Making Anarchist Multimedia

Ryan Alexander Neily

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Film can be a powerful social and political tool. As anarchists, socialists, DIYs, and every other type of fellow traveler, we need to make videos to motivate and inform us. What does an anarchist world look like? What does an anarchist do in a political suspense movie? I challenge storytellers to make movies that answer these questions. What do we want to have them say? Do we have any idea what we want to have happen as a result of people watching our videos?

A Digital Revolution means sophisticated video can now be made using any modern personal computer. Installing Linux as the operating system on your computer is itself a political act for those of us inspired by social justice. Linux is an operating system based on contribution, mutual aid and cooperation. The Free Software movement offers pretty much every imaginable app freely available on install or as a net download. To make movies, utilize applications such as KDEnlive or Cinelerra for editing tasks, or my favourite, 3D Blender, which is a superbly competent CG environment.

Having your oppressor supply your materiel is normally associated with guerrilla warfare. DIY multimedia making has this modus operandi at it's core, as well. Reusable resources such as films and images fall into the Public Domain every year. The Public Domain being that which is owned by 'Society'. Whatever your approach to multimedia making, a familiarity with copyright law, Creative Commons licenses and the Public Domain will smooth your path. Knowledge is power. Laws were enacted to protect a creative's work from being copied for a period of time so they could recoup their costs and actually earn a living making art. This is called copyright law. The laws were put in place because a society that encourages artists is a healthy society.

There is a term limit set on this copyright so that these works become usable to society at large after the copyright expires. This is the legacy the artist leaves society in recognition of the copyright protection they receive. This all means that there are clips in the public domain that can be repurposed to your message.

Danger Dead End, the political multimedia I put together, started as a set of clips from Waterfront, a 1941 movie in the Public Domain. I assembled and edited images, 3D animation, also adding dialogue and music to the piece. The soundtrack song 'Blue Salsa' was composed and recorded by my friend Colin MacRae on his keyboard.

The clips I took from the movie Waterfront are obviously from an older time. To make it work as a future based story I used only street-level shots under the 'streets are streets' anywhere notion. I created a rocket spewing fiery exhaust crossing the frame to show there is much more going on than simply an American dockside 1940s period piece. The rocket being in a cartoon style tells the audience not to interpret things too literally.

Another example of how to recycle film assets is the use I have made of an old WWI British recruitment poster. The call to serve the "Empire" still has resonance, even the best part of a hundred years later. The concept of Empire comes through to the viewer in Danger Dead End even though the Empire of the poster is not the Empire of the film. An anarchist A placed on top of the lion of empire changes the politics into something new entirely.

This article has been no more than an introduction to making anarchist multimedia. A few pointers to show the way how to make it and even perhaps why you should make it. Multimedia is a powerful tool, make something potent with it.

My completed multimedia is to be found on youtube.com, either enter 'Danger Dead End' in the youtube search field.

– Ryan Alexander Neily

Ryan.Neily — AT — gmail — DOT — com

Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada