



Women Below the Line

*Building crews, careers, and community in the Los Angeles
production scene*

LA Women's Film Crew — First Edition — July 2026

This e-book is editorial and educational commentary published by LA Women's Film Crew in July 2026. It reflects general reflections on film-production careers, crew networking, and community-building; it is not legal, financial, or career-placement advice, and it does not guarantee any job, booking, or professional outcome. Industry conditions, union rules, and best practices change over time; treat everything here as a starting point rather than a rulebook. No statement here should be read as a promise of results.

Contents

- Foreword
- Chapter 1 — Below the Line Is Where Films Get Made
- Chapter 2 — The Directory Is the Network
- Chapter 3 — Mentorship and the Path Up
- Chapter 4 — The Equipment Co-Op
- Chapter 5 — Reading the Production Calendar
- Chapter 6 — Workshops and the Portable Skillset
- Chapter 7 — The Job Board and the Referral
- Conclusion: Your Crew, Your Network, Your Power

Foreword

The names above the line get the credit. The people below it get the film made. Camera, sound, grip, electric, and the dozens of specialties that fill a call sheet — this is the craft workforce that turns a script into footage, and it is where careers in production are actually built, day by day, set by set. This book is for the women in that workforce, and for the community that helps them find each other.

LA Women's Film Crew exists because below-the-line work runs on relationships, and relationships need somewhere to form. A directory to be found in, mentors to learn from, equipment to share, a calendar to read, workshops to grow from, and a job board to book through — these are the practical infrastructure of a crew career, and a community is what makes them work. The point is not just to network for its own sake but to build the connections that lead to the next call.

Read it once end to end, then keep the checklists handy. They are written to be marked up until they fit where you are in your own path — whether you are breaking in, leveling up, or already the person others come to. People who show up, hit their marks, and lift each other up build careers together. Let's get into how.

Chapter 1 — Below the Line Is Where Films Get Made



Below the line is not a lesser tier of filmmaking; it is the tier where filmmaking happens. The camera department captures the image, sound records it, grip and electric shape the light and rig the shots, and forty-plus specialties handle the countless technical realities of a production. A film is only as good as the crew executing it, and that crew is overwhelmingly below-the-line professionals doing skilled, specific, physically real work.

Careers here are built differently than in the above-the-line world. They advance through demonstrated skill, reliability on set, and — crucially — the network of people who have worked with you and will vouch for you. A crew member who shows up, hits their marks, and is good to work with earns the next job largely through the people who saw it. The work is technical, but the career is relational.

That relational nature is exactly why community matters so much for below-the-line careers. You cannot get hired for a job you never hear about, and you cannot build a reputation without a network to carry it. Understanding below-the-line work as both a craft and a network is the foundation everything else in this book stands on. The skill gets you through the day; the network gets you the next one.

Treat below-the-line work as a craft advanced through reputation and relationships, not credits alone.

Field Checklist

- Know your department and your specialty precisely
- Build reputation through reliability on set
- Treat your network as career infrastructure

Chapter 2 — The Directory Is the Network



A searchable crew directory is more than a list — it is the mechanism by which people who need crew find the crew they need. Specialties, experience, and availability, made searchable, turn an invisible pool of talent into a discoverable one. For a below-the-line professional, being in the directory is being findable, and being findable is the precondition for being booked. You cannot be hired for work that never reaches you.

The directory works in both directions. A producer or department head building a crew can search for the exact specialty and availability they need; a crew member can be found for jobs they would never have heard about otherwise. That two-sided discovery is what makes a directory a network rather than a phone book — it actively connects supply and demand instead of just storing names. The value is in the matching.

Getting the most from a directory means keeping your entry sharp: accurate specialty, honest experience, current availability. A vague or stale profile gets passed over; a clear, current one gets the call. The directory rewards the people who treat it as a living professional presence rather than a form filled out once and forgotten. In a relational business, being clearly findable is half the battle.

Keep your directory presence clear and current, and treat findability as the first step to getting booked.

Field Checklist

- Maintain an accurate, specific directory profile
- Keep specialty, experience, and availability current
- Use the directory to find crew and to be found

Chapter 3 — Mentorship and the Path Up



Below-the-line careers have a shape — from entry roles up through experienced positions and department leadership — and the fastest way to navigate that shape is through people who have already walked it. Mentorship connects newer crew with experienced mentors who can explain the unwritten parts: how to move up a department, how a set really works, how to handle the situations no workshop covers. The craft can be taught; the path is usually shown.

The value of a mentor is compressed experience. A mentor has already made the mistakes, learned the etiquette, and built the relationships, and a good mentoring relationship transfers some of that hard-won knowledge without the years. Just as important, mentorship builds the relationships that careers run on — a mentor is often also a connection, a reference, and a door into rooms a newcomer could not reach alone.

Mentorship runs both ways over a career. The person mentored today becomes the mentor tomorrow, and a community that circulates knowledge this way lifts everyone in it. Seeking a mentor early and becoming one later is how a scene sustains itself and how individual careers compound. The path up is rarely walked alone; it is shown, one experienced hand to the next.

Seek mentors to navigate the path, and become one later to keep the knowledge circulating.

Field Checklist

- Find a mentor who has walked your department's path
- Use mentorship to learn the unwritten rules and relationships
- Plan to mentor others as you gain experience

Chapter 4 — The Equipment Co-Op



Below-the-line work often requires owning or accessing serious equipment, and that gear is expensive. An equipment co-op — shared production equipment at member rates — lowers one of the real financial barriers to building a career, letting crew access what they need without carrying the full cost of owning everything alone. Keeping costs down is not a luxury in this business; it is what makes the early years survivable.

