

## Candidate 4 evidence

**Please note:** The short film produced as part of this assignment with filename *AssignmentProjectAlchemyvideo.mp4* is on SQA's secure website and can be accessed through your SQA Coordinator.

### Higher Media Assignment 2018-19

**Brief:**

You are going to create either a trailer for a new horror film OR a horror short film. You can choose which sub-genre of horror you would most like to create. You will work as part of a group, but each group member must plan and develop a section of the trailer/film that can be identified as their own work. Each individual segment should last around 30 seconds and be made up of at least 5 scenes. Your group will then come together to combine segments or scenes to create the finished product.

**Target Audience:**

You should agree a suitable target audience for your product, bearing in mind the institutional constraints you will have to operate within.

**Level of Finish:**

You are to create a film trailer OR short film. As part of your planning you will produce storyboards, but it is expected that your finished product will be a film trailer / short film. You will have access to HD camcorders and tripods as well as basic editing software (iMovie). You may use your own cameras and software if you wish.

## Creative Intentions In Response to the Brief

### **Brief:**

*Working as part of a small production group, you must plan, create and evaluate a short horror film / film trailer.*

*You may select your own sub-genre, target audience, age rating, and production roles.*

I aim to create a film trailer that fulfills these criteria, the sub-genre being psychological horror and the target audience being mid-teens. We choose the form of a film trailer as we believed our ambitions for any short film would not be able to be met. If we were to use the form of a trailer, we would be able to have more of a variety of shots and uses a broader range of film techniques as all the shots would not need to make complete sense and flow together. I plan to take the role of cinematographer and director in my own scenes. I feel this is a good selection of roles as traditionally the role of cinematographer and director were one. I believe that holding both of these roles will enable me to better visualize my final vision.

I aim to make the trailer effective and suspenseful. It will have the ability to draw a viewer in, using horror techniques to create a mystique about the scene that the audience will be drawn into. I will achieve this by drawing on sound, light and camera techniques that are commonly found in the horror genre – this includes low-key lighting, a jarring sound track, high use of diegetic sound and a shaky camera. I feel that these pieces of techniques, that are often found within the horror genre, would attract an audience of horror fans that would enjoy the film.

I will be working a small group of people (3) and we will aim to film within the confines of our school hours. This means that we will have to work within the instructional confines of our school. We have delegated each other roles within the production of the film, with the occasional overlap in roles for different sections of the film. We hope this will lead to a more focused and task orientated production. I will, as previously mentioned, be taking on the roles of Cinematographer and Director in my own scenes and my peers will be taking on the roles of location scouts - location finding and clearing - and editor - postproduction.

Our budget will be low, to non-existent, so we will be looking to spend no money on the production, meaning that we will borrow equipment and resources from within our school. This limits the props and wardrobe of our production. Filming within the school is not ideal as we are confined by the institute's rules, but filming within our school's confines also gives us the ability to recruit students to be our actors and gives us clear times when we can film.

Overall my aim is to create a film trailer that showcases as many horror techniques that I can. I hope to create something that is recognizably a horror trailer. This means I will use techniques ranging from low-key lighting to diegetic sound. I want to capture the unease and tension many horror trailers have created.

## Content Research 1

### Ib

In my content research I watched and analysed the trailers for *The Sleep Experiment* and *The Nun*. These two horror movie trailers have inspired some ideas for the trailer I plan to make as part of this media course.

*The Nun* and *The Sleep Experiment*'s trailers use a variety of film techniques to attract an audience of horror fans, such as the amplification of diegetic sounds.

For instance in *The Nun* the sound of something running has been amplified within the trailer, this amplification then moves to the creaking of an oil lamp effect. Similarly *The Sleep Experiment*'s trailer starts with the sound of a reel to reel tape recorder running. This sets the tone for the trailer and builds tension. These uses of diegetic sound helps to set up jump scares as the audience is drawn into the sound and are paying close attention to the scene waiting for it to happen. It keeps the viewer on the edge of their seat and promises them that the movie will do the same. That's why diegetic sounds draw in a horror viewing audience as the focus on sound is a useful and well used tool within the horror genre. Therefore I plan to use the diegetic sound of a can rolling over a floor, after the character have entered the scene, to achieve this effect.

