Written Assignment 1

Since I was 13, film has been a very important part in my life. During middle school and high school I watched and absorbed some of the landmark cinema such as Pulp Fiction, The Godfather, Goodfellas, The Shining, and other films of the same caliber. Having all these movies poured into my consciousness during those formative years definitely made its mark. I feel like it gave me a strong command of plot and meaning as well as forming my linguistics and oratory skills. With my strong affinity for cinema, I want to learn how I can make my contribution to not only the industry of cinema, but also to cinema as an art form. During these next few months of my mentorship I hope to establish a firm grasp of cinematography, lighting, sound, editing, and all other manners of production; furthermore, I want to hone my story writing capabilities and learn how to turn my ideas into a screenplays I can either sell or see to fruition.

In high school, I enrolled in two film and television production high schools where I was exposed, all be it briefly, to editing and filming; however, the schools were poorly equipped, focused primarily on book work, and the students did not have the same zeal that I did. Working with cameras and professional editing software was wonderful and fulfilling and I knew I wanted to continue. The Film Connection appealed to me because of the promise of hands on training. In the future, whether I am holding a boom mic, editing a small clip, or actually directing a whole crew, I know I will enjoy and love a career in cinema. These last couple weeks working with Apex Productions and my mentor Paul Waide have furthered my love for production and I have had a smile every day I have been there. I know this program is going to be very fulfilling and educational as I learn how to work on a production. I want to hopefully be certified and be industry ready by the end of my time with Film Connection and Apex Productions.

My favorite films have always been those that were well written with dynamic characters and brilliant and intelligent dialogue. I have written a few stories, acted in a play or two, and even produced a play and a shirt film in middle and high school, respectfully. While I had fun writing and producing these projects, they are nowhere close to something I can sell and make a living wage on or do they exhibit a fantastic form of art. I love cinema and it truly makes me happy, but I being paid to write is my dream. Anyone can write on their own, but too make this a career I believe film connection is my best bet. Dialogue and character development is what I really want to learn when it comes to writing.

The plots and characters I find most attractive are able to evoke a feeling of hyperrealism. I like to see characters who behave and react realistically. In John Wick, the eponymous hitman runs out of bullets after firing a limited number of shots, a tiny detail that I feel makes the story believable amidst the chaos and excitement of an action film. In Grave Encounters 2, a found footage horror film, the cast runs out of the haunted asylum immediately after they see a demon burn the security guard, a very real and rational reaction to the paranormal. I bring these two scenes up to show details that I see and think “I wish I could write this way”. I want my write originally so I don’t feel lacking in hindsight.

Another plot device I like is when dialogue and plot becomes an analogy of something else, like when the show It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia will have an episode that is a giant metaphor for the Israel-Pakistani conflict. Meta-commentary adds so much to a film and television and I have often found myself speaking and explaining in metaphors. With my screenwriting mentor, I would love to be able to learn how to write metaphorically in a way that is not heavy handed and adds to the plot and characters in a much more dynamic way. Much like how jazz is about the notes you don’t play, I want to learn to write in a way that is about what the character does not do or does not say, adding depth and reality to my story.

For me, film is a way of life. I watch 2 or 3 movies a day and I often think about what I would do differently or how to replicate a shot. I strive to be capable to make my own film whether so that one day I can say, “I did it”. These are my goals. This is what I want to do.

Film Ideas

1. A family moves into a haunted house. Instead of a slow build-up of strange paranormal occurrences, everything happens in one night so as to rob the family from any chance of escape. I would also want to stylize the plot in order to allow for the main horror to all happen in real time. I would want the film to be shot in long sequences so it can add to the suspense and also hopefully be cut to resemble something like Birdman.
2. A programmer and robotics expert are on the fringe of building an artificial intelligence. They succeed and quickly are wrapped up in the startup and Silicon Valley mentality. But success gets to their head and they start fighting and resemble a married couple in the throes of a divorce causing the AI to act much like a child of divorce and adapt quickly to solve the problems it sees. Along that path it becomes something beyond human and starts to contemplate humanity like humans contemplate god. I have a few more details I would like to add but they don’t really explain the plot, just are great scenes in my opinion.
3. A day in the life of a generic twenty something slacker (possibly stoner if the plot calls for that) as he expresses his disdain for his millennial peers, explores his role in life, and ultimately deals with a so called quarter-life crisis. This story would deal heavily in conversions and interactions with a variety of characters. Essentially this is a homage to Clerks and Catcher in the Rye. I don’t have much of a plot other than this character would be going from location to location, talking to those he grew up in high school. If he engages with someone who appears successful, I want him to tear down why they are not happy or fulfilled, if he deals with someone with problems, I want him to solve them but in way that angers the other characters.