

MAD Film and Television 12

A2: Shooting an Improvised Film

Name: _____

Assignment Synopsis:

We need to have a plan to shoot a short film, but we don't plan on locking down the actors with lines that they need to rehearse. This is a group effort and you are all actors in this short movie you are making, as well as camera people. I will have the Theatre Production crowd help out, as well.

Here are the steps to shooting an improvised film:

Start With a Strong Outline

Identify what your film is about, who the characters are, and what is at stake for them. Outline each scene with the location, cast, and ultimate purpose. Each major cast member should have a written backstory to help guide and justify their actions. The more preparation you do ahead of time, the more freedom the actors will have on the day of the shoot.

Find Your Collaborators

Even more so than traditional filmmaking, improv cinema is an intensely collaborative process, and it takes a flexible and open-minded person to truly excel at it. Recruit your cast and crew with that in mind.

Schedule Time for Rehearsal

A strong actor isn't necessarily a gifted improviser, and it's important to leave time for your cast members to develop trust and a sense of familiarity with one another before you go to camera. Consider having your actors improv scenes that won't appear in your film but are significant parts of their back story. A scene that explores where the characters first met, or shared a secret, or had their first big fight will contribute to the depth of their performance during the actual shoot.

Have a Multi-cam Setup

One of the greatest assets of improvisational cinema is also its greatest challenge: every take is going to be different. Shoot with a minimum of two cameras to ensure you get enough coverage and options for editing.

What to do:

1. Create a strong outline! Why not have something that is no more than five scenes long, gets to the business of the movie and leaves the actors enough to play with.
2. Let the actors work out how these characters interact and sound around each other.
3. Shoot a single scene, with two cameras, so you have a variety of angles to play with.
4. List what you'll need to make this film happen- gear, lighting, place, etc..
5. Don't edit the film, let's see what the original and the edited versions look like after you've played around.

Curriculum	4
Reflect on personal experiences and make connections to a variety of film and television productions	Looking at film and tv scenes, you have interesting dynamics that you have found to imitate in your film
Document, share, and respond to moving images	You are able to look at the materials you are researching and make solid notes of what you are looking to imitate, or adapt for the project
Express and analyze personal voice as a moving-image artist	You are putting a strong outline for the actors to use, and using editing to finish off your own voice for the film