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# THE Grip Book

THIRD  
EDITION

Michael G. Uva

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Focal  
Press

# The Grip Book

By Michael G. Uva



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# THE GRIP BOOK

This book is dedicated to all the “newbies” who want to learn it all, to all the great production people who work so hard that they can’t possibly know it all, and, last but not least, to the old salts who invented it all. Thank you, one and all.

—Mike

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—Mike

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## **Letter from the Author**

Hi, and thank you in advance for buying my book. I am trying with this book to accomplish two things that I learned from the author Zig Zigler: “If you help enough people get what they want, you’ll get what you want.” I want to help as many folks who want to get into the film industry as I can. I absolutely love my jobs. Yes, I did say jobs. Because of my career in the film business as a grip, I have been able to explore my other passions as well. I love to write, and I love to train students at my seminars. In this newly revised grip handbook, I have added more need-to-know information about basic grip equipment. I have learned from my many students and other folks whom I’ve met that I should also include some basics about tools. As you thumb through the new and improved *The Grip Book*, I’m sure that you will come across some things that you already know. Good for you! But, there will also be many other readers out there for whom this material is entirely new and whom will benefit from the “need-to-know” material provided in the text. So, sit down, peruse the book, and learn!

Thanks again,  
Michael G. Uva

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## **About the Author**

Michael Uva is a highly motivated self-starter. He created one of Hollywood’s largest privately owned fleets of rental trucks for grip equipment in just a few years and then sold it. He learned his business strictly through on-the-job experience and never attended any formal motion picture or cinema-related schools or classes. When Michael began his career as a grip, no specialty books regarding his craft were available. After several years of learning his craft from other key grips and grips, Michael wrote the first edition of this book to share the knowledge he had gained. That edition proved very useful to new and experienced grips alike, so Michael wrote a second edition. He also teaches at the University of California at Los Angeles on occasion. Michael’s goal in writing this third edition of *The Grip Book* is to help new students, other grips, and production members by providing a firsthand, fingertip reference guide to the grip equipment used in the industry.

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## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to take a few moments of your time to share with you the names of people I want to thank. The only reason you should read this section is because, if and when you do make it to Hollywood, these are the types of people you want to work with. These people are some of the best grips and other personnel still working in the business, and they have helped me on a relatively routine basis.

First and foremost is Doug Wood, key grip, I.A., Local 80. Doug gave me that first proverbial break in the business of making movies. Not only was this guy a giant

of a man in stature (his nickname was “King Kong”), but he was also probably one of the best, if not *the* best, dolly-grips you would ever see. In fact, I looked up the word “smooth” in the dictionary, and next to it was his picture. All kidding aside, he was one of the best. I loved him like a brother. (Doug is now with the Lord.)

Next on my list is Gary Welsh, key grip, I.A., Local 80. Doug Wood taught me the trade of the business, but Gary taught me the business of the business. I have nothing but respect and admiration for this guy.

Then there is John Stabile, key grip, I.A., Local 80. This kid, as I call him, is one of Hollywood’s youngest and hottest key grips around. This guy looks 18 years old but has the knowledge and experience of a 48-year-old. My humble hat is off to you, John.

These guys are only a few of what I consider to be the greats of the business. Look them up yourself when you hit Hollywood.

I have worked with so many good grips, but if I listed them all this book would be really boring and the only people who would read it would be those listed here. (There is no shortage of ego in this industry . . . perhaps that is why there are so many greats!)

Before I get on with the show, I really must say a special thanks to someone who has been my sidekick and is a cofounder of Uva’s Grip Truck Service, Mr. José A. Santiago. I met José over 25 years ago when I was just breaking into the industry. He was sweeping floors at the place where I was working part-time. He had come to the continental United States from the Virgin Islands only three years earlier. At that time, José only spoke broken English, but he had, and still has, flair. He swept the floor with a smile, cleaned toilets, whatever was required of his job. He showed me then, as he continues to do so now, that he could do any job assigned to him. You just need to show him how to do the job, dirty or glamorous, and give him the chance to prove himself. After only eight years in this country, he was driving a DeLorean auto, had bought his second home with a pool, and was helping his mother back in the Virgin Islands where she still lives. José is now one of Hollywood’s most sought-after key grips. Just another success story, I guess, but one we are both living.

Good luck to all of you who venture down this road. I would love to hear from readers who have gotten the breaks and are making the big bucks.



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## A Bit of Encouragement

I have included the illustration below to encourage my readers. These words were discovered cast in stone (okay, cement) in Hollywood at the Kodak Theater, located next to the world famous Mann's Chinese Theater. They are part of an artistic statement designed by Erica Rothenberg and entitled "The Road to Hollywood." This concrete "red carpet" includes many quotes from directors, producers, actors, and now, of course, a key grip. Who knew? If you turn back to the acknowledgments section of this book, you will learn that this key grip is my good friend José Santiago. Besides being very, very proud of José, I am telling you about him to let you know that *you can also make it here!* (P.S. Look Mom . . . I have arrived!)

