

Unhand Me (Short Film) - Full Project Description

My short film details the struggles of authentic identity, in a world where hiding our true selves provide security and protection. I was highly inspired by directors Wes Anderson and Wong Kar-wai, whose contrasting styles I used to depict the different realities we experience.



Plot Overview

Unhand Me opens with a silhouette over a late sunset, before quickly panning to a coldly lit house and backyard, shifting its tone. A figure in black, somewhat blending into the background, intrudes into the house. The character wields a knife, suggesting their profession and intentions, but it is never fully revealed. The mainly blue palette and high contrast is evocative of Wong Kar-wai's films. A grandiose piano melody, almost like an anthem, sets up an air of confidence and pride, which is later swiftly cut off.

The scene shifts dramatically in terms of composition and color, reminiscent of Wes Anderson, with pastel/pink palettes and overhead shots of intricate, staged placements of props. An officer receives a phone call about a home invasion attempt, hinting towards the character first seen in the beginning. However, the officer seems dismissive and files away the report, although suggesting that fingerprints could be collected at the scene. In the background is the diegetic sound of a radio broadcast, making the mood of the scene relatively calm, mundane and, at times, comical with the dialogue.

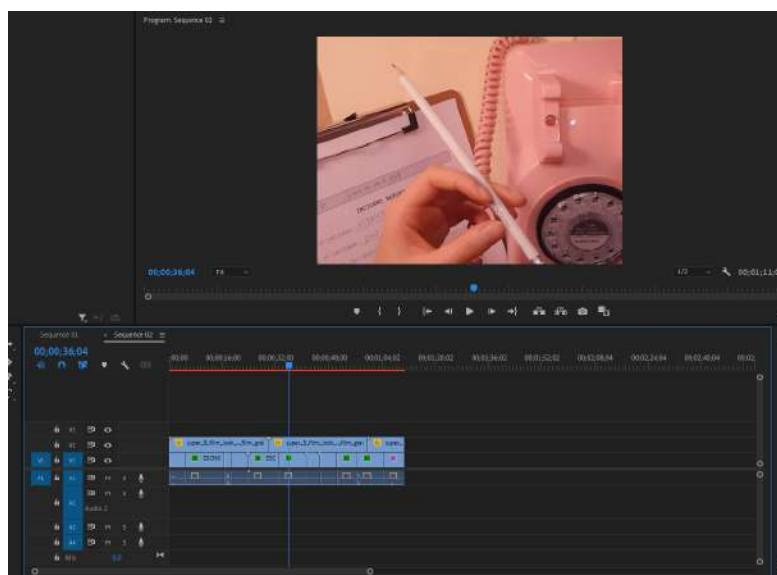
We return to the main character, where it is disclosed that they were unable to commit the planned murder, and accidentally left behind fingerprints, as they did not

wear fully concealing gloves. An inner voice berates them for the failure, recounting previous successes, but the montages of intense hand-washing and cleaning suggests fear, guilt and despair. It is also when the blue saturated tones are the most prominent. Out of the blue (no pun intended), they decide to leave the life of crime. The loud radio static is cut off.

There is a match cut to the protagonist moving away, and opening up to the world for once without the barrier of gloves. It calls back to the scene in the bathroom sink, and a box of hair dye implies a change in identity (physically). Throwing caution to the wind, the plastic gloves from the box are disposed of, and the protagonist officially embraces the surroundings without fear. New props that accumulate juxtapose the cleaning supplies seen before, while a joyful commercial jingle plays on the radio, pointing to a state of bliss in the mundane daily life. For once, the scene is completely silent when the character extends and opens up their hands.

While still following the Anderson-style composition, the color palette drifts to a sudden orange and green, as the character lights a candle. The birthday song playing attempts to create a simple, blissful mood, but its pitch change downwards reverts us back to the opening scene.

We return to the backyard, except the inner voice reveals that the life out of crime was just wistful thinking. The protagonist ends up finishing the job successfully, in fully covered gloves, while intercutting to the previous dream sequence. The music features a simple, somber piano tune with a low fidelity feel, completely contrasting the opening track. It ends with a police report filed of an unsolved murder, with the exact case number that appeared in the phone call scene.



