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All My Friends: A Short Film

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Abstract

The film that I chose to make as my capstone project is a slice-of-life comedy entitled, *All My Friends*. The idea for the film was originally conceived back in the summer of 2017, and the process towards creating a final production has gone through numerous script revisions, a two-week long casting session, the assembly of a large crew and extras, and an intricate editing process. The film was shot digitally and the style was meant to emulate some of the most filmmakers I admire most including Richard Linklater, Alexander Payne, and Alfonso Cuarón. Like any collaborative creative work, the final product is a culmination of many different artistic voices coming together to form a film that hopefully gives some representation of the world we are living in today.

Executive Summary

When describing my desire to make a film like *All My Friends* to people at first, I found it difficult to say exactly what I thought the film would be about. When I originally conceived the idea, it was simply an amalgamation of my memories from the last few years of my life. From there, I started to narrow down thoughts to try to form a coherent story. At first, the film was about a night in the life of one young man as he navigates his quirky friends while trying to come to terms with how young people connect to each other romantically in contemporary society. That first draft started subsequent conversations with my friends over our experiences on this subject matter. I became really interested in the experiences of my female friends and their wanting for a romantic connection in a world that treats them very differently. It was from that vantage point that the final idea for *All My Friends* really began to take shape. The challenge became how to show a night in the life of two friends, one male and one female, and how those experiences relate to one another. The two main characters, Charlie and Natalie, needed to feel like real people. I based much of their dialogue off real life conversations I have had or heard of. Their plights in the film are nothing overly dramatic. In the end, nothing much changes for the characters. Each character is looking to make a real connection, but their insecurities cause them to resort to mobile dating apps and crowded bars in search of it. I am critical of the characters' ways of thinking, but also understanding. That is the world we are living in. Those are societal expectations for a large number of people. My goal with this film was to show bittersweet nature of these feelings of longing. These are two friends who struggle for the same thing and bond over that struggle in the end.

Making a film requires many moving parts to come together properly. I have come to realize over the years that a director's job on the set of a film is not to make the movie, but

manage its creation. A film pretty much begins with one person and that is what happened here. If you're not in Hollywood, the screenplays for films are typically written by one to two people. I started writing *All My Friends* back in July. After each draft, I would send a copy off to three or four trusted friends, get their feedback, and start writing again. That process went for six drafts over the course of six months. I had feedback from my peers, my professors, my relatives, and anyone else who I trusted to give me honest and thoughtful critiques. Starting in January, I began to put together my production team. One of the biggest components of my crew was my cinematographer, or the person that would actually film the project. I had worked with her on a short film I made in Prague the previous semester. Together we worked on storyboards and shot lists, which are the two things used to plan out the visual style of a film. We decided to incorporate a handheld way of shooting for the vast majority of the film. This meant that the camera was rarely locked down on a tripod. The purpose of this was to give the film a documentary realistic feel especially in the scenes that took place at the bar. Along with our desire to give the film a sense of realism, we shot the entire film with one 35mm lens on the camera. This lens most accurately shows the world as if it is from the perspective of the human eye, which is why we thought it was important to use. Sound was also an important aspect of the film. The bar we used needed to sound full and lively with music that felt like it was playing in the background. Since it would have been impossible to film a movie at a crowded bar, we had to fill an empty bar space with extras and create the sounds in the editing process. A student composer helped to write and produce the original music that appears in both the background of scenes. His music also underscores emotional moments. This film relied heavily on the talents of others under my direction.

This project is significant in a number of ways. First, our goal with this film was to reflect the world young people are living in. When making the film, I had long discussions with the actors about their roles, and we had them bring in their own personal experiences. The hope with a film like this is that some people will watch this and their empathy will be rooted in their own personal experiences. Hopefully, the film will show something that has not necessarily been seen before. The use of online dating apps is still stigmatized despite the fact that millions of people use them. Young people are no longer going on them just looking for a “hook up,” but are now trying to use them to actually date. I know this because I have a number of friends who have started long meaningful relationships over these apps, but do not feel like they can talk about it. I would also hope that some men will watch this and understand how their microaggressions affect the women around them. The character of Natalie is talked down to throughout the entire film by guys at the bar and on the dating apps. Despite this, the moment that angers her the most is when Charlie cannot understand the double standard she is put through. Charlie is too caught up in his own self-pity. This is a personal reflection from my memories. This is something that I do not think about enough. I consider myself a supporter of my female friends and family, but I do not always see the bigger picture. My hope is that the film will possibly allow for revelations similar to mine to happen to others as well.

