

Shooting of my scene by: Sang Nguyen Tran

Preparing to shoot my scene seemed easy at first. I had it all planned out in my head. I figured we wouldn't need much since it's an easy scene. Boy was I wrong... It turned out to be quite a challenge that took nearly a whole day to finish. Here I will explain what went great, what went terrible, what I learned, and what I will do differently next time.

First day was extremely exciting. Although I was challenged with barely any state of the art equipment and actors, I still managed to get the scene done. I was using a Canon t2 camera which isn't the best Digital SLR camera but it worked. I also had a tripod, and lots of hopes and dreams. After all I feel that being a good director isn't about the equipment you have but rather what you do with it.

The great thing about the shoot was that it was an easy scene with plenty of dialogue. I took plenty of shots, and tried many angles which was fun to experiment with. We had fun with the picking of the wardrobe. The scene did not need much props which was a good thing. Overall everyone that was involved had lots of fun and I made sure that laughter was plenty to keep the energy up. We had snacks and drinks to make up for the hours of shooting. I didn't need to do plenty of explaining since my actors seemed to understand me very well. I think that filmmaking should be a fun, social experience, and I made sure to communicate that with everyone.

The part that went, I wouldn't say terrible, but more of a challenge was the fact that I had to find a good location to do my scene. Since it's an outdoor scene, being that I reside in the Windy City of Chicago, made it very difficult. On top of that I needed a nice sunny day to make it look like it was a hot atmosphere. Luckily the weather was nice and I was able to shoot on this day. The location I picked was right by the lakefront so trying to lockdown the scene was a big challenge. People kept walking in front of the camera and they would stop and ask questions. A few people asked to be in it which was pretty funny. I just politely asked people to not disturb us while we were shooting and they were pretty understanding about it. Another challenge was not having a good microphone. So in order to solve that I had to do all of the audio separately. Sometimes being a good director doesn't always cut it I guess. But where there's a will, there's a way, right?

Shooting just this one scene helped me learn a lot. I learned that making a movie is not as easy as it looks. Improvising was key when making the scene come together. There were plenty of challenges for just this one scene, so I can only imagine what a whole movie would take. I also learned that it can be a lot of fun when working with people that can understand you and appreciate what you're trying to do. Maybe the fact that I was working with friends and family made it that way, but I hope that it will be the same, if not better, when working with others. Nevertheless I had a lot of fun, and I'm sure the people I work with felt the same way. In my experience with film overall I found it to be very

interesting, which is possibly the reason why I find it to be exciting and worthwhile. I enjoy every aspect of it and that alone makes it fun. I learned that having the right equipment can make a big difference too but getting the idea down is as simple as pointing and shooting a camera. Even though I am working with the scraps that I am given, I was still able to make it work. That alone taught me a lot.

What I would do differently next time is to make sure I prepare better. I kind of shot this scene on a whim and just went with it, I barely had time to plan and I barely had money to buy better equipment. I would definitely get a better microphone next time and I would make sure to browse more locations. Checking the weather might be a good thing also. Definitely preparing is good but improvising is always an option when it comes to film-making. I guess the next time will just be another experience to learn from, and hopefully I will have better equipment and ideas to make it that much better.

This about sums up my experience on shooting my first scene. I know other filmmakers have had their ups and downs before with facing challenges. "Fitzcarraldo" is a prime example of this and I couldn't help but keep thinking about that movie every time I ran into a problem. But I managed to keep it together by acting cool, calm, and collected. I wish to take this, and many other experiences as a milestone marker in my career as a filmmaker. As much fun as it is, it's much better knowing that I am the one doing it, and being involved, instead of just watching it behind the scenes.