Two and a half years ago I started as an undergraduate studying BA Digital Media Production at the Arts University College Bournemouth, which from 2013 has become the Arts University Bournemouth. I was convinced at the start of my degree that I would concentrate my studies and project work on web-related topics and eventually graduate some three years later as a website designer. But, thanks to a chance meeting with a guest lecturer from the professional film industry; my studies, my project work and future career interests have taken a radically different path.

This key first lecture had a very simple concept; divided up into small groups, each one would write, create a storyboard/shot list and edit/produce a 2-minute short film by the end of the day using the lyrics of a song for inspiration. Our group had the chorus from KT Tunstall’s, ‘Black Horse & A Cherry Tree’. For the production the technical parameters were set as follows - we were restricted to using a mobile phone to film, but we would have access to a suite of iMac’s all running Adobe Creative Suite CS5 for editing, which meant we could use iMovie or Premier Pro CS5. I remember my only concern at the time was ‘where are we going to find a horse’ but, of course, we found one in the end.

I wondered about the mobile phone restriction for the project when we had access to several Sony HVR-Z5E Camcorders, but now I can see that this limitation was put in place in order to generate creativity. It would have been so easy to use the camcorders with their zoom lenses to capture the image of a horse from afar. But with just a mobile phone we ended up sneaking up on a horse in a damp field, armed only with a recently purchased apple from the University Refectory to tempt the horse close and so get the shots we needed.
needed. By the end of the day I was hooked. In less than a day we had created a short 2-minute film, filmed in HD (on my Sony Ericsson W995), edited in Premiere Pro CS5 and it is the preferred editing tool for our course, although we do have access to different shot for each beat of the music. Capturing to a different shot for each beat of the music. Modern editing trends mean rapid cuts, especially in an action film. These cuts add to the dramatic effect, the quicker the cut the faster the pace of the film.

The choice of music is important too. I’d already researched the perfect soundtrack with a beat to match the movement, building up to a crescendo at the end, which was perfect for this type of on-screen action.

Towards the end of the editing process is the time to add special effects (if required) and also work on any colour grading.

Get feedback
It is always a good idea to preview your film to a group of friends before going public with your latest creation. I usually upload my film to YouTube as unlisted and then send the link to friends for their comments. Typically, based on the feedback, I fully expect to have to do several changes to the final edit before the film is ready to go public. For University assessment we present our films to our peers for critique. This is when you find out if it’s good, could be better, or it’s a real stinker. But no matter whether the feedback is positive or negative, learn from it. This can only help you to be a better filmmaker.

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