*The Nun*'s trailer also uses a sound track to create a sense of suspense, and build atmosphere, though the use of high pitched eerie humming/chanting – this occurs shortly after the zooming of the castle and follows our, presumed, main character deeper in to the castle. This helps expand the religious themes and creates a horror atmosphere. Other than the sound track the trailer also uses Non-diegetic sounds to create suspense at key moments. The use of a high pitched/unnerving sound track helps to attract a horror audience as it helps to build and release tension and shows that tension will be created and used throughout the film. *The Sleep Experiment* also uses a sound track to build a sense of tension with a low-profile in the beginning which is used to build up nearer the end into a loud and exciting crescendo to silence. This build suspense then allows the viewer to want more, through its sudden end. I plan to use a mixture of diegetic sounds and an overarching sound track to build suspense – for instance the creaking of a door or the rolling of can unaccompanied while every frame around it has a sound track, creating a contrast.

*The Nun* uses a variety of editing techniques to enhance the trailer footage. One such technique is the use of jump cuts to change the scene slightly. There are two examples of this; one cut is used to replace a painting of the nun with the Nun and the other is used to make the Nun look like its travelling faster than it is during a jump scare. The cut of the painting to Nun is to create a sense of horror as the cut also darkens the scene leaving mainly The Nuns eyes visible in the darkness. The cut of the moving Nun is to enhance the jump scare and shorten the initial shock. These two uses of jump cuts helps to use tension built and create a clear vision of what this movie will be like to the viewer as these to cuts shows the movie can both create and use tension well. This would draw in a horror viewership. I plan to work on this by building tension though cutting to inanimate objects which hold no inherit fearful factors in them, such as a can and a previously stationary door slowing closing itself. *The Sleep Experiment* uses jump cuts and fades from/to black as its main uses of cuts. The cuts serve to illustrate what the man on the radio is telling you and show the viewer rather than telling them. This helps to draw in the audience as they become more aware of what is happening and more committed to the world. I plan to suddenly cut away from our main actors to a sound they heard, to force a sudden change of view on the audience and take away their attention to the characters

## Content Research 2

### Ic

One of the horror features that *The Nun* uses is low-key lighting, this is used to create fear/tension as darkness hides objects and makes them “unknown”. The fear of the unknown or unexplained is a major theme in the horror genre as once something is revealed or explained it gradually loses its power of fear. A trailer using the fear of the unknown will attract horror fans as it is a major theme. On the other hand *The Sleep Experiment* uses a mixture of natural lighting and low-key at different times. The use of low-key lighting is the same as *The Nun* but its use of natural lighting serves to bring the viewer closer to the events that are happening and make them seem more real. This makes the horror elements used more effective as the viewers feel that the events are more real.

I plan to use low-key lighting, as a horror theme, within my trailer section. I plan to use the low-key lighting of these scenes to create a feeling of mystic and intrigue – as the audience is met with unknowns in the dark. I will have these scenes near the beginning of my piece to set the tone of the trailer.

*The Nun*'s taglines are all in a serif font which has had connotations of horror since Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*. The text is metal covered in blood, with some letters looking close to crucifixes. The taglines referencing Annabel and *The Conjuring* draw in audiences who liked those films or the expanded universe they are set in or viewers who know of the quality of the previous works.

*The Sleep Experiment* does not have a tagline but its name is in reference to a well-known piece of internet horror-fiction called *The Russian Sleep Experiment*, which *The Sleep Experiment* is based on. Readers of the fiction will be attracted to watch the movie adaptation as it is a known story to them.

I plan to use the title *Project Alchemy*, as the use of the word “project” draws the idea of a military experiment – like *The Sleep Experiment*. The title will be accompanied by the tag line “Execution Awaits”, to make the viewer feel that the event is awaiting them in the theatre.

