

Directing Specialism Report

For this essay, I will be discussing my graduation final year major project short film. I will be talking about the decisions that I had taken and made through the production of my short film "FREEDOM" as the director and producer. How difficult it was to make quick decisions of making the film financially as the producer. And the changes that had to be made due to elements that lead to taking quick decisions on the set which will help to execute my vision as the director of the film. Also, what I have learnt from the whole experience and what errors that the project had that allowed me to take it up words to my next projects in the future.

Pre Production:

The planning of "FREEDOM" short film. Planning and organising everything for this short film was difficult and time-consuming as I was doing everything myself. And not getting the script written on time may have delayed my planning time, but as the director, I did have the whole film in my head and not in written formate. So after a few 1-2-1 meetings with my supervisor, I decided to write a draft version of the script as I can not plan any further without the script. I then received some initial feedback as I been advised to do some changes to my script formate as it contained some errors, and I need to work on the story world more. Took the feedback on board, and I decided to go and co-write it with experienced scriptwriters. My co-writer liked how simple and easy the script is but mainly the story itself. We worked on the script, and it was ready for filming. Now that the script is available it was time to continue with the planning and decide where and when I am going to film, who are my actors will be (getting audition tapes on time) arranging my crew and providing them with all the information that it's needed for them to know. Also, to understand how I am going to shoot the script by getting the schedule sheets done on time.

As I was planning and doing everything by myself, I found it very hard, but I managed to get everything done on time for the shoot. I decided to film on 23rd and 24th March. Managed to secure the location, get audition tapes for my main characters. And update my crew about the shooting, cast, kits required and location including other information needed. Also, get the scene schedule and the shot list all on time for the shoot. As I was doing everything I was asking myself so many types of questions as what kind of shots each scene needs, as the house is on a busy road where the scene takes place, the sort of home the character lives in, costumes and makeup needed for the scenes and what the set dress/design will be required for each scene. I needed to know all this and get it done on time, also update the crew. And if I was not sure what type of camera angles and movements needed I always went back to my DOP for an advise as they know what I am trying to achieve and how I would like each scene to look like.

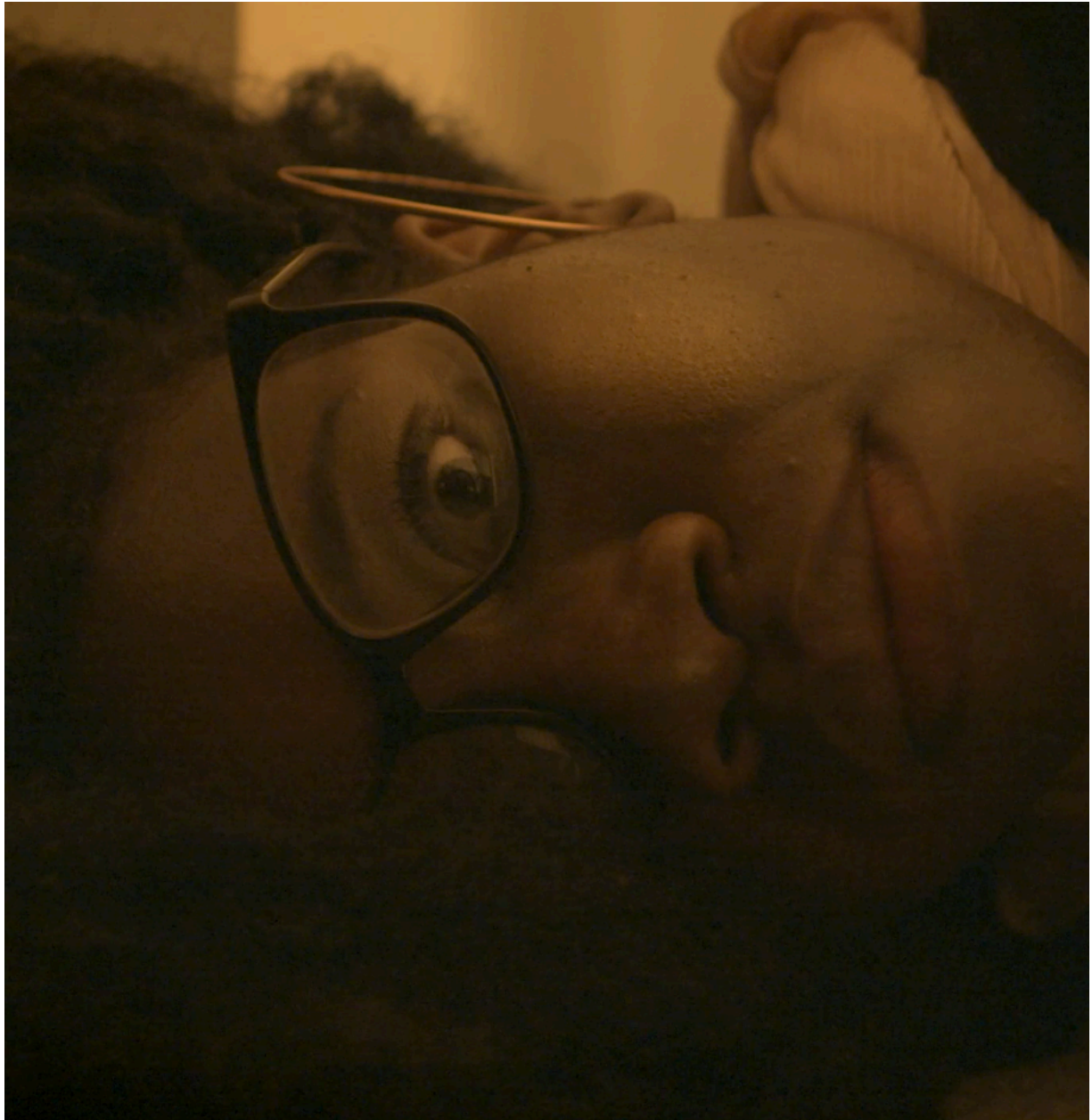
Planning shot list:

As the director, I needed to choose a shot that appropriately shows the emotion played within the scene. Reading the script and trying to imagine in my head how will it look like.

