

International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme

FILM HL

Production Portfolio

Jazz After Nine

Role of Director

Word count: 1,727

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i. Rationale

(i) Film

Jazz After Nine explores the disjointed relationship between an ex-rock guitarist father, Raymond, and his jazz-loving son, Freddie. With the help of his two ex-bandmates, Raymond strives to find a common ground where he is able to reconnect with his son. As a director, I aimed to confront the conflict, by working collaboratively with my team and other artists to execute artistic visions that were interpreted from the script. Furthermore, I also acknowledged the brotherhood between Raymond and his friends by cultivating onscreen and offscreen relationships between the cast, deepening the emotional value of the performance.

(99 words)

(i) Trailer

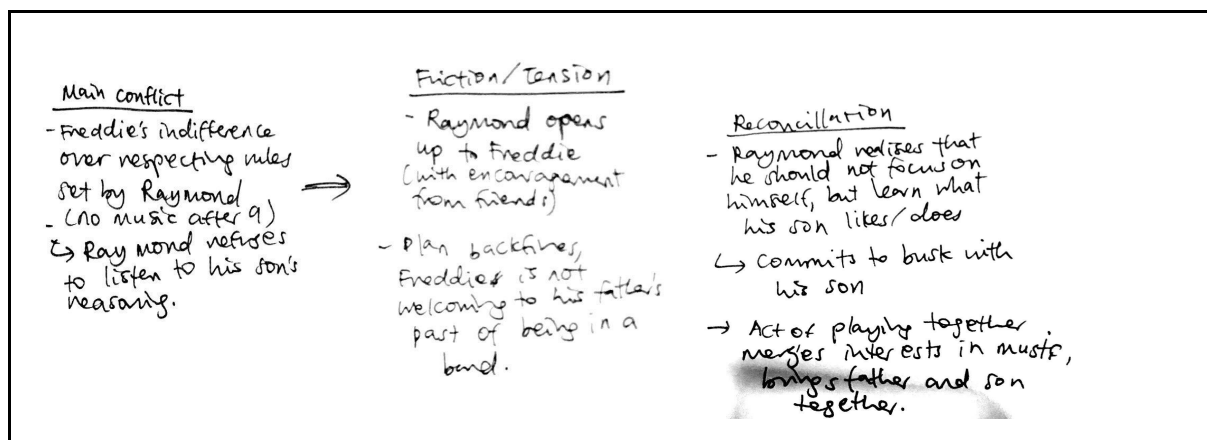
Inspired by *La La Land* (2016) my trailer aimed to convey the disappointment that Raymond felt due to his inability to connect with his son. After explaining his need for a connection, the sound fades into Freddie's jazz piece and shots of Freddie are followed by silent reactions of Raymond. These are then followed by Raymond and his friends with intercuts of Freddie to show Raymond's pursuit for a solution to resolve a conflict with his son. Ending without a shot of the father and son together, the audience is left to wonder whether there is a resolution.

(98 words)

2. Pre-production

1.1 Writing the Script

I wrote the script with the intention of focusing on the conflicts within parent-child relationships (Fig. 1). With personal experience of failing to come to compromise due to self interests, my aim was to showcase the perspectives of both individuals. My intention was to create a neutral ground for the audiences to empathise with both parties, as well as realise that the resolution of a conflict can be achieved through the willingness experience and share the view of the opposing party.





(Fig. 1 showing the timeline for conflict between Freddie and Raymond)

1.2 Conceptualisation

The script has limited dialogue meant that this had to be introduced through other conventions to show the individual realities that each character decides to confine themselves to. I decided to use visual animation/projections and different genres of music to establish that.

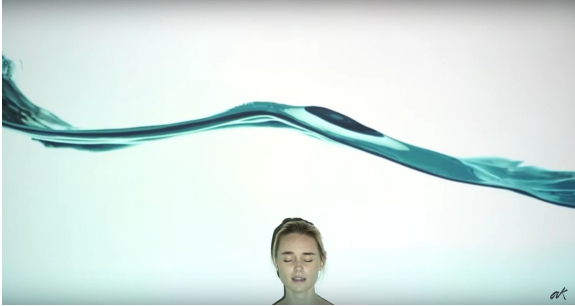



(i) Animation/Projections

The use of further artistic elements to symbolise the alternate space that the characters delve into drew reference from Anocha Suwichakornpong's *Mundane History* (2009) (Fig 2).

