

Taylor Aldridge

Short Film Production

Behind the Scenes of “*Lola*”

The module that was just completed was the Short Film Production module. In this module, we were taught the process of creating a short film idea, developing that idea, pitching the idea, doing research, applying the research, learn and understanding terminology in the filming industry, and then filming the short film. This was my first module in the exchange program, and it was so much fun. In this Process Workbook, I will describe and explain my part in the creation, development, and execution of my group’s short film “*Lola*” and what I learned throughout this module.

The first task we were given was to send in self-tapes to Keiron. We then reviewed them and got feedback on my tape. The advice I was given was to make sure I had a completely blank background behind me. I was also advised to not be afraid to do more in the monologue. I have done self-tapes before in my experience. In Moodle, there was a video that was shared on advice to do self-tapes for film. It advised to keep the camera in a mid-shot (shot from the waist to just above the top of the head), a plain background, and when you’re working with eyelines in self-tapes, to make the person you are look at on the opposite side of the phone if that’s how you are filming (Jordan, 2018). Another important thing we were taught right at the beginning was the difference between stage acting and screen acting. For stage, the size of the actions and the volume of speech are two of the biggest differences. With stage, depending on the size of theatre, the actions of the actor have to be more exaggerated so that everyone can see what’s being done or heard on stage. And for film acting, it does not need to be as exaggerated because the audience

is right there (Acting, n.d.). We were taught these skills as we began the process of creating our short film. My group's project name was "*Lola*."

"*Lola*" is a short film adaptation of the story within the song *Copacabana* by Bary Manilow. Following a girl who auditions for a club in hopes of becoming a star, then learns the business is not as glitz and glamour as she made it out to be. This became the idea that we ended up choosing for our Short Film project. My group did extremely well in working together and delegating tasks. There were some hiccups here and there, but we were able to work past them. At certain points, we ran into problems with running out of time and making sure we got everything together before we needed to present them. We were on top of each other, and we were able to get all of the information and materials done.

The technical tasks that I was delegated to me specifically were writing, props, story board, lighting, and hair design and application. Even though the tasks were given out, we all brought our ideas together and discussed them before writing them down and making them official. A couple of us wrote individual scenes but once we finished, we came together as a group to discuss and mold the script into what we envisioned. I have experience in writing plays but not short films. So, I found a book in the library called *Writing Short Films: Structure and Content for Screenwriters 2nd Edition* by Linda J. Cowgill, as well as an article shared in Moodle called *Perfect Short Film Structure...* by admin. In these articles, I found a lot of helpful advice on how to properly structure scenes for short films. Similar to difference in film and stage acting, Cowgill wrote that "you want to show your story, not tell it" (Cowgill, 2005). The article had some fantastic advice on what to aim for with writing short films. The rules they gave were "Rule 1. Start immediately... Rule 2. Observe the set-up...Rule 3. Enter scenes and start dialogue at breaking points...Rule 4. Remove all non-narrative essential elements." (Admin,

2015). Once we chose the idea and got the script written, we met up with Kieron individually to rehearse and got through the script and shot lists. He helped us understand, simplify, and perfect the final product of our film. We also met with Lloyd to learn film terminology, practicing acting to a camera versus on stage, how to work filming equipment, and understanding different shot types so that we could complete a shot list and story board for our project.

As we began rehearsing with Keiron, we were asked to create details for our character to have for ourselves as well as for the final pitch of the project. My character in this film was named Beatrice or Bea. She is a stubborn and self-centered person who is always rude to everyone no matter what. She has been in corrupt show business for the majority of her life to where she's become numb to the whole situation. The inspiration I had for Bea was Kristen Bell's character *Niki* from *Burlesque*. Her character is very selfish and rude, so I took a lot of inspiration for the character of Bea. I took this character inspiration because I had to play a character that was opposite to my own personality. That was a fun challenge I took on for myself.

Another aspect of our film that made this process a challenge was we decided to make this a period piece. It was set in the 1950's. That gave us an extra challenge for the project to make sure we had period accurate props, costumes, hair and makeup trends, lighting finishes, and locations. For props, we found things like a rotary phone, vintage mirrors, a working record player, and many items that were more time accurate. With the storyboard, we made it a point to know that there would be modern items that we would need to cut out or block in our shoots. We then discussed for the story boards to have more three-fourths shot (shots in the camera from the top of your knees to the top of your head) and mid-shots (shots in the camera from the waist to the top of the head). That so we have a better chance of hiding the modern elements of our locations. *Last Night in Soho* also inspired the shots for our film. We used their montage scene as

inspiration for what we called the ‘trauma montage’ in our film. For lighting, what I really wanted to do, it gives it a vintage aesthetic in the final edit. I mentioned the idea to the group about giving it a vintage, tea-stained finish to the final edit of the film. Similar to how it was in the short film *Whiplash*. This will add a final layer to the period aspect of the film.

The biggest technical element I tackled was the design and application of hairstyles in the film. I found an article from Real Simple that listed popular hair trends of the 1950s for female and male presenting people. There were three trends that I used from this article were Victory rolls which “were iconic during WWII and can be seen in many ‘50s Hollywood films...” (Nafeesah Allen, 2023) , sophisticated waves “also referred as glam waves or Hollywood waves...” (Nafeesah Allen, 2023), and the pompadour which ‘regained popularity in the ‘50s thanks to pin-up girl Betty Grable and Rock n roll entertainer Elvis Presley...” (Nafeesah Allen, 2023). These were the easiest hairstyles and most notable hairstyles that became popular during this time. Researching and styling the hair for this project was one of my favorite parts about it. This was the first time I ever styled shorter hair for male presenting people. I have only styled longer hair before. What this process taught me was that there is a lot of work that goes into the planning and preparation for films. There are so many things you need to take into consideration for every little part of the film.

Filming the short film was the craziest experience I have ever had in my entire life. I was so excited but extremely nervous. However, as I helped with one of the other group’s projects when filming, I saw how helpful and encouraging Keiron and Lloyd were. They helped with some of the choreography so that everyone would be okay and so that it would read better on the camera. This made me less nervous for our filming time because I knew that they would help us out if we could not completely figure out what we wanted to do for a specific scene. We had a

fight scene at the very end and they both helped choreograph it so that it read better on film, and everyone was comfortable. They also taught us how to create a master script for a film and what to add/edit it throughout the filming days. Something we learned about that was extremely helpful to know was how to complete risk assessments for the various locations. It was interesting to learn how to assess the locations and understand the liability risks and how to make sure everyone is safe. I learned how to work a boom microphone and use a clapper board. I have never learned anything close to this back home and I am so excited that I can add that skill to my resume!

After viewing the rushes for the short film, I am glad to say that it turned out a lot better than I expected. There were some parts that were a little disappointing such as my hair and costume in the first dressing room scene. Those didn't turn out well at all and I'm very critical about myself. But overall, everything look so good and I am so excited to see the finished product!

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