

# Production Design Skills Unit 3 Media



NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

## Production Exercises

In VCE Media, the production exercises that precede your major project are an opportunity to develop your skill in the use of media technology—exploring technical equipment, media processes and the aesthetic qualities of the media form or genre you've decided to work in. Keep in mind that your two production exercises are not mini-productions. They should be contained activities that develop specific skills.

As a Media student, you need to practice using the equipment and making films, experiment layout for print, take photographs, use software programs at every opportunity. The more time you spend using the equipment, the more mistakes you're going to make, the more you're going to learn about the pre and post production process.

Your Production Exercises must be clearly labelled Production Exercise 1 and Production Exercise 2. To achieve a satisfactory grade, they must include an intention and evaluation.

The production exercises you complete for Unit 3 are graded as part of CRITERION 2 for your School Assessed Task. Further information about the assessment of the Production Exercises can be found on the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority's VCE Media page.

### **FROM the Study Design:**

Students develop production skills that inform the production, design and development of a media product. They record their learning in documented research, annotated production activities, experiments, exercises and reflections.

Experimentation and documentation of the use of relevant media equipment, technologies and processes to inform the design of a media production.

## IDEAS FOR PRODUCTION EXERCISES

The best production exercises will allow you to develop a deeper understanding of your selected media form, allowing you to explore the aesthetic qualities and technical equipment you will use to complete your production. You need to think carefully about the production you plan to undertake, including the skills, processes and technology that you will use.

### Video

- **Camera.** The production exercise is a great opportunity to learn the features of the camera that you're going to use for your production. If you're using a digital SLR, this is your opportunity to learn how to use different lenses and aperture settings. If you're shooting on something like a mobile phone, it might be worthwhile exploring options for stabilising the camera.
- **Camera movement.** Think carefully about the type of camera techniques you need to use in your film. Perhaps you'd like to have a dolly in or a crane shot. The production exercises are a terrific opportunity to practice these skills.
- **Focus.** Digital SLRs provide greater scope for using depth of field and focus than traditional video cameras. Complete a production exercise involving focus or shallow depth of field.
- **Editing.** If you're making a film, you will need to learn how to use your editing software. Shoot a practice scene and edit together in the editing software that you're going to use.
- **Lighting.** Plan to use a particular lighting effect in your film? The production exercise is an excellent opportunity to explore how you're going to achieve these lighting effects. You don't need expensive lighting rigs to light a scene. Use natural light and practical light sources, such as desk lamps and overhead lights, to illuminate your subject. If you're planning to film scenes at night, you could practice achieving the day-for-night look favoured by Hollywood.

- **Sound.** Think about the technology you've got to record sound, which might include the camera's on-board microphone, lapel mics or shotguns. What will you do to ensure that you record clear and usable dialogue? Use the production exercise as an opportunity to explore the equipment you are going to use to record sound.
- **Music.** Finding music for your film can sometimes be difficult. Use one of the production exercises to develop an understanding of how to use music software such as Garageband, Logic or FL Studio.
- **Dialogue.** Learn how to plan, block, compose and shoot dialogue by filming a conversation between two people. Make sure that you get enough coverage by shooting each line of dialogue at different shot sizes. Ensure you capture cut ins, cutaways and noddies to help you edit the sequence together.
- **Colour correction.** Colour correction and colour grading is an important part of post-production. Sometimes when you shoot a scene, the white balance on your camera may not be set correctly, resulting in a shot that is too blue or yellow. Most editing software – including Final Cut and Premiere – includes colour correction tools which allow you to adjust the colour and saturation of clips. Shoot a series of shots, deliberately changing the white balance then correct the resulting footage in your editing software.
- **Colour grading.** Colour grading involves creating a visual style for your film. Ever noticed how The Matrix has a slight green tint or the films of Tony Scott have a yellow hue? This is colour grading in action. Shoot a series of shots and investigate how you can use colour correction filters to achieve a particular look.
- **Foley.** The soundtrack is one of the most important aspects of your film. Filmmakers record foley sounds for a number of reasons. When shooting on location, there are often noises that interfere with the shoot which means that sounds such as footsteps have to be recorded later. Sometimes the sounds recorded on location don't suit the tone of your film. If you're making a horror film, for example, you might want a door to make an

ominous screeching as it opens. Sounds like these will have to be recorded in post-production and synced with the footage. Use one of your production exercises to shoot a short sequence, replacing the sounds captured on location with your own foley sounds.

