

# BEFORE WE GET STARTED

**Register your  
attendance.**

Session numbers are in  
the program.



SCAN HERE FOR  
AUSTIN ROSTERS



UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

# Make it Cinematic

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# How do you make a short film? Consider...

- The Material
- Performance / Directing Actors
- Directing Camera / Cinematography
- Audio
- Location
- Production Design and Visual Effects
- Equipment
- Editing
- Releases / Copyright
- Nurture vs. Isolation





# The Material

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- Novel
  - Internal conflict (thoughts)
- Stage Play
  - Verbal conflict (comes out in dialogue)
- Screenplay
  - Visual conflict (images and action)





# Film vs. Theatre

- Stage: The Play
  - Shakespeare or classics performed over and over, possibly a newer playwright:  
Existing material
- Film: The Screenplay
  - Dreamed up by the students





# The Material

## High Fidelity Screenplay

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Group of bags huddled next to the door. Not the go-on vacation set, but the clothes-to-coffee-maker moving out variety. Rob stares at them, his face unreadable, his head gripped by a big pair Boudokan headphones. We hear what he is hearing, something foreboding and upbeat at the same time.

LAURA, Rob's girlfriend, enters the room, and he immediately pulls the headphones off. She clocks him for a moment, catching him in what seems to be an old and repeated moment of nonpresence. She begins to heft the bags, Rob goes to her, a little tardy for his big goodbye. Laura begins to cry a bit.

LAURA  
I don't really know what I'm doing.

He smiles, and she doesn't. He adjusts.

ROB  
You don't have to go this second.  
You can stay until whenever.

LAURA  
We've done the hard part now. I  
might as well, you know...

ROB  
Well stay for tonight, then.

Laura shakes her head, lifts the last small bag, and backs out the door. A strap catches on a handle and the two of them wrestle with it a bit, while trying to keep the door open, until Laura awkwardly disappears from view and the door shuts behind Rob. He stays right there staring at the shut door for a long moment, listening to the fading sound of Laura and her dragging bags.

STEREO

Rob's left hand cranks the volume knob while his right switches the CD changer to something loud and adrenal. He addresses us again.

ROB  
My desert-island, all-time, top  
five most memorable break-ups, in

## High Fidelity Stage Play

### Scene 2

*(As the opening number ends, Rob's apartment appears, and ROB lands on his couch, with a beer in his hand.)*

ROB. This is my living room. More records. Couch I've had since college...

*(LAURA enters. She's packing up her things over the following. She's frazzled and apologetic, but determined.)*

ROB. That's my girlfriend Laura. We met four years ago when I was deejaying at the Billy Club. She requested I play Art Garfunkel's "Bright Eyes," which, in case you don't know, will clear a dance floor in three seconds flat. But I played it anyway—because...well, because I wanted to sleep with her.

LAURA. *(Holds something up:)* I'm gonna take these if that's okay.

ROB. That's fine. *(Back to audience:)* She's a lawyer, if you can believe it. Laura worked for Legal Aid when she moved in here, but she took a corporate job last month, so she's all conflicted about selling out. I, however, was relieved that one of us can actually pay the rent.

LAURA. I'm almost done here, Rob.

ROB. She just told me she's leaving me. I haven't figured out if it's a threat, or she really means it, so I should probably... Excuse me. *(To LAURA:)* You don't need to do this, Laura. It was just a fight.

LAURA. Just another fight, you mean. That's all we've been doing lately. And for the record, last night's was especially ugly, I thought. *(Re: something on a shelf:)* I'm not gonna take this. Do you want it?

ROB. Not really.

LAURA. Me either. Where did this come from?

ROB. I don't know. It was here when I moved in.

LAURA. Right. *(Stops, looks around, a bit overwhelmed, awkward:)* I don't really know what I'm doing.

ROB. You don't have to go, you know. You can stay until whenever.

LAURA. No, we've done the hard part. I should...

ROB. Stay the night at least.

LAURA. I can't, Rob.



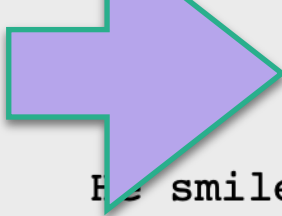
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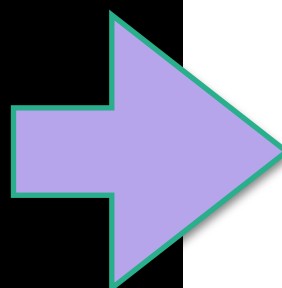
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# Find the Story

— (Jim Hart)

1. Writing About Personal Experience
2. Adapting Stories from the Press
3. Adapting Works in the Public Domain
4. Story Genres
5. Favorite Actors
6. Characters from Literature and History





# Find the Story — (Jim Hart)

- 7. Locations
- 8. Sequels and Prequels
- 9. Historical Events
- 10. Images
- 11. Stories Based on Music and Song
- 12. Speculation. What if...?





# *Character* Story

## Basic Framework

- Setup the character and their world
- Introduce a problem
- Main character reacts to the problem and **TAKES ACTION**
- Obstacles make it difficult for the main character to fix the problem.
- Main character confronts the problem in the big climax.
- A new world for the character is established.





# Short Film Freedom - Types

- A Character story (the mini feature)
- A Gag film. Set up like a joke with a punchline. No real main character as everyone is there to serve the build-up.
- A Real-time experience (still fictional and scripted)
- A Single moment played out, sometimes blown up a small moment
- Poetic/Atmospheric. The message/theme is the focus and characters only serve to demonstrate the message.
- Something else?



# Teaching Storytelling

- Read screenplays and take notice.
- 3 Act Structure / Pixar movies
- Ideas / Pitching. Writer uses writer's Core Values.
- Screenwriting. Embrace format- pick that perfect action verb and keeping lots of white space.
- High school students: Less dialogue is better. (Even no dialogue.)
- Get students to understand and embrace subtext.
- Story is about a character changing a belief





# Acting

Stage	Film
Larger than life	More natural
Every performance is different	One performance lives on forever
Energy from the audience	Where's the camera?
Perform beginning to end	Out of order, continuity



# Acting

- Suspend disbelief
- Realism – cast appropriate age, etc
- Just make a film. Don't make a “high school film.”





The Student Directs



# Directing Performance

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- Rehearse Blocking
  - Where do the actors need to be positioned in the scene? Where do they move?
- Helping actors master production techniques
  - Hitting Marks
  - Matching action
  - Don't look at the camera





# Directing Performance

- Insight
  - Help the actors understand their character, understand the scene, and understand why their character is taking the action in the scene.
  - Help actors understand what happened before this scene and what will still happen.
- Use Action Verbs
  - Don't just expect a result. "Be angry" is not a helpful direction.
  - "Convince", "insist", "discourage", etc, are good directions to give an actor.
- Do another take for safety.
- Save a little writing for the 3rd take.
- The performance only ends when director says cut.







A director is an arbiter of truth – *Ivan Reitman*



# Director's Key Responsibilities on Set



- Works with the actors to get an authentic performance
- Decides where to put the camera to show perspective





# Camera

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- Where to start?
- Analyze the script.
  - Understand the characters and the events.
- Visualize the film:
  - How will you tell the story with the camera?



# Camera Decisions

- Convey information and/or feeling
- Choose the shot and consult with Director of Photography to consider:
  - Size
  - Composition
  - Angle
  - Duration
  - Color
  - Perspective
  - Movement





