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### Production Role 1: Director

#### Filmmaker intentions:

As a director, my role was to oversee all the production aspects of a film, from sound to visuals, in order to effectively tell the story. This required an understanding of each job so that I could successfully communicate my intent or vision with my collaborators. Although the director has the most creative power, I found it vitally important to be open to suggestions at all times, even during production, because a film is always a team effort and often times others will have unique and interesting ideas to contribute to the film in the moment while on set.

#### Clip 1: The Pencil (1:03 mins)

My production group was tasked with creating a superhero trailer. I wanted to experiment with creating tension while only having the reveal of the hero at the very end. Our team's idea was to create a superhero called The Pencil, who has the power to give pencils instantly to students in need. I wanted the trailer to be comprised of short scenes, or vignettes, in which a student is in need of a pencil and one suddenly and mysteriously appears.

The trailer opens with the first vignette of a girl running to class. She looks in her backpack but is unable to find a pencil. When she sets her bag on the ground to search more thoroughly, a pencil rolls up to her on the ground.

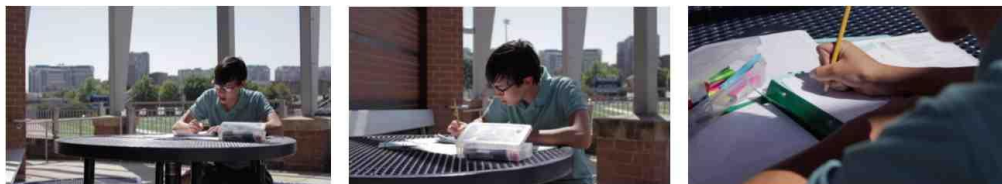


*(Figure 1. Symmetry and single point perspective)*

The composition and framing of this sequence is mostly symmetrical and single point perspective (Figure 1). I chose to shoot the sequence this way because it puts emphasis on the girl in the center of the frame, to the point of being unsettling, which adds to the tension of the scene. This echoes the cinematography of many of Stanley Kubrick's films, which use a hypnotic, single point perspective to add to the sense of unease.

The main light sources in the school were fluorescents, which appeared yellow in camera if the white balance was set to neutral daylight. I decided to keep this look rather than correct the white balance because the uncomfortable yellow tones also served to increase the tension. This look is similar to many David Fincher films, which are often described as gritty or grimy. They are characterized by their yellowish-green color palette, achieved through both lighting and color grading.

In a later scene, a boy is quickly scribbling notes on a sheet of paper when his pencil breaks. He appears distraught, but then a flash of yellow appears on screen and his pencil is magically fixed. The boy looks up and sees Pencil Man.



(Figure 2. The progression of shot types in a scene)

This sequence follows the standard shot progression for a scene: establishing shot, medium shot, and then close-up (Figure 2). I made sure to follow this rule in our shot list and throughout the edit so that the audience would be given enough context at the beginning of the scene, allowing them to fully understand consecutive shots.

#### Clip 2: Lose Yourself to Dance (0:53 secs)

In this film I wanted to experiment with combining two parallel narrative threads into a single moment, with one plotline occurring in the visuals, and one occurring through the audio. I had this idea during the writing process and wrote it into the script (Figure 3).

The scene begins with a jarring cut to shoes running up a flight of stairs in order to throw the audience into the frantic feeling of the scene, in which the character, Sam, is searching for a credit card. I then made sure to include the non-diegetic sound of a phone ringing to indicate to the audience that they are hearing the conversation of a separate character, Zack, from outside the house. We watch Sam search through the house and listen to Zack talk with his father, and these plot lines culminate with Sam finding the credit card and Zack's father hanging up on him, evidence by the closing shots of each of their reactions.

THUMP, THUMP, THUMP, THUMP! Loud footsteps on wood.

Sam runs up the stairs of his house. He reaches the landing and rushes to a nearby doorway.

**ZACK (Voice Over)**

Hey, Dad.

Sam pulls open a drawer and rummages through its contents.

**ZACK (V.O.)**

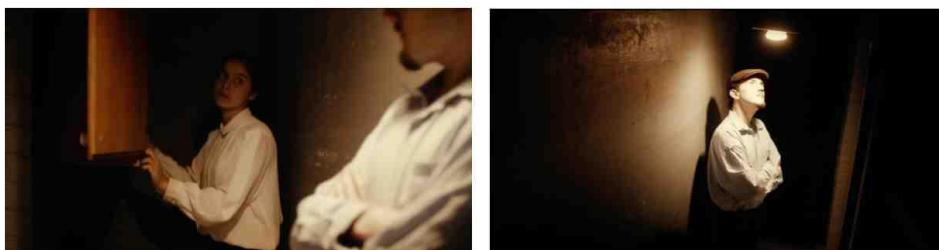
No, we're not there yet - we just picked up Sam and Rachel. Yeah.

