

DOX 92: THE MORE THEY KNOW

SATIRE: A listing of commissioning editor archetypes By **Boris Mitić**

After profiling species of documentary filmmakers, let's turn now to the bright side of the pitch floor: the commissioning editors. Their appreciation or lack thereof can often make or break your career, but don't be mistaken -- despite their pack mentality, safe-buy policy, audimat paranoia, editorial directives, trendiness imperative, complexity aversion, fragile egos, notorious elusiveness, quasi-chronic impotence and obsessive gossiping about your cool ethno prêt-à-porter, they almost certainly do love documentary films.



COMMISSIONING EDITOR ARCHETYPES

Counterclockwise: the Alpha-Male, the Beta-Guarantor, the Follower, the Dissident, the Structuralist, the Ombudsman, the Petty Pre-Buyer, the MEDIA Fertilizer, the Aspiring Assistant, the Austere Sweetheart, the Sterile Smiley, the Silent Sleeper, the Smartass Chronovore, the Funambulist, the NotForMySlot Consultant, the Cross-Platform Sinequanonist

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THE ALPHA MALE: i.e. the voice of god. Whatever s/he says, all others imperatively abide to or chose not to challenge, at least not in public.

THE BETA GUARANTORS: Not as influential as alpha males, but championing highly regarded opinions. Might not bring a lot of money into a project, but can help it considerably by investing personal credibility.

THE FOLLOWERS: acquiesce any way the wind blows.

THE DISSIDENTS: speak out against the flow.

THE STRUCTURALISTS: always ask about the structure of your film.

THE OMBUDSMEN: paranoically worry about their audience. Will they understand and how does this relate to them.

THE PETTY PRE-BUYERS: pre-buy a lot, albeit for low money. But sometimes, if they come from countries that recently joined the EU, they can upgrade to become...

MEDIA FERTILIZERS: Good to have on board, not for cash, but for the top funding they can help bring in thanks to their specific weight in terms of MEDIA fundraising 'points'.

THE ASPIRING ASSISTANTS: get sent in when their bosses get bored of coming year after year to the same industry event. Good to know because they will ultimately replace their bosses one day, at which point you will be 'old friends'.

THE AUSTERE SWEETHEARTS: always sport a dead cold face, but actually very nice and compassionate vis-à-vis both filmmakers and characters in their films.

THE STERILE SMILEYS: Quite the opposite. Always smiling, never delivering.

THE SILENT SLEEPERS: You never know if they are silent because they are dozing, or because, in the new terrorist terminology, they are sleepers who keep quiet until some explosive surprise comment.

THE SMARTASS CHRONOVORES: eat up precious time off of your post-pitch Q & A by trying to be smart or funny in front of their colleagues, with comments often unrelated to your film or pitch.

THE NOTFORMYSLOT CONSULTANTS: comment enthusiastically on the project, then end with a castrating "but it's not for my slot". Sometimes helpful in advising, though.

THE CROSS-PLATFORM SINEQUANONANISTS: trendily condition any financing with the delivery of interactive, online, multimedia versions of the film, however meaningless.

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IN THE NEXT EDITION: Crew member archetypes.