Documentary Reflection: Essay On Production Proposal

Production Proposal

The documentary was made by our group of five, it was decided that Felix would be the Cinematographer because of his expertise with camera operation, Henry would be the Screenwriter and Riley would be the sound designer. Lucas and I were having a hard time choosing between editor or director, but due to us noticing that he wouldn't be available during the planned filming session because of a trip to Japan we decided that he would be the editor and I would take the role of director. We all gave suggestions of interesting people who may be available to be the focus of the documentary, I told the group about a guy I knew named Bob Jones and they seemed to think it would be a good idea. I met Bob one day while trying a VR demo and he gave me his card. I chose to interview him because of his previous work experience in the animation industry and because his house is a really interesting place to get B-roll as it is full of memorabilia and pieces of unique art. As the director it was my duty to handle communications and make sure that everyone was available on a certain day for filming. We wanted to create a documentary that focuses heavily on the emotional and personal side and that followed the style of either a personal documentary or an interview you might see on TV. We also decided to call our group the Bob Squad.

Pre-Production

Our team collaborated to find an interesting subject for the film. When I mentioned Bob to the group everyone seemed very interested and decided that it would be a great idea to interview him. I coordinated with the screenwriter to write some questions for interview that would go over who he is, what he does, and anything else we thought would elicit good reactions or interesting dialogue to use in the video. I messaged Bob to coordinate the date for he was available for filming with the team. The only day that seemed to be available was the 7th of October as everyone was either away or just not available on every other day leading up to it. Bob's main form of communication is email so I made sure to keep a professional tone because I wanted to be as professional as possible so as not to send any wrong information and make sure the dates were as clear as possible.

Figure 1 Email to Bob Jones

Production

I planned with the group to meet at my house and then to drive over to Bob's house to film the interview. The editor and sound designer were unable to show up because one was in Japan and the other was called to a choir rehearsal last minute. I think that in the end, only 3 crew members worked out well as the roles missing were more on the post-production side of things and having them on a relatively small set may have felt cramped. I called Bob Jones on the day to ensure his availability. We created a small mock lighting setup at my house to test sound and video to make sure that we wouldn't need to ask any questions again as it may change the feel of the response compared to the others. Helped with the setup of some equipment and helped

to mitigate background noise. Due to how hot the day was we had to keep the doors open which let in the sounds of distant passing cars and there was a fan left on. At one point during filming, I had to keep a dog from walking through the set and making noise. After filming the cinematographer and I walked around his house taking B-roll of his trinkets and memorabilia. We also got some shots of Bob flipping through some of his art journals from his time at Halfbrick. Bob remarked that we were just as professional as other more experienced film crews he had seen during his time at Halfbrick due to how quickly we had set up our equipment and from the level.

Figure 2 Screenwriter on set

Post-Production

Worked with editor and screenwriter to piece together documentary story arc. I tried to get the editor to give some input on what he thinks the theme or mood of the documentary should be considering his abilities as an editor, but he was adamant that as the editor it was not his job to do that. With the help of the screenwriter we pieced together a story arc emotional sandwich to aid the editor. We wanted to start and end on a high note and have some kind of sad part in the middle to make it dynamic and interesting. Continually checked in with editor to see where he was in the editing process. The editor put the video into separate segments to bridge and asked my opinion on which ones to keep and which ones to put in. I wanted to add a lot more than what was in the draft the editor made but sadly there was not enough time in the 5 minutes. At least we didn’t have the problem of not enough footage.

Critique

The planning for the filming could have been better as I forgot to specify a time for everyone to arrive at my house to check equipment. The footage itself was good and the responses Bob gave were interesting, but he paused when speaking which was annoying for the editor. Another problem was that the cinematographer filmed in 4K and at some point when filming the B-roll accidentally set the camera to slow motion making it hard to edit. The lighting was fine but due to the wind sometimes blowing through the front door it caused the diffuser to sway and nearly get in the frame. There was also a mirror behind Bob that we didn’t notice but thankfully the aspect ratio cut it out but left very little space to move the camera around. As the director I feel I could have given more input to the group and been more useful on set, I brought my own equipment for the interview but none of it was used which made me feel kind of useless.

Reflection

I didn’t really know my crew members before this project, I had just noticed an opportunity to be the 5th member in their group and took it. Because of this, it made my role of director challenging as I wanted to make a good impression, but I sometimes found myself lacking in certain aspects. I imagine that Bob’s willingness to be a part of the documentary was helped by the fact that I knew him before and so it wasn’t some complete strangers coming into his house to interview him.