

UAL Level 3 Extended Diploma in Creative Media (Unit 13) Final Evaluation

(Number of words: approx. 750)

Student name: Connor James Norton
Critically evaluate a media project against the agreed requirements and parameters.
1 Proposal:
<p>For my Final Major Project, I wanted to write the long-lasting effects of Post-Traumatic-Stress-Syndrome. I wanted to explore with the fact that having PTSD/PTSS is not a short-term thing.</p> <p>If anything, I think this is my first proposal that isn't over ambitious. I think because PTSD is something I have had, and to a degree, still do, it made writing the script easier for me than having to write about something in which I have no real knowledge in. The idea to incorporate a terror attack into my story was part of the research I did for PTSD and one of its causes.</p> <p>There were many changes to my script, mainly regarding the genders of my characters. This is something I will detail more later on.</p>
2 Sources
<p>The range of sources I used for my film, varied from speaking to actual survivors terror attacks, (I interviewed a survivor of July 7th attacks, which was the basis for my film, but never actually mentioned the attack by name, out of respect of those effected.) talking to actual therapists and even looking over my own therapy notes from when I had Post-Traumatic-Stress-Syndrome. I also watched many video's of people who have survived a terror attack. (That's a tough watch!)</p> <p>One of the video's I used a lot for my research was the TED SYDNY talk by 7/7 survivor Gill Hicks, in which she goes into detail about her experience that day, I did try contacting her, to speak to her in more detail about that day, but during the time of writing to her, she was in Australia and she said that she would get back to me when she returned. To this day, I've heard nothing. As she was such a huge inspiration for the film, I included a 'With thanks to' credit for her in the final production.</p> <p>Did I use the most visually interesting sources? There's not really a lot that's visually interesting when it comes to looking up PTSD or terror attacks, So, I'm not entirely sure how to answer that one.</p> <p>As I went along, I researched ways to film two-way conversations, looking at the film 'WILD' starring Reece Wetherspoons, the movie 'Shame' with Michael Fassbender, and one particular scene in the tv show 'The Blacklist', which was a scene where the main character (<i>James Spader</i>) is delivering a monologue with the camera moving closer to his face. This was a shot I tried to do in my film, but was not successful. All of these scenes were inspiration for how I was going to film my final production.</p> <p>If anything, I wish I was allowed access to my own therapy notes. Once I knew I was going to be doing a film regarding PTSD and having my main characters friend die, I reached out to my own therapist whom I saw when my own friend passed. Originally, the service was happy to allow me access to my notes, but when asked about who would see them, (Fay, the examiner and maybe Elena.) They weren't so forthcoming. Apparently, because a third party. (the examiner) would be seeing them, they thought it would be best if they didn't release me my notes.</p> <p>This was something that really annoyed me as I really wanted to use them for my research.</p>
3 Development of ideas:
<p>When it came to developing my ideas, the first thing I looked at was a list of reasons that people develop Post-Traumatic-Stress-Syndrome. I found a list of most common reasons on the NHS website, I then looked at each one individually and decided weather or not I should right about them.</p>

When I knew I would be writing about a terrorist attack, I decided to watch as many programs about terror attacks as I could. I found many of them on YouTube, as well as Amazon and Netflix.

When I knew it was going to be a therapy session, I reached out to multiple counseling services and asked to speak to whomever they had in charge of their retrospective trauma services. I spoke to them about what I wanted to do, and they told me how they would go about the situation and dealing with the situation.

Once I knew I wanted my therapist to actually be the dead friend that the client is talking about, I went through the script and tried to make sure whatever the therapist was saying, would also be what the friend was saying.

After I had my plan all written out, things kind of progressed quite quickly, for the first part of planning that is. I got my script written, I'd spoken to Georgina and then deities the script to make it more life like. I also took notes from the SYDNEY TED TALK with Gill Hicks, to get as much of an understanding as I could.

Once I knew I wanted a female actress in her 30's, I went online to *BackstageCasting.com* and posted the job on there and if anyone would want to apply. The day after, I had a few offers. I made it really clear that this was going to be an unpaid job. A fact that they all were fine with. Until they weren't.

Honestly, I don't think I managed my time well. I spent quite a while on writing the actual script and not enough time finding actors and or locations. If I spent less time trying to get the script 'perfect' then maybe, just maybe, things wouldn't have gone to hell.

