



# THE FILM PRODUCTION POND

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*User Manual*

Version 1.0 — April 2026  
Offline.Ltd

*"No cloud. No nonsense. Just tools."*

Screen edition (dark)

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## Introduction

The Film Production Pond is an offline-first production analysis tool for filmmakers. Eleven interconnected tabs model a production from script concept through to distribution and ROI. Change one number — your budget, your shooting days, your crew size — and every downstream calculation updates instantly.

Think of it as throwing a stone into a pond. Your total budget is the stone. The schedule, crew rates, and equipment costs are the first ripple. Cash Flow is where the ripples converge. Distribution and ROI are the waves that reach the shore. And the Decision Log closes the loop — informing your next production.

Everything runs in your browser. No server, no account, no internet connection required. Your data never leaves your machine.

## The Ripple Effect

*Every tab feeds downstream. Here is how data flows through the system:*

Source	Feeds into	What flows
Script & Concept	Budget, Schedule, All tabs	Total budget, shoot days, contingency
Budget	Cash Flow, Dashboard	Department allocations
Schedule	Crew, Equipment, Cash Flow	Shooting days, total timeline
Locations & Permits	Cash Flow, Dashboard	Location costs, permits, travel
Crew & Talent	Cash Flow, Dashboard	Total labour costs
Equipment	Cash Flow, Dashboard	Total equipment costs
Post-Production	Cash Flow, Dashboard	Post costs by category
Cash Flow	Distribution, Dashboard	Total spend, budget remaining
All tabs	Dashboard, Decision Log	Health metrics, auto-fill

### ▮ THE POND METAPHOR

The interconnection is the product. Traditional production budgets work in isolation — one spreadsheet for crew, another for equipment, a third for post. The Pond lets you pull a lever on any tab and see all the dials move at once.

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## Quick Start

1. Open **The\_Film\_Production\_Pond.html** in any modern browser.
2. **Script & Concept tab** — enter the total budget, format, genre, and shooting days. This is the stone.
3. **Budget tab** — allocate funds by department: Above the Line, Production, Post-Production, Other.
4. **Schedule tab** — set pre-production weeks, shooting days, and post-production weeks. Add phases.
5. **Locations tab** — add each shooting location with daily fees, permit costs, and travel.
6. **Crew & Talent tab** — add crew and cast with daily or weekly rates and working days.
7. **Equipment tab** — add camera, lighting, grip, and sound packages with rental rates.
8. **Post-Production tab** — add editing, VFX, sound, colour, music, and deliverables.
9. **Cash Flow tab** — see your total spend vs budget. Green means under budget. Red means over.
10. **Dashboard tab** — check health badges. Click the **Oracle** button for sensitivity analysis.
11. **Distribution tab** — model revenue streams and ROI scenarios.
12. **Decision Log tab** — record your greenlight, hold, wrap, or kill decision. Click Auto-fill to capture current metrics.
13. **Files tab** — export your state as a JSON file. Keep it alongside the HTML file.

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## The Tabs

### Script & Concept

*The stone you throw in.*

Enter the project title, total budget, format (feature, short, documentary, TV pilot, web series, music video, or commercial), genre, runtime in minutes, planned shooting days, and contingency percentage.

The total budget is the most important number — it ripples into every other tab, setting the scale for crew rates, equipment choices, location ambitions, and post-production scope. The contingency percentage (industry standard 10–15%) is applied on top of all costs to cover overruns, weather delays, and reshoots.

The stat cards show total budget, contingency amount, cost per minute of runtime, and budget per shooting day.

### Budget Breakdown

*Where the money goes.*

Break your total budget into department allocations with categorised line items. Four categories are available: Above the Line (producers, director, writers, lead cast), Production (staff, art, catering, transport), Post-Production, and Other (insurance, legal, festival fees).

The system shows allocated vs unallocated budget in real time, with a visual bar chart showing how much of your total budget is committed. Category subtotals help you check whether your Above the Line costs are proportionate — a common rule of thumb is ATL should be 20–30% of budget for independent productions.

#### ▣ THE BUDGET BAR

The bar chart at the bottom of the Budget tab fills from left to right as you allocate. Green means under 90% allocated, amber means 90–100%, and red means over budget. Watch it as you add departments — it is your early warning system.