I will be taking more from *The Sleep Experiment*'s general mise-en-scene than *The Nun*'s as the former has a closer relation to the setting my group have made. We were interested in the slightly military setting and decided that we would incorporate a psychological theme into the trailer. I feel watching *The Sleep Experiment* trailer has given me a good look into what our trailer should look like, in terms of mise-en-scene, once we are done. The shots should mostly be dark with sharp contrasts of light when possible. The walls, floors and ceiling should be a dull colour or grey and everything in shot should look simple. I will include these elements by making sure the sites we shot on are dull and contain very few props, if any.

## Audience Research

### Ic

I conducted my audience research in the form of a physical questionnaire which posed questions about what a member of our protentional audience would expect from a movie such as ours. We sought people from both within and without our class room. This led to several cross over in opinions on the matter.

In my audience research I found that most people want a trailer to contain a cliff-hanger. I will achieve this target by including a fadeout/cut to black while an important event is happening. This will be near the end, if not the end of the trailer and will be followed by a tagline or title card for the movie. With the cliff-hanger I intend to create an enigma for the audience to want to solve. This will increase the number of people that want to see the film.

A theme that came up in our audience research is mental illness, with our target audience wanting themes of mental illness to be explored in a psychological horror. We wish to create an interesting horror monster that is affected by mental illness to an extreme. This will be a core theme of the movie, as a psychological horror. I hope that this sub-genre will help to pin-point the audience of the film and allow us to give greater attention to the genre of the movie. The theme of psychological horror helps to create a better level of tension in the trailer as it forces us to use more subliminal and atmospheric genre techniques. I plan to explore the idea not though a character's dialogue or actions but a more voyeuristic camera shake effect. This places the viewer as something within the film, the shaking of their viewer would lead them to believe that what ever they are viewing the world though is unhinged.

My audience research also brought up the effective use of jump scares, with our audience expecting a horror movie to contain jumps scares that are effective. I will work to build then release tension though the use of jump scares. I will achieve this though the use of dramatic or tense music and diegetic sounds, which will lead to an effective jump scare that I hope our audience, will appreciate or be horrified by. The music will serve to build the tension in pivotal moments that are prompted by a lack of music before with a high use of diegetic sound to allow the viewer to be immersed into the trailer.

The research also brought up the idea of a montage or repeated cuts/fades to black, the effective use of these techniques can build tension and move scenes along. I had planned to use this idea in the middle segment of the trailer anyway. The use of montage helps to keep the viewer on edge and along with music and diegetic sounds can build tension effectively. I hope to make use of long cuts to black that disorientates the viewer to the extent that they know little about what is going on making them search for what is happening. This need to search the screen for the event helps to draw the audience in and makes the addition of jump scares more effective. One of my peers plans to make effective use of the montage effect to combine a number of small quick scenes into an effective sections of tension building, where he can present a number of horror codes.

The audience research also brought up the idea of a voice over; with our audience wanting use to clearly convey the themes and general plot of the film. We had planned to use a radio like effect to keep within the setting of the film, but while the voice over would be effective in conveying the plot and themes of the film to the viewer while we show them visually it would subtract from the planned use of diegetic sound. If we were to make use of a voice over in the final product it would most likely

be only the title card and tagline. I feel like the uses of a calm voice over to the chaotic back drop would add a needed bit of contrast to the trailer and act as a founding point in the horror.

## Production Roles

### Id

A Director's role within the production of a film is the oversight of both the technical and artist sections of the film. They must create a balance between what is possible, what is most cost effective and what will give the best artistic result. Essentially a Director has an artistic intention that they must work towards, while trying not to sacrifice the end result in production. Problems can come during production that the Director must have the final say on, to ensure that all decisions made within the filming mesh together to create a coherent film. This might mean sacrificing shots that cannot work due internal or external issues. I plan to, as a Director, allow the actors the freedom they need to create dialogue and act to their full ability. As I'm aware that they are good actors in their own right and are capable of doing so with little intervention. My main role will be direction of the actor's movements and how the scene should flow.