For example, Alia brushing her teeth, doing her makeup, changing her clothes, putting her hijab. I wanted to get these as quick shots, and it would be changing from (wide, medium, close up shots) of the character.



Another example was, filming the last shot, which is also the opening shot of the film. Where Alia is laying on the ground lifeless, it would be nice to do a dolly shot of her on the ground and ending it with a (Close up to Extreme close up) on her face as it would focus on her facial expressions when she starts to breathe again. Wanted to capture all her gestures in the frame as it will get the audience to feel her emotions.



I knew that I should do planning my shots and do it until I have all the factors and elements in each scene that I want is covered. And that it will be my main shot list. As it helped to see and plan where each person stands and where to put and want my camera to be for the shots. It also made it easier for my 1st AC to know or understand where I want to place the camera and the actors.

Furthermore, I needed also to consider my cast and made sure to read the script and go through the lines with them, and most likely to have a rehearsal if there was time availability. As the director of this film, I needed to know some tips and ways for working with actors and know how to direct them to get the idea through my directional perceptions.

For example:

The final scene, when Alia attempts to committing suicide and wanting to take her life

away. I had to tell the actress and direct her on how she should be showing that she is losing breathe and also show her that she also needs to get her both hands facing and directing back words as a sign that all her muscles are tense. And to even explain it more, I had to use some examples and show them myself. Most of the time, it was challenging and over warming trying to explain to the talent how I want the character to feel in some points. And that due to the language barrier and lack of confidence in my own decisions. But besides all that I was able to use whatever experience and knowledge I have to get these talents show and play the characters the way I visioned it to be. And be as clear as I can about the intentions of the characters and directing the action.





Production:

The shooting of my film. This is when everything gets to all happen. Where I get to be making all the decisions, as where should the camera will be and what type of shots I want and require for the scenes, where my actors should stand and how will they say their lines. As the director and the producer, I also needed to make sure that I had enough time and light to ensure that I have covered and got everything I needed. I knew that on the shoot day I needed to follow and use few guidelines for each shot been taken. Plan and discuss with the DOP and the talent as to how I want and think the shot should be looking like. Make sure that I double check on my

camera and shot list as the shoot goes along and make notes if things get to be changed, so it helps to remember when it gets to the editing process. After all that been done, make sure to let the crew set up the shot as I am talking and explaining also rehearsing with the cast to make sure that they are aware of their lines and get them to listen to my instructions. And see if it makes any sense sounds like I imagined it to be or if they are playing the right emotions. Once I was happy with them, and everyone is on board, we go for a take. I also make sure to guide them (cast) through their "BLOCKING" as in where I need them to stand or sit/be positioned and move to. And we go then to rehearse with the camera and the sound, so we all get to be on the same page. And if there are any issues or problems, I ask why it was or what caused it. What can be done by me to resolve it? Maybe they did not get my point or understood what I wanted of them to show. If the shot was too noisy and we were filming too close to the window (ex. shot of Alia getting ready in her room in the morning by her vanity table), and we hear the road. If we can get the sunlight shadow of the wall as it wasn't there before we do retakes just for the sake of continuity wise.

Getting to do real rehearsals of the whole scene on camera as it was real. And make sure that I watch every bit of it on and through the TV monitor as it helped me focus more on the shot and what I can see through that, so I know how to guide them through the action. And if I am happy, I ask to record it. Make sure everything and everyone is up and running for the take and make sure that everyone is set before I call for "Action". And I keep reminding myself that I need to focus only on what I see in the small monitor.

And if I am pleased with how it went, then and only then I say "CUT" when I want it to stop recording, and let everyone that I am happy with how it turned out, and if I need or would like to take another one just in case it's necessary for editing. Most of the time, sound and camera required to retake the shot as the focus was not 100% or it was not loud enough to hear the talents line. And I made sure to allow them to do so. And if I was happy or not, I made sure to communicate it back to them. And give them a reason on why do I need them to reshoot something without saying why and not being careful about. Be very professional and polite but also very clear about what was not right about the whole thing.

As the director, I wanted each scene to be covered in as many shots needed and wanted, but not to the point of shooting more than we need or it required. And make sure that by doing so, there is no time wasted on the shoot day more than it needed and in the edit. This is when planning the scene comes in hand as it will allow us to have every line covered and maybe more than one shot sizes filmed. And in that way, I can create the emotions and the tension needed through the editing process. Finally, make sure to record all the required sound of each shot that requires it so makes it easy to have a variety of sound when it comes to the editing process.

Post Production:

For the editing part, I hired a professional editor who knew what they were doing and helped to get the absolute best vision of my final project. And I needed to have a fresh perspective who can bring something else to this film and who can view the

footages more objectively. I worked alongside the editor and guided them on how I wanted some of the scenes to be done.



For example, on the first cut of the edits, I realised that the cut was not , and it looked like a glitch, and the sound was not synced with the footage. Feedback this to the editor, and he also realised that he missed it and it was fixed by using other footages we reshot on that day. The type of equipment used to edit this film needed a professional editor who is experienced and trained to work fast enough to be productive. And of course, I made sure that I provide all the instructions needed for

the film to look as I wanted it to be. After working on the feedback, the editor sends me the final edits, and it actually looked professional, and my vision was executed very well, and the outcomes were successful.