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## Shooting Schedule

*Time is money. Literally.*

Set the pre-production period (in weeks), principal photography (in shooting days, auto-populated from the Script tab), and post-production period (in weeks). Add a start date and hours per shooting day to calculate total shoot hours.

Below the summary, add custom schedule phases — each with a name, number of days, and type (Pre-Production, Production, or Post-Production). Phases help you track specific milestones: rehearsals, location blocks, pick-up days, assembly edits, and delivery deadlines.

The total timeline is calculated in weeks: pre-production + shooting weeks (days ÷ 5) + post-production. Every extra shooting day multiplies crew daily rates, equipment rental, catering, and location costs — one additional day can add thousands to your budget.

### ▮ SCHEDULE DISCIPLINE

A shooting day costs more than you think. Multiply your crew headcount by average daily rate, add equipment, catering, and location fees. That is your burn rate. If it is \$8,000/day and you add 2 days, that is \$16,000 — plus contingency on top. The Schedule tab makes this visible.

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## Locations & Permits

*Where you shoot matters.*

Add each shooting location with its name, daily fee, number of days at that location, permit fees, and travel costs. The system calculates total cost per location and shows aggregate location spending as a percentage of budget.

Location costs feed directly into Cash Flow. They include location fees (daily rate × days), permit fees (film commission permits, council permits, private property agreements), and travel (fuel, parking, unit base transport).

For multi-location shoots, the Locations tab becomes essential for tracking which locations are eating most of your budget. The Dashboard and Oracle flag when location costs exceed 15% of budget — a common threshold for independent productions.

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## Crew & Talent

*The people who make it happen.*

Add crew and cast members with their name, role category (Camera, Lighting, Sound, Art, Production, Cast, Post, Other), rate type (daily or weekly), rate amount, and number of working days. Weekly rates are automatically converted to total cost based on 5-day weeks.

The stat cards show total crew and talent cost, a crew-only subtotal (excluding cast), a cast/talent subtotal, the percentage of budget consumed by labour, and the total headcount. Crew is typically 30–50% of an independent production budget.

The role categories help you see where labour costs are concentrated. If your Camera department is 40% of your crew budget, that might be justified for a visually ambitious project — or it might mean you are overspending on one department at the expense of others.

### ▮ RATE TYPES

Daily rates work for most production crew (DP, gaffer, sound, ADs). Weekly rates suit longer engagements where a flat week rate is negotiated — common for production designers, editors, and post staff. The system handles both: daily rates multiply by days, weekly rates multiply by weeks (days ÷ 5, rounded up).

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## Equipment

*Tools of the trade.*

Track camera packages, lighting kits, grip and rigging, sound gear, and any other equipment. Each item has a name, category (Camera, Lighting, Grip, Sound, Other), daily rental rate, and number of rental days. For purchased items, enter the full cost with 1 day.

The equipment total is shown as a percentage of budget. Equipment is typically 5–12% of a production budget. Below that, category subtotals show where your gear spend is concentrated — Camera is usually the largest, followed by Lighting.

For shoots under 15 days, renting is almost always more cost-effective than buying. The daily rate column multiplied by shooting days gives you the total. Negotiate package deals with rental houses — most will offer weekly rates (typically 3× the daily rate for 7 days) and production discounts.

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## Post-Production

*Where the film is really made.*

Add all post-production costs as categorised line items: Editing, VFX, Sound, Colour, Music, Deliverables, and Other. Each item has a name, category, and flat amount. These costs feed directly into Cash Flow.

Post-production is typically 15–25% of an independent production budget, but this varies significantly by format. A VFX-heavy sci-fi feature might spend 40% in post, while a dialogue-driven drama could manage with 12%. The Oracle checks whether your post budget looks underfunded for your chosen format.

Common line items include: editor fees (flat or weekly), VFX (priced per shot or as a package), sound design and foley, 5.1 or Atmos mixing, colour grading (usually day-rate at a facility), original score or music licensing, DCP and streaming masters, closed captions, and subtitle translations.

### ▣ THE POST TRAP

The most common budgeting mistake in independent film is underfunding post-production. You run out of money during the shoot and "figure post out later." The result is a film that looks and sounds cheap in the last mile. Budget post properly from the start — the Pond makes it visible alongside everything else.