Fig 2. <i>Mundane History</i> as a reference for <i>Jazz After Nine</i>	
Mundane History	Jazz After Nine
	
The overlay used in <i>Mundane History</i> were to emphasize the hidden and underlying intentions	Similarly, the intention to use projections/overlaying of animations were to


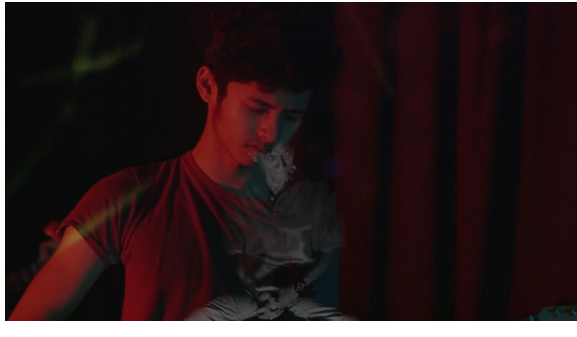
of the characters despite the mundane exterior of reality.	highlight a depth in Freddie's passion for jazz music that transcends the dull reality that he is situated in.
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For Freddie's sequence, I was inspired by Alice Kristiansen music video, *Lost in Translation*.

Lost In Translation Music Video	Testing a subject matter with projections prior to the shoot
	
	
Projections heightened the emotional value, as well as transformed the plain space	A test was done beforehand to plan the composition of the shots, and the feasibility of executing the idea.



For Raymond's "flashback" sequence, I drew inspiration from artist John Clang's *Being Together*.

<i>Being Together</i>	<i>Jazz After Nine</i>
	

	
<p>This work “addresses the phenomenon of differing time zones” by compressing time and space through the use of projections.</p>	<p>Similarly, projections were used to place Raymond within the space of his past.</p>

(ii) Music

As music is used as the factor that divides and connects both the characters, there was a reiteration that the compositions had reflect those themes. Collaborating with a composer allowed me to bring forth and execute that.

Notes to Composer/Composition	Sequence in Jazz After Nine
 <p><u>Jazz Song</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ slow ◦ jollier melody to signify Freddie's relaxed/joyous state because of his passion for jazz ◦ flexible piece 	

Intro

$\text{♩} = 130$

Lead Guitar

Rhythm Guitar

Bass Guitar

Drumset

Rock piece

- Harsher tone
- Steady beat
- Needs to be a direct contrast from the jazz piece

Influences:

- Spentime Palace
 - Hyukoh (?)
- } more contemporary, less classic



5 C G Am F

9 C G Am E

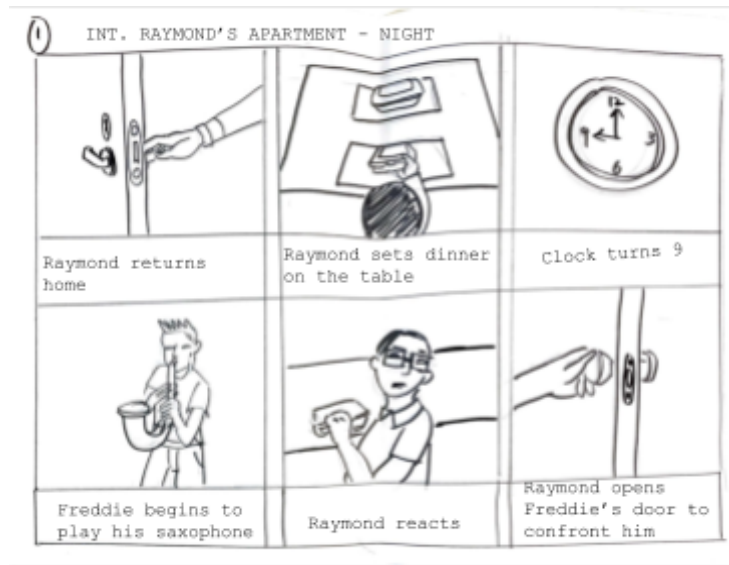
Final Song

- A combination of both pieces — option ①
- Freddie to lead melody, father joins in as a ~~sp~~ supporting ~~drum~~ player



1.3 Location Scouting

To portray the fragmented relationship between Freddie and Raymond, the team planned to use a series of fast cuts between close-up shots (Fig.2).



