

“The Diving Bell” Research and Development

Introduction

“The Diving Bell” is a short film about three different lifestyles and the consequences that come with them. Each character resembles a lifestyle and its relation to God. None of the characters are Christians, yet each exhibit secular traits that drive them further from God.

Research

The concept for the film came about during a conversation with co-writer Graham Holliday. I wanted to create a short film so I approached him and simply asked if he had any ideas. He suggested a simple concept “a story about people who venture into a house, and disappear”. While the concept seems basic, meaning and story began to fall into every corner of the story. From the characters to the intention behind the driving plot. In the creation of the original story I thought about “what makes a compelling short film?”. I learned “hidden meaning” was the main driver behind a great story. The characters have to be “real” people. It simply is foolish to create a story by itself. I created the characters first. Each character has multiple pages of backstory and thought behind them. After the characters existed, the story began to write itself. Every pen stroke was driven by one thought “what would the character do?” Because of this the story changed so many times it was difficult to keep my cast and crew up to speed on the conceptualization. The story had to represent the characters, not the other way around. I kept editing the script until that idea was realized as perfectly as possible.

Pre Production

Me and my team faced many challenges because of the nature of the film. We had about a month of pre production time and a budget of around \$400.00. The budget grew as donations came in, but because of the fluctuation of the budget it made financial choices very difficult. The main challenge my crew faced was getting locations. My location manager, Enrique Chiriboga, found me about five shooting locations, and secured the one that we wanted within a week's time. Location was something I didn't realize I needed to focus so much on until it got close to principal. Enrique even managed to secure a location we needed mere hours before call time on day two. Most of the pre production time was spent auditioning talent and perfecting the script. The story is so character driven that as I understood my own characters more, I realized the story had to change. I believe a story is purely driven by the characters. If the characters would react to a situation in a particular manner, why should the story go down a different path?

Production

Production was extremely intense. We had less than 15 hours of set time available to us on our first two locations (house and forest). This time was split into a 9 hour day and a 6 hour day. The bulk of the shoot took place in these two locations and lasted two days, totalling just under 16 hours of on set time. The remainder of the shoot consisted of 5 shots that took about 30 minutes to shoot. We shot it at Yorktown beach, which presented a few problems. The tricky part of this scene was timing. We shot it on reading day of the fall 2022 semester. This meant people had exam studying to do. To make this work me, my 1st AD Graham Holliday, and Lorelle Phillips (Kina) left Lynchburg at 3am in order to arrive on set at the break of dawn. We got the 5

shots that we needed and rushed back to Lynchburg for a total of 7 driving hours. My crew helped me significantly when facing these kinds of problems. They were incredibly efficient with their work, and did their jobs without getting in the way of other crew/cast. When they were needed they were available. I couldn't have asked for a better crew.

Post Production

Post production is where I had the most enjoyment in bringing this story to life. To create and assemble the visuals, sound fx, and music was incredibly rewarding. While I handled all of the technical parts of post production, there were a few people who redirected the angle of the story. I completely re-imagined the edit after classmates, Kenzie Greene and Sadye Horst, made some very important suggestions about how the story should be presented visually. I had an initial test screening (film students) which changed some more of the edits and choices I made in post. I had a second test screening (people outside of the entertainment industry) where the audience felt the film was very much completed. After the final corrections I had made with the film student test screening the “average audience” simply enjoyed the film, and had little to no notes on the film.

Summery

Overall, I gathered a lot of knowledge from start to finish. Taking something from just a simple thought and turning it into a reality that people can not only experience, but relate to, and live in is absolutely amazing! Of course I made mistakes, and I missed opportunities, but I just take what I learn, and I grow from it. The ultimate goal of this film was to learn and grow, and I accomplished that, so whatever happens next is simply the cherry on top!