# Planning the Shots

## Master Shot

- The whole scene from beginning to end
- Usually a long shot

## Coverage

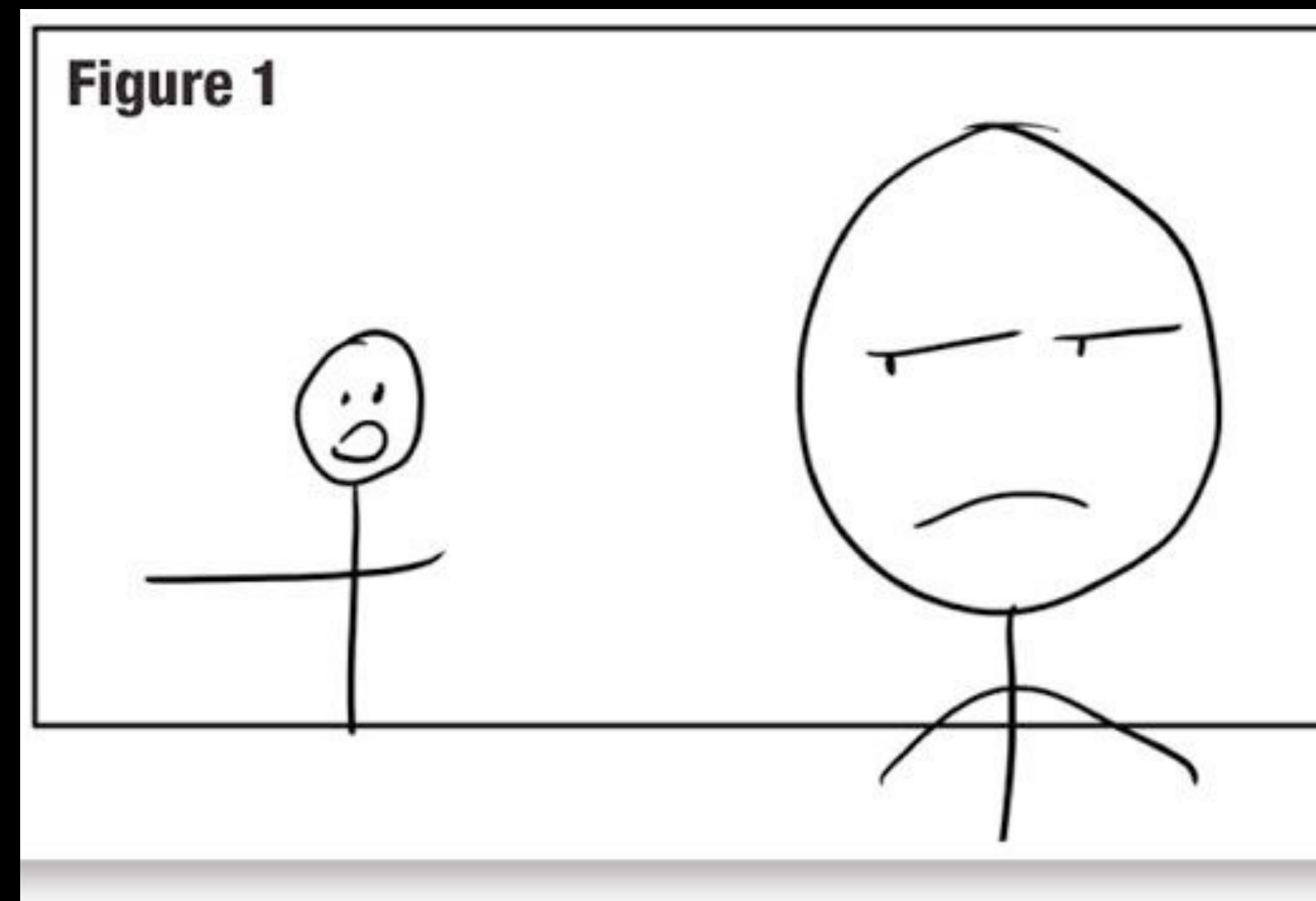
- Multiple angles and framings of the same scene





# Storyboard

- Storyboard at the location. Think beyond your first choice frame.
  - major shots, angles and action involved in the script – main dramatic moments
  - camera movement
  - frame and perspective
  - stick figures too!





- *Cinematography is making deliberate choices on all aspects of capturing an image. Use manual setting on camera to get full control.*





# Paying Homage

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# Cinematography: Attain the Look

- Focal length
- Depth of field
- Frame rate
- Shutter speed
- Camera movement
- Exposure
- Lighting
- Framing and shot variety
- Color correction





# Lenses

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- Need 3 or more
  - Normal, Prime = 50mm
  - Wide = 17-40mm
  - Telephoto = 70-200mm
- 
- \*If you have different cameras, make sure you can purchase adapters to use the same lenses



# Depth of Field

Depth of Field Simulator website:  
<http://dofsimulator.net/en/>

Wide



Telephoto



- Do not ZOOM while recording. DOLLY IN or OUT instead.



