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Reality Meets Fiction

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Reality Meets Fiction

By

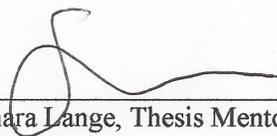
Nicholas Mariano Balcells

An Undergraduate Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the
Fine & Performing Arts Scholars Program
Honors College
and the Department of Media and Communications
College of Arts & Science
East Tennessee State University



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5/3/17

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Date

The film "Reality Meets Fiction" is the first film I directed in my career as a filmmaker. I began by throwing around different ideas with family and friends, until ultimately, I began going back and forth with my father about the play "Cyrano de Bergerac." The conflict between the two main characters, Cyrano and Christian, is what sparked an idea in my mind. Cyrano falls in love with a woman, Roxane, and is a talented writer. However, he is superbly ugly. On the other hand, Christian is a handsome individual, but does not possess the same level of creativity as Cyrano does in his letters. This gave me idea to bring this to a modern awareness, thus screenplay writing came about as the core for my film. I then began thinking of my main characters, and knew two things at this point. One is that I would like to act in my film, and two was I needed to know I could count on someone to star in my low-budget film that had the potential to make the production stage really long. I recalled that my little brother had acting experience and after that thought, everything else began to fall into place fast. The ending of the film is not quite as easy. Due to rainy weather, holidays, and the fact my main actor lived in a different city and was in high school prolonged the duration of the film than I expected. Once production was completed, it was time to move on to post-production. This again took a rather long time, since there were multiple edits for video and audio, along with the fact it was a lengthy film. I received help from a recent East Tennessee State University graduate who specialized in post-production and together we began putting all the pieces together. Finally, it came down to presenting my thesis to the public. The film was well received by my colleagues and received more pointers on how I could work on the film more in post-production.

"Reality Meets Fiction" began with the first step, brainstorming. I went to other Oscar worthy films to jumpstart my mind. I also discussed my ideas with friends and family members.

Finally, I found one idea that I thoroughly enjoyed. Once the idea cemented in my mind, the story came to me like a calm wave rolling through the sea. I took my script and showed it to some chosen individuals to get feedback. Once that was completed, I made the revisions. One feedback idea was to give the main characters more of a backstory. I thought then about creating a voice over at the start of the narrative film. The purpose for this is to give “an umbrella” of what the film is about regarding the two main characters. It helped give the older brother a bigger presence, while helping the little brother appear smaller. This film began with the desire for it to be new and exciting. The audience will see the two basic, raw sides of a human personality. The two brothers will embody this idea that Chris is the brother who is considered to be an extroverted, cocky individual. Cyrus is the brother who is considered an introverted, shy individual. Both brothers share a close bond, but represent opposite sides of a coin so to speak. The audience will begin to think on the difference of right and wrong, and whether that difference can have a “grey area.” I want the audience to sympathize with one brother while coming to hate the other, ultimately leading to a dramatic showdown between the two at the end of the film. Once the script was finalized, I moved on to create a production plan for the film. This was the pre-production phase, it included everything involved in planning for the production and post-production of “Reality Meets Fiction.” I planned which dates I would choose to have my cast and crew show up. I also planned out the locations for the scenes, getting permission if needed to film in certain buildings. Finally, I also thought about post-production and how much time it would take to get a final cut for the film, as well as the different ways I would delivering it to the public. Upon the production plan being completed, I also knew I wanted the film to be cinema quality, so I made sure to rent high quality lenses and

equipment at the college to do just that. I got permission to rent out the equipment according to my production dates and next came the actual filming. My goal for the actual production was to be as efficient as possible. My first priority for filming was to get as many scenes from one location first, starting with the bigger scenes. We began getting the apartment scenes done first, since that location was the easiest to manage and work around as far as scheduling. I left the more complicated locations, such as the high school, for later in the coming weeks because I could better plan the use the high school if I gave them a good amount of notice. This also helped with getting extras on set for the high school scene as well. Production lasted for about fourteen days, spanning across seven weeks. I experienced a big obstacle when it came to the outside shots, since there was a decent amount of rain storms during the days I was filming, which pushed back the filming schedule. This also complicated cast and crew availabilities, which was something I had to figure out and overcome. In the end though, it all worked out and I was able to get all the shots I wanted for the film. The next step was post-production and editing all the footage shot and audio recorded into a single premier project. This was a lengthy process. My experienced post-production friend and I began with the scenes we filmed first and worked our way through the whole project as we filmed more week after week. We knew adding Foley, which is re-creating sound effects, in order to give the scenes a fuller experience. Color gradation was also important to help the look of the shots throughout the film. I also knew I wanted to add original music to the film, so I contacted a friend to assist me in that area. I wanted opening voice over to have some good film score in the background, while the ending to be dramatic. Finally came the presentation to the public. I exported my huge premier file and uploaded it to the college TV studio so it could be screened on the projector. I gave a little

background before the film started and finished it up with questions. The only step now was to plan for how I was going to deliver my film to a bigger audience. The primary idea that came to mind was to submit it to film festivals, while waiting before I put it on free content sites. This I thought would add to the film being more special since it would only be showed at film festivals in the coming year. I look forward to the future of my film, "Reality Meets Fiction."