The action plan I had, was, in my opinion, not successful. (This is turning out to be an awful thing for self-learning!) It wasn't successful mainly because everything just fell flat on its face. First actors fell through, then the location, and then my will to live.

Contextual links

There were many links that I used that made my film more realistic, as I've said above. I wouldn't say there were any particular film makers that inspired me, if there any then it would be Katherine Bigelow, whom I looked at for my Authorship report. I took some of her styles and incorporated them into my film, I used the slow-motion effect on the opening found footage, the use of non-diegetic sound as I had more of the found footage playing, and then the final scene of the film was handheld.

The connections I made, have been mentioned above.

I think it's important to look at others work as it may spark something inside of you that you may be able to add to your own film.

Problem solving

I wouldn't say there were many problems in the early stages, i.e. The script, but the major problems I had with the film making, were my actors and also the TV studio, honestly, that isn't a nice room to film in!

Three of my actors had not been successful, one moved back to Canada without telling me, one got a paid job and the one actress I actually really liked for the role, well she phoned me (the day before we're meant to begin filming!) and said that she wasn't able to do it. So there I was, actress less.

Once I lost my actress, I started to think about how I could still make the film work, with a younger actress, then it hit me. It didn't really matter how old the actress was.

So then I re-wrote the script. (for the fifth time!) and started looking for a younger woman, I later found one from the first year. This all meant that I had to postpone filming until I'd found my actress. Oh and I could only use the therapy room on a Monday and Friday, so that limits that.

When it came to filming, I had to film the whole thing twice, as the first version wasn't the best. This was a blow to me, as even though the first version was awful, to re-film it, it meant I only had two days. I honestly thought the world was ending.

I began filming in the half term, a whole ten days after my original desired shoot date.

When I filmed the first version of the film, I filmed in the studio. When it came to filming the second, I filmed in the college's actual therapy room, this had been my original location but then ActorGate happened and, to be honest, that week is a blur! I don't remember much of it!

Filming in the therapy room meant that I could shoot the film the way I wanted it to be filmed. I could have the room looking as I wanted it to look and more importantly, it LOOKS like a therapist's office!

6 Development of skills

I would say the big thing for me during this project, was using the SONY camera. It's not one I'd used before, but when it came to filming, I thought I'd use it to give the film a more professional look. Using the camera for the first time, was difficult but fun. They all basically work the same, turn on, open lenses cap, make sure the scene you want is in focus, then hit record.

Another thing that I learned is about how to color grade in Premier Pro, been here four years, but never needed to colour grade. I needed to colour grade because every time the camera was on Olivia, the girl from Y1, it looked as though she was jauntiest. So with the help of Steve Harvey, he showed me how to match the colour. I enjoyed learning this as it was something I had never done before and will most likely need to know for university.

Outcomes

Successful outcome? I'm alive! I made it through! I'm finished! Oh and the film actually looks really good. I think it got through to people that one, PTSS can stay with you for a while even after thirteen years, for the sake of the film. But it's true, it doesn't go away overnight. If there is anything I would've changed, it would be to learn my lines. I'm not sure if it shows in the film, but both Olivia and I were reading.

A second thing would be to film with two cameras. I know this has been told to me as something that was really hard, but so was moving a big massive camera from two different angles, and the space we had, wasn't exactly the biggest.

8 Retrospect

In retrospect, the one thing I've learned is to never think everything is going to run smoothly. This Final, Final project, and this year has had its ups and downs. I had actress, then I didn't and then I did again, I had a location, but then I didn't and then I did again.

Things can always be seen as a positive no matter how negative they seem.

9. Conclusion

In conclusion, good word, I think this final major project has been both eye opening and inspiring as it allowed to meet with new people whom have had the worst thing happen to them, but yet they've not let it get in the way of living their lives and for that, I have a huge respect and admiration for them.

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS SECTION:

Main production roles that I took in my production (e.g. producer, director, camera operation):

Writer, actor, producer, camera operator, director, editor, colorist.

Additional production work, if appropriate:

List other roles that you took for other student productions:

Student name/Production Name

Your production role/s (e.g. camera, actor)

Student signature:

Date:

Connor James Norton.