- Please don't zoom





Aperture





Shutter Speed





Cinematography  
= Lighting

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# Lighting

- Large light sources like a soft box, bounce board, or the cloudy sky give soft, more flattering light
- Small light sources like one spot light or the dot of the sun in the sky give hard light and cast shadows
- Shooting outside usually helps beginners. It can be difficult to get enough light indoors.



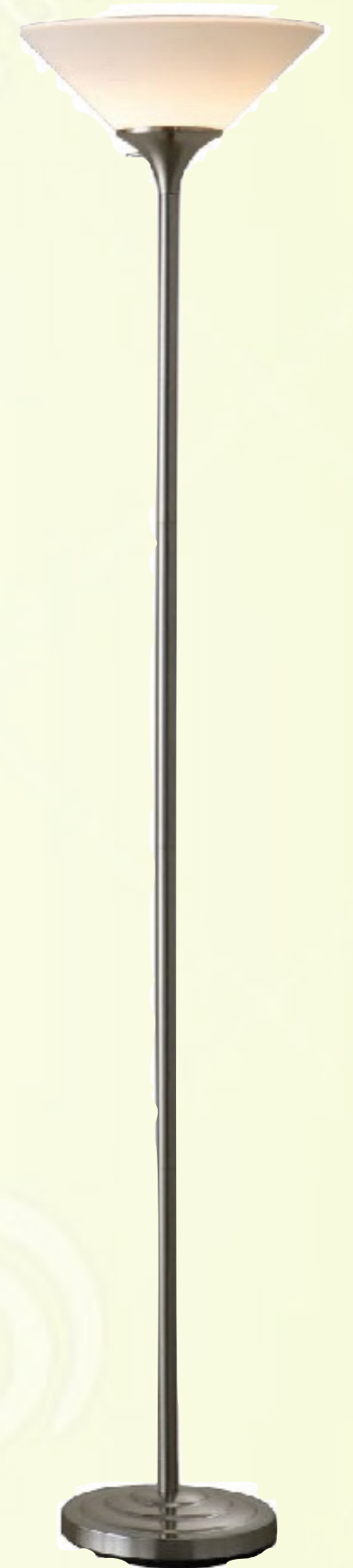


# Shed a little light

LEDs are user friendly



Practicals help too.