Sam digs deeper and begins tossing things behind him.

(Figure 3. Parallel storylines in the script)

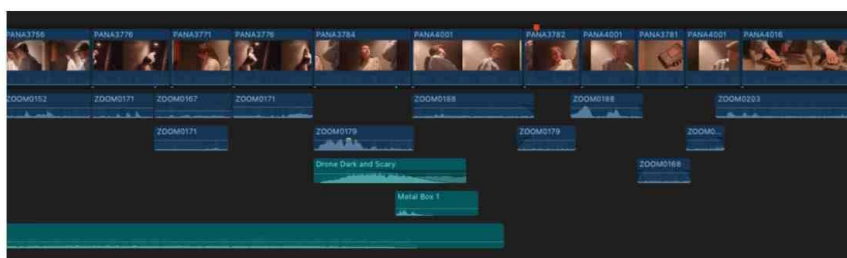
**Clip 3: Manners (1:01 mins)**

My focus in this film was on establishing the correct tone as quickly as possible in the opening shots. This was achieved through a combination of the high contrast, single-source lighting, and the droning, non-diegetic score. Both elements combined to create a mysterious and ominous tone. The entire film takes place in a single room, and I decided to augment the room by adding a black blanket to the far wall, visible on the right (Figure 4), in order to absorb light and let the wall fall into complete shadow. This use of production design to support lighting makes it unclear to the audience how far the cellar extends behind the characters, adding to the mystery and unease.



(Figure 4. High contrast lighting. Lots of shadows)

The two characters argue over who is to blame for getting them trapped in this cellar, when suddenly they hear a disturbing noise and the whole room shakes for a brief moment. Once everything has settled, they notice that something has appeared on the ground in front of them. I decided to emphasize this moment by having the sound effects and score fade out, leaving the characters in a suspenseful and uneasy silence. This can best be seen in the editing timeline, where several audio tracks end as the characters notice the mysterious object on the ground (Figure 5).



(Figure 5. Editing timeline with score and sound fading out)

Overall, the various decisions that I made as a director in my productions involved making careful decisions about different film elements and how their combined effects would change the tone and pacing of the stories being told. I learned how to collaborate and take into consideration different production roles in order to elevate the final product.

## Production Role 2: Editor

### Filmmaker intentions:

As an editor, my primary role was to piece together the footage that was shot during production, but I also had creative editorial abilities, like reordering, cutting, or not cutting on certain shots if it improved the pacing or comprehensibility of a piece. One of my goals was to practice invisible editing in order to enhance the immersion of the audience and the realism of the films.

### Clip 1: The W-L Breakfast Club (1:32 mins)

This film is a contemporary remake or adaptation of the lunch scene from *The Breakfast Club*, directed by John Hughes. Our group was tasked with analyzing the style of the film and recreating it in our own way. As the editor, I paid special attention to the editing and the various types of cuts between shots, and then used these techniques in our film.



(Figure 6. Invisible editing. Cutting on movement: the closing of the sandwich)

I used invisible editing techniques throughout the film to maintain the flow of the visuals and avoid cuts that could otherwise be jarring or distracting. This included cutting on sound, like the opening of the soda can, or cutting on movement, like when one of the characters closes his sandwich (Figure 6). I learned that cutting on movement can be a difficult task to get just right. Often times the difference between a smooth cut and a jarring cut is the difference of a few frames. Most of the time it is necessary to maintain continuity between shots when cutting them together, and to do this requires precise matching of either the location or the acceleration of movement.

I also used editing to visually emphasize the punchline of a joke or gag. In our film, there is an insert shot of a slice of bologna hitting and sticking to the ceiling right after it is thrown by one of the characters. This insert shot of the food on the ceiling serves as the punchline of the gag and I had to time this perfectly for comedic effect.

The role of the editor can often overlap into the role of the sound designer since both roles are part of the post production process. In this film there is a moment when a boy is loudly chewing a sandwich (Figure 7). The sandwich is meant to be disgustingly juicy because of the candy that was put inside of it, so I wanted to highlight this with added chewing sounds. I did this by recording sounds of myself loudly eating a grapefruit in order to enhance the

chewing sounds and make them even more unpleasant. This is a good example of using foley, or sound effects recorded after filming has concluded, in order to enhance the visuals. Making foley match the visuals can be difficult, but when done correctly it adds a lot to the experience and immersion of the audience.