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## Cash Flow

*The convergence point.*

Cash Flow is where all the ripples meet.  $\text{Total Spend} = \text{Budget line items} + \text{Locations} + \text{Crew} + \text{Equipment} + \text{Post-Production}$ .  $\text{Budget Remaining} = \text{Total Budget} - \text{Total Spend}$  (including contingency). This is the number that tells you whether your production is financially viable.

The large-format display is colour-coded: green when more than 15% of budget remains (healthy), amber when 0–15% remains (tight), red when over budget by up to 10% (danger), and pulsing red when more than 10% over budget (critical).

The department breakdown table shows each cost category, its amount, its percentage of total budget, and a cumulative running total. A stacked bar chart visualises the proportions. Use this to spot which department is consuming the most — if Crew is 55% of spend and Post is only 8%, that imbalance is immediately visible.

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## Distribution & ROI

*Will you get your money back?*

Model your revenue expectations across different distribution channels. Each revenue stream has a name, a gross revenue estimate, and a probability percentage. Common streams include: theatrical (limited or wide release), streaming and VOD (platform deals, TVOD, SVOD), international sales (territory-by-territory or package deals), TV licensing, educational distribution, and impact campaign screenings.

Below the revenue streams, set your sales agent or distributor fee (typically 15–35% of gross revenue) and your P&A budget (prints and advertising — the cost of actually getting the film in front of audiences). Net revenue is calculated as gross revenue  $\times$  (1 – distributor fee) – P&A.

The scenario comparison table shows three projections: Conservative (probability-weighted revenue  $\times$  0.6), Base (probability-weighted revenue), and Optimistic (probability-weighted revenue  $\times$  1.5). Each shows net revenue, profit or loss, ROI multiple, and whether the production recoups.

The ROI multiple is your key number: 1.0x means you broke even, 2.0x means investors doubled their money, below 1.0x means a loss. The probability-weighted net revenue uses each stream's probability to calculate a realistic expected value — not the best-case fantasy.

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## Dashboard

*Everything at a glance.*

Five health-check stat cards with traffic-light badges: Budget Used (green if under 85%, amber up to 100%, red if over), Crew-to-Budget Ratio (healthy under 50%, high up to 65%, excessive above), Projected ROI (strong above 1.5x, break-even at 1.0x, loss below), Contingency (safe at 10%+, tight 5–10%, risky below 5%), and Post-to-Budget Ratio (healthy 15–30%, flags if below or above).

Two summary cards show the full cost breakdown (budget lines, crew, equipment, locations, post, and total with contingency) and quick metrics (cost per minute, cost per shoot day, crew headcount, and break-even revenue).

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## Decision Log

*Your production journal.*

Log production decisions with the date, project name, your rationale, and the key numbers at the time of the decision. Four decision types are available, each colour-coded: Greenlight (green — committing to proceed), Hold (amber — pausing for more information), Wrap (blue — production complete), and Kill (red — abandoning the project).

The Auto-fill button populates the key numbers field with current metrics pulled from across all tabs: budget, total spend, percentage spent, budget remaining, estimated ROI, and shooting days. Over time, the Decision Log becomes your production history — invaluable for learning from past choices and tracking how your thinking evolved.

Each entry shows a timestamp, so you can trace the arc of a production from initial greenlight through mid-production holds to final wrap. The rationale field is free-text — use it to record why you made each decision, what data supported it, and what risks you were weighing.

### ■ CLOSE THE LOOP

When you wrap one production, the next project goes back to the Script tab. The Decision Log is the feedback loop that connects the end of one production to the beginning of the next — like a stone thrown from the shore back into the pond.

# The Oracle

*Sensitivity analysis for filmmakers.*

The Oracle is built into the Dashboard tab. Click the Oracle button to reveal two sections: lever analysis and low-hanging fruit.

