

property of



FEATURETTE

A Really Short Film

Screenplay by

Gordon T. Highland

© June 25, 2004
Locked Shooting Draft

"FEATURETTE"

CUT FROM BLACK:

Academy leader, then two-pop, exposure ramp into:

1 INT. LIVING ROOM MOVIE SET – DAY (DV) 1

A flashlit CLAPBOARD fills the frame, then is removed as we clumsily re-focus to reveal a small, dim, low-budget movie set, with two apathetic-looking twentysomething actors sitting on the worn couch.

This is grainy, semi-amateur black-and-white video footage, distinguished as "DV" from here forward, which is the camera the actors always play to in this fictitious production we're parodying. "DOCCO" is the color behind-the-scenes footage, ironically of far superior cinematic quality, mostly wide shots.

VOICE

Speed. . . marker.

VOICE 2

Everyone settle... and...
action!

We defocus with vague action in the background as the credits roll. Their acting is very stiff.

SUPER TITLES:

Indie Penance

in association with

The Slowdance Institute

presents

Featurette: The Making of "Redlight."

BLURRY MALE ACTOR

Did we get all of the gear
rented for tomorrow?

BLURRY FEMALE ACTOR

Still waiting to hear about the
location, though.

BLURRY MALE ACTOR

Cool.

(beat)

So... anything going on tonight?

BLURRY FEMALE ACTOR

We probably should get the cast together for a read-through. Maybe roll a J, hang out.

BLURRY MALE ACTOR

A'ight. I think I can be down with that, I just gotta, umm-

(to Director O.S.)

Dammit! Can I get a cut, <Alan> (Brad)?

ALAN (O.S.)

And we're cut.

Every time a name written like <Alan> appears, it's a horribly obvious audio edit made later after the person took their name off the project. The (name) is what is actually spoken by the actor on set.

The scene racks back into focus briefly as the credits end and the actors reach O.S. for their SCRIPTS, stand up, and pace about. A MIC BOOM lowers into frame. Female Actor lights up a smoke.

ALAN (O.S. CONT'D)

Anyone happen to bring any extra blank tapes with them?

Both actors look up into camera at Alan.

BLACKOUT

MUSIC UP

2 INT. EDITING ROOM – NIGHT (DOCCO)

2

LOWER THIRD: Alan Smithee, Director – "Redlight"

BRAD COLLINS (ALAN SMITHEE), mid-20s trendster full of fast-talker youthful enthusiasm a la Tarantino, wears a production company ball cap, purple-tinted geek-chic glasses, and a LIGHT METER around his neck. He's lit in beautiful soft light, and beams with pride as he discusses his dream project with the INTERVIEWER just off camera left.

ALAN

The idea for "Redlight" came from, the original seed anyway, from my own experiences in this business. They say to write what you know, ya know? Well, obviously my expertise is in visual storytelling. And no one's ever thought to make a film about the industry or the filmmaking process before.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

A film... that you're shooting... on video?

ALAN

Film, tape, video - whatever you wanna call it. We did some experimentation with different stocks and lenses and stuff. Anyway, we just thought that being self-referential in the story would give it this cyclical feel, something original. Fresh.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

Fresh.

ALAN

Exciting.

(beat)

Kind of like a new artist or photographer who makes self-portraits. I mean, you just don't ever see that kinda stuff, ya know?

(waiting for agreement,
but left hanging)

Right?

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

Anyway, tell us about your background.

ALAN

Well, I started off in the commercial sector...

3 INSERT:

3

A bad local television commercial with a goofy yokel in a king costume selling used cars.

ALAN (V.O. CONT'D)
 ... but working around agency
 types left me creatively
 bankrupt. So I made some
 experimental shorts, just testing
 the limits of the camera.

4 INSERT:

4

(VHS) POV home-movie footage of someone (Alan
 presumably) making out with a girl on a couch, her
 mouth practically engulfing the lens.

ALAN
 Then I decided to go back to
 school, and that kinda rekindled
 my passion for film-

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)
 Video.

ALAN
 Video, and that's where I picked
 up most of my crew for
 "Redlight" and eventually
 brought us to this very moment,
 on the verge of its hopefully
 triumphant release.