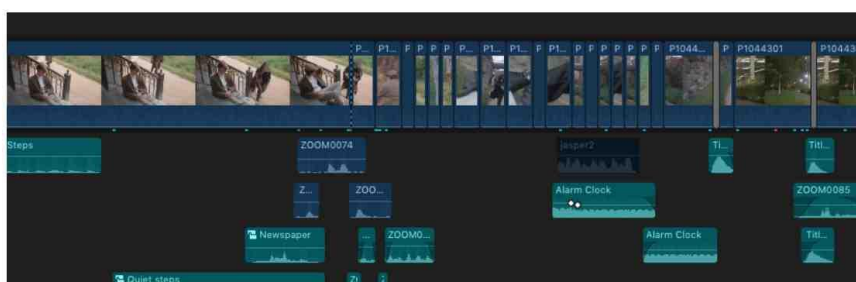


(Figure 7. Sandwich eating and Kuleshov effect)

After eating his sandwich silently for a moment, the boy looks up and sees the reaction of his peers. Their reaction was shot in a single from the boy's perspective, so he is not present in the shot, but we are able to intercut the two shots because their spatial relationship is implied by the Kuleshov effect (Figure 7).

#### Clip 2: Time Troubles: Termination (0:23 secs)

In this film the majority of my focus was on pacing and visual effects. The film has a chase sequence where a paperboy is chasing after a mysterious time traveler character. During the opening of the film, before the chase happens, the shots are quite long, and I made very few cuts. This reflected the characters' emotional states at the time. Then, once the chase happens, I transitioned into a sequence with very rapid cuts in order to heighten the kinetic energy and forward progression of the scene. The transition from few cuts to many cuts can be seen in my editing timeline (Figure 8).



(Figure 8. Editing timeline with fast cuts during an action sequence)

I also had the opportunity to do visual effects because this was a science fiction film. I consulted with my collaborators during the production process to ensure that the shots

requiring visual effects did as much as possible to achieve some of the effect in-camera in order to increase the realism. A good example of this was adding lights to illuminate the characters as they teleport (Figure 9). This practical lighting made the transition look more convincing in editing and showed how effective collaboration between production and post-production roles can significantly improve the visual effects and editing of a film. Another visual effects technique I employed was rotoscoping: the process of animating an effect frame-by-frame in order to match the motion of an object. I animated the flashing lights of the watch worn by the time traveler, which could not actually light up. This small detail made the story a lot more immersive.



(Figure 9. Using lighting for practical effects on left, illuminating watch with rotoscoping on right)

### Clip 3: Lose Yourself to Dance (1:04 mins)

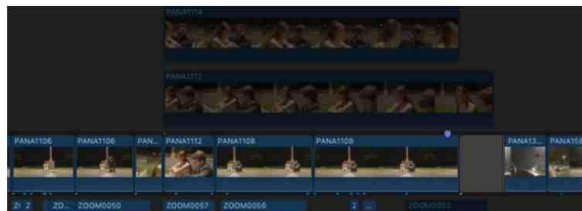
Editing this film gave me the opportunity to edit more subtle and nuanced performances because of the nature of the story and the acting. Since there were a lot of dialogue scenes, I had to edit lots of coverage and make careful decisions about which takes to use and what shots to cut to in order to show the best performances. In a scene towards the end of the film with two characters in a parking lot, we had a wide master shot as well as standard over-the-shoulder coverage of each character (Figure 10).



(Figure 10. Medium coverage on left, master shot on right)

The initial plan was to begin the scene in the master shot, and then cut to the medium coverage shots and stay there; however, upon watching all of the footage, I felt that the emotion of the scene played out best in the master shot, so I ended up cutting to that for the majority of the sequence. The master shot was appropriate because it visually communicated the helpless feeling of the scene, with the characters being small in the frame. It also put each character on the same level, right next to each other, reflecting the boy's intent to make

amends, rather than visually having one character closer and one farther, like in an over-the-shoulder shot. This decision to hold on a wide master shot can be seen in my editing timeline, where I ended up disabling the additional coverage for most of the scene (Figure 11).



