

Essay

Before I even began shooting my short film, I was going through a series of mixed emotions. I was drifting somewhere between complete excitement and overwhelming stress, but in the end, after the two days of shooting, what I feel now is relief. I was exceptionally glad that my first experience directing was doing so for a no-budget student film with minimal crew. Because of these circumstances, I was able to more easily and efficiently grasp the duties of director in both the pre-production and production stages of filming (well, even the development stage, too).

Overall I felt the production as a whole had many strong points and went rather smoothly. With the conditions in which we had to film, I honestly couldn't have asked for better results. I was very pleased with how my crew and I were able to use the two filming locations to our advantage. Both locations were essentially houses of friends where we were granted permission to film, and in a very limited amount of time. So with these conditions, we created the illusion of a secluded wooded area for the exterior shots and for the interiors we were able to create interesting camera angles and even atmosphere. One other aspect of production that I want to mention that most certainly went well was the performance of the actors. My script that they were performing had no dialogue but a very specific mood and tone. So obviously a lot fell on the actors' shoulders to bring out the best performances they had, and they absolutely delivered. Because the two actors I was working with were able to easily grasp the directions I was giving them, they not only set the right tone I was going for, but also helped speed the production along by nailing practically every take.

Thankfully there was not any major mishaps during production or anything that went terribly. That is not to say that everything went perfectly, because of course nothing will ever go perfectly on a film set. All of the problems we came across were minute and luckily we were able to power through them easily enough to get the shots we needed. My biggest concern going in was lighting correctly as my whole short film takes place during the nighttime. There were some difficult lighting decisions to be

made and of course, cars driving in the background nearly ruined a couple takes. Nevertheless, my crew and I were most definitely on top of it and found, in my opinion, the best possible lighting setups we could.

I truly feel every second I spent in pre-production and every moment I spent directing was a fascinating learning experience for me. The most important lesson I learned during my experience is that the film is really made during the pre-production phase. This is the phase I spent the most time and effort in and it most certainly paid off. Creating detailed storyboards, a shot list, lens changes (etc.) I felt was the best way to prepare myself for the actual production/shooting phase. Because all of the pre-production was completed, my crew and I were able to keep up a constant workflow that allowed us to move through our limited amount of time efficiently. Having said that I believe that the next time I direct a film (short or feature), I will take what I learned from the pre-production phase to the next level. With this short film I did in fact do all the pre-production steps to completion, but I also feel my time management could be improved. For example, I did a location scout of the interior location the day before the shoot. I learned that it would be much better to do said location scout about a *week* before instead so that I would have much more time to discuss and create the scene with my crew. With this I would also have more thorough notes about the location I could use with my crew to ensure a better understanding of the shooting area and possibly prevent any unforeseen location complications.

The overall conditions for the filmmaking were absolutely perfect for me as a first-time, student filmmaker. The lack of any real budget and the extremely limited shooting time forced me to use the filming locations as creatively as possible. I'm also glad that my crew number was very small as that kept the workflow and my managerial duties as director at healthy (and relatively stress-free) levels. Directing my short, even though it was just a couple of scenes, was truly an amazing experience and one that leaves me impatient for the next time I can go out and direct again. There are many more ideas swirling around in my head that I'm just dying to create.