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# Let's Make a Movie!

by David Gordon Green & Onur Tükel

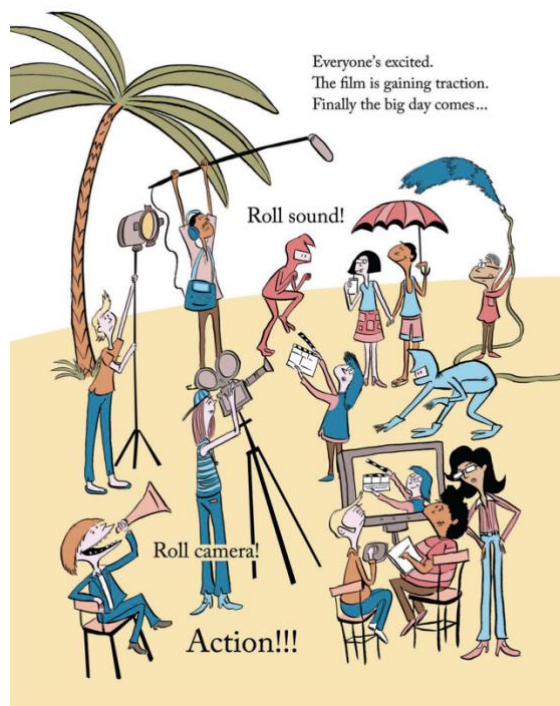


From Sidney Lumet's classic *Making Movies* to Robert Rodriguez's entertaining *Rebel Without a Crew* to Steven Ascher's seminal *The Filmmaker's Handbook*, there are a slew of important books about moviemaking that have inspired and informed generations of budding filmmakers. To this select list of titles familiar to all serious fans of films and filmmaking, David Gordon Green and Onur Tükel

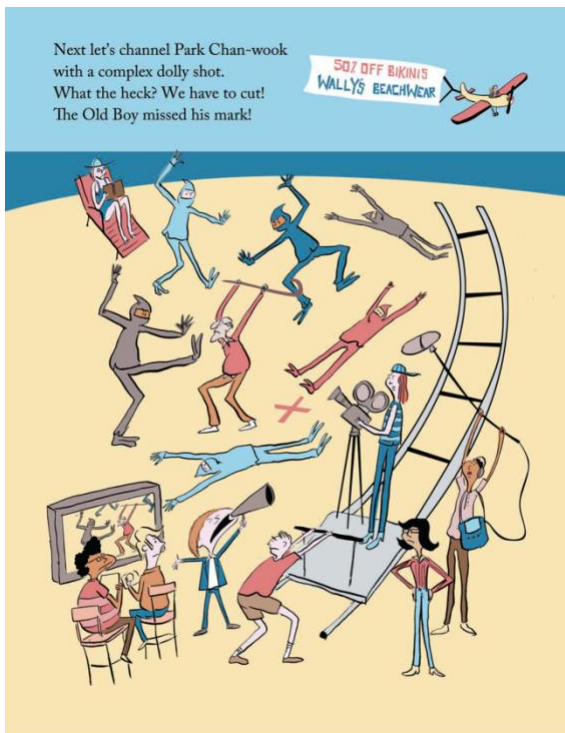
offer a fresh take on the genre with *Let's Make a Movie!*, an illustrated children's book about moviemaking written for today's youngest generation.

"As an aspiring filmmaker, perhaps nothing educated me more about the highs and lows of making a movie than the many books I read on the subject by working filmmakers," says Green, known today as much for his celebrated low-budget independent projects as the studio-level franchises he helms. "But all of those books are written for an older audience. We thought it'd be fun to introduce the process of filmmaking to a much younger audience, to the adventure of making a movie, which can sometimes be as dramatic, thrilling, and entertaining as any crowd pleaser—or any beloved bedtime book."

"When I first got into making movies, the only reliable sources of information I had were those many dog-eared filmmaking books I read and re-read," echoes Tukel, whose films have played at festivals like Tribeca and on services like Netflix, and who has previously written and illustrated two children's books. "In talking with David, we wanted to give younger kids a taste of the filmmaking experience in a fun and engaging way—in a way their parents would also be able to enjoy. To really tell the story within the story."



Following a group of young intrepid filmmakers as they set out to make an independent movie titled *The Ninjas Fight the Killer Sharks at Bikini Beach*, the plotting of the book reflects the challenges filmmakers will experience in any genre. “We had a lot of fun developing the idea of the movie within the book,”

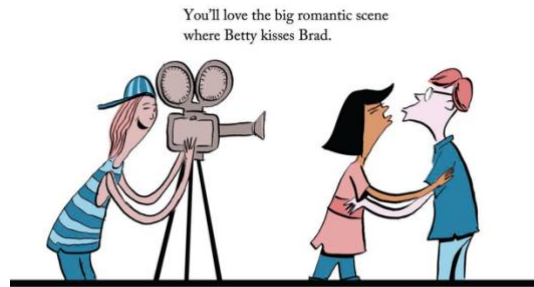


Green says. “It might not necessarily be a movie I’d choose to shoot myself, but this campy mash-up of genres allowed us to touch on multiple aspects of filmmaking that you might not get in a straight drama or comedy.” This includes a special focus on often all-important special effects and stunts, which Green has learned to master while shooting the three installments of his *Halloween* trilogy.