(Fig. 2 showing initial storyboarding for the first scene)





However, during our location scout, we found a house that had a physical barrier between the entrance and the living space, inspiring us to re-plan our shots and focus on portraying Raymond and Freddie's conflict through the space itself.

Reference from <i>Chungking Express</i>	Premise of Location during Location Scouting
	
	
Frame within a frame composition	Space that inspired us to utilize a similar composition

Revised Storyboarding	Final Product
 <p>Freddie coming home through the front door, framed by the barriers</p>	
 <p>Raymond watching Freddie Come home through the barrier</p>	

1.4 Casting


<p>Live auditions were recorded so we could also review the actor's presence on-screen.</p>

Character Profile	Casting Decision	
<p><u>Paul</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Late 40s - Early 50s - More outspoken - Quick to speak - Man of house, but not the caregiver to his 2 daughters. o (Any race) 		<p>We casted a professional actor because he was comfortable in front of the camera. This helped to exert the confidence and spontaneity in Paul's character.</p>
<p><u>George (Late 40s?)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grounded • Very supportive friend - The "go getter" - Empathetic o Any race 		<p>Non-professional but he worked in front of a camera as a hobby. Thus, had the ability to emulate confidence on-screen while maintaining a realistically grounded demeanour.</p>
<p><u>Raymond</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Late 40s - Mid 50s - Face has to have character (been through hardships) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↳ loss of wife ↳ still dealing with loss. ↳ still tries hard to connect with son. → Should be same race as "Freddie" 		<p>Non-professional but very expressive, and had prominent age lines that aligned with the idea of his character going through hardship. He was also a musician and was able to play the guitar with ease.</p>
<p><u>Freddie</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 - 18 years old • Although jazz player, should have a contrary image <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↳ "Emo" kid ↳ still struggling with loss of mother. → Actor should be same race as Raymond's actor. 		<p>Casting a saxophonist ensured the authenticity of Freddie's character.</p>

The schedules of the actors were also taken into consideration through call sheets planned tight 3-day shoot (Fig. 3).

Jazz After Nine

Ashley Jane, Nicole Ong, Shanil Lee

JAZZ AFTER NINE

SHOOT DAY #: 1 of 3

DATE: Friday, 1st June 2018

LOCATION 1:

SCRIPT LOCATION: Freddie and Raymond's House

ACTUAL LOCATION: 329 Bukit Batok St 33, #14-107, Singapore 650329

CREW CALLED

ASHLEY JANE LEOW

NICOLE ONG

SHANIL LEE BASNAYAKE

CREW CALL: 1000hrs / CAST CALL: 1200hrs

ON SET MOBILES

Director: Ashley Jane 8322 1664

Cinematographer: Nicole Ong 9061 0081

Editor/Sound Man: Shanil Lee Basnayake 8121 6538

Weather 32°/24°

Mstly cldy; a passing mm shower followed by periods of rain in afternoon

Sunrise: 0657

Sunset: 1909

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

POLICE: 999

FIRE: 995

AMBULANCE: 995

Jazz After Nine

Ashley Jane, Nicole Ong, Shanil Lee

TIME	NO. SHOTS	SET/SYNOPSIS:	CHARACTER	ACTOR	Costume Change
1630 - 1900		INT. HOUSE - DAY Jamming Session (alternative scene)	Raymond George Paul	- Leong Kwok Peng - Jason Leong - Keith Liu	(R), (F) : T-shirt (Home Clothes)
1900 - 2000		INT. VOID DECK - DAY	Raymond George Paul	- Leong Kwok Peng - Jason Leong - Keith Liu	Casual Polo Tees and T Shirt
1500-1730		INT. VOID DECK - DAY	Raymond George Paul	- Leong Kwok Peng - Jason Leong - Keith Liu	Another Set of T Shirt and Shorts
DINNER @ 1730					
1730-1930		INT. HOUSE - NIGHT Raymond having dinner/Freddie apologising	Raymond	- Leong Kwok Peng - Matthew Cabawatan	
1930-2000	4	INT. HOUSE - NIGHT Raymond and Freddie Argue	Raymond Freddie	- Leong Kwok Peng - Matthew Cabawatan	
2000-2130	7	INT. HOUSE - NIGHT Raymond and Freddie play together at home	Raymond Freddie	- Leong Kwok Peng - Matthew Cabawatan	
END OF DAY 1					

(Fig. 3 showing call sheets for the first day of shoot)

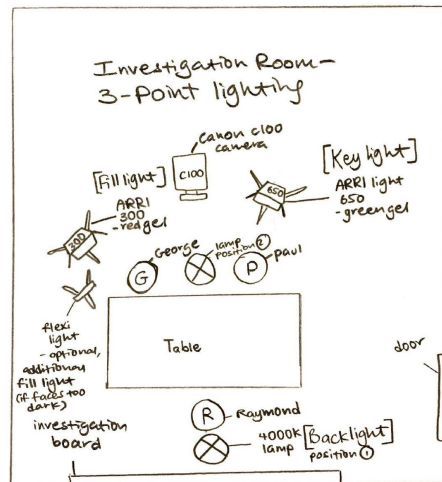
1.4 Lighting

Low-key lighting to isolate the characters within their individual spaces, whereas the colourful lights intended create an alienated space for the characters to abide in. The vision behind this was to emphasise the individualised state of the characters that prevented the resolution of their conflict.

(Fig. 4 and 5 showing the colourful, high key lighting that was executed)

To characterise the investigation room as a surreal space, we had also intended to use harsher low-key lighting to bring out the shadows of the characters, not only following the convention of mystery (that needed to be solved), but it also making a stark contrast against the realistic space of the void deck. This would firstly show he did not know how to connect with Freddie, but also showing the effort and desperation of his need to do so.

10



(Fig. 6 showing the lighting diagram plan for the investigation room)



(Fig. 7 showing the realistic high key lighted space of the void deck versus Fig. 8 that shows the low key lighting of the investigation room)

2. Production

2.1 Characterisation

Fig. 9 Script and Character notes	
<p>PAUL</p> <p>Ah, sorry bro I don't know either. My daughters are different. They just come to me for money to buy their clothes la. This kind of thing, I don't need to connect with them. That one I leave to Linda.</p>	<p>GEORGE</p> <p>Aiyo, my girls talk so much! Olivia and I love to hear about their day over dinner. But boys are so different, do you remember talking to your dad at this age?</p>
<p>SCENE 5: Paul tries to justify his inability to properly help Raymond by relating to his own life. George builds up from Paul's statement with personal input, but also tries to stimulate Raymond to understand Freddie.</p>	

For these two lines, I asked each actor to personally tell me about their own families before they continued with the acting, implementing Uta Hagen's method of "substitution" which relied on the "finding of the character within ourselves, through a continuing and overlapping series of substitutions from our own experience". This connected their off-screen lives with the portrayal of their character on-screen, giving the lines weight and emotional meaning. This also connected the

characters to each other as their personal efforts to help each other go beyond just acting, alluding back to the theme of camaraderie between the fathers.



(Fig. 10 and 11 showing how I as a director, interacted with the actors to find out their personal experiences that share similarities with their characters)

2.2 Cinematography

(i) Dolly

As the fathers were a support system for Raymond, we decided to use an unbroken take to create an cohesive conversation between the fathers without breaking momentum. However, the original intention of utilizing a slider limited the range of the shot as it could only be used from a closer angle.

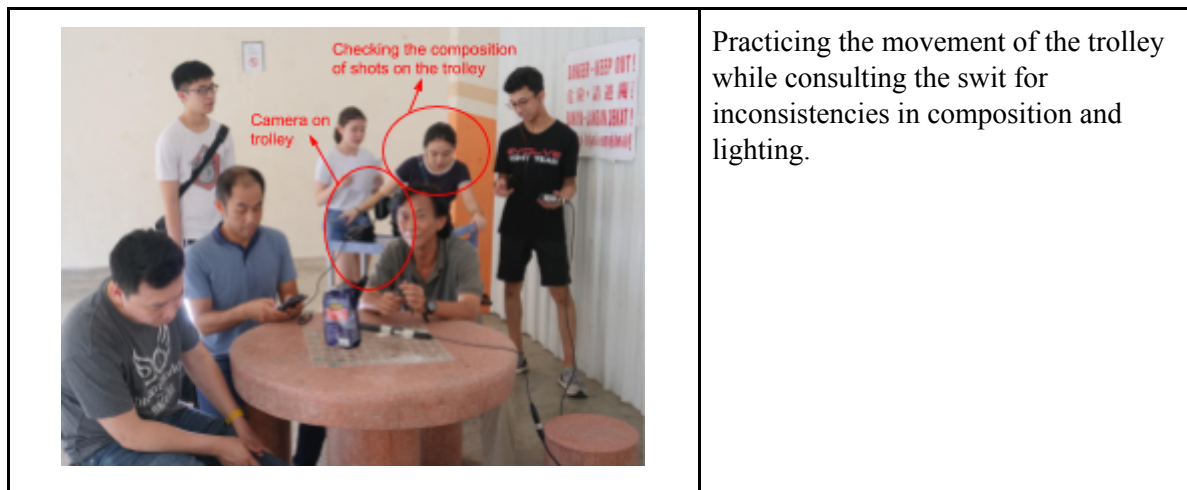
Fig 12 Execution of makeshift dolly



Taped camera to trolley as a makeshift dolly to create a more flexible method of capturing the 3 fathers around a round table.



Consulting and changing the shortlist by improvising various ways to frame the shot.



(ii) Zoom Shots

During the crucial scenes of Raymond's flashback and the final resolution, I realised that a still shot that was initially planned (Fig. 13), was not effective enough in:

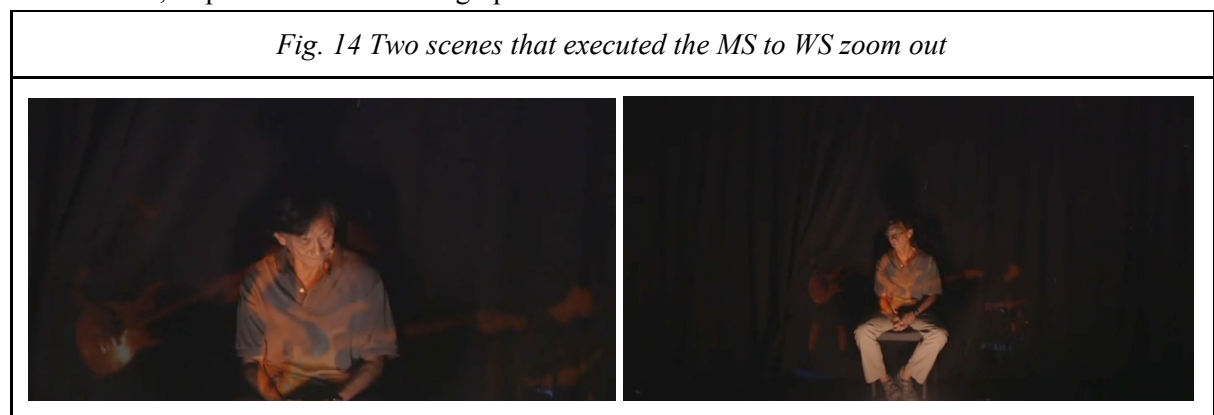
- 1) conveying the emotional depth of the character
- 2) placing them within the space.

Fig. 13 Initial Shot-list for Scenes 8 and 12

Scene 8: Investigation room 2	8.1	Still/High angle shot	MLS	Paul (sitting) and George face the blackboard. George circles the word "MUSIC".
	8.2	Still/High angle shot (quick panning shot to frontal)	CU->WS	George turns to Raymond. (camera whip pans to Raymond. Background behind Ray is curtains)
	8.3	Still	WS	younger George and Paul appear next to him (now young vers.) with their instruments.
	8.4	Still	WS	Raymond sitting in front of curtain, old George and Paul appear next to him with their instruments.
	8.5	Still	WS	same shots just with projection
Scene 12: (Busking together)	12.1	Still	WS	Freddie busks in front of a white wall/ at orchard road/POMO. Raymond walks into frame next to fred with guitar and amp on hand. Freddie looks bewildered.
	12.2	Still	CU/WS	Fred and Ray jamming out.
	12.3	Still	WS	Raymond and Freddie in front of a white wall, blue and red lighting flashes against the wall as credits appear above their heads.

Hence, I opted for the cinematographer to zoom out from a Medium-Shot to a Wide-Shot.

Fig. 14 Two scenes that executed the MS to WS zoom out



Zooming out changed the emotional beat of Raymond being absorbed by his older memories while creating a picture-esque value to the shot, physically leaving him within his past.



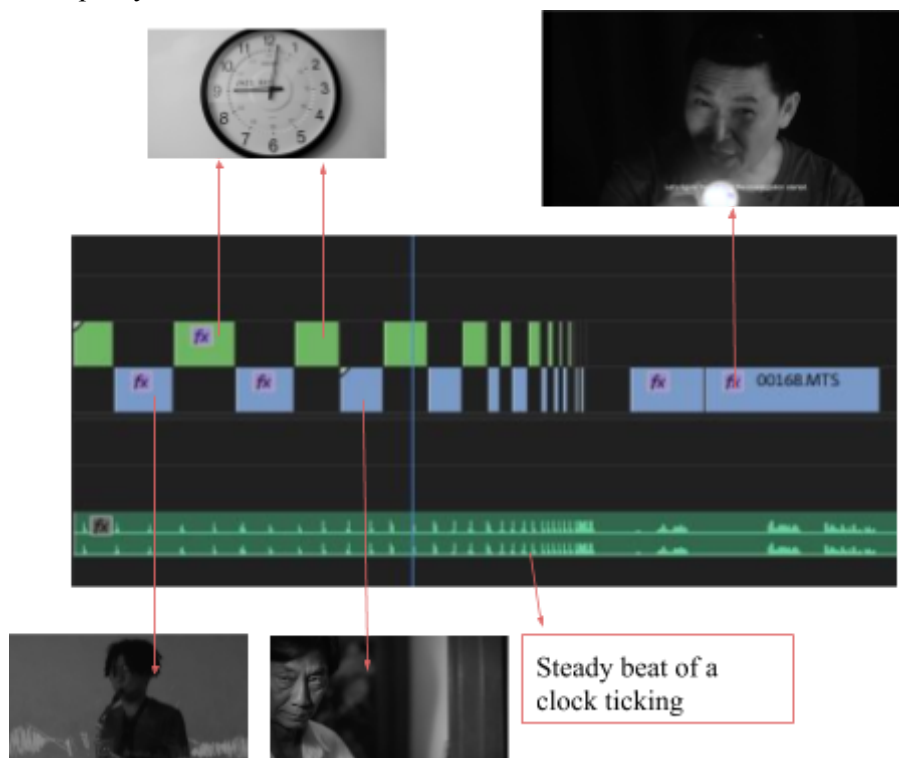
As the camera does not move while zooming out, it flattens the image, giving it a “snapshot” quality. Background (lights) intensifies emotional connection of the established foreground (father and son). Being only the second WS in the film, it reiterated the impact of the resolve.

3. Post-Production

3.1 Editing

(i) Opening Sequence

I felt that the first edit’s opening was too abrupt and lacked the establishment of conflict. This led me to direct another fast-paced opening that cut between scenes of the clock and Raymond and Freddie. These shots also ended with a clip of Paul and George in the investigation room, preluding their involvement to help Raymond solve the conflict.





(Fig. 15 showing the opening sequence)

This sequence also served as to establish the non-realistic nature of the film; a precursor to the animation, projections and unnatural spaces that entailed.



(ii) Pseudo Step Printing

Wong Kar Wai's *Chungking Express* was also referenced for Freddie's scene, showing the seclusion of Freddie as he busked. However, it was executed through the method of Step Printing, which required shooting at 12fps. We were limited by the C100's capacity of 23.97 fps and were unable to achieve it. Therefore we executed it in post by masking shots of passersby and overlaying them onto the shot of Freddie (Fig. 15).

Fig 16: <i>Chungking Express</i> ' Step Printing done VS <i>Jazz After Nine</i> 's Overlays	
Chungking Express	Jazz After Nine
	
Protagonists in the background are focused and slow, contrasted by blur of fast-paced passersby in the foreground.	Similarly, Freddie is in focus and moves in slow motion, while passersby are translucent and overlaid to achieve a blurred contrast.

3.2 Colour-grading

After test screenings, we were advised that the bright colours distracted audiences from the emotional value of the music and performances. As a group, we decided to resolve this problem by colouring the film black and white. Fortunately, many of our shots were executed with a low-key lighting which kept the integrity of our intended lighting schemes. The change in black and white also tied together the elements of investigation, jazz and tension more effectively, bringing attention to the individual characters' emotional payoff.

Fig. 17 The effect of changing the film to black and white	
Colour	Black and White
	



This change to black and white honed in on the stylistic element of the film. It also made the investigation room more coherent as the black and white with low key lighting was reminiscent of film noir.



Black and white allowed for the shadows to be more prominent, bringing out the actor's features and removed distractions that would deviate audience attention.



Colour was still used to highlight the individual worlds that the characters confined themselves to. The original intention of the bright colours intended to emphasize the worlds in which the characters were secluded to had been dulled by the change to black and white, by allowing certain elements to be coloured adhered to our original intention. This selective colouring was inspired by the alternate realm of "Oz" in *Wizard of Oz* (1939).

Fig. 18 Wizard of Oz as a reference for colour

Wizard of Oz	Jazz After Nine
	
The transition into colour from a sepia tone allowed for an insight into the fantastical realm of Oz.	The selective colour gave a similar unworldly effect that connected Freddie and his music. The inclusion of colour only in these sequences also went beyond the original intention of alienation, adding a larger contrast between the frustration and dullness that Freddie felt without pursuing his passion.

4. Trailer



For my trailer, I wanted to establish Freddie's passion as the root of the conflict between Freddie and Raymond, and Raymond's attempt to pursue a resolve. I used many montages to introduce the main plot of Raymond pursuing a connection with his son.

 	<p>The sequencing of these clips highlights Raymond's contemplation of his desire to improve the relationship with his absent son.</p>
 	<p>Using a match-cut from the B-roll established the individualistic nature of two characters and highlights the similarities of both their passions.</p>

(i) *La La Land* as inspiration

La La Land (2013) served as a reference as it chronicled a woman's inability to deepen her relationship with a jazz pianist as his pursuit for jazz clashed with her own personal goals.

La La Land	Jazz After Nine
	
<p>The opening of this trailer showed Mia's determination to redo an audition scene in the face of rejection.</p>	<p>Similarly, I used the reaction of Raymond who states his desire to connect with his son after being told that Freddie was still angry.</p>

	
<p>The main jazz piece of both the films fades in, and the trailers both reveal the musician behind the song - establishing their passion for music. This introduces the character that the protagonists intend to cultivate their relationship with.</p>	

5. Conclusion

Although many inconsistencies were improved during post production, I realised that I could have been more concise as a director. If I were to direct it again, I would remove the investigation room, as it might have broken away from the serious momentum of the conflict. I would then only use artistic elements (colour/animations/projections) to depict Freddie's passion, allowing the audiences to sympathize with both Freddie and Raymond without distracting them from the paraphernalia of other stylistic devices.

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