Inspirations

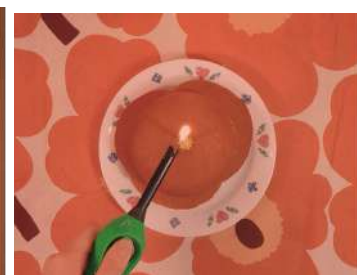
Wes Anderson

The Grand Budapest Hotel, The Royal Tenenbaums



- Distinct pastel / vibrant color palette
- Overhead shots with purposefully constructed sets & props
- Symmetrical, balanced compositions with a sense of fictionality

I utilized Anderson's style for the film, when I wanted to portray a dream-like vision of being true to one's self. Color grading was integral to create a more harmonious color scheme, and props that were selected were usually of a warm, pink/orange tone. The dollhouse look perpetuated the idea that the scenes were more fantasy than reality, indicating the rosy yet unrealistic prospect of being authentic. However, it instills hope and optimism. I used a 4:3 aspect ratio to mimic older films, creating a sense of longing and nostalgia that contrasts to its counterpart.



Wong Kar-wai
Happy Together, In the Mood for Love



- Moody, dark + melodramatic cinematography
- Heavy contrast of lighting and color
- Themes of crime, loneliness and retrospection

Wong's cinematic style reflects a more realistic, although depressing outlook on identity. I used more saturated blue tones in homage to *Happy Together*, which follows the themes of finding liberation in oneself. The nonlinear narrative structure also mirrors his style. The cinemascope aspect ratio, which is the norm for most films today, makes the film appear more solemn, cinematic and dramatic, as these sequences are intended to show the reality of identity.



Other Inspirations

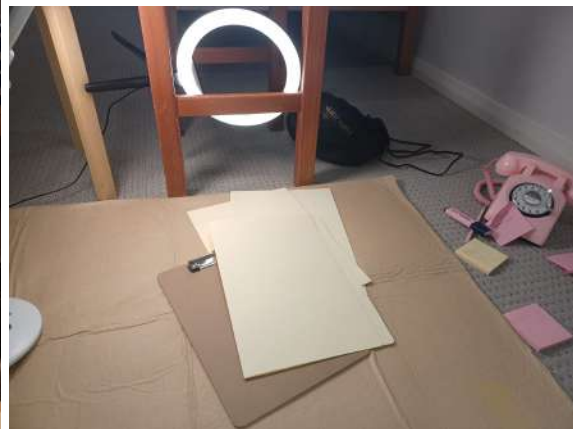
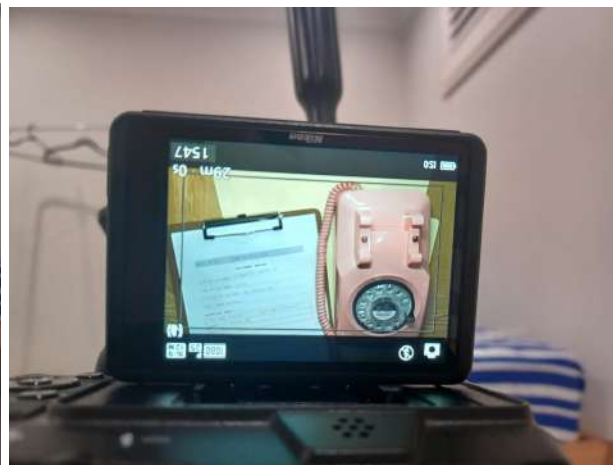
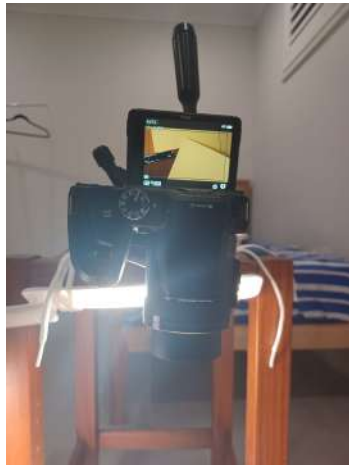
Angel Heart (1987)



Starsky and Hutch (1974-79)



BTS Production



Script + Storyboard

ARS to consider: **VA**

- 276:1 (70mm)
- 1.37:1 (academy) / 2.40:1 **anamorphic** **4:3** dated, old, almost artificial for today's perspective
- 2.7 (cinemascope) **wide screen** 1.85:1 **academy** - more used a stylistic device - 4th wall

21:9 (anamorphic normal, common) filter of how normally it is **Answer MA**

1 EXT. BACKYARD - SUNSET 1

SETS:

- Backyard
- Station
- Hideout
- Bathroom
- Flat

Winter, around 5pm; the sky is a heavy, foggy blue. It zooms into the backyard of a house in a quiet, seemingly boring neighborhood.