The co-op model works because equipment sits idle most of the time. A piece of gear owned by one person is used on their jobs and gathers dust otherwise; shared across a community, that same gear serves many careers. Pooling access turns individually unaffordable equipment into collectively available equipment, which is a genuine leveling force — it means the barrier to doing the work is skill, not the size of your bank account.

Using a co-op well means treating shared resources as shared responsibility: care for the gear, return it right, keep the system working for the next person. A co-op is a community asset, and it lasts only as long as its members treat it that way. Handled with that discipline, it lets a crew build the kit and take the jobs they otherwise could not — an advantage that compounds across a career.

Use the equipment co-op to lower the cost barrier, and steward the shared gear like the community asset it is.

Field Checklist

- Access shared gear at member rates to lower costs
- Build your capability without owning everything alone
- Steward shared equipment for the next member

Chapter 5 — Reading the Production Calendar



A shared production and event calendar is a map of where the work and the connections are. Productions ramping up, industry events, networking opportunities, and community announcements — seeing them in one place lets a crew member position themselves ahead of the calls rather than reacting after them. In a business where timing matters, knowing what is coming is a real edge.

The calendar matters more in 2026 because Los Angeles is shooting again. FilmLA reported 5,121 on-location shoot days in the first quarter of 2026, up 10.7 percent over the prior quarter, as California's expanded film and television tax credit pulled production back to the region. More shoot days means more calls for crew across every department — and reading the calendar is how a crew member turns that macro trend into a concrete opportunity they actually catch.

Using the calendar well is proactive, not passive. It is not just checking what happened but planning around what is coming: which productions to be available for, which events to attend, which windows to keep open. A crew member who reads the calendar is positioning; one who ignores it is hoping. In a busier market, positioning ahead of the work is how you convert a strong production climate into a booked schedule.

Read the calendar to position ahead of the work, and turn a busy market into caught opportunities.

Field Checklist

- Track ramping productions and industry events in one place
- Position ahead of calls rather than reacting after

- Use a busy 2026 market as concrete opportunity

Chapter 6 — Workshops and the Portable Skillset



Craft in film production keeps evolving, and the crew who last are the ones who keep learning. Monthly workshops — technical skill-building, career development, guest speakers — are how a professional stays current, adds specialties, and grows the portable skillset that follows them from job to job. In a relational, project-based business, your skills are your product, and keeping them sharp is keeping yourself hireable.

The value of the portable skillset is that it belongs to you, not to any one production. A new technical skill, a broadened specialty, a better understanding of how departments interlock — these travel to every future job and compound over a career. The tools of the craft keep changing, and workshops are how a crew member keeps pace instead of falling behind, especially as studio-grade tools and new techniques put more capability within reach of small teams.

Workshops also do a second thing: they are community. Learning alongside other crew, hearing from guest speakers, and building skills in a room full of peers grows both the skillset and the network at once. A crew member who shows up to learn is also showing up to be known, and in this business those two things are inseparable. Growth and connection happen in the same room.

Keep building the portable skillset through workshops, and grow the network in the same room.

Field Checklist

- Attend workshops to keep your craft current

- Add specialties that broaden what you can be hired for
- Grow skills and network together in the room

Chapter 7 — The Job Board and the Referral



The job board is where the network becomes a paycheck. Production jobs, contract work, and freelance opportunities posted by producers and production companies turn the community's connections into concrete bookings. For a below-the-line professional, a good job board is a steady source of the calls that make a freelance career sustainable — the tangible output of everything else the community provides.

But the job board rarely works in isolation from the rest of the network. In a relational business, the strongest opportunities often come with a referral — someone who worked with you and vouches for you, turning a cold posting into a warm call. The directory, the mentorship, the workshops, and the community are what generate those referrals, and the job board is where they convert into work. The posting opens the door; the reputation walks you through it.

Using the job board well means being ready to be booked: findable in the directory, sharp in your skills, and known in the community for showing up and hitting your marks. A crew member who has built all of that turns job postings into a working schedule; one who relies on the board alone competes cold. The board is the harvest, but the network is what was planted.

Treat the job board as where the network converts to work, and let reputation and referrals carry you through the door.

Field Checklist

- Watch the job board for postings that fit your specialty

- Build the referrals that turn cold postings into warm calls
- Stay ready to be booked across directory, skills, and reputation

Conclusion: Your Crew, Your Network, Your Power

Below-the-line filmmaking is a craft, but a below-the-line career is a network — and a network needs a community to form in. Everything in this book is a piece of that community's infrastructure: the directory that makes you findable, the mentorship that shows you the path, the co-op that lowers the barrier, the calendar that helps you position, the workshops that keep you sharp, and the job board where it all converts into work. Each supports the others, and together they turn individual talent into a sustainable career.

The moment is a good one. Los Angeles is shooting again, the indie market is healthy, and modern tools are putting studio-grade reach within range of small, tight-knit crews. But a busy market rewards the people who are ready for it — findable, skilled, connected, and known for showing up. The community is how you become that person, and how you help others become it too.

So keep your profile sharp. Find a mentor and become one. Use the shared gear well, read the calendar, keep learning, and turn the network into work. People who show up, hit their marks, and lift each other up build careers together — that is the whole idea. Your crew, your network, your power. Bookmark it, check back often, and build with us.

References

1. FilmLA, Q1 2026 on-location production report (5,121 shoot days; 10.7% increase over the prior quarter; California film & television tax credit driving production).
2. LA Women's Film Crew community materials, 2026 (crew directory, mentorship program, equipment co-op, production calendar, workshops, and job board for women below the line).



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