5 INT. LIVING ROOM MOVIE SET - DAY (DOCCO)

5

We watch at a distance (everything looks gorgeous as
 if magically re-lit in the Docco cam) as our once-
 blurry actors, CASSIE and WES, prepare for a scene.
 Cassie checks her makeup in a COMPACT, and Wes's lips
 move as he goes over his lines. Alan practices some
 wacky trendy handheld camera moves in front of them.
 KIM, the boom operator, adjusts her HEADPHONES and
 twiddles a knob on the MIXER around her neck.

KIM
 (noticing Wes)
 He's a little shiny.

Kim lowers her pole, takes a small KIT out of her
 mixer bag and powders Wes on the face. She gets her
 mic back into position.

KIM (CONT'D)
 Sound set.

ALAN
 Standby and... action!

6 INT. LIVING ROOM MOVIE SET – CONTINUOUS (DV)

6

Wes and Cassie (as characters Martin and Sophia) act out the scene, badly, with faux desperation and overenunciation, barely making eye contact. Of course, it magically looks like crap again.

MARTIN

Sophia, whaddya mean Steve can't do the movie? He's our villain!

SOPHIA

He says his kid's got little league practice on Wednesdays.

The boom shadow is quite noticeable as it moves from one person's face to the other between lines. The camera ZOOMS/PANS awkwardly between them as well.

MARTIN

Could we maybe have a cover set on standby for him in case there's a rain-out?

SOPHIA

Hel-lo, Martin! All his scenes are exteriors. Who's gonna drive the van?

(sighs)

Why did I ever decide to go into the film business?

A phone RINGS. The actors seem surprised, glance into camera briefly, and look for the source. Cassie picks up a CELL PHONE out of her purse and gives us the "gimme a second" finger as she answers.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

(breaking character)

Heya girlie!

(beat)

Yeah, kinda. No, it's okay.

ALAN

Cut!

7 INT. LIVING ROOM MOVIE SET – CONTINUOUS (DOCCO)

7

Alan shakes his head, resigned, patiently closes the flip-out viewfinder on the camcorder, and stands with hands clasped behind his back in waiting.

ALAN
 (as to a child)
 Film's not cheap, ya know.

WES
 Wait, maybe we can work this
 into the script. Who's she
 talking to? Maybe we can
 pretend it's a studio exec or
 something.
 (beat)
 No?

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)
 Hey Wes, can we bust out this
 EPK thing real quick with you?
 Wes looks O.S. and gets up to exit frame.

WES
 Oh, the uh, thing for the DVD?
 Yeah, sure.

8 INT. GREEN ROOM – DAY (DOCCO) 8

LOWER THIRD: Wes Tender "Martin"

Wes gets settled into his chair as a CREWPERSON clips on his lavalier microphone. CREWPERSON #2 hands him a cup of coffee, which he takes with pleasant surprise. CREWPERSON #3 extends a tape measure from camera to his face. CREWPERSON #4 adjusts a LIGHT in the background. All of these things catch him off guard, professionalism he's likely never experienced. He's also clearly unaware camera is rolling.

WES
 Wow. Alrighty. Nice setup. So
 this is where we all line up to
 blow the director, right? So
 he'll hire us again when he gets
 some real money?
 (smiling, adjusting
 clothing)
 Yeah, I love watching these
 things. You should make it a
 drinking game where everybody
 takes a shot whenever someone
 says <Alan Smithee> (Brad
 Collins).

Wes laughs, as do at least three other O.S. VOICES.
 The camera zooms in, checks focus, and reframes.

WES (CONT'D)

You know what would be hilarious is if someone made one of these that shows how it really is.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

Yeah, that would be great.

WES

You've got a red light flashing on top of your camera there.

Jump cut with slight reframing. Wes is "in character" now, your usual kissass actor.

WES

<Alan's> (Brad's) by far the most talented director I've ever worked with. The performances—

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

Who— sorry... who else have you worked with?

WES

Not counting <Alan> (Brad)?

Let's see, umm...

(long pause, defeated)

He lets me sleep here.

(beat, to camera)

You can edit this part, right?

