Aaron Morris

Film-Connection

Lesson 1 Assignment

My Background and Goals

As a child, I used to watch movies all the time. Whether it was during a long road trip in my parents’ SUV, over at a friend’s house or in the theater, I always loved to catch a glimpse into the lives of adventurers and superheros. I imagined myself traveling the world to find ancient treasures, to dogfight in the sky, and to save the day in the end. Realizing those dreams were both impractical and intangible, I started to dream of what I could actually do. In my mind, I constructed my own adventures in a modern day setting. Perhaps I could become a technological genius and build a robot to fight alien robots, or journey into space to discover new worlds. Over time, these old visions of grandiose enterprises slowly died. Movies were always there to give me that glimpse of what could be, but reality set in and I moved on. It was not until tenth grade that I would begin to dream like that again.

In my 10th grade Social Studies class, my friend Darian and I were assigned a rather easy project. We had to convey information about terrorism in an interesting fashion, whether it be a poster, long essay or a video. The last option intrigued me, and so we decided to go forth with an interview. Of course, we could not find the time to work together in one spot, so we both shot our portions of the project separately. I ended up editing the two videos together and submitting it to our teacher. Normally, I would chalk this off as another grade A project and move on but something felt different. I felt this odd sense of completion, of fulfillment and happiness. Nothing I had ever done prior had emulated this emotion, even winning a baseball game. No, it felt like I put together a puzzle, with every piece perfectly in place. Sure, in retrospect, the project is rather dumb and of low quality. Never the less, the feeling that I had done something not for the sake of an award or the objective of winning but instead for a pat on the back, a compliment or even a critique, felt invigorating. It gave me some purpose that I had not previously had. At that moment, I had realized that with a camera and some time, I could not only live out the dreams I had left behind, but maybe make people happy as well.

The following year, I signed up for my school’s film class. Over the course of the year, I made several short films spanning different genres including drama, comedy, documentary, and horror. For most of the projects, I was the director, cameraman, storyboard artist, editor and occasionally an actor. While the short films were collaborative efforts between my friend Max and Jack, along with the assistance of whomever we could get to act, I ended up calling the shots and putting everything together. This involved arranging times, scouting locations and directing people on what they had to do. I would continue to do this throughout my junior year and into my senior year, now accompanied by my friend Darian again. As I made each successive film, I started to refine my technique and become more in tune with the themes I was conveying. My films became less ridiculous and more down to earth, relating to whatever I felt at the time. My fantasy of creating ambitious adventures was still there, if at a spiritual level, but my focus shifted onto, well, me. I wanted, and still do, to create stories based on real life experiences and desires. The products of such, *Hoops of Glory* for instance, felt far more personal and not only seemed more real but also easier for the audiences watching it to relate. In this short film, a student who didn’t make the basketball team lives out his dream of becoming a basketball star by shooting paper balls into trash bins. Odd as it may sound, it is far-none the most realistic and satisfying project I have worked on. The success of *Hoops of Glory*, on both a personal and social level, solidified my desire to become a director.

**Now that I have concluded my long winded backstory**, I would like to express my goals and desires out of this program. Throughout the next upcoming months, I would like to know how to become a director. I have an idea in my head of what that means, if only through past experience, but I want to get to know how things actually work. I want to see how a real director interfaces with the cast and crew, how he conducts workflow and assembles different aspects of a project into a neat and finalized product. In the past, I have worked with friends and friendly acquaintances, but never complete strangers or anyone who has challenged me or my ideas. That does not give me a good measure of my ego or talent, or lack thereof, and so I would very much enjoy experiencing how a director manages his job. More or less, I would actually like to know what it means to be a director. Additionally, I would like to improve my cinematography. I have worked only with DSLRs but I find that I have not taken full potential of the tools I have been given and thus some of my previous work suffers for it. I am hoping to learn of different tips and tricks to improve shots, make the most of certain scenarios such as very low light conditions, and to frame shots in the way that best fits the scene. As fate would have it, Mr. Whalen does happen to be a cinematographer, so I am looking forward to the insight. Lastly, I would like to become a writer. The closest thing to a screenplay I have written is closer to a glorified synopsis. I know the format of writing them but not how to actually write them. With all these ideas in my head, I would like to be able to express them. Concepts are no good if they are not on paper. So, in total, I would like to become a director, writer and cinematographer. While I do have some knowledge and skills in editing, it is not my first choice for any sort of job or project. I only edit my own films because I am a bit of a snob, worrywart and perfectionist who wants to see his visions come out the way he wants it. I have put countless hours into doing so, and the results are not always what I want, so I think it would be best to stray away from that stress, if at all possible.