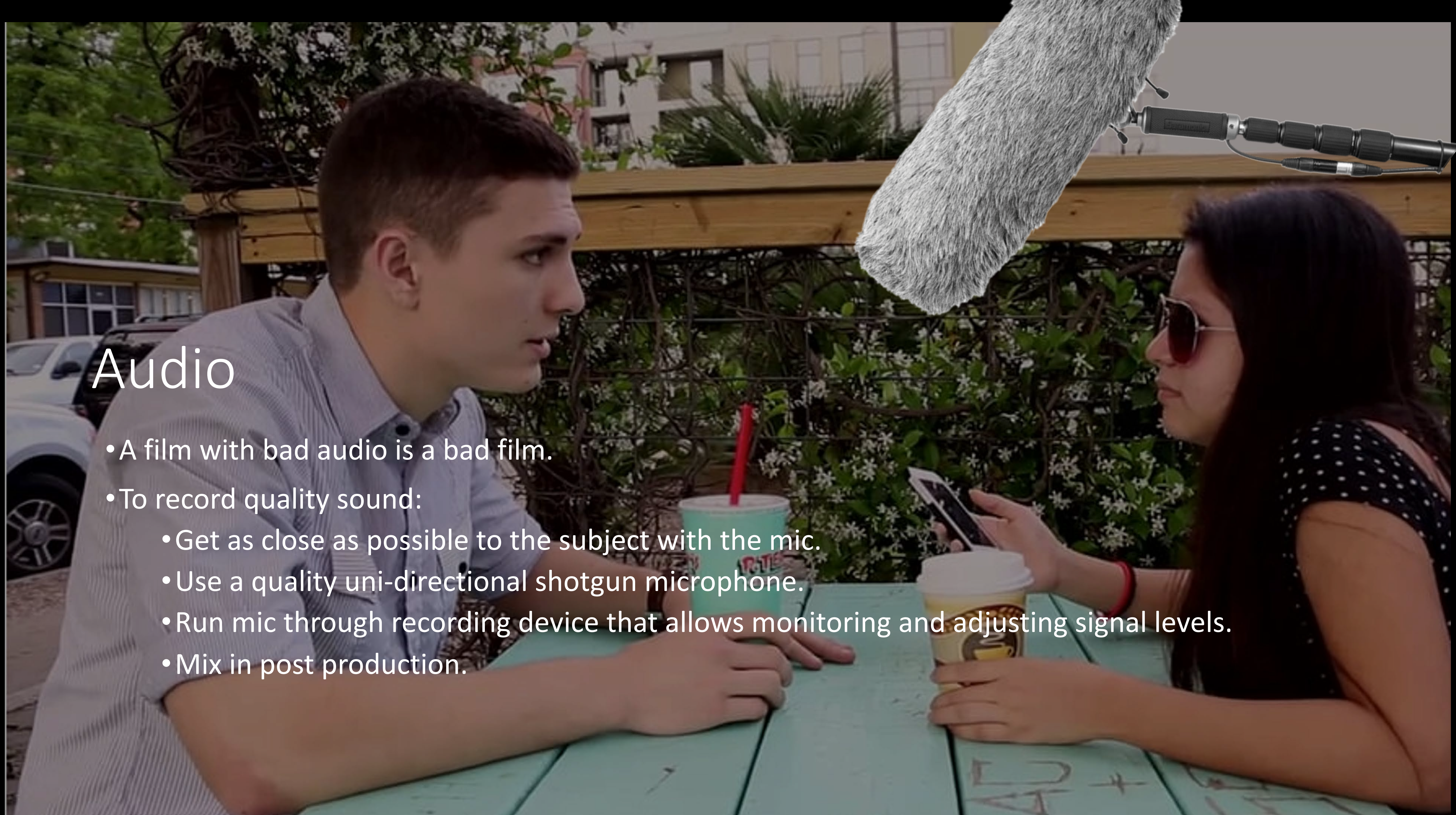
Reflectors





# Audio

- A film with bad audio is a bad film.
- To record quality sound:
  - Get as close as possible to the subject with the mic.
  - Use a quality uni-directional shotgun microphone.
  - Run mic through recording device that allows monitoring and adjusting signal levels.
  - Mix in post production.





# Location

- Theatre location is a familiar stage
- Film locations vary
  - Getting access to the right location increases production value. If you do get access, take advantage of it.
  - Try to get a location you can control.
  - If possible, write to the locations you to which you have access. Also limit the number of locations to help with production.
  - Film crews always leave a location in as good condition as they found it (or even better.)
  - Exteriors can give great visuals, but they present sound challenges



# Production Design, Costume Design

- Sets
- Set decor
- Props
- Costumes
- Too often students will do lazy production design, “This is what I am wearing today, so I guess this is what my character wears...”
- Most of production design is planning.





A close-up of a human eye with a glowing green digital effect. The effect consists of a bright green dot in the center of the iris, surrounded by concentric green arcs and a larger green ring, giving it a futuristic or robotic appearance. The background is a blurred, light-colored surface.

## Visual Effects

- Usually this means Adobe After Effects
- Prevalent in UIL winners



# Budget Equipment

- Canon Vixia HF G20, Vixia HF G50 - \$500 range
- Phone camera – Perhaps with lens app like Filmic Pro.
- Tripod: Anything. Cheapest is about \$40
- Microphones: Basic shotgun is around \$100
- Boompoles: Rode basic is \$49
- Lights: IKEA china balls are \$30, foam core bounce boards
- Free editing software like iMovie or Moviemaker
- Kids will need to share.