(pause for edit)

I wake up every day in complete awe that I'm even on the same set with these people. I mean, you only get one "and introducing" credit in your whole career, so I can't imagine a better guy to give up my virginity to. And Cassie and the rest of the cast, just amazing, amazing actors. When we're in the middle of a scene and in that zone, I feel like we're making a real movie.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

You're not?

WES

Yeah, no, well I don't mean "Redlight," I mean the fictional movie within the movie that Martin and Sophia are struggling to make after they win the screenplay contest. It's called "Inner Demons." Wait, no. "Enter Dem- Inner umm..." Anyway, I'm not the writer.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

I don't get it.

WES

Yeah, it's not something you should think about too hard.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

So... they've got me here making this little movie about you guys making a movie about the movie some people are making because they won a movie contest?

WES

Which is what actually happened to us. So that experience has allowed us to really bring the audience into our world, both the magic we make and the challenges we face every day as filmmakers.

The camera punches in and refocuses.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

By learning from your own struggles on the video set?

WES

(deadpan)

What do you mean?

9 INT. MOVIE SET – VARIOUS (ALL DV)

9

BLOOPER REEL MONTAGE:

- A) Clapboard marks the scene. The camera slowly tilts down, gaining momentum, until it falls over and the picture zaps out. Wes O.S.: "That's not good."
- B) Clapboard marks the scene. Cassie gets up out of a chair and is suddenly yanked back down as she runs out of mic cable slack.
- C) Alan directs from O.S.: "That was great. Lemme punch in for the close-ups." The camera zooms in on Wes, refocuses. Alan: "Ok, I'm gonna roll cam—" Cut to: "And we're cut. Awesome! Can't top that take. Next, Cassie's single... (we pan over to her) standby... and ac—" Cut to: the camera's bumping around a little, lots of laughter and Alan says "Priceless! That's a keeper. Ok, we're wrapped here." Wes peeks into lens: "Why's the little light on?" (*he was recording when he thought he was stopped and vice-versa*)
- D) The camera sits on the floor in a wide shot, accidentally recording, as feet scamper around the room looking for something. Alan O.S.: "Do you hear that?" Kim O.S.: "No. What?" Alan O.S.: "Some little hum buzz thing. It's not major, but—" A really loud 60Hz hum masks the whole scene.
- E) Wes's face, in a locked down macro close-up, looks at us mischievously, checks both directions to see if anyone is looking, then stands up with crotch at camera level. Wes O.S.: "I'm a star. I'm a big, bright shining star." He unzips.

BLACKOUT

10 INT. SCREENING ROOM – NIGHT (DOCCO)

10

Alan faces a video monitor, watching a cut of his movie play back while speaking into a desk microphone.

ALAN

(into mic)

I don't want to get into too many technical details and bore you all with stuff like...

(referring to manual in front of him)

...f-stoops and ...tree-pods or any of that, but—

(noticing camera, suddenly cheery)

Hey everybody! The video crew's here, doing their little behind-the-scenes thing. Guess they wanted some shots of me recording my commentary track and maybe get a little free film-school lesson in.

(back to the mic)

Anyway, so I remember on this day the bagels were really stale. And that damn cat wouldn't hold still, so we had to superglue his paws to the table.

11 EXT./INT. MINIVAN – NIGHT (DOCCO)

11

We shoot through the open rear door as Alan leans back over the front seat explaining the scene to Cassie and Wes sitting in the back.

ALAN

Fantastic. Okay, moving on to Scene 12A. This is just after you guys've had sex in the production van and you're—

CASSIE

Wait, what do you mean? Are we shooting out of sequence? What about 11, where we... you know?

Cassie mimes a naughty freaky-deak ass-slap.

ALAN
 Yeah, um, we had to cut that.
 (beat)
 I got a memo from <Jeff> (Ryan).

Cassie throws her hands up in disgust and shoots Wes an accusatory look.

CASSIE
 (to Wes)
 Your boyfriend?!

WES
 What. Don't look at me, <Al's>
 (Brad's) the one who made him
 script supervisor.

12 INT. EDITING ROOM - NIGHT (DOCCO)

12

Same interview setting as before.