As for my plan to get there...well, it is a bit foggy. None of my family works in the film industry, so I get no help on that end. I have not found any concrete method or ideology on the web that describes how people normally do it. In my fantasy, however, and it is only a fantasy, I get to work with a film company as either a camera operator, an assistant, or a crew member. With some time, I “work my way up”, so to speak, and become better acquainted with the powers that be. If lady luck is in my favor, perhaps they would consider reading one of my screenplays and give me a shot. Of course, this is at best a far-fetched pipe-dream based on what I have gathered from the media, but that is why I have come to you. My hope is that you perhaps know the answers or at least a process that can get me into the film industry and let me show the world what I can do. I am hardworking and willing to put in however many hours it takes.

Thank you for reading all of that. I know it is a little longer than two pages but I wanted to share a little of my background and what filmmaking means to me.

Three Ideas I have for Movies

*Business Associates*

A group of of teenage misfits become friends and go on ridiculous adventures, attempting odd and often illegal activities and finding themselves along the way. Whether it is setting off fireworks in a residential area, 2 AM runs to Denny’s, acting stupid at the Under 21 Club (H202, in Ocean City) or causing public disturbances, this band of losers wants to have as much fun as possible.

* On a side note, this is based on some personal experiences and I feel would make for a great television series. It would be more of a teen drama and comedy than sit-com. It would involve daily life as well as their misadventures.

*The Enemy Within/ Beyond the Frontier/ Nobody’s Hero*

Set 200 years in the future, a cybernetic teen named Adam stows aboard the intergalactic starship the Rocinante in order to flee to the distant planet of Veritas, where he believes he might find his father or discover the truth about what happened to him. However, a sinister coup unfolds on the shit and it is up to Adam to get it back on course.

Born with a life threatening birth defect, Adam was destined to die until his father, a brilliant scientist, took matters into his own hands and injected Adam with nanomachines in order to save his life. However, given the illegal means he used to do it, he was shunned by the scientific community for his ethics and deported to the distant planet Veritas by the government for his crimes. With his father gone, Adam grew up with only his mother and a lot of questions. He was bullied in school for his odd appearance and the special abilities enabled by these nanomachines. Throughout his life, he was discriminated for his cybernetic nature and subsequently was treated like a second class citizen. As a young adult, he finds an opportunity to hide on a transport ship, the Rocinante, and travel to the distant planet, in hopes of being free and finding his father. However, he is discovered by the captain’s daughter Chell, who takes a liking to him and manages to get Adam a position on board with the maintenance staff. On the job, Adam meets Richard, a hateful and distraught man who despises Adam simply because of his nanomachines. As it turns out, Richard had lost his previous jobs due to robots and automation, as well as losing the love his life to the captain. In a desperate act of revenge, he attempts a mutiny with half the crew. Now, it is up to Adam and Chell to stop Richard, save the crew members and get the ship back on track. (Sorry about this being a bit long. I want to get as many ideas out without writing the whole thing)

*Not Good Enough*

A misfit growing up in an affluent neighborhood full of jocks, musicians and “cool kids” struggles to find his place. A precursor for one of the characters in *Business Associates*, the story is centered around a kid who moves around a few times, loses some friends, has his heart broken and struggles to find purpose. Through painful fights with his father, drunken outbursts from his mother and self inflicted isolation, he must learn to open up and experience the world. This movie would have a strong emphasis on pride, love and depression, showing the world from an angle many people may experience but few wish to share.

-Yes, this is also based on personal experience. Unlike *Business Associates,* which would represent my high school years, *Not Good Enough* would be a reflection of my middle school years and my parents divorce.

Overall, I feel most comfortable making films with a strong human element and based on things I know. Nothing is more offputting to me when I see any form of art (whether it's a comic, painting, movie, song, etc) made by somebody who knows nothing to very little on the subject matter. Parts of them come off as “forced”, inaccurate or inappropriate. Rather than be a hypocrite, I would like to make something from the heart, something honest and relatable but still entertaining or emotionally involving.

Sorry about the slight tardiness of this assignment. I have been having some nasty writer’s block. I will try my hardest to be more punctual with future assignments.