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Introduction

When describing my desire to make a film like *All My Friends* to people at first, I found it difficult to say exactly what I thought the film would be about. When I originally conceived the idea, it was simply an amalgamation of my memories from the last few years of my life. From there, I started to narrow down thoughts to try to form a coherent story. At first, the film was about a night in the life of one young man as he navigates his quirky friends while trying to come to terms with how young people connect to each other romantically in contemporary society. That first draft started subsequent conversations with my friends over our experiences on this subject matter. I became really interested in the experiences of my female friends and their wanting for a romantic connection in a world that treats them very differently. It was from that vantage point that the final idea for *All My Friends* really began to take shape. The challenge became how to show a night in the life of two friends, one male and one female, and how those experiences relate to one another. The two main characters, Charlie and Natalie, needed to feel like real people. I based much of their dialogue off real life conversations I have had or heard of. Their plights in the film are nothing overly dramatic. In the end, nothing much changes for the characters. Each character is looking to make a real connection, but their insecurities cause them to resort to mobile dating apps and crowded bars in search of it. I am critical of the characters' ways of thinking, but also understanding. That is the world we are living in. Those are societal expectations for a large number of people. My goal with this film was to show bittersweet nature of these feelings of longing. These are two friends who struggle for the same thing and bond over that struggle in the end.

Influences

I still remember sitting in my room as a sixth grader, covered by the sheet of my bed, secretly watching *The Departed* after downloading it onto my iPod Touch. My parents were pretty strict about the content I was allowed to watch, but I had seen a few minutes of this film on TV earlier that day. I knew I had to somehow watch it. That film blew my mind as a twelve-year-old. It was violent and profane, but it was also densely plotted and directed with such an energy that I could not shake it from my mind. Those were the kind of films that got me hooked on the art of cinema. The films of Christopher Nolan, especially my first experience watching *Inception* in theatres, were inspiring. I wanted to go to film school and make big, violent gangster films and science fiction epics. My mind has shifted significantly since that point much of which is due to Richard Linklater.

Linklater is the man who, along with Steven Soderbergh, established the 1990s American independent film renaissance that has led to directors like Quentin Tarantino, Wes Anderson, and Noah Baumbach. It took me awhile to discover Linklater. In the summer between my senior year of high school and the start of college, Linklater's *Boyhood* came out in theatres. I had read about the film since it had premiered at Sundance, and the fact that it had been made over the span of 13 years was exciting enough for me to seek it out. I could not wait for it to expand nationwide, so I drove the two hours up to Washington D.C. from my hometown in Richmond to see it. *Boyhood* changed how I viewed the medium of film. One reason is that I saw that film at a point in my life where I lived the experience of that main character. The film ends with the main character driving off to college while I was headed off to college a month after I saw it. More than that connection, I had never seen a film that was so concerned with the little moments of a person's life. No one dies in the film, there is no climatic heist, or big sappy romantic moment at

the end of the film. Linklater was making a concerted effort to show childhood the best way he knew how. The characters struggle with things like divorced parents, alcoholism, poverty, and fears about their future, but it is handled in a way that is never emotionally manipulative. I saw aspects of my family and my friends in so many of the characters. After *Boyhood*, I started to look into the other works of Linklater. His films *Dazed and Confused* and *Everybody Wants Some!* are films that Linklater wrote from his memories of high school and college respectively. Again, they do not deal with major crimes or overly heighten dramatic stakes. The characters in these films talk like real people. Most of the conversations seem silly or inane, but they end up going such a long way towards painting multidimensional and humane characters. That has been Linklater's biggest impact on me as a developing storyteller, and I think it shows in *All My Friends*. For Linklater, the things that we remember most are these little moments that we share between the people in our lives. The most inconsequential interactions can have powerful meanings in our memories. His films create empathy by recreating specific, detailed experiences.