ALAN
 The chemistry we enjoy on set is
 really special. I've known
 these guys for a few years now.
 Of course, we all met in the
 <Lloyd Kauffman> (Brian DePalma)
 film studies program, and have
 formed our own sort of little
 repertory, you know, all working
 together on each others'
 projects.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)
 So you're not one of these one-
 man-band type egomaniacal-

ALAN
 -Oh no, not at all. You can't
 do it all by yourself, it's a
 collaborative artform. It's
 good to maintain a little
 humility, you know, understand
each role on the set before you
 move into this chair.

(looking down)
 Well, not this exact chair, but
 the one I sit in... out on the
 set... when someone else is
 around to hold the camera. Like
 with Cassie's stuff, I'll act,
 grip...

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)
Gaffer...

ALAN
What?

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)
Gaffer.

ALAN
(faux understanding)
Yeah, yeah, gaff her, read lines
with her, whatever she needs.
(recomposing)
So we capture all this magic on
film, and then I work closely
with our editor <Alan Smithee>
(Sidney Gillman) to put it all
together.
(beat)
This is his chair, actually.

13 INT. EDITING ROOM – DAY (DOCCO)

13

Same room, different composition and lighting setup. The computers behind him have editing interfaces and paused video displayed on screen. "Sidney" has slicked-back hair, no glasses, and wears an alt-rock concert T-shirt, but it's clearly a poor disguise for the same guy who obviously plays the director, so we'll still call him Alan. Editor Alan is soft-spoken and deliberate, techy, but no more informed.

LOWER THIRD: Alan Smithee, Editor

ALAN
This is <Alan> (Brad) and I's
third film together.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)
What were the others?

ALAN

Umm, the first was called "Lori Takes a Shower," which was about a girl... coming clean, really. Not a lot of editing in that one. More an exercise in letting the scene develop and speak through its natural pacing. Although we did do nine takes of the master shot.

(reflective pause)

The other was called "Weird Guy on Porch" and was sort of a French-New-Wave-style character study. It was actually what won the contest that allowed us to make "Redlight," and marked the beginning of our experiments in what <Alan> (Brad) likes to call "digital film."

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

Describe your working process.

ALAN

With <Alan> (Brad)? I'd say it's really, really intuitive. We're very much the same person. He's always telling me that he would've cut a certain scene the exact same way I did. If he knew how to use the computer.

14 INSERT:

14

FX: GREENSCREEN Director Alan walks into the editing suite while Editor Alan works on the computer. Editor Alan acknowledges him, appears uneasy, and tries to concentrate on the screen. FRONT ANGLE on Editor Alan as he works nervously with Director Alan looming over his shoulder.

ALAN (V.O. CONT'D)

But he does like to be very, uh, "involved" in my work, which, for any other team without the kind of relationship we have, might be a little distracting. That whole "voice in your head" thing.

15 INSERT: 15

FX: GREENSCREEN FRONT ANGLE on Director Alan, he points toward us (the computer screen) and mouths a suggestion. Editor Alan shakes his head, sighs, and rolls his eyes. He mouths a disagreement and turns around to face Director Alan. REAR ANGLE two-shot as they bicker animatedly back and forth. Editor Alan reaches back and threatens a bitch-slap.

16 EXT. PARK — AFTERNOON (DOCCO) 16

Cassie sits under a tree with a drink, looking up from another SCRIPT as she's interviewed.

LOWER THIRD: Cassie Oppea "Sophia"

CASSIE

Those guys make a unique pair,
the way they work together. I
mean... I've never actually seen
them in the same room, but...
they have a great understanding
of how to get the best out of
each other.

17 EXT. STUDIO ENTRANCE — EVENING (DOCCO) 17

Editor Alan flies out of the door backwards toward us and then out of frame, obviously pushed. Director Alan storms after him through the doorway, pushing up him sleeves and crossing to

18 PARKING LOT 18

FX: GREENSCREEN The two Alans circle each other like wrestlers preparing to tangle. REVERSE ANGLE as they cross the axis. CLOSE-UPS of furious expressions. Brows furrow. Knuckles crack.

CASSIE (V.O. CONT'D)

There's a lot of love there, and
I think it shows in the final
cut. You probably wouldn't know
it to watch us work, but this
business can just knock you on
your ass some days.