# Better Equipment: Cameras

- CAMERAS

- DSLR: My Intro AV class uses Canon T7i \$800, body only (cropped sensor) Canon stopped making DSLRs.
- Mirrorless: Canon EOS M50 Mark II \$745 with 18-45mm lens
- Mirrorless Sony A7S II is \$2598, body only
- Mirrorless: Canon R5 \$3999, body only
- Cinematic: Blackmagic URSA Mini is \$5995, body only
- Cinematic: Canon C200 Mark II is \$3999, body only



# Better Equipment: Audio

- Tripod: Sturdier, fluid head, automatic balance: Libec, Manfrotto @\$300
- Microphones: Audio-Technica AT4053b @\$500, Rode NTG2 @\$200
- Sound recorder: Tascam DR60 @\$200
- Boompoles: Gitzo 4 section carbon fiber @\$200, Neweer @\$50





# We Use

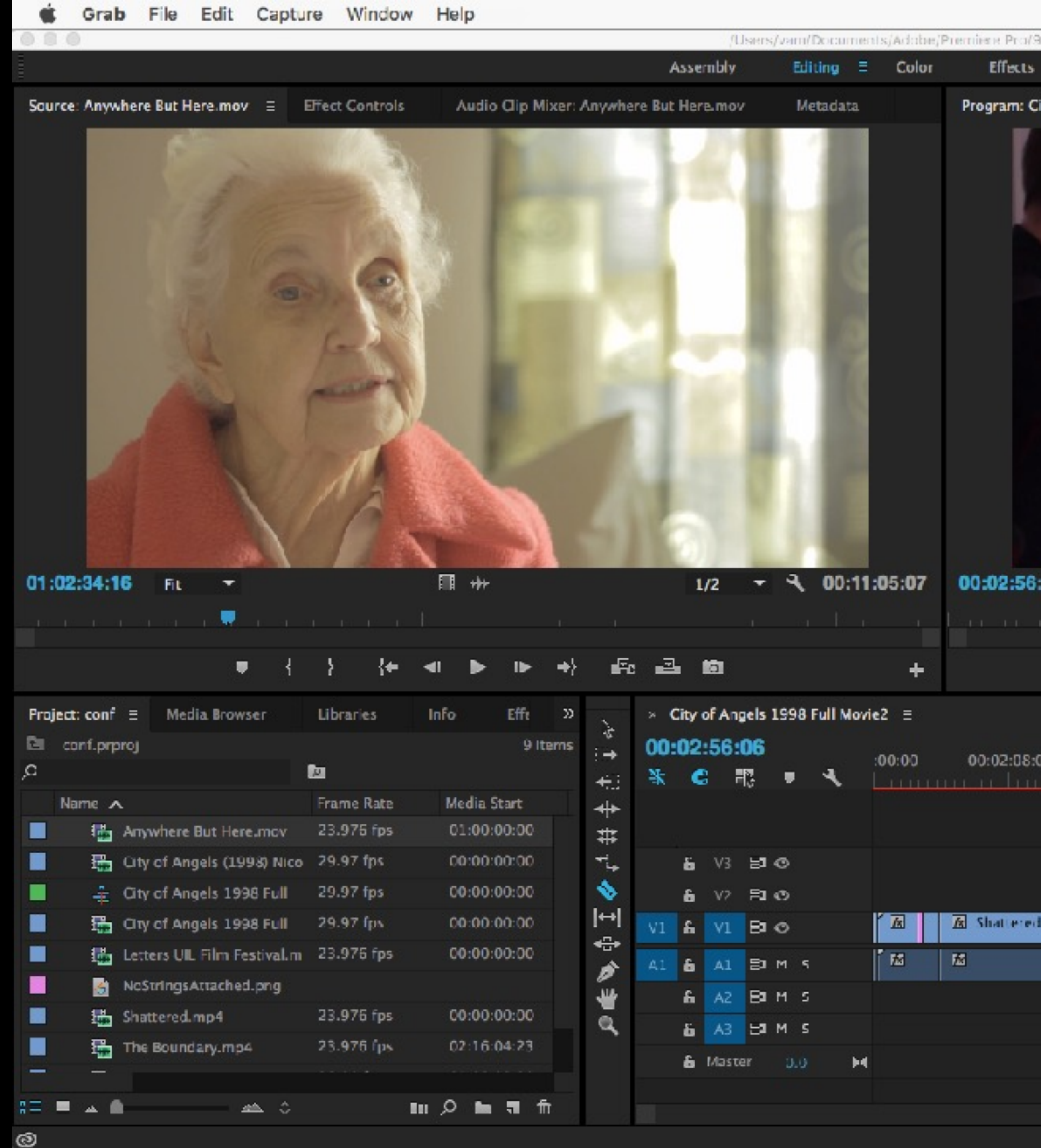
- Lights: LEDs, Arri fresnels, Kino Flo fluorescents
- Adobe Premiere Pro, Avid Media Composer
- Ronin DJI Gimball (steady cam)