- **Sound editing.** Record a conversation and explore the possibility of using audio editors to improve the quality of your soundtrack. Audio editors like Audacity and Adobe Audition allow you to amplify sounds and reduce noise. Learn how to use this software to ensure that your audio is perfect!
- **Special effects.** Do you need to achieve a particular special effect in your film? Perhaps you need to learn how to create a matte painting or shoot against a green screen. Use one of your production exercises to practice achieving this technique.
- **Matching on action.** If you haven't made a narrative film before, you will need to practice using a technique called matching on action. Matching the action between two shots allows you create a seamless bridge between two pieces of footage.

## DOCUMENTARY

- **Interview.** Find someone to interview for your documentary. Write a series of open-ended interview questions and practice asking questions that elicit a detailed response. Consider using rule of thirds to compose these shots. When lighting the subject, think about how you can use available lighting, including desk lamps and natural light to illuminate the subject of your interview.
- **B-roll.** In a documentary, nothing is more tedious than lingering on a talking head for too long. During your interview, you will need to engage the audience by cutting to b-roll footage. Once you have interviewed a subject, practice filming appropriate b-roll footage that suits this purpose. Think about how you can use composition, colour, focus, depth of field and camera movement to make these shots more interesting.

- **Vox pops.** If you plan to use vox pops in your documentary, get some practice by completing vox pops for your production exercise. Head out and record people's responses to a particular question. Practice framing and lighting your shots correctly. Work out how you are going to record pristine audio on location.
- **Lower thirds.** In documentaries, the title that appears beneath an interview subject is called a 'lower third'. One of your production exercises might involve designing a lower third title and incorporating it with footage of an interview subject.
- **Editing.** If you have filmed an interview for one of your production exercises, edit this together with b-roll footage to mask edits and awkward camera movements.

## DOCUMENTING YOUR PRODUCTION EXERCISES

The documentation for your production exercises will include an intention, which outlines what you hope to achieve during the exercise and a realisation, which explains what you have learned. Your production exercise cannot be used in the final production in any way. However, the skill you have obtained can.

### WRITING YOUR INTENTION

The intention for each of your production exercises will include a discussion of style, aesthetic qualities, technical equipment, media processes. It will also include, as appropriate, planning documentation such as scripts or storyboards.

When you are writing your intention, consider:

- **Style and aesthetic qualities.** What are the aesthetic qualities I will be exploring in this exercise? These aesthetic qualities might relate to an aspect of your production exercise such as framing or lighting. If you are filming an interview, for example, you might explain how you are going to conventionally frame up each of the shots using rule of thirds. If you are filming a conversation, you might explain how you are going to use conventions like look room and headroom. Exploring the lighting typically used in film noir? You would comment on how you are going to achieve this style of lighting.
- **Technical equipment.** What technical equipment are you going to use? Include a relevant description of the technical equipment you intend to use. It is not necessary to include long descriptions of the camera's features unless they are relevant to your production. If you are using a digital SLR, for example, you might comment on how you are going to use lenses and aperture to achieve a particular look. If you are using a

microphone to capture dialogue or sound effects, you might comment on how you will configure it correctly when recording these sounds.

- **Media processes.** Explain how you intended to use and develop your understanding of media processes, such as editing or colour correction, in the completion of this exercise.
- **Planning documentation.** Your production exercise must include any planning documentation, such as scripts, shotlists and storyboards.
- **References.** If you are exploring new techniques and processes in the completion of your exercise, it might be necessary to find out further information from manuals, books or online tutorials. In your intention, provide a commentary on how you intend to use these resources when completing your production exercise. Include an alphabetised list of resources at the end of your intention.

## UNDERTAKING YOUR PRODUCTION EXERCISE

Keep a record of what you are doing while you complete your production exercise. This might include diagrams, photographs, screenshots or notes.

If you are completing an exercise in colour grading, for example, you might take screenshots of the settings that you use to achieve particular effects. Likewise, if you are taking a series of photographs, you might keep a record of the shutter speed, aperture and white balance.

Remember, you are completing this exercise to become more familiar with the aesthetic qualities, media processes and technology you plan to use in your production. Keeping a record of how you achieved this during your production exercise will help you out later on. It will also make writing your evaluation much easier.



## WRITING YOUR EVALUATION

The evaluation of your production exercise is a summary of what you have learned by undertaking the exercise. It is not sufficient to simply say you achieved your intention. A good evaluation will provide a detailed commentary on the aesthetic qualities, technical equipment and media processes that you explored.