FX: GREENSCREEN Over-the-shoulder on Director Alan, who shoves Editor Alan right at us, knocking him into the camera as we stumble.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

Hey!

BOTH ALANS

Sorry.

The camera bumps around as it's handed over to Editor Alan next to us, still from the DOCCO POV.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

(to Editor Alan)

Here, take this.

(to Director Alan,
furious)

You want some, bitch?

Interviewer enters frame and makes a beeline for Director Alan. He's a 30-year-old redhead, average size, wearing headphones.

INTERVIEWER (CONT'D)

You got a fucking problem?

He shoves Director Alan out of frame. We start to pan away from the action.

DIRECTOR ALAN (O.S.)

Come on dude, this is between me and <Alan> (Sidney).

INTERVIEWER

(noticing camera)

No, you keep rolling on this!

(back to Alan, on-camera again)

I'm gonna take your ass to school, <Smithee> (Collins), you no-talent tape-wasting fuck!

Director Alan crouches in fear. Interviewer yells at him and points to camera.

INTERVIEWER

See this? This is called "cinema verite." It means "truth." Exposing things for what they really-

EDITOR ALAN (O.S.)

Hey Gordon, what's "low batt" mean? I got this flashy thing going on.

Interviewer looks back at camera in utter disbelief, sighs, then walks toward us.

INTERVIEWER

You've got to be kid--

STATIC, THEN BLACKOUT

UPCUT SOUND

INTERVIEWER (V.O.)

It was stupid. Unprofessional.

19 INT. KITCHEN – MORNING (DOCCO) 19

GORDON (formerly INTERVIEWER) is in full-on apology mode. He wears headphones around his neck and sports a bruised cheek. He adds chopped ingredients to a skillet at the island stove as he speaks in his own reverse-interview.

LOWER THIRD: Gordon Highland, Director "Featurette"

GORDON (CONT'D)

I'm supposed to be objective, right? A good documentarian?
(shaking head)

I just got caught up in the moment, I guess. I'd never mean to call attention to myself, it just pi**es me off when--

20 EXT. PARKING LOT – EVENING (DOCCO) 20

Gordon and Director Alan stand semi-frozen looking at camera as they wait for the camera to come up to speed. Gordon gives a tiny "ready?" nod to camera, then grabs Director Alan by his shirt, in his face.

GORDON

--Pisses me off when punks like you get a hold of some cheap video gear, read a couple of articles on the internet, and all of a sudden think you're gonna be the next fuckin' Fellinis!

DIRECTOR ALAN

They gave us a million dollars
to make the film!

GORDON

How many cans of turd polish you
think that'll buy? And by the
way, this is video, you
pretentious hack! Vid-e-o!

DRAMATIC MUSIC CUE slowly fades in. Alan continues
to be paralyzed with fear. Gordon screams at him,
his voice eventually softening.

GORDON (CONT'D)

I've been working my ass off at
this for ten years, man! Where's
my fucking filmmaking grant?
Huh? I spend a few hundred bucks
on these little things, hoping
for just a screening at some po-
dunk festival in Nutsack,
Montana. And another thing...
(pauses, cocks head)
You hear that?

DIRECTOR ALAN

Hear what?

GORDON

It sounds like... music?!

Gordon's ears perk, he sighs in anger, drops Alan to
the ground, and exits frame in futility.

21 INT. RECORDING STUDIO CONTROL ROOM – NIGHT (DOCCO)

21

Another interview. This guy, mid-20s and frazzled
hair, wears a dressy button-down shirt and wire-
rimmed glasses. He's upbeat, professional, and
articulate, but it's still a poor disguise for the
same guy who obviously plays both the director and
the editor. He often shifts his glance back and
forth from the interviewer and the camera directly.

LOWER THIRD: Alan Smithee, Composer

ALAN

Hi, I'm <Alan Smithee> (Victor Martin), composer and chief sound designer for the film "Redlight," here to hopefully share some insight into the score to this wonderful, powerful film. It's been a truly magical experience working both with <Alan> (Brad) and <Alan> (Sidney), and I hope they keep me in mind for future projects...