(Figure 11. Editing timeline with unused coverage)

Working as an editor on all of these projects made me more attentive to small details that could be adjusted in order to improve the existing narrative. I began to pay more attention to how sound influences an audience's interpretation of visuals and was able to experiment with enhancing certain aspects of the story through additional sound design. I learned how to influence the pacing of a scene through the tempo of the cuts being made. I experimented with visual effects and how to use them to add to the world building of a story. Most importantly, in my opinion, I became more attuned to nuances in actor's expressions, movement, and body language, as I had to assess these things when selecting the best and most fitting performances.

### Production Role 3: Cinematographer

#### Filmmaker intentions:

As a cinematographer, I was tasked with using lighting, colors, composition, and movement to visually portray the emotions of a story as well as emphasize important aspects of the setting and the plot. Beyond making a single image the best it could be, I had to be responsible and conscious about how my shots would cut together in the edit as well. I also had to work with the director and ensure that the images we were creating were in line with the overall story and the tone or style that the director had in mind.

#### Clip 1: Under the Winter Sun (1:51 mins)

This film was a stop-motion claymation about the friendship between two snowmen. This required a very different approach compared to the live action work that I had done because everything was on a smaller scale. I found inspiration for the types of cinematographic techniques that could be achieved in animation from the work of Nick Park, the creator of Wallace and Gromit, who achieves cinematic movement and angles on a small scale.

The placement of the camera was very important to me for this film. I wanted the small clay figures to feel larger and alive, so rather than have the camera pointing down at them from



above since they were so small, I brought the camera to their level and placed the horizon line either in the middle of the frame or towards the bottom third most of the time.



(Figure 12. Lighting transition)

There is a montage in which we wanted to show the passage of time, so I achieved this by slowly transitioning our key light from a warm source, or the sun, to a cool source, or the moon. I also moved the lights during this transition to emulate the movement of the sun and moon across the sky (Figure 12).



(Figure 13. Transitional tracking shots and screen direction)

I used tracking shots at two points during the film to match the energy and movement of the characters as well as illustrate the change that they were undergoing (Figure 13). At first, the snowmen are running in the snow and we track along with them to show the transition into their new friendship. After the sun comes up and they start to melt, however, we track with them as they run back towards shade and one of them melts completely, which transitions us back to the beginning of the film where there was only one snowman.

I also made sure to pay special attention to screen direction and the blocking of the characters in the frame throughout the film. At night, the snowmen run from left to right, and when the sun comes up, they return from right to left. This makes it easy for the audience to comprehend the events of the story spatially. Additionally, because the snowmen look virtually identical, I made sure that the original snowman from the beginning was always on the left side of frame, and the new snowman was always on the right, until the moment when the new snowman gives the old snowman a hat, because at that point they are identifiable.

A technical aspect that I made sure to consider because of the small scale of the figures was the depth of field, or the plane of focus. Since we were focusing so close and shooting on a longer lens, a 50mm f/1.8, the focus was extremely shallow at lower apertures, especially f/1.8. I decided to stop down the lens to an f/5.6 or f/8 for the majority of the film in order to give a

deeper depth of field and keep more things in focus. Otherwise there was very little detail and most of the image was a blur. Of course, because of the nature of exposure, stopping down the lens made the image darker, so we had to compensate for this by brightening the lights and making our shutter speed longer. This was a good example of rebalancing the three elements of exposure in order to achieve a specific photographic effect.



(Figure 14. Focus pull and depth of field with miniatures)

There were times where having more objects in focus was not important as well. There is a shot when the sun comes up where we pull focus from the snowman with the hat to the melting snowman (Figure 14). I decided to shoot from this angle and do a focus pull because it shows the distance between each snowman and visually separates them through the blur. This separation increases the sense of dread, because they are not able to help each other as easily.



(Figure 15. Opening shot versus closing shot)

Lastly, the film is bookended by identical shots, however at the end it is the new snowman looking at a puddle rather than the original snowman (Figure 15). This visual match forms a comparison in the relationship between each snowman and also forms a loop. The film could be continued from the beginning and it would all connect in a never-ending cycle. This visual match and formation of a loop makes the ending even more impactful.

Through this experience in stop-motion cinematography, I learned how to apply my knowledge about creating effective visuals in live action films to animations. It also strengthened my visual storytelling skills because the entire film is told visually. Without dialogue the emphasis is placed entirely on showing the audience the information, which is essential to the art of cinematography.

### External Sources

Music:

Zdravko Djordjevic. Atmosphere, Atmostra, [bubaproducer.com/atmostra/atmosphere.html](http://bubaproducer.com/atmostra/atmosphere.html).