From Linklater, I began to explore more and more humanist filmmakers. These were people that value character over complicated plots or elaborate set pieces. I started going back in time to some of the 1970s American cinema that focused on friendships and relationships. George Lucas' first film, *American Graffiti*, which was an inspiration for *Dazed and Confused*, documented the last night before college for a group of high schoolers. Woody Allen made films like *Annie Hall* and *Manhattan* in that time period that put the realistic and complicated relationships people have with each other at the forefront. More recently, directors like Alexander Payne and Kenneth Lonergan have put complex human relationships at the forefront of their works. Payne specifically wrestles with how self-pitying white men exist in modern society by satirizing how self-important they tend to think of themselves. That is something that I

found incredibly important when forming the character of Charlie. Although *All My Friends* is contemporary, these films were vital to my understanding of where this genre of cinema has come from in America. These are films that are hard to categorize. They have funny moments, but it would be disingenuous to consider them comedies. They also have dramatic moments, but they do not play into melodrama. These are the kinds of works that I think best reflect how we live our lives. These films set the stage for the tone I wanted to use when going out to make my own work.

Going to Prague last spring was my first chance to see much of the European films that have made an impact on the American directors that I grew up admiring. What I ended up taking away from seeing the films of the French and Czech New Waves were how they had influenced where American cinema evolved. What really had an impact on me was the style of the Social Realist wave of European films in the 1990s. The Dardenne Brothers, a directing team of Belgian brothers, made waves when they debuted their Palme d'Or winning film *Rosetta* in 1999 at the Cannes Film Festival. That film (and their subsequent others) are notable for how the directors began to use the camera to show realism. It was in constant motion almost like a documentarian trying to react to a situation happening in front of them. The Dardenne brothers shifted away from how film is classically constructed. They turned away from artificial lighting and standard shot coverage.

Their influence, which defined much of the shooting style of *All My Friends*, ended up affecting another film, *Y Tu Mamá También*, that had an even bigger impact on my final project. This film, directed by Alfonso Cuarón, follows the exploits of two teenagers and an older woman as they take a trip to coast from Mexico City during a period of political turmoil. What had such an impact on me from that film is how Cuarón moves his camera. He incorporates long,

handheld tracking shots. Unlike the Dardenne brothers, Cuarón's film is very much a conversational piece where the dramatic stakes are lowered. The film asks us to hang out with these three characters over the course of five days. Cuarón feels both rooted in realism, but also vibrant and stylistic in its own right. That was the exact thing I was hoping to achieve with my short film.

Most recently I have admired a lot of the work on television, and how it rides the line between the comedy and drama while tackling issues like contemporary friendship and relationships. The show *Master of None* has put out two exemplary seasons of television. The series is about how a young actor and his group of friends navigate parents, relationships, and social issues in New York City. The show has received praise for a lot of things; one of the most notable has been how it embraces modern dating and relationships. Instead of simply making a joke about something like Tinder, the show explores how people are actually using it. One episode in the past season entitled "First Date" consists of 12 online dates that Dev (played by Ansari) goes on over the course of a few weeks. The episode deals with the difficulty of meeting someone meaningful from an online app as well as the overwhelming influence and impression dating apps have over the lives of millennials. This episode demonstrated the possibility of telling stories about this topic, and it inspired me to dig even deeper with my generation. Shows like *Insecure* and *High Maintenance* have also shown a desire to explore similar ideas and themes.

Along with *Master of None*, I also read Ansari's book, *Modern Romance*, this summer before writing my script. Because of Ansari's stand up persona, many thought the book would be about Ansari's own experiences dating in the modern world. Instead, the book (which Ansari co-wrote with NYU professor Eric Klinenberg) is a sociological investigation into how people meet,

fall in love, hook up, and get married in the United States and in countries around the world. *Modern Love* has been a *New York Times* best seller. It showed that these concerns are on the minds of many people. It motivated me to explore this issue further from my own observations.