This film will be the result of anything and everything I have learned in my Radio/Television/Film career. I have applied my writing skills that I have learned in my classes towards the script. I also applied my video techniques I learned in my classes towards directing this narrative film. Finally, from learning and observing on the other side of the camera, I will apply that perspective towards my acting in the film. However, this film has challenged me more than just the skills I learned in my classes. It has challenged my organizational skills in order for my film to be completed on time. This was most important for the pre-production stage. I needed to plan ahead to schedule meetings, rent equipment, plan location shoots, and be able to give myself enough time in post-production to edit this film. I also had been applying my leadership skills with my crew. I had multiple actors and several people working behind the camera for the production of this film. I needed to not only know how to instruct these individuals on what to do, but also to be able to listen on the feedback and incorporate that feedback into making a better film. This project will help exponentially in my professional life since I have never written a script, nor directed or produced a film before in my life (especially it being this massive). "Reality Meets Fiction" has pushed me to my limits on the knowledge and skills I have learned my whole college career. I have been learning step by step what it takes to make a great film. For example, as mentioned earlier, my production plan was the

backbone of my project. I planned out my budget, shooting dates, public exposure for my film, and most of all I formed connections with the people I worked with and the many other individuals I will meet when my completed project is shown in film festivals. I aspire to be an actor, but my aspiration for this film is to show others that I can work in all aspects in the film industry. Many actors eventually produce and direct their own films towards the end of their careers, just as I am doing the same towards the end of my college career. It is my ambition that this film will be my best work and be recognized by film directors, producers, writers, and fellow actors. I hope that this film will strengthen my goal to be a successful actor someday.

Bibliography

Nicholas Mariano Balcells (Director/Writer/Actor)

Nicholas Mariano Balcells is a senior at The Honors College of East Tennessee State University. He is striving to become a successful actor and is working as a student in the RTVF department to learn the skills behind the camera. Nicholas plans to move to Los Angeles to further his acting career.

Diego Alexander Balcells (Actor)

Diego Alexander Balcells is a young and aspiring photographer, designer, musician, and filmmaker. He plans on pursuing these hobbies until they become something more in the future. He hopes to have a fun and educational experience in this film.

Cristy Balcells (Actress)

Cristy Balcells joins "Reality meets fiction" after a 20 year hiatus from acting. Cristy was a theatre major in the 90's before pursuing a second degree in nursing and a Masters in public health. Cristy enjoys her time as a mom and new resident of Asheville, NC with her husband Eduardo, children and dogs while keeping busy advocating for people with rare diseases. Cristy is excited to be acting again in this short feature with her son Nicholas.

Pat Cronin (Actor)

Pat Cronin is a former Los Angeles actor and the Department Head for the Theater program at East Tennessee State University. He is working with actor Nicholas Mariano, helping to develop his craft and move to Los Angeles. Pat Cronin is looking forward to working with his student Nicholas for the very first time.

Eduardo Balcells (Actor)

Eduardo Balcells takes a moment away from his career as an interventional cardiologist to debut in his first film with his son. Eduardo is an avid wellness and fitness enthusiast, enjoying crossfit, running and yoga with his family. When not busy taking care of hearts or his family, Eduardo enjoys traveling and being outdoors. Eduardo aspires to one day play a doctor on TV.

Jake Burbage (Director of Cinematography)

Jake Burbage is a recent graduate at East Tennessee State University. Jake aspires to work in the field of creative media, specifically video and film. Jake has directed multiple short films spanning documentary, narrative, and advertising work.

Denver Johnston (Gaffer/Boom Operator)

Denver Johnston is an aspiring wildlife videographer and is currently a senior at East Tennessee State University. He is majoring in Media and Communications with a focus in Radio/TV/Film. Denver is a member of Buc-TV News and the ETSU Forensics and Debate Team. Once he graduates he would like to travel the world doing some freelance videography before settling into a job, wherever that may be.

Beatriz Diaz (1st Cameraman)

Beatriz Cano Diaz is a senior at East Tennessee State University (ETSU) majoring in Mass Communications: Radio, Television and Film and with a minor in Religious Studies. She is very passionate about film production and loves being able to put forth her creative side. After graduating she would like to work as a cinematographer and director.