As I Director I need to veto the locations the location scouts have found and choose which location has the best potential. I need to be able to judge which sites are most suitable for filming and strike a balance between practicality and artistic intentions. This may mean that I need to edit my vision for my scenes after the site has been confirmed. I can use these changes to enhance my use of the locations provided by the scout.

In my role as Director I also need to be able to guide the editor, in the final stages of the film's creation, towards my ideas around the scenes. This includes music, contrast and cuts. The ability to say what goes where in the edits allows a more accurate portrayal of the original artistic intentions. In my trailer section I hope to sacrifice as little of my artistic intentions as possible while still producing a piece of work that is of good quality. To achieve this goal, I need to actively communicate with the editor though out the editing prosses and ensure that the final piece is what I had in mind.

A Cinematographer's role within a film's production is either the creation of a scene though a brief set by a director or the production of a scene over seen by the director. The difference being the involvement the director has directly with the production of the scene. Since I will be the director and cinematographer of my own scenes I do not need to worry about miscommunications between these roles as I can produce the scenes myself, while filming. The Cinematographer's goal is to create the Directors vison on screen. This involves not just the position of cameras, their lenses and zoom applied but also character placement and lighting. In this respect the Cinematographer can be considered the connection between the filming of the film and the artistic vision of the Director. As a cinematographer I will need to get as much out of the location the location scouts have provided me with. This means I need to frame shots so they capture everything they need to while avoiding objects that might damage the overall look, or feel, of the film.

The camera I will use is a handheld video recorder. This piece of equipment does not hinder me, in my role as a cinematographer as it is small, mobile and easy to use. This allows me to create unsteady shots from unconventional angles. If I wished to shoot a low angled shot, for instance, I can easy lift the camera above me while on a step stool or ladder. As a Cinematographer I hope to be able to effectively use lighting, camera position and zoom to create an effective horror trailer, despite probably lack of equipment.

## Institutional Research

### If

The equipment we need costs very little but even so our school can provide us with the equipment; Boiler suit, hood/mask, camera and camera stand. The main requirement for us is to ask permission for the use of said equipment. This means our production value will be close to, if not, zero and will require us to be inventive if any problems occur during filming.

We will also be making use of editing equipment provided by the school (iMovie). This will save us budget but will not be as effective as alternative, paid for, software.

I found that finding a suitable age range for the film was hard as there will be horror themes that will be the overarching idea of the trailer and be disturbing. These sequences will be frequent and of length. Imitable negative behaviour will be seen but it will not be put in a positive light. The film will not directly show bodily harm but the aftermath of said harm. Neither will physical violence be directly seen. This will be shown through scenes where the killer grabs and takes back a character, while grievous harm – blood or blunt injures – will not be shown, harm will be implied off screen at a later date. Through my research I have judged that the trailer will not be an 18 but will have substantial enough content to require a 15 rating.

If we were to use a non-public domain song we would have to gain permission from the producer of the music and the performer. This would most likely require money to change hands for the permission to go through. Even if we received a reply from either the producer or the performer. We would have to find info about the public domain songs from websites (BMI/ASCAP) which keep database of them. Instead of this process, we will employ diegetic sounds and silence in contrast to any music we use. Therefore the music we will use within our trailer will be of our own making or within the public domain. This means that we will have to search for sites who allow fair use of their music in non-profit items.

Our project will not suffer greatly from any health and safety worries other than potential risks involving tripping or slipping during filming. This can be solved through clearing the set before filming and being aware of potential tripping hazards. We will also be filming in locations that have little light, to create the effect of low-key lighting- for instance my scenes require several actors moving in a darkened place. This means the chances of tripping is increased. This means we will need to ensure that the set is safe before we film, to avoid any injures or equipment damage during the filming.

We will be working within the confines of the school's institution. This means that filming time will be limited, and potential production scenes will be unavailable. We will also have to work within a reasonable noise level and not disturb other classes with our filming. The institution of the school allows us access to resources, equipment and actors. Since we will make use of the school's actors, we must conform to their time schedules and speak with teachers to gain access to our actors. We will inform the actors of their schedules to ensure that they will have no problems attending shoots.

## Section 2

a. Evaluate the production process and evaluate how effectively you carried out your production role(s) within the institutional context. Give at least four developed points of evaluation.

You should refer to the final content and/or elements of the development process to support your evaluation. If you worked within a group or class project, you can refer to the whole content and/or process, or your individual part(s).

(10 marks) (at least 4 points of evaluation)

In the pre-production of the trailer we looked at a variety of locations, within our school, which we could film at. We searched the school to find suitably lit sites – to give us a natural low-key lighting. We looked at a large range of doors and hallways to find one suitable for the first scene. The main location we looked at was behind the school's stage it had no windows to let in light and had an interesting mise-en-scene – that fitted well with the setting of our horror trailer. This meant that there was very little light and fit with the low-lighting of the horror genre.

We also looked to the schools basements and/or lower floors. These hallways, under the schools main floor had windows that let in a little bit of light with the main source of lighting being actual lights. The location was also beneficial as the hallways were unused by anyone other than the drama department and had little noise pollution for filming.

I settled for the school's basement, over my original pick as the door was an alarmed fire exit and the characters would have to travel through it for the scene. This is unfortunate as the original set would be more usable and prevented some the problems, while also creating a better atmosphere for the trailer. If it were not for time restraints and institutional boundaries, the legal inability to disable a fire door within a school, we would have had a better end result. Our final choice of scene did have some benefits for filming and the end result as the natural light that came through the windowed door helped to mask the actors and create a better contrast with the low-key lighting.

For my scene I needed the door used in the scene to stay open, rather than closing by itself like many of my school's doors do. We could not find a door that was located in a dark place and stayed open, so we opted to choose our best location and just jam the door. This meant one of the actors had to jam the door after they had opened it. Because of this, at 00:08, one of our actors looks to pop up out of nowhere, since they were jamming the door. This meant I was able to keep to my original artistic intentions but it caused this odd movement that could distract and/or remove the viewer from the scene, this could make our trailer less effective at drawing in a viewer to see the full film.

I directed the actors in front of the door jammer to block the camera's view of him, but because of time constraints, and worse takes, we decided to use this take – where you can see him jam it and get up.

In my role as director I instructed the actors on a loose script, as I trusted the actors ability and knew they were capable of creating themselves as believable characters, but in the end the dialogue is not important, within this scene – 00:00 to 00:12 - , as the use of diegetic sound and a non-diegetic voice over creates a more interesting atmosphere. This atmosphere should be stereotypical of the horror genre, with moments with little non-diegetic sound but a high uses of sudden, contrasting, diegetic sounds.

I did not fulfil the role of editor in my scene, or the trailer as a whole, but I left directions for them to follow – placements of cuts and examples of what I was looking for, references to *The Nun* and *The Sleep Experiment*. We strategic cuts to replace objects and change the scene to disorientate the audience.

The location we decided to film my scene at was naturally dark with a good amount of natural light coming through the door's window. This was not planned; originally I would have liked the room to be quite dark, only getting lighter when the character turned on a flash light. This is a deviation from my original intentions but this centre of natural light acts to obscure the characters faces, create a certain mystery about the characters – this is an enigma that draws in the viewer: who are they, what are they doing, why are they there? This engages the viewer and draws them in; it helps the trailer fulfil its goal – drawing people in to watch the final product.

In my role as a cinematographer I filmed my section of the trailer, with the aim of it being a steady shot. But my hands shifted a bit during – 00:06 - recording, this gave the camera work a more natural feeling. This unintentional slight shake can also indulge the audience with a voyeuristic perspective, further immersing them in the trailer and attracting their attention to it on screen. I decided to change the placement of the camera for final shot of the door. This is to, further, differentiate it from the original shot, the scene giving a sense of change. Other than my stationary shot I filmed a panning shot of a can landing then rolling. The pan didn't turn out as smooth as I wanted it to be and the can didn't roll in the way we needed it to. This caused the scene to be more disjointed than I wanted it to be. The result is better than I believed it would be when I filmed it, but it is not what I envisioned. If I had had more time, I would have focused more on drawing the uses of these unintentional effects and further incorporating them into the film.

