 20 minute, 3-year project to get to an "answer print" that was shown in the 1984 Mill Valley Film Festival. I had spent by then about \$10,000 in cash, and received

what I consider another \$10,000 in friends' in-kind performance and technical donations, too.

But I didn't like the film, it wasn't "fun" to watch, and it took me years to realize what was wrong: I had completely overwritten it.

I had created Maxwell Diggs as a jealous ex-dancer who couldn't stop talking, and I had told myself for years that it "fit," because the character was homicidal, nervous and guilty. but I didn't know enough to create the pauses in the dialog for the viewers to appreciate it. Especially when you consider all the visually georgeous stuff my friends, and their friends, had created in just a few days of shooting, volunteer.

Cut out most of the "yakking," Chris, I thought, and you'll like it. Watch the screen, it's a movie!

Then I met a beautiful woman (I know, excuses, excuses) and we got married. We lived together happily for most of 12 years and I found I had other priorities in life, including keeping my job, her children and family, attending church and singing in the choir, working around the house, etc.

Still, over time I re-wrote the VO (voice over) and stayed in contact with TA Garsva, the narrator (and cameraman, drummer, etc.) for CLUES.

After divorcing in 2010, one of the very first things I *did* accomplish was to drive from Middletown to Petaluma, where TA recorded my rewritten naration in his garage, in two days, and that's what's in the film now, and much of it is very different from the "original" version that played in the Mill Valley Film Festival in 1984. Redoing the narration was also an opportunity for me to share a couple of beers with TA for a couple of evenings and talk about old times, too.

But soon after that, TA passed, completely unexpectedly. I'd never noticed anything wrong, either. We'd already lost John Theroux ("Rene") many years before. I can remember it was on a strole around Skywalker Ranch on a summer's evening in 1980 with John that we came up with the idea for "Falling," too.

I first met TA when he was eight years old, slamming away on his trap set in the basement of his parents' home in Novato, across the street from my girlfriend's house. I dated his sister, Sue, in high school. I miss him, terribly, some times.

But even now, I gag watching the first version of "Clues." I had VHS tapes made from my answer print, originally. Remember, this was Way Back Before Digital. And I finally got my last VHS copy duped to digital at Walmart a few months ago, so I can line it up

in my editor, and flip from one version to the other, or even intercut them, easily. I continue to like the new version a whole lot more, and find people like watching it better than the original version, and feel more entertained by it, too. I believe it's 10 times the film the MVFF version was, even as rough as it is, now.

And yeah, that, "Way Back Before Digital" thing? That's something else that used to cost people an awful lot of time and treasure, and almost scared me off of popular media entirely. Because there wasn't any digital film editing back in 1980, and I wanted to work on an industry-standard editing machine. So, I drove, several times a month on average, for two years, to Film Arts Foundation south of Market St. in San Francisco, because you could use their 16mm flatbeds for free from Midnight until 8 am. And that process took me two long years because I didn't know what I was doing as an editor, either.

For TWO FREAKING YEARS I drove from Novato to San Francisco, to park in an unlit parking lot, walk three blocks past peep shows, prostitutes and fights in bars to let myself in to FAF, and lock myself into one of their editing rooms.

BTW kids, back in 1980 you edited a film by cutting a 16mm print carefully, with scissors or a razor blade, matching it to another piece of film, and pasting it together with little acetate tabs and special glue after cleaning it with alcohol, and hoped that it wouldn't come apart the next time you viewed the edit, running it through the flat bed. You'd get high from the chemicals, too. (I actually thought that was one of the benefits--ask a Lucasfilm model-maker about that!)

Finally, a few months ago, because my life has finally settled down enough, I found the time to investigate digital editing options, and free software, Lightworks, on the Internet. Even though I'd never seen it before, I edited the "new" version of CLUES with TA's six-year-old "new" dialog, in three weeks, sitting on a comfy couch, watching it on my big-screen, listening to it on a great sound system, in boxer shorts, drinking a beer.

We're going to continue to create entertaining popular media at Musser Communications. We'll be re-writing "The Silver Splitter" for feature length, (so it can sell as a feature and qualify for awards, etc.) as soon as I can put another small team together, and along with their input. We're going to shoot it in the winter of 2018, and it will be "finished" and ready for distribution a month after that.

Best Regards,

Chris

P.S. As time allows I'm also going to search for missing original content in my CLUES

AB-to-digital dupes, such as sound effects, etc. and add them to the film while improving the sync, too. I think I'll be working on "Clues" for the rest of my life. I have the original AB rolls in a fire-proof safe and the original sound track recordings, Nagra recorded sound effects and background sounds, etc. and some day, I hope to be able to afford to have the film timed properly, cleaned, and rescanned, and then "Clues" will really shine!

P.P.S. MTV started after CLUES did in 1980, too. With that in mind, I'm quite proud of our one-of-the-very-first-ever completely original music videos, written in just a few hours, shot in just a few hours, and recorded in just a few hours more. What do you think?

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