When you are writing your evaluation, consider:

- **Style and aesthetic qualities.** How well did you achieve the style or aesthetic qualities that you hoped to achieve? How will you use or modify this approach in your production?
- **Technical equipment.** What did you learn about the operation of technical equipment? Technically, what do you need to be more aware of for the production? Are there issues you need to address before undertaking the production?
- **Media processes.** Do you need to modify or change your approach to media production processes? Is there a better way to go about your production? What do you need to learn more about?
- **Further research.** If you faced difficulties in the completion of your production exercise, explain how you will address this when you complete your production.

## **SAMPLE PRODUCTION EXERCISE #1**

### **Intention**

As my main focus for this exercise is in colour correction and the special effects within transitions. I will need to test and co-ordinate sequences that achieves these experiments effectively.

### **Colour Correction**

Firstly I will begin by shooting a variety of shots on both the GoPro and the Canon Hv40. The use of two cameras here will allow me to see which camera is more suitable for each given scene in my film. Then by experimenting with a variety of colour correction tools I will enhance the visual aspect of each shot. I intend to colour correct this in Adobe After Effects with a variety of tools (levels, RGB curves, brightness and contrast and blurs). After this process I will cut the footage on an angle allowing a small corner of the raw footage to be viewed, creating a contrast from the before and after. By experimenting with a variety of colour correction techniques, I will establish the best approach to colour correct my footage.

### **Special Effect Transitions**

Through the use of a point of view shot I will attempt to establish the best methods of linking two shots together. These transitions are crucial for my production of "Transition", as they are the backbone for the narrative. Through the use of roto-scoping, cross fading and motion blur I will develop a variety of different alternatives methods to achieve the transition. This will be done in adobe after effects, which will provide me with a variety of choices in regards to these options.

I intend to shoot footage on a canon Hv40 and a Go Pro basically focusing on a point of view shot. In each sequence there will be two shots, with one in another completely different location that would allow me to create the transition. What I aim to achieve is a smooth flowing transition that seems both faultless and believable. I would like the effect to seem simple and not to basic as it is essential for the films development as a narrative.

## **Realisation & Evaluation**

### **Colour Correction**

During the colour correction process, it became quite obvious that it was going to become a key component in my films post production. As I had shot a variety of shots, both indoors, outdoors and underwater, I had to establish particular hues and colour correction templates for a given scene. This worked extremely well, as I had to compensate for given natural light and artificial light. The only thing that may need to be improved on is how I colour correct each given camera (Canon Hv40.. GOPRO). This I found to be an issue as each camera, had different levels of background noise, therefore requiring more contrast.

### **Special Effect Transitions**

The transitions themselves was quite a lengthy process to create as the both required Roto scoping in after effects. The first one I tried out was rather complex as I focused on opening a door to an aerial view of suburbia. This required a large amount of roto-scoping as I had shot this in handheld. I placed a picture below this layer in after effects, motion tracked it to the scene. Although the final product did not look particularly convincing, I established that I will have to use a green screen rather than the roto-scoping method. This I believe will create the effect I required without the jittery drawback from roto-scoping. The second transition, involved an underwater transition to a bathtub which will be shot on the GoPro. This involved me filming an underwater shot as the camera rose to the surface, then cutting suddenly to a point of view shot from the bathtub. This effect was done through rotoscoping , motion blur and cross fading inside Adobe After Effects. The only thing that I would like to improve from this process, is how quickly I cut to the bathtub. Ideally I would have liked to linger on the water surface slower, which can be achieved through a slower camera movement to the surface. But overall I was extremely happy with the final result in this Production Exercise 1.

### **Conclusion**

I am particularly happy with the outputted result for Production Exercise 1 .The only thing I would change if I had the chance would be to take my time a lot more when it came to shooting the underwater sequences as I felt that I rushed them , which showed in the final output.

# A quick snap shot

BEFORE the exercise...

## INTENTION:

Explain in detail your specific intentions for this task, by discussing each of the following points:

- **What** you plan to **do**.
- What **media equipment** and/or **processes** you plan to use.
- Why it is a **relevant** and **worthwhile** exercise to complete in preparation for your production task.
- What you intend to **achieve**.

AFTER the exercise...

## EVALUATION:

**Evaluate** what you accomplished in your exercise by discussing the following:

- Explain the **results** of the exercise, so what you **produced**, what was actually **achieved**.
- Explain if and how your **intentions** were **realised**, explaining *to what extent* they were realised.
- Explain what you **learned** from the exercise.
- Explain how what was or was not achieved or learned has impacted on your **planning** for the production.