## SENSITIVITY ANALYSIS

The Oracle models the financial impact of six adjustments to your production:

Lever	What it models	Typical impact
Budget +10%	Increasing the total budget envelope	High — more headroom
Crew costs -10%	Reducing labour through rate negotiation or fewer days	High — crew is often the biggest cost
Revenue +20%	Better distribution performance	High for revenue-dependent projects
Shoot days -2	Tightening the schedule	Moderate to high
Post costs -15%	Reducing post-production scope	Moderate
Distributor fee -5pp	Negotiating a lower sales commission	Moderate

The levers are sorted by impact with proportional colour bars, so the biggest opportunity is always at the top. Click any lever to jump directly to the relevant tab.

## LOW-HANGING FRUIT

Below the levers, the Oracle generates contextual, actionable recommendations based on your specific numbers. These are not generic tips — they reference your actual crew percentage, location spend, contingency level, and post allocation, and include the exact amount you would gain from each adjustment. Each tip links to the tab where you can make the change.

The Oracle analyses conditions including: crew costs above 50% of budget (suggests rate review), locations above 15% (suggests consolidation), post below 10% for features (flags underfunding risk), contingency below 10% (warns of overrun exposure), equipment above 15% (suggests package negotiation), distributor fees above 30% (suggests alternatives), and negative ROI (highlights the single biggest lever).

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## Files & State Management

*Your data is yours.*

Your work is saved automatically in the browser's localStorage. For portability, use the Files tab to export your full state as a JSON file. The file contains all eleven tabs' data and can be imported on any device.

You can also export and import individual tools separately. The session info section shows when your session started, how many tools you have used, and how much localStorage is consumed.

### ▣ THE TWO-FILE SYSTEM

Keep two files together: the HTML tool and your latest state JSON. Email them to yourself, put them on a USB stick, store them in a cloud folder. Open the HTML anywhere, import your state, and you are exactly where you left off.

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## Keyboard Shortcuts

Shortcut	Action
Ctrl/Cmd + 1	Script & Concept tab
Ctrl/Cmd + 2	Budget tab
Ctrl/Cmd + 3	Schedule tab
Ctrl/Cmd + 4	Locations tab
Ctrl/Cmd + 5	Crew & Talent tab
Ctrl/Cmd + 6	Equipment tab
Ctrl/Cmd + 7	Post-Production tab
Ctrl/Cmd + 8	Cash Flow tab
Ctrl/Cmd + 9	Distribution & ROI tab
Ctrl/Cmd + 0	Dashboard tab
Ctrl/Cmd + S	Export full state
Escape	Close modals

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## Glossary

Term	Definition
Above the Line (ATL)	Creative costs negotiated before production: producers, director, writers, lead cast. Typically 20–30% of an indie budget.
Below the Line (BTL)	Technical and craft costs: crew, equipment, locations, catering, transport. The operational backbone of the production.
Burn Rate	Daily cost of running the production. Crew + equipment + location + catering per shoot day.
Contingency	A percentage buffer (typically 10–15%) added on top of all costs to cover overruns, weather, and reshoots.
DCP	Digital Cinema Package. The standard delivery format for theatrical exhibition. Typically \$1,500–\$3,000 to create.
Deliverables	The final technical outputs required by distributors: DCP, ProRes masters, HDR versions, M&E; tracks, subtitles.
M&E; Track	Music and Effects track — the audio mix without dialogue, needed for international dubbing.
P&A;	Prints and Advertising. The marketing and distribution budget, separate from the production budget.
ROI Multiple	Net revenue divided by total cost. 1.0x = break-even. 2.0x = doubled the investment.
SAG	Screen Actors Guild (SAG-AFTRA). The US actors' union. Low-budget agreements (Ultra-Low, Modified Low, Low) reduce minimums.
Sales Agent	A company that sells distribution rights territory by territory, typically for a 15–25% commission.
Recoupment	The point at which revenue equals total cost — investors have their money back. Everything after is profit.
Wrap	The end of principal photography. Also used for the end of any production phase.

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## Disclaimer

All calculations, projections, and analyses generated by The Film Production Pond are estimates for informational and planning purposes only. They do not constitute financial, legal, tax, or investment advice.

Film production carries inherent financial risks including but not limited to budget overruns, schedule delays, market changes, distribution uncertainty, and regulatory changes. Users should independently verify all outputs and consult qualified professionals before committing capital to a production.

The software is provided "as is" without warranty of any kind, express or implied. Offline.Ltd's total liability shall in no event exceed the purchase price paid for the software.



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