# Editing

- Adobe Premiere Pro - most used at our level of production
- Avid Media Composer - most used in the Hollywood film industry (many film schools, colleges, use this)
- Final Cut Pro X - used by many Mac users
- Davinci Resolve (Free version is still pro!)





# Mobile Filmmaking

- Phone Camera
  - Filmic Pro <https://www.filmicpro.com> \$2.99 per week
- Phone Lavalier
  - LeeReel brand \$22.29 from Amazon  
[https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B09PTHZJ2X/ref=ppx\\_yo\\_dt\\_b\\_search\\_asin\\_title?ie=UTF8&psc=1](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B09PTHZJ2X/ref=ppx_yo_dt_b_search_asin_title?ie=UTF8&psc=1)
- LED Light
  - LOLpetek brand lantern, magnetic \$11.99 from Amazon
  - [https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0B45PXM7S/ref=ppx\\_yo\\_dt\\_b\\_search\\_asin\\_title?ie=UTF8&psc=1](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0B45PXM7S/ref=ppx_yo_dt_b_search_asin_title?ie=UTF8&psc=1)
- Editing
  - LumaFusion from <https://luma-touch.com> \$29.99 per year
  - KineMaster from <https://kinemaster.com/en> \$39.99 per year





# Evaluating Film: Discuss

- an interesting camera shot
- why you think the story is so strong
- how the director builds suspense
- how the director establishes tone
- a compelling moment from the actor's performance
- an element of the art department that helps tell the story
- how the genre supports the story
- how the very short format serves the story best
- or something you noticed that is not on this list



# Community Standards

- The content of films for UIL contest is determined by the standards set at the campus.
- Principals must approve the content of each film before it is submitted.
- Community standards vary from campus to campus. Some principals may allow more mature content and some may not.
- Students should be able to express themselves authentically, but perhaps not explicitly.





# Talent Releases

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- Permission should be given in writing by parents/guardians that student actors can appear in the film.
- Depending on your school community, permission could be a formal “talent release” document or it could be simply signing the syllabus from your class at the beginning of the year.







# Copyright

- Since the students are making films like other professionals, they should abide by copyright law. This means using a music track, etc only if permission has been given or a license has been granted.
- In film there is no “30 second rule”
- Fair Use is a defense that may or may not stand up in court after using copyright protected works without the permission of the author, creator or publisher.





# UIL Film

- A compelling self-contained story, demonstrating unique artistic vision
- The applicant's demonstrated ability and creativity as seen in the film
- Evaluation
- Storytelling: Is the vision original? Is the narrative clear and cohesive? Are the character's stories fully developed?
- Performance and Character: Are the performers and onscreen talent well-directed? Are the characterizations believable?
- Production: How do you rate the Cinematography, Lighting, Sound, Art Design, Costumes?
- Post Production: How do you rate the editing, visual computer effects and graphics?





The lonely filmmaker





# Make It Cinematic

- Intentional perspective given through a variety of shot coverage
- Nice cinematography using light, lens variety, and manual control of a camera with a good sensor
- Quality audio recorded with a shotgun microphone on a boom pole through a recorder that allows adjustment
- Believable characters
- Good-paced edit that brings all elements together







# The Ballad of Sam Steele

<https://vimeo.com/332487054>



# THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING



Austin Eval

**We value your  
feedback.**  
Please complete  
conference evaluation  
after your last session.

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