Background

This capstone project has been the culmination of filmmaking skills I have been trying to learn over the past four years. I started my college career as a Broadcast Journalism major before switching to Television, Radio, and Film in my first week on campus. One of the most important decisions I made during the first semester of my freshman year was to join the sketch comedy show *After Hours* on Citrus TV. I applied as a writer, and I was given my first formal directions in screenwriting and comedy writing. Newhouse does not offer in depth production classes to first year students, so it was with *After Hours* that I began to understand how film production worked. I eventually found myself working on sets and helping out in any way I could. These skills would eventually help in preparing me for higher level film classes as a part of my major, but the biggest take away I got from my *After Hours* experiences was how important being a self-starter is to filmmaking. I eventually became the Executive Producer of the show in my junior year. Suddenly, I had to figure out how to manage all the different departments of the show including writers' meetings, casting sessions, sets, and editing. It was a lot having to keep all those factors in mind, but it ended up preparing me well to make this film. Even though I ended up bringing in two producers to help me with *All My Friends*, I still had to oversee many different areas of the production including casting, locations, equipment check out, renting out a U-Haul, etc. It would have been ten times harder had I not been prepared through my experiences running the show.

My class work was also vital in preparing me to take on this film. My first Television, Radio, and Film (TRF) production class was TRF 205, a requirement for all majors. It is known as being one of the most stressful classes a TRF student will take. Everyone walks away with their own horror stories. I took this class at the beginning of my sophomore year, when I was still trying to decide for sure if film was what I truly wanted to do. In that class, I took a chance and asked to direct our group's final film. As one of the youngest in the class, I ended up getting paired with someone to co-direct the project. Our film was a nightmarish experience. My co-director did not want to be a co-director. He wanted to be *the* director. He forced me to take a secondary role until he quit three quarters of the way through the production, and I had to take over. The whole film was disorganized from start to finish with multiple shooting days falling apart. To this day, I am pretty ashamed of how our final film turned out, but I learned some really important lessons. Films will fall apart if the people involved with them do not care what they are making. Everyone in my group was making our film for a grade, but we did not have passion about what impact it was making. In the future, to make films that were exciting to make and actually had a purpose, I realized I needed to surround myself with people that I trust and whom I believe in.

I almost gave up on wanting to be a director after my TRF 205 experience, but the second semester of that year reignited my passion. I was able to take a class specifically in directing. The purpose of the class was to help the students find their voices as filmmakers by letting us make our own projects on a week to week basis. It culminated in our final films. I chose to adapt one of my *After Hours* sketches into a comedic short film about a man trying to work his way through an afterlife bureaucracy in order to get into heaven. I got the chance to work with some of my talented friends and choose my own crew. My ability to trust them allowed for me to

execute my vision of the first time. I modeled my style after the Coen Brothers, and I had the people that let me take that creative risk. Making that film gave me the confidence to continue to explore my tastes and interests as a filmmaker. Along with the directing class, I took a basic screenwriting class where I wrote a fifteen-page short film entitled, "Correction." I was lucky enough to have a professor who was willing to push me, because she could tell that writing was something that I was passionate about. My script ended up getting picked the next semester by a TRF 205 class to be made, and I won an award from Newhouse because of it. Screenwriting made me more willing to follow my interests as a writer.

My experiences at the end of sophomore year motivated me to try something I was not sure was possible: apply for the VPA (the other film school at Syracuse) abroad program in Prague. Already competitive within the VPA film program, it was rare for Newhouse students to apply, let alone get in. I talked to my abroad advisor and ended up applying directly to the program with the film I had made the previous semester serving as my portfolio. I ended up getting into the program, and I got to spend a semester at FAMU, the film school in Prague. I was given the chance to shoot a 16mm film, a process that is rare in American film schools. I got to make a film that had more dramatic heft than I had made before. The story involved a estranged father trying to connect with his mentally disabled daughter. My sister is disabled, and it was one of the first times I had made such a personal subject matter a topic of one of my works. Even more importantly though, I became close with a number of the students in the VPA film program during that semester. I worked on their sets, and a number of them worked on mine. It was in that program and from my friendships with those students that I began to understand much more about the technical craft of filmmaking and how to apply it to my projects. In the end, many of those friends that I made in Prague worked the major roles on *All*

My Friends. I attribute much of the technical quality to them and their abilities. The film would not exist if I had never been able to make it into the Prague program.