(wink, elbow)

I'm responsible for pretty much everything you hear on the film, from the seven sound effects to those little subtle music cues that help add dramatic tension at key moments, like the scene where Sofia and Martin make love in the van.

We see Gordon interviewing next to camera.

GORDON

I've noticed some of the location sound has a little hum in it. Is that something—

ALAN

That's not me.

GORDON

Ooh-kay. So... how do you match each scene with the melodies you hear in your head?

ALAN

Ah, yes. That's the most rewarding part of this job! I start off over here in our music library...

(gestures to small stack of CDs)

... and just pop in a couple of discs until I find the best fit for the actors' subtext, and import it right into the computer.

Editor Alan pokes his head in the doorway.

EDITOR ALAN

Hey <Al> (Vic), what was the name of Counting Crows's first album?

COMPOSER ALAN

Ummm, "August and Everything After," wasn't it?

EDITOR ALAN

That's right! Perfect, thanks!

GORDON

(to Composer Alan)

So that's what, a placeholder to set a mood until your original music goes in later?

COMPOSER ALAN

What do you mean?

A pause.

GORDON

Well, you have to license those songs. And it's not cheap.

COMPOSER ALAN

(confused)

I already paid for the CDs myself at the Virgin Megastore. I kept the receipt.

22 EXT. PARK — AFTERNOON (DOCCO)

22

Same as before, under the tree. SLOW ZOOM in.

CASSIE

So Sofia, she's like, dealing with her own ambitions and stuff, so she sorta becomes like the antagonist, ya know? I mean, "Enter Dementia" is her way to break into film. And while she wants to help Martin and all, she really wants to direct, so...

DISSOLVE TO:

23 INT. GREEN ROOM – DAY (DOCCO) 23

Same as his last interview. MATCH ZOOM in.

WES

... Martin is trying to like, edge Sofia out of the production so the studio will notice his own talent, but at the same time there's this odd sexual tension there, which makes Martin a great character opportunity for me, because I'm... you know...

DISSOLVE TO:

24 INT. SCREENING ROOM – NIGHT (DOCCO) 24

Director Alan recording the commentary track. MATCH ZOOM in.

ALAN

... a really queer sort-of... mystery. You never really know if the characters are plotting against each other or the studio system they're both now a slave to, see? It's a multi-layered story that really screws with your head, especially when you consider...

DISSOLVE TO:

25 INT. EDITING ROOM – DAY (DOCCO) 25

Editor Alan continues his interview. MATCH ZOOM in.

ALAN

... he has no idea what the hell he's doing. What are his goals? Why's he in the van in the first place? Where are his pants? But through editing, we can clue the viewer in using flashbacks that make you wonder...

CUT TO:

26 EXT. PARKING LOT – EVENING (DOCCO) 26

FAST PUSH IN to close-up of Gordon, jaw agape.

GORDON
 (to camera)
 Jesus, who the fuck writes this
 shit!!

27 INT. VIDEO STUDIO – DAY (DOCCO) 27

Standard interview setup with background color wash. A woman sits in a chair in darkness, silhouetted, and her voice is digitally scrambled. She's tentative, nervous.

LOWER THIRD: Ellen Smithee, Writer

ELLEN
 I'm not proud.
 (beat)
 I had four evenings to come up with a feature-length script because at the last minute <Alan> (Brad) decided to cast his friends and try to do everything else himself -- after sticking most of the studio's budget up his nose. Hopefully the boy'll come to his senses and take his name off the project. At least I got this little witness protection deal going on here with you guys.

SUPER: CREDITS ROLL

GORDON (O.S.)
 Okay! Cut! I think that's everything we need. Thanks so much for your time.

A studio BUZZER rings twice. Ellen gets off the chair as the lights go up and a CREWPERSON hands her a cup of coffee. We see her in full view as MORE CREW start milling about in the background. She walks over next to camera. The voice effect is off now also.

ELLEN (SEMI O.S.)
So after you get this film
edited you say you'll give my
business card to Spielberg then?

GORDON (O.S.)
Absolutely next time I see him,
Stephanie Mitchell of Austin,
Texas.

THE END

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