Burner Scene

Shooting the scene has been one of the more challenging assignments for me. One because I was using an iphone I just upgraded to a week ago and two because my actors bailed on me for my scene. I am not extremely skilled when it comes to filming or how to use complicated editing techniques. I had to download imovie and use YouTube to learn how to edit video on my phone. Las Vegas isn’t very similar to the story location (Philadelphia) either. I couldn’t find other actors when I asked for volunteers, so I ended up doing something different from my original scene.

 I wanted to film the scene with Connor showing up at John and Mary-Ann’s home and show the conversation where he gives them money as they all say sorry for what happens earlier in the story. This scene reflected the theme of forgiveness which is what *Burner* is really about. I was going to have my oldest brother and his wife help me shoot the scene, but she had two surgeries for some health issues I didn’t know about. Having originally agreed to help me, my brother told me they couldn’t help when I called him one afternoon. I kind of laughed because some of what is in my story is inspired by him. I ended up shooting something different on my own and forgave my brother for bailing on me.

 With that happening, I had to come up with a backup plan. I read over my project summary numerous times and didn’t really find a scene I could do on my own, so I created a new scene as if it were part of the story already. I went to a local skate park and filmed myself after work. It was tough because I had no one to record for me. I had to set my phone up against a water bottle on the pavement to keep it steady. I tried doing some handheld shots, but they really weren’t that great.

The awkward part was when I had to actually tag certain places in the park. There were city workers cleaning and a couple families playing tennis. I tried to go at a time when there were few people as possible to help avoid issues. I found a couple of spots I like where I could film without interruption of noise or people walking through shots. The hardest shots were actually tagging with my marker while filming, trying to make it look real like I was actually being watched. I just used an erasable marker so I wasn’t actually tagging, but I still felt like eyes were watching me from somewhere. I looked around a bunch to make sure there were no cameras in case someone thought I actually was tagging.

If I would have had at least one person there to help I could have accomplished so much more. Then again I would have done something that stems directly from the script, although what I shot feels like it could be part of the story. I tried to dress a lot younger by wearing my Mila Kunis shirt, hat, and backpack. I could have snuck into this local tunnel by my house and spray painted inside, but I didn’t take the scene that far.

 I think there are some shots that came out pretty cool. I learned having a camera in your hand makes you view the world in a different perspective. It gave me a sense of objectivity I didn’t have while planning out shots prior to the scene. It also helped me to see the scene as a first time viewer would. It’s always so bright in Vegas so it’s hard to not have every shot overexposed. The light and shadows contrast so vividly that filming is difficult. There’s always noise in a large city especially some sort of emergency siren or car alarm. I tried to keep away from these problems to keep the focus on the images of the scene. I didn’t use any dialogue or voice over as I don’t like the hearing myself when recorded-weird, I know.

 I learned that I need to learn how to use an actual camera. I learned sometimes you just have to do things on your own the way you like it without anyone’s interpretation or approval. I thought filming would have taken longer, but it went quickly. I felt like once I was at my location I became more inspired and wanted to film new shots. The scene kind of propelled itself in a way. And though it’s nothing amazing and the editing isn’t perfect I’m glad I was able to get out there and shoot something. It was kind of like I was in a strange world where I questioned my surroundings every second. What about this? And maybe this idea will work? And yet I felt sort of interrupted with the outside world competing to occupy the same space around me.

 If I was to do this over again I would see if I could get someone with actual camera experience to help me out. I would probably go on Craig’s List or to a local art school to see if I could get some actors to help out. I would hope to use my time more efficiently and find a great location that excites me. I would like to have that feeling when the scene is done that it was something I was extremely proud of and wanted everyone to see.

 I really wanted my family and friends to be involved so they could see how challenging it is for me to create what I love. I wish they could for a moment enter the world I’m building and experience what I experience when I write. I earnestly wanted to show them how my talents materialize into something unique. Maybe that’s why I write in the first place, because I feel this need to show others understand what’s inside my head.