Rationale

My IB film production, *Life Just Happens,* is a short film about the unexpected events life has to offer and the importance of understanding that everything happens for a reason. The struggles of the protagonist reveal themes and motifs, such as the importance of family, friends, love, and hope. I based this film off of the life of a close friend of mine and just added a more extreme twist in the end. I assumed the role of the cinematographer and was inspired by the work of Robert Yeoman in films such as Wes Anderson's *The Royal Tenenbaums* (2001).

Word Count: 99

Commentary

Introduction

     Life Just Happens is a film about a boy named Max who lives an "average" life that takes

a turn in the opposite direction when he thinks he has found the girl of his dreams. This film

explores many different themes, such as the importance of family, friends, love, and hope. The

triviality of Max's situation emphasizes that he is still young and naive, creating another

recurring theme of youth. I assumed the role of the cinematographer since I have grown to love

the lighting, framing, and composition of shots and I thought that as the cinematographer I could

effectively convey meaning through these elements.

Pre-Production

     I was first inspired to write this film by the life of the actor who plays Max's best friend

Emery. One day at school he began to talk about his job at a pizzeria here in New Mexico, and

how awfully dull life feels as you grow older. I took a lot of time to carefully write the script in

order to create a film that was visually pleasing, as well as having an interesting story line. I went

through quite a few edits of the script after turning in the final script, only because I had changed

my mind on some parts when the actors brought it to life (Appendix 1). The target audience for

this film is meant to be young adults to adults, since the themes are a bit more mature. However,

I did incorporate a comedic aspect that a younger audience could appreciate and relate to. Once I

had the general idea for the plot of the film, I began to think of ways to portray a boy who

believes he has an average life even though it really can be quite spectacular in the blink of an

eye. I was inspired by the work of Robert Yeoman in *Moonrise Kingdom* (2012) (Figure 1) and

The Royal Tenenbaums (2001) (Figure 2) since the framing, color, composition, and lighting in

these films give off a youthful and out of the ordinary tone. I decided to thoroughly study Yeoman's work and take note of things that I liked and didn't like and how his choices as well as director's choices created meaning.

I decided to draw up a storyboard (Appendix 2) and also began to get an idea of the kind of actors that I would want to portray the characters in the script. I walked around the school hallways one afternoon and asked if anyone was interested in auditioning for a part in the film, and I got a lot of feedback. The students were thrilled to participate and were willing to help out with anything that I needed. I had students fill out forms with available dates and other pertinent information (Appendix 3) and made a final decision to use a few friends from school, and some others from my community theatre.

After casting, the most difficult parts began. There were issues with scheduling, creating shot lists, and making the call sheets (Appendix 4 and 5) since all of the actors had very different school and work schedules. Eventually, we had to change the original schedule and production was pushed to a later date. Some scenes were taken out due to the limitations of some of the actors, which changed the storyboard and script. I started to realize that taking on the role of

Figure 1: Shot from *Moonrise Kingdom* (2012)

Figure 2: Shot from *The Royal Tenenbaums* (2001)

every thing besides an actor was quite difficult. I had to go out and do some location scouting, but the script called for some very simple locations, such as the park, my house, and a friend's house.

Production

When it came time to film, we decided to take day one to get comfortable with each other by running lines and taking note of what was and wasn't working for the actors. The actors who played Max and Emery were called on the first day and they got to sit in the bean bag chairs and talk to each other before we shot the video game scene. I think this helped them to be more comfortable with each other, as this would help to create some realistic looking chemistry in the film. The video game scene was an interesting scene to shoot because I really wanted to have both of the character's faces seen individually and center frame first to convey their different emotions and reveal the contrast between average and not-so-average. The lighting is dark on Max's face because he is a little bit gloomier and Emery is a happier person so the lighting is a bit brighter (Figures 3 and 4).
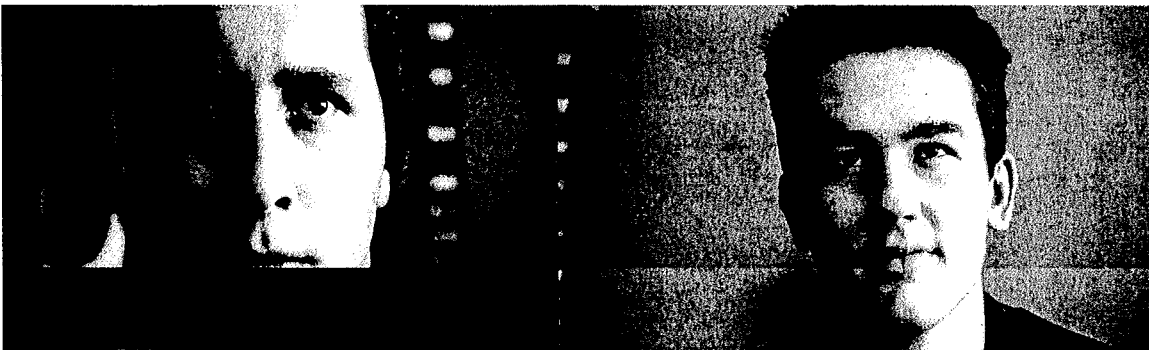

