

Miller Arts Scholar Award Progress Report: *Farewell Old Stringy* by Alex Rafala

Goal: To make a short film and submit it to film festivals, exhibition being the ultimate goal and desire of a filmmaker.

Farewell Old Stringy is an exploration of and emotional response to the suicide of a co-worker of mine last year. The subsequent thoughts and questions I had after that event influenced and informed the script, making it a plea for attentiveness, a promotion of mental health awareness, and a commentary on the closeness of our relationships in a world that is growing increasingly more isolated. Ultimately, it functions as a confession of my ignorance (more in depth information and a detailed Director's Statement can be found on our website and our Facebook page).

<http://www.farewelloldstringy.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/farewelloldstringy>

Faculty Mentor: Richard Warner, Professor in the UVA Department of Drama. Richard not only served as a business and artistic advisor, he also delivered a powerful and refined performance as one of our leading actors. He facilitated the project in more ways than one, and I am forever grateful for his skill and ceaseless commitment to the project.

Progress So Far: The film is currently in the Post-Production phase, which largely deals with editing and distributing it

The final product will be an approximately 30 minute short film.

The total budget is \$13,613

The cast and crew included twenty-six intelligent, talented, and reliable cast and crew members comprised of UVA students, alumni and professors, as well as local community members and VCU graduates.

We hired the talent and rented the equipment of a small Richmond based Production Company called House Cat Productions. They provided a great deal of professional lighting and sound equipment at a very reasonable price. Especially important was the Black Magic 2.5 K camera with Canon 2.8 70-200mm zoom lens and Canon 2.8 16-35mm lens.

Pre-Production

Pre-Production started in August of 2013. Throughout the following year, my production team (Producer Lauren Lukow and Assistant Producer Alex Jones) and I raised the necessary funds, totaling at \$13,613— funding sources included Kickstarter (\$3865), Office of the Vice Provost for the Arts (\$1000), University Award for Projects in the Arts (\$3000), and two Arts Scholars Award Grants (\$5500).

Other Pre-Production objectives included: Devising a budget, enlisting crew and casting actors, production meetings, designer meetings, registering an LLC, opening a bank account, location scouting, SAG-AFTRA negotiations, etc.

Production

\$5119.76 used in the Production Phase. Costs included House Cat Production fees, catering, props, costumes, make up, parking fees, etc

Shooting began on May 20, 2014 and ended on May 25, 2014.

Post-Production (Current Phase)

Remaining funds (about \$8493.24) allotted to Post Production Phase

Post-Production began on May 26, 2014. The film has gone through five cuts/drafts and we are nearly complete. Color Correction, one of the final tasks on the editing checklist, is currently underway, along with minute touch ups.

ADR (Additional Dialogue Recording) took place over the summer.

Original Score was recorded and mastered.

Other Post-Production Accomplishments: Website was created, Poster Designs were finalized.

Future Post-Production Objectives: Manufacture and distribute Kickstarter rewards, Submit finished product to film festivals, continue advertising, etc.

Self-Analysis and Knowledge Acquired

As a Writer:

Overall I am very pleased with my screenplay. Although I have written a fair amount plays and screenplays, this was the first to be produced, and it was enlightening to see which of my stylistic choices flourished on screen and which didn't play as expected. Two scenes were cut significantly in the editing process. Most notably was the first full scene, which, on paper, constituted one third of the pages. While it was entertaining to read, for a short film intended to be no more than thirty minutes in length, this scene stunted the flow and action of the exposition. Cutting a large portion of the interior dialogue increased the pace, shortened the film, and, overall, made it a much stronger experience. In future writing endeavors I will be less reluctant to cut portions of dialogue that disrupt the flow of the story, no matter how much I love them.

I'm hesitant to acknowledge what I think my strengths are because I feel a little conceited doing so, but if I'm obligated: I believe I devised an unrelenting journey, one that begins with a façade of happiness (fast-paced, crass, darkly humorous banter) that then descends into an even

unhappier place. One where the characters, especially Bradach, take no reservations in releasing their brutally honest, relationship destroying thoughts. I also think the plot is an enticingly unique one, its originality providing a new means of addressing the serious social issue of mental health awareness.

As a Director:

Many of my artistic choices were actor driven: That is, much of my focus was given to the actors' performances. This comes as no surprise, seeing as I was trained as an actor. One such choice was to include as many lengthy shots as possible. I believe this gives the audience a sense of the moment and the authenticity of the actors' performances.

That is not to say this film is free of aesthetically emblematic cinematography/editing/design. It is not solely about how the actor is captured. There are many moments I feel very strongly translate themes and meaning through camera work and editing (in conjunction with the actors and their performances). Especially so are the first and final shots of the film, which I will allow the viewer to interpret on their own.

My Director of Photography and I discussed motifs of symmetry and asymmetry and how the usage of such framing could be representative of many things, most interestingly Davey's mentality and his perceived "lucidity," a term used frequently in our discussions of character analysis.

The editing process is an exciting one. It's been a fulfilling experience to craft this film with my editor. One noteworthy choice: What I've been calling "hard cuts," in which scenes segway with abrupt and assaulting images/transitions intended to catch the viewer off guard.

There was a significant technical problem: We somehow lost a bit of footage from the first day of shooting in the data transfer process from one computer to another. Not so much that the film was rendered impossible, but some creative editing did have to be employed in one of the earlier scenes.

In future endeavors: I want to explore in more depth the possibilities of the camera and heighten the visual language, employ even more and even stronger aesthetic choices, and improve communications with my crew (which were not weak, but I think can stand to be even more artistically productive).

We have created an endearing and well-made film. My pride of our creation is even more so considering that this is my directorial debut. Of course mistakes were made, but this was a majorly successful enterprise that taught me a great deal.

Special Thanks

I send my extreme gratitude to all of our donors, especially the Miller Arts Scholars, The University of Virginia Center for Undergraduate Excellence, The Office of the Vice Provost for

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taylor ballard

richard warner

ian lindsay

farewell
old stringy

FAREWELL OLD STRINGY STARRING TAYLOR BALLARD, IAN LINDSAY, AND RICHARD WARNER
MUSIC BY NICHOLAS HURST SOUND SUPERVISOR MAX KREMBS COSTUME DESIGNER ANA MENDELSON PRODUCTION DESIGNER ANNE DONNELLY EDITED BY REID KERLEY DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY MICHAEL DUNI
CO-PRODUCED BY ALEX JONES PRODUCED BY LAUREN LUKOW WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY ALEX RAFALA



CENTER for UNDERGRADUATE EXCELLENCE
UNIVERSITY of VIRGINIA



farewell old stringy

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