P walks to the back door, jogging up the steps.

They stand, hesitant. They've got a large black overcoat, a black beanie, and black pants. Distinctly fingerless gloves. The camera stays near the upper torso, particularly the hands.

P opens up the jacket, revealing a knife; as they wield it, it becomes apparent what is about to happen: a murder. They seem agitated, although skilled.

Finally they try to pry open the door. To no avail.

Footsteps come down the stairs inside. P starts to shake, sighs and contemplates, raising the knife then putting it down.

seemingly going to plant **(=28) God Bless America**
ident, flowers, confident

Someone opens the door. The homeowner is in drab-colored clothing, and hears P running away.

It pans to the side of the house, where P flees.

The BOSS appears as subtitles the entire time, serving as either an inner dialogue + authority figure to P.

BOSS (SUBTITLE)

Why are you leaving?

2 INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT 2

radio broadcast. ✓ The homeowner reports the attempted intrusion to the police. An overhead shot of desk; officer's hands, stationery, files,

↳ diegetic sound = occurs when it is within 'reality' which P perceives
non-diegetic music = true reality

* only voice of officer = external. Does not affect P. In a sense, throws off the story's direction

Δ update link (PPT)
Δ MAT links
Δ plot line

⊗ COLOR GRADED

slips of paper.

OFFICER
 ✓(writing it down)
 The intruder was wearing an all
 black hoodie, shoes, tried to pry
 open your door. That it?

Shot of officer opening a file.

OFFICER (CONT'D)
 Around 5'6, you say?
 Oh, so - they spoke, they yelled
 'please report me as 5'8' but you
 think they looked 5'6. Alright.

✓ Closer shot of writing. *(not talk)*

OFFICER (CONT'D)
 What do you think would be valuable
 in your home to warrant an, uh,
 attempted break in, perhaps?

3 INT. INSIDE OF P'S RESIDENCE - NIGHT

3

P takes off their jacket to the right side of the table, then
 the knife.

OFFICER (V.O.)
 No, sir, I don't think a first
 edition Shrek DVD counts - Shrek 1,
 sorry. Does that make it more...
 valuable?

4 BACK TO POLICE STATION

4

OFFICER (CONT'D)
 ✓ Ok, ok. Perhaps...

5 P'S RESIDENCE

5

OFFICER (V.O.)
 we can dust for fingerprints around
 the area.

P then reaches from across the table for a pair of gloves,
 realizing a huge mistake: they've left fingerprints all
 around the area.

VA

w
w

3.

6 INT. POLICE STATION

6

OFFICER

Well, that's it for now. There has been reports of, you know, burglaries and murders around town recently, so we'll get back to you.

X Officer hands him a slip. On it, the film's title: Unhand Me.

OFFICER (CONT'D)

Mind if you just leave your details here?

7 INT. HIDEOUT - NIGHT

7

Static landing

Shot of the mug being placed on the table; trembling.

~~hand~~ =

Close up of the knife; door handle; empty floor. ✓

mean free
from assigned identity to real identity
Cavale said
symbolic of 'real'

BOSS

Were you even trying?

radio = 'real world'
it hopes to connect to

Fingerprints.

but never does →
however the signifier is
virtual imaginary does not
include them, it appears

Everywhere.

And no body.

BOSS (CONT'D)

This was your final chance. You had one job.

8 INT. BATHROOM - DAY

8

✓ P washes their hands fiercely, again and again. Overhead shot of the table; there is a mass of different cleaning products.

BOSS

You've been doing this for ages - you can't just throw it all away now. You... a year ago, if they saw who you were now -

9 HIDEOUT

9

BOSS (CONT'D)
This is who you are. You can't just leave-

✓ P takes a deep breath, rips the gloves off, and throws them on the table - then runs.

10 INT. FLAT - LATER THAT NIGHT 10

static Landlord and P stand inside a room. P has hands shoved in pockets, evidently fidgety and scared. Landlord holds several documents.

LANDLORD (SUBTITLE)
You sure you've got no, uh, belongings? Nothing?

P shrugs.

LANDLORD (SUBTITLE)
(awkwardly)
O-kay. Rent's due every 1st of the month.

Landlord tries to pass the key to P. P hesitantly removes hands, takes it, and just as quickly, returns them in the pocket. Landlord leaves.

P, slowly, finally takes hands out.

Montage; jump cuts:

(This might be sort of a Gone Girl Homage but positive)

