Many things went right, many things went wrong, but regardless I learned a crap ton while filming my

short film *The Shot*.

I always hear that every new project, specifically a short film/feature, is a film school entirely on

its own. I found this to be completely true. Between pre-production, production and post-production

(which I’m currently still in), each one held its own difficulties, but none so much as production itself.

While on production, it wasn’t one thing that could potentially go wrong, it was everything. Schedules

were constantly conflicting. Weather would change. Audio was unattainable due to dogs barking,

lawnmowers running or children playing close by. Shots would change because of locations

not being suitable to use at the time, so on and so forth. It was a constant battle, and if you are not

willing to keep fighting and pushing, you are never going to make it.

One of the easiest aspects of the shoot, specifically on the days of shooting, was the actors. Both

are very talented and were easy to work with. One of the actors, the guy, I knew personally. The girl,

however, I had never met or even heard of before. She was recommended by a friend who said she had

acted in a lot of plays. I had never worked with either of these two before, but more specifically, I have

never worked with someone I didn’t know. That idea of working with someone I’ve never met was

exciting and also a little nerve-racking, especially knowing that she has worked with directors for much

of her life. I instantly discovered that she was super easy to direct, and she had the perfect charisma, not

only for the part, but for working with us as well.

One of the hardest aspects of the shoot was the weather. The entire short took place outside

with no cover. This made everything more difficult. It was already hard to match up schedules even with

only two actors, but there were a couple of times that we all had the ability to film, but the weather

didn’t permit it. I should explain that short required sunny days. We had an unusually rainy summer last

year, and although I’m not complaining (I don’t want a drought), it made things really complicated. On

the days that we were able to film we had to deal with clouds that messed up continuity and heat that

was overheating the actors, crew and the equipment. Because we started production less than a month

before school began, we were racing against time. Both actors attended schools several house away and

would not be able to come back for reshoots. This made fighting the weather that much more stressful.

There is way too much stuff that I learned on set to put into words, but the biggest things for me

was using my words correctly when directing. I really hate trying to act out what I want the

actor to do in the scene because A) I’m not an actor, and B) I don’t want the actor to copy me so much

as take what I’m telling them and make it their own. One of the chapters talked about using verbs with

actors. I hadn’t read that chapter at the time, but it is so true. I also learned that it’s ok to say, “I know

what I want you to do, but I’m not entirely sure how to explain it.” This allowed the actors to really make

the characters their own while we tried to figure out how to tackle those specific scenes. In the end, it

may have taken 7 to 10 extra takes, but we got it. Another thing I learned is that you can almost never

spend too much time on pre-production. My brother and I spent quite some time working through the

story boards and scouting out the locations before production, but even as we were shooting, I

discovered that we could have used more time.

Looking back, there are a couple of things that I would do differently, and will do in the future.

One of them is spending more time in pre-production. There were a couple of shots that we do not have

because we did not storyboard them that would have made our lives a lot easier in post-production. But

the biggest one is rehearsals. There is no dialogue in the film, but the actors would have had a much

easier time getting into character and grasping what it is we were looking for had we been able to have

rehearsals. This is especially true for the second act. During the second act, both characters meet for the

first time. It’s a cheesy, romantic montage that ended up being a really great scene in my opinion. The

actors accomplished exactly what we wanted, but that scene took far longer than we anticipated and

put us behind in our schedule. A large part of it taking so long was because the clouds were messing up

continuity with shadows, but had we rehearsed this part in particular, we could have knocked that scene

out twice as fast.

All in all, it was an amazing experience. Everyone had a blast, and I can’t wait to start the whole

process over again with a new project.