We filmed our scenes within the confines of school time, this limited our time with the actors – who were all sitting exams this year, and could not get out of scheduled classes – to 4 periods (45 min sets) per week. This meant that the times available to film were few and relied upon tutor teachers allowing them away from their study periods. Therefore our filming times were short and we had to take our shots in quick succession of each other. The shots needed to be quickly setup, due to the time constraints. This caused our scenes to be overall easy to do, with limited props, but we made the most out of these small filming windows to create a finished project of good quality.

We had planned for a voice over throughout the trailer but due to time issues we elected to only have a voice announcing *Project Alchemy* 01:19 and *Execution Awaits* 00:48 this is not what we had originally hoped for but I believe it is still an effective contribution to the trailer.

## Section 2

b. Evaluate how effectively you used media codes and/or techniques to achieve your creative intentions in the finished content. Give at least five developed points of evaluation.

You should explain how you have used media codes and/or techniques and evaluate how effectively you have done this. You must refer to particular examples from your finished content to support your evaluation. (20 marks)

My scene starts at 00:00 with a medium long shot of a door with a group of people about to enter. The actors open the door to the scene and enter. It is conveyed to the viewer, through dialogue, that they are looking for something or someone and are not sure of their location. The scene is shot in a low-key setting with the main source of light coming from where the characters entered from. This light source conceals the characters' faces (00:07), this creates an enigma for the viewer as they will want to find out the identity's of the characters (who they are played by and what they actually look like). This was not originally thought of but thanks to location scouting, by others, I was able to choose from a host of locations that could have done. I believe that this end result, in terms of setting and lighting, is the best I could have gotten within the constraints of the production.

At 00:04 the characters start a dialogue, that I had the actors improvise, with the rough script of they were lost and looking for something. I believe that they were able, after a few takes, to create a believable dialogue between their characters while meeting their cues. I believe that this form of directing was appropriate as I knew that the actors had taken drama as a subject in the past and had also played their own role in the school productions. I also believe that the conversation and the way in which they conversed reflected a normal conversation and enhanced the theme of horror. I believe that the normality of the conversation helps to enhance these themes as the horror, on the most part, is about horrible things that happen to or around normal people – who are relatable to the viewer. This brings the audience deeper into the trailer as they are able to project themselves into the character and their role.

Once they had entered they hear a noise deeper and the camera cuts (00:13) to a can rolling down a corridor, with no explanation for where it came from. I would have liked this to be a tenser scene but the build up to it was not enough for the tension. I wanted this to be similar to the cliché fake jump scare that you often see within horror movies, for example in *The Quiet Place* there is a building of tension that is broken by a jump scare caused by raccoons – instead of the expected monster. Unfortunately I was not able to build this sort of tension before this scene. So the scene was not what I had envisioned it to be. I would have liked the scene to have been a taste of what the audience should expect from the full movie. Also, for this scene I would have wanted the camera to be a lot smoother but as it was a hand held and needed to be moved it was at the whims of my hand's movements and was not as smooth or at the angle I had originally wanted. Despite this I'm pleased with the end product of the rolling can scene, on its own.

After the can has rolled there is a cut (00:17) back to the door. This scene sees the door close on its own after staying open for the duration of the characters entering. Unfortunately this cut should have been to the characters walking deeper in and then the door closing but because of the tight filming schedule we were unable to film them moving off the screen and then have the door close. So instead we only saw the door close after the characters had gone. This scene would have also been artificially

darker, through editing, and have a lower light contrast to create the idea of a change around the door. But the scene is still effective without the post editing

I would have also liked to of included a zoom in on the outside of the door before showing the inside, but I could not find a suitable location for the outside of the door.

At 00:13, 00:17 and 00:21 there are cuts to black that I would have wanted to be a second or two longer to allow more use of the tension building music, and to allow tension to be better built through anticipation. I feel like the cuts at these points are not perfect, with the cut at 00:13 featuring a freeze frame of the scene before anything happening then a sudden cut to the action. I feel like this would have been better served as a pure black cut.