

Story #8

Do Producer's Ever Lie About The Money Available?

I went on location with an independent production, believing that the financing would be locked and that there would be no worries there. We were well into the on-location shooting when it became apparent that the money WASN'T about to be locked.

The Bond Company kept asking one question after the other. The Producer wanted to know EXACTLY how much money I needed, then sent less than that. It was reaching a point of mutiny with the crew we'd hired at this particular location. Finally after the shooting was finished the American crew went home and my assistant and I had to stay on to wrap up the payroll and outstanding bills.

You guessed it. No money arrived to pay the local crew for that last week of shooting! The local service provider started making threats to call the police. This is scary, because in this particular country financial disputes were first referred to the police to determine if the non-payment was purposely entered into, and if so, then I could be part of a criminal charge.

For 3 weeks my assistant and I sat in hope, listening to the Producers say, "The money will arrive by this Thursday." (I kept thinking of those Popeye cartoons where Wimpy is promising to pay on Tuesday for a hamburger today).

The Bond Company, although very professional and sympathetic, were still stalling. They just didn't want to sign the Insurance Bond Agreement – there were just too many holes in the various other agreements that the producers had transacted. The stickler was that without

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The Bonding Company signed on to the production, the money would never come!

The local service provider was making veiled threats, even going so far as to intimate that if we tried to leave the country they would ask us to be “detained”. They wanted the crew and local suppliers paid first – and so did I.

I did some soul searching. Should I quit? What about all those people who the production owed money to? Should I stand by the investors, or cut and run while I could? In the end, my assistant and I decided to stay.

By the beginning of the fourth week we didn't have the money to pay our hotel room. My assistant and I were ready to throw in the towel – we started secretly discussing ways we could sneak out of the country and fly home. In the eleventh hour the Bond Company signed the insuring agreement – finally!

I think that it's a hackneyed phrase to say that we wept with relief, but that's what we did. We managed to pay the local crew/suppliers in a day or two and boogied on outta there.

What's to learn from this story? ...Always trust the Bond Company over the Producer. They'll give you the straight goods (but sometimes you have to confront them with some very direct questions before leaving to go on location). Go ahead and do it; they'll like you for it.