

ITCOMM Scene

Planning: The first phase was to find a scene that fit the criteria. I was looking for a scene with two players or less, one location, and little to no additional elements. I looked through the entire script until I found a scene that fit the bill. The scene is simple; Jake has gotten a call, a man. Mark Learner, who knows the identity of the crimson killer. We follow Jake to Mark's house. Where Mark discloses that he is the crimson killer. All I needed to pull the shot off was two actors, a couple of props and since I wanted to do wideshots I needed a location that had enough space to work the angles.

Pre-production: I had to go find the location which took a bit of work cause I needed a deck that was at least about 10'x18' to accompany the shot plan. I did the storyboards. Which ended up only being about eight boards. The set up was pretty simple. But the wideshot plan dictated a lot, like I knew I would need two lavalier microphones and a boom mic. I knew I would have to come up with a creative way to backlight from the distance. So, I planned all of this using the overhead set plan in my storyboards.

After that was the budget. Some of the props had to be purchased. There was a cigar called for, which was easy enough. Then there was a newspaper where the headline needed to appear in the shot. We contacted a prop house and had them design and run off a dew copies. It worked out great. We need to budget to pay actors, sound department and set design. Wardrobes and PA's we got volunteers from local colleges. The total cost came in around seven hundred dollars. I was able to call in a few favors and raise the money so I didn't have to fund it entirely.

Then came the hiring phase. I used a local production forum to post for all the positions including the location. We got the actors in for auditions. I set this up at a community meeting center which if scheduled in advance we could do for free. So, the actors came in and read for the part. We had them try a few different things, gave them some direction and got down to the two we wanted the most. We offered them the part, had them sign agreements, NDA's and got off and running. We then went and looked for some audio guys willing to work for experience. We got lucky and found a really talented guy for a little bit of money.

Principal was pretty simple. We set it up for a twelve hour shoot. Aggressive since we had three dialogue heavy pages to shoot. We held one rehearsal and then we met at the location for the shoot. We got makeup and crew there an hour early and got the first set up ready to roll.

This wasn't my first shoot so we didn't run into any real problems. The main issue we dealt with was lighting. Since this was an exterior shoot and we didn't have a lot of time to go in and test anything we were surprised with exactly how dark it was. We started the shoot around seven pm and had very little moonlight. We were always concerned about the weather. Would it be too cold? Would it be raining? Being that it was the middle of winter we had to be concerned about the possibility of snow, but we dodge the bullet there. We also had audio concerns, but again it wasn't warm enough to worry about AC units shutting on and off.

We got all the shots in on time and ahead of schedule and worked great. After the shoot we passed the footage and audio on to our editors. After two weeks we have seen a rough cut and things look good. We'll still have to go in and mess with color correction and then we should be good to go.

All in all it was a fairly uneventful shoot as these things go, but it was a great experience!