Figure 3: Max's face in low light   Figure 4: Emery's face with more light

On day two, we shot the scenes of Max hanging out with Emery and his girlfriend, Essena. We decided to shoot at a friend's house and outside at a park with very bright lighting and bright colors since this scene was supposed to feel a bit quirkier and happier, just to spite Max (Figure 5).

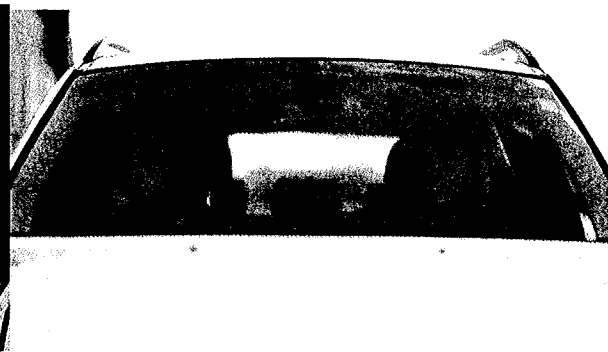**Figure 5: Day – A lot of light and color**   **Figure 6: Day – Max and his mom in the car**

It was incredibly difficult because we had been prepared to shoot on a day that was sunny and warm with consistent sunlight. On day three, we shot the scene of Max and his mother in the car. I wanted to get a nice shot of Max and his mom through the windshield (Figure 6) because it shows both of their emotions and reveals the theme of family and how a single heartfelt conversation can happen within a car. On day four, we shot the montage of Max and having him center frame and quick cuts revealed the theme of youth and playfulness with bright colors and a lot of light. On day five, we shot the scene with Max and the neighbors. The lighting was almost exactly how I wanted it, warm and bright to reveal the themes of love and hope despite the banality of life. The light gave both Max and Ana a warm glow illuminating the warmth of their hearts (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Max with warm light behind him   **Figure 8: Max and Ana center frame**

For many of the shots in my film, I wanted Max's character center frame because this is

his story, not anyone else's. I used negative space for shots with other people to show that

sometimes Max felt out of place and average compared to those around him, almost like at times

they were taking away from his story because it was too boring. At the end, I wanted Max and

Ana to be center frame (Figure 8) because Ana became a part of his story.

Post-production

After filming, the editing process was in full force and so began the color balancing, sound

mixing, and the creation of the score. I had a peer in the IB Music course help me with the score

for the film and it was a magical experience. I wanted the music to be playful and happy, since

this story is being told from the perspective of the main character. Max is still young and has his

whole life ahead of him. After a few technical difficulties with sound mixing and deleting scenes

due to time limitations of the film itself, the final touches were made and it was finished. It was

interesting to see the importance of every role in the making of a film, especially cinematography

for my film. The process of being the cinematographer was incredible, and it only inspired me to

work even harder toward my goal of being a Director of Photography someday in the future.

Appendices

                    MAX
        (To himself) OK. Here we go. I have
        never seen her face before. I have
        never heard her speak. I don't know
        if she prefers blue or yellow. Oh
        God.

MAX and his MOM are in the car. MAX has his earphones in.
MOM is confused at her son's dismay.

MOM parks and tries to comfort him.

                    MAX'S MOM
        Okay, what now?

                    MAX
        Nothing. Bye, mom. I love you. Bye.

MAX puts his earphones back in.

                    MAX'S MOM
        Nope. We are having this talk.

MAX'S MOM pulls his earphones out of his ears.

                    MAX
        It's a girl. The one next door.

                    MAX'S MOM
        Just go talk to her.

                    MAX

        You.

                    MAX'S MOM
        What do you have to lose? Come on.

                    MAX
        Everything.

                    MAX'S MOM
        Uh huh. Sure. When we get home you
        are going over to that house and
        you are talking to that girl. You
        can do it.

                    MAX
        Ugh.

                    MAX'S MOM
        It will be a piece of...