“I’d definitely shoot the movie in our book,” says Tukul, half-jokingly. His early films include a vampire movie shot on a shoestring budget that was released by Troma, and he previously teamed up with Green to create an illustrated children’s book–style adaptation of the original *Halloween*. Recalling his early experiences in film, Tukul says he and Green made an effort to introduce budgetary obstacles for their aspiring Spielbergs to overcome. “This is a universal issue for every film and filmmaker,” he notes, “but the thing to realize is that there’s always a creative solution to whatever constraint or unexpected

problem that arises. The key is to not give up. This is an especially important lesson that goes well beyond filmmaking.” Today, both Green and Tukul take pride in what they were able to accomplish in their early movies with so little. Green’s first feature film cost \$42,000, and Tukul’s cost \$10,000. “With today’s technology, I could have probably shot it for \$1,000,” notes Tukul with a grin.

“You’ll often hear that it’s a miracle any movie ever gets made,” Green says, “but that’s only half-true. The fact is, it also requires a tremendous amount of energy and input from everyone involved.



It takes a fully coordinated team effort, which means problem-solving and resolving conflicts. This is all reflected in the story, which gives a taste of the important work and cooperation needed



across all departments, from accounting to wardrobe.” Adds Tukul, “Speaking for myself, the reward of filmmaking is often as much in the process and the experience as in the finished product. And that’s true for any creative project I’ve ever been a part of, including *Let’s Make a Movie!*”

“I had a blast working with Onur on this,” says Green. “The bar is obviously quite high when it comes to illustrated kid’s books. We wanted to create something that was both unique and that wouldn’t be completely out of place on a bookshelf or nightstand next to the classics, the works we all know



We've burned through all the film and we're completely out of money.



and love from Shel Silverstein and Dr. Seuss and Beatrix Potter.” Adds Tukul, “There’s a lot to consider and get right, from working out the story and figuring out the best rhymes and rhythm to creating something that people of all ages can enjoy, whether a young child who can’t yet read, a film student or fan who wants a fun collectible, or even a parent, who will in most cases be doing the actual reading.”

“That was a key issue for us when designing the book,” adds Green. “We wanted a story and illustrations that kids would enjoy and understand, but as a parent, I know what it’s like to read the same book over, and over, and over. We wanted to give the moms and dads something they’d enjoy too, like a Pixar movie. This means many of the jokes and situations are as much for them as for the kids, who’ll get the broad strokes and will have plenty to explore with their eyes but who likely won’t pick up on a lot of the nuance and detail.” Says Tukul, “We intentionally introduced a lot of Easter eggs into the book. This includes references to filmmakers who might not be on the radar of your typical five-year-old, such as Ed Wood and Park Chan-wook.”

Although Green and Tukul want the book to entertain readers of all ages, they also hope to inform and inspire kids in an artform and profession that has

given them both so much. “There’s a great line from Roger Ebert’s *New York Times* book review of Lumet’s *Making Movies*. Ebert wrote, ‘I am sometimes asked if there is one book a filmgoer could read to learn more about how movies are made and what to look for while watching them. This is the book.’ I’m not saying we’re getting anywhere near that bar with our book, but that’s my overall hope with it—to give kids a sense of what goes into the movies they’re just starting to watch and love, and to maybe get them to consider the endless possibilities.”



“That’s really the key,” says Tukul, concurring. “In the end, David and I are film fans. To some degree, we’re thinking about our future selves as moviegoers. We’re not looking to spoil the magic—we’re looking to inspire more magic.”

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### About the Authors

David Gordon Green wrote and directed his first feature film *George Washington* for a budget of \$42K. It won the New York Film Critics’ Circle award for best first feature before going on to win festival awards internationally. His other films include *All the Real Girls*, *Pineapple Express*, *Joe*, *Stronger*, and the reboot of the *Halloween* franchise.

Onur Tukul wrote and directed his first feature film *House of Pancakes* for \$10K. He went on to direct the low-budget movies *Ding-a-ling-LESS*, *Catfight*, *Summer of Blood*, *Applesauce*, *Black Magic for White Boys*, *Scenes from an Empty Church*, and *That Cold Dead Look in Your Eyes*. His previous children's books include *Little Friends* and *Rainstack!*

*Let's Make a Movie!*

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