Process

The first major decisions that were made by me when making this film was to expand the character of Natalie in the script to much make her the second lead. Originally, the script was centered around Charlie, the friends he interacts with, and his struggles. Natalie was one of the friends that he interacted with. As the writing process continued on, I got more and more feedback, and it became clear to me that I needed to do more with her character. She was too complex to only be a supporting role. With the expansion of her character, I think the central idea of the film began to change as well. Natalie's perspective allows for a critique of Charlie that was not possible before. Charlie is so caught up in his own personal plight that he ignores what is going on with his close friend. In earlier drafts, there was also a friend of Charlie and Natalie's named Tyler. He was supposed to play a middle ground between the extremes of Charlie and Jas, but I eventually wrote him out of the script because I could combine him with Jas. In a short film, one only has so much time to flesh out characters. It was a choice that I needed to make in order to focus on the characters that I cared more deeply about exploring.

The expansion and evolution of the characters continued into the casting process. Having worked on a number of student films before, I knew that good acting can make or break a film. I knew that for my film especially, which relies so heavily on character interactions through dialogue that having knowledgeable actors would be important. I looked towards Syracuse's drama department, which surprisingly has little interaction with our film schools. Many times, film students will cast fellow film students in their films or friends of theirs instead of looking

into the acting program. I was committed to getting acting majors to fill the lead roles of my film. We ended up auditioning fifteen people to fill the five main roles. In terms of casting, I was looking for people that fit the physical description of the parts and had good acting abilities, but most importantly I was looking for people who I thought could embody the personalities of the characters. I wanted the actors to be able to inhabit their roles to the point where they could understand the mindset of their characters. I thought this would lead to a richer collaboration, and the best possible performance. I ended up casting four acting majors and one non-acting major in the film. They all ended up bringing something unique to the table. I purposely casted a month and a half before I planned to shoot because I wanted time to work with the actors together. I was happily surprised to learn that all of the actors (even the non-acting major) knew each other before hand and were friends. We ended up being able to have two group rehearsals (including a table read) and one additional session with the actors who played Charlie and Natalie. This allowed me to have long conversations with each actor about their character's motivations and goals. With Charlie and Natalie, I was able to work on their chemistry. I wanted each of their conversations to feel as breezy and naturalistic as possible. I also knew that many of their character's most powerful moments are unspoken. Their reactions to things in the film are vital to selling its central themes and ideas. To get those genuine reactions, I had to walk them through the journey of their characters. The importance of working with actors who played the other supporting characters of Jas, Rachel, and Greg was to keep them from being clichéd or stereotypes. For most of those characters, they only have scene or two in the film to establish who they are. It is hard to achieve complexity with that short of screen time, but much of that complexity can come through in the performance. During the rehearsals, I brought in the film's costume and production designer to work with the actors in cultivating their appearance in the

film. I had the actor's costumes reflect much of their internal state. The color each character wears speaks to how we wanted them to be perceived by the audience. With Charlie and Natalie, we also have shots of them in their respective bedroom's in the opening shots of the film. The production designer and I worked with them to create a space that would accurately represent who their characters are. By the time we got onto set, the actors and I were on the same page. Our ability to rehearse beforehand meant that the actors and I both knew what we needed out of each scene. We experimented on set and took numerous takes of each scene, but the directing process for me was much easier than it has normally been. There was an open dialogue between me and the actors on set that helped us feel more confident in the decisions we were making.

One of the trickiest aspects of making this film was securing the locations. Our main concern was securing a bar, where over half of the film takes place. We had tossed around ideas early on about trying to dress up a basement to look like a bar, but I ended up deciding that we needed to shoot on location somewhere. I think the audience would have been able to easily see through the façade of a basement. We also made the decision to avoid bars that were mainly student bars near campus. That decision was made for a number of reasons. First, these student bars (DJs, Feagan's, Orange Crate Brewing Company, etc.) have a bad reputation with student filmmakers. I was on a project a couple years ago where we had made an agreement to shoot at DJs with the owner's permission, but he backed out the night before. Instead my producer and I started focusing on scouting out bars in downtown Syracuse near armory square. We needed a place that would appear lively without being exclusively a club. We spent two days scouting and talking to over a dozen bar owners and managers downtown. To our surprise the bar Benjamins on Franklin's, which we had heard mixed things about, was the most welcoming place along with Clinton Street Pub. We decided to choose Benjamin's because they agreed to allow us to