EXT. NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - DAY

MAX is dressed in his work uniform and rings the doorbell
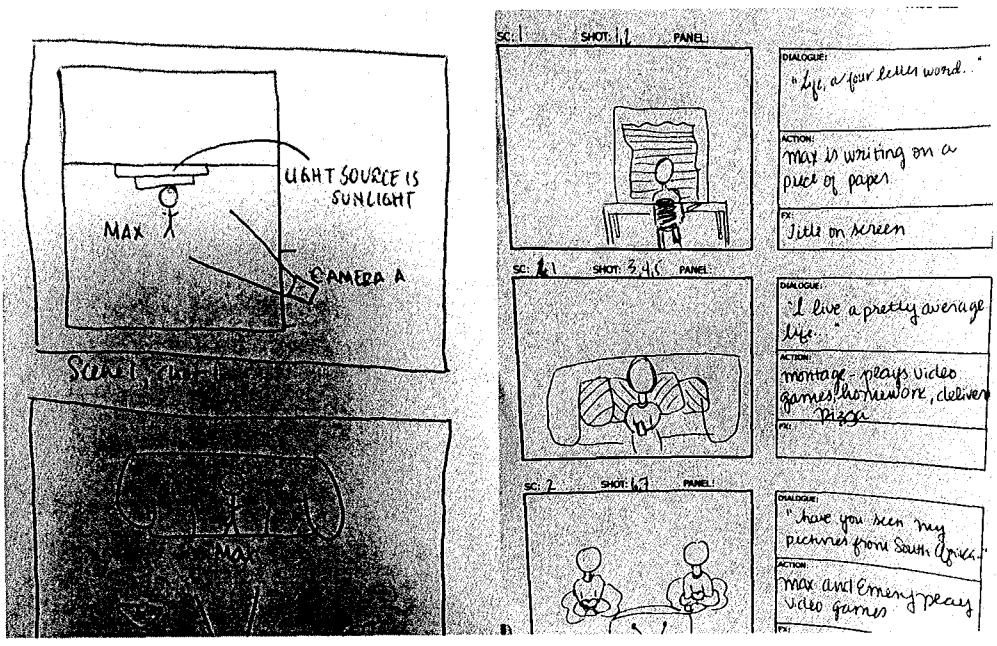nervously. A girl (ANA), about 17, answers the door.

                    ANA
        Pizza?

                    MAX
        Hi, um, hi. So, you ordered a
        pizza?

                    ANA
        Uh. No, sorry. Wrong house I guess!
        Have a nice day!

Appendix 1: Original script

Appendix 2: Lighting and camera set up as well as the storyboard of the first two scenes

IB Film Senior Productions: Casting Application

Name: _Ryan Myer_ Grade Level _12_ Sex: M / F

Eye Color _blue/green_ Hair Color _Dark Brown_ Shirt Size _M L_ Pant Size _34/30_

Cell Phone _805-382-5717_ Email: _ryanmyers868@gmail.com_

Additional Contact Info _____

Parent / Guardian Name & Contact Info: _Cmayer@sbu.com_

Special Talents If Any _writing, sports, singing_

Are you interested in (circle one) ACTING / TECHNICIAN / BOTH

Do you have any acting experience? Yes / No

Emery

What days/times are you best available (circle all that apply):

Day	Time
Monday and 12/1	12 am - 12 pm
Saturday	12 Pm - 12 am
Sunday	

Do you have your own means of transportation? Y / N

Please list any extracurricular activities:
Basketball and work

Appendix 3: Audition sheet for "Emery"

Appendix 4: Shooting schedule

Name(s): _____Kayleigh Maes_____ **Movie Title:** _____Life Just Happens_____

Shooting Schedule

Day/Date you will film	Scene #	Interior/Exterior Day/Night	Location	Shot Description/Summary	Characters/ Cast in the scene	Special Equipment
12/1/15	2	Interior	Max's house	Max and Emery play video games in his room	Max, Emery	Sony a7s ii, tripod
12/5/15	4	Interior/Exterior	Park, Essena's house	Max is third wheeling on Emery's dates	Essena, Emery, Max	Sony a7s ii, tripod
12/8/15	6	Interior	Car	Max and his mother talk about facing his fear	Max, Max's mom	Lavalier mic, Sony a7s ii, tripod
12/10/15	1	Interior/Exterior	Max's house, door	Montage of Max's life	Max	Sony a7s, tripod
12/12/15	7	Exterior	Ana's house	Max delivers a pizza to the neighbor's house, sees Ana	Blonde, Ana, Max	Sony a7s, tripod
12/20/15	8	Interior	Ana's house	Max and Ana share pizza and phrase "Life just happens"	Ana, Max	Sony a7s, lights, tripod