Turn in Assignment for Chapter 17 - Directing Three: The Shoot

Write a 2-3 page paper on your experience shooting your scene. What went great, what went terribly, and what did you learn? What will you do differently next time?

This video shoot is a scene from ACT I of my screenplay, Defying Gravity.

Challenges to setup the shoot:

First of all, I chose this scene because it is a turning point in the beginning of the film at about 10 minutes into the movie, which is intended to be the first sign to the audience of what is going to be the challenge of the main character of the film. I also chose this scene to shoot because it only required two actors, myself as Larry (protagonist) and my wife as the other character, NASA Commander Samantha.

The first challenge I had with shooting a scene from my film was the location. I decided to use my home because it was easiest, but I realized quickly that in order to create the real image of this scene would actually require a real film set, props and a background that looks like the real scene venue which is a NASA space center! Not so easy to duplicate!

What went well?

I would say that myself and my other actress were able to practice our lines enough after a few takes that the flow of the scene did start to feel better and more natural.

I was able to use some props that I had to create some sense of identity for the scene such as a model of a NASA space shuttle. I put a NASA sticker on my wife’s shirt as to create a uniform for her. I put on a camouflage army hat and pants and t-shirt.

What went terrible?

Well, to be honest, this was very difficult to make this scene believable with very limited resources; no studio, no professional backdrops, no professional lighting. It felt very amateur and low budget! I think the acting was probably terrible and not believable, but it was the best we could do. That is why we need people like Tom Cruise and Robert DeNiro and Kate Winslet to help make it feel real!

What did we learn?

We learned that creating really good scenes, with the right location, props, lighting, sound effects etc. is a lot of work!! Another important element is the actors and acting.

You have got to have actors that can create drama, tension, and a sense of reality that is believable. That is the magic, the secret sauce if you will.

What I can say, is it felt really good to bring my film to life! Even though it was extremely low budget and so on. I would love to see it actually done with a budget and professional staging etc. What a difference that would make!

I know that I need to practice more and more shooting and directing film scenes. This is the only way I can learn and get better at it. We did try different camera angles for example to see how each compared to the other. Also, having the actors eye contact and facial expressions needed some coaching I believe.

What would I do different next time?

The next time I do a video shoot of a scene, I will most definitely plan ahead! I will find more props, backdrops and lighting to do whatever I can to make the scene appear more real! I may even go to a rental store to get some professional items. Depending what happens with my pitch to the producer, I will probably be making a trailer of my film to do crowd funding on kickstarter.com. I know this will have to be really good quality video shoot.

Thank you for this opportunity to get practical experience as a budding writer, director!

Sincerely,

Steven B. Carpenter, screenplay writer for Defying Gravity