use the entire space for our shoot. The bar is only open on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, which leaves the venue open for the rest of the week. We made an agreement with the management to shoot on a Tuesday and Wednesday night while being able to leave our equipment there overnight. Our biggest issue at that point became finding enough extras to fill the enormous space in both the bar and dance floor area. It was a challenge that we knew we had to face in order to make the best-looking film possible. Through email, Facebook, and mainly calling on favors, we were able to secure 30 extras for our first night and 18 for our second. With the help of my second assistant director, we strategically placed the extras throughout the scenes as we shot. We able to turn an empty bar into a lively venue.

The other major location that we needed to secure for the film was the restaurant in the final scene of the film. The original screenplay had Calios listed as the desired location for nostalgic purposes. We originally approached Calios to film, and they were happy to help. After due consideration though, I realized that Calios, despite my sentimental feelings towards it, was not the ideal place to shoot. The outside windows were too small and the lighting was too generic. Their location on Marshall also meant that we would be constantly dealing with people walking in or out. On our scouting trips downtown trying to find the bar, we stumbled across a Chinese restaurant with an outside window that immediately grabbed our attention. It was large and expansive with a vibrant neon signed attached to it. The final shot of the film involves a slow tracking shot pulling back from the restaurant, so it was vital to ending the film on the emotional note it requires. When we went in to talk with the owner, we were hit with a major hurdle. She did not speak any English. As we tried to communicate our desire to possibly use the restaurant for our film, she thought we were trying to order something. We eventually talked with her teenage daughter, who worked in the restaurant as a cashier. She was able to translate our desire

and help us to secure the restaurant for our shoot. We ended up paying her to be on set with us to make sure everything went smoothly with the owner. That venue ended up being the perfect fit for the final scene. At this point, I cannot picture the film ending with any other setting.

Our last major location hurdle came on our last night of shooting. A couple scenes of the film take place in an alleyway, and I found one that fit the aesthetic of the film near Armory Square. We were filming outside in the freezing cold after shooting for the previous day. Everyone was tired and exhausted. A local bar was allowing us to take power from their building for our lights and camera outside. Just as we were about to start filming our last scene, the bar owner came outside and told us that he had to shut down early because of a family emergency. We were about to be in a dark alleyway without lights or a camera. All of our equipment was due back the next day. Luckily, one of the crew members found an outdoor outlet from a restaurant that bordered the alley. We hooked up our extension cords, but we had no clue how long this power would last. My director of photography and I had planned on getting five shots to cover the scene, but times were getting desperate. It was either now or never to get that scene. I literally had to go stand in a corner for a couple minutes and picture how the scene would play out in my head. I decided to cut down the scene into two shots and let the performances drive the scene. In the end, I think it became one of the strongest scenes in the film because of it. The actors and crew members felt the sense of urgency and they stepped up to get the scene done under difficult circumstances.

A major creative decision that I made before filming started was how I wanted the film to be shot. I brought in a good friend of mine from Prague, who had served as a camera assistant on my 16mm film there, to be my director of photography. I trusted her talent, and I was excited to work with her on a major production. We made the choice to shoot the film almost entirely

handheld with the exception of the first and last scenes. This meant that the camera was never locked down on a tripod. It was always in motion in one way or another. We made this decision for a number of reasons. First, it fit the tone of the film. I wanted to go for something realistic yet lively. The movement of the handheld adds a sense of urgency to each shot, which is what I wanted out of the characters. The style is more documentary than traditional Hollywood. I wanted a film with a lot of movement. The camera tracks with the characters, behind them, and around them. With this style, the camera hopefully becomes its own perspective in the story. The second reason we used handheld was that it allowed us to get way more shots than would have been possible with a tripod. We had a crazy number of shots that I wanted to get at the bar over the course of our two days of shooting there. It would have been impossible to get all that was needed if we had to set up and adjust a tripod for each shot. We incorporated a run and gun style of filmmaking to get what we needed to tell our story.

Music also plays a huge role in this film. Decisions in that regard to music will go a long way towards making the final product authentic. We made the decision not to play music while the actors and extras were performing, because I wanted to use original music throughout my film. The composer and I worked on the music for the film, which served two purposes. Part of the score would need to highlight the emotions of the characters and add to the overall tone of the film. This part of the score comes in the beginning of the film as we are introduced to the characters and leave them. For those songs, I asked the composer to emulate two artists: Tame Impala, an Australian electronic rock band, and LCD Soundsystem, an American alternative electronic band. The music of these two artists inspired much of the tone of this film from when I was originally writing it. Their styles are electronic and modern without falling into the superficiality that I believe dominates a lot of electronic dance music (EDM). Tame Impala and

LCD Soundsystem both discuss the difficulties of making connections with modern technology in their work. The song “All My Friends” by LCD Soundsystem is what partially inspired the title to my film. In contrast, the other music that inhabits the film is taking place within the bar and club. This music is generic EDM modeled after artists like The Chainsmokers. The music is catchy, simple, and easy to dance to. It is in these moments that the characters struggle the most to connect to other people. The music in this film gave me an opportunity to play with the tone of my film while also showcase my opinions on the irony of modern EDM culture.

Significance

When all is said and wrapped, I still struggle with what I think the significance of this film is to me and the audience. There are issues and themes that I was trying to discuss with this piece such as the apathy of modern dating, double standards, and male and female friendship, but I really wanted to tell a story about two people that I know. By that, I mean I wanted to make a film about people that felt like the characters could actually exist in the real world. The way that I went about doing that was to make a film based off of my friends. This film is really a love letter to them and their struggles throughout the time they have been in my life. I do not believe that means that those people and I will be the only ones to get something out of this film. I just want people to see themselves and the things that they worry about reflected on the screen. The characters I have been trying to create are not perfect people. I understand that much of what I have put on the screen is what I know. These characters ended up being white and heteronormative although that was not my set intention. I wish I could have used a more diverse cast. I tried to recruit LGBTQ actors and actors of color, but they were not available. My thinking is that if I can put on the screen genuine emotions then people will be able to connect

with it. No matter what a person's background is, we will always long for a connection. We will always feel jealousy, disappointment, and anger when we find ourselves misunderstood. If my film can tap into those emotions with an audience then I think it has meaning and purpose. Film and stories in general are about connecting people to the greater scheme. They make people feel less alone. I know that they have done that for me. If someone can watch my film and feel something then the film is having an impact.

Film can help people to reevaluate how much importance they put on their own problems. The evolution of the Natalie character allowed me to critique the character of Charlie, and, in a way, myself. Charlie goes through a journey in the film that I am able to empathize strongly with. He was a much easier character to write and create because of that. Charlie has a rough night, but his "rough night" does not compare to Natalie's. She is talked down to constantly, has drinks spilled on her, and is almost taken advantage of while having the same goals as Charlie. The biggest problem Charlie has is, "not being able to get past the opening conversation." There is a disparity that exists between the friends that Charlie cannot seem to see the entire film. I would hope that although Charlie cannot see that double standard, the audience can. People like me will sit in the audience and feel bad for Charlie, but also realize that his problem pale in comparison to Natalie's. I contemplated letting Natalie tell Charlie at the end of the film exactly how his inability to see her double standard angers her, but that is not a reflection of real life. Rarely have I seen women talk to men openly about the double standard that exists for them in dating and in life. I do not think that burden is on them in anyway, but I understand it is a difficult thing to speak about. I just hope that my film can be a constructive voice in this issue even if it is in only a small way.

On a personal level, the film has already meant a great deal to me. It has allowed me to grow and expand as a filmmaker. I have gained invaluable experience working with a large and talented cast and crew of creatives. I was able to experiment with styles that I have only learned in theory. I have been able to see how I can expand my use of different cinematic tools. The film will symbolize so much of what I have been able to learn over my collegiate years. It will serve as my starting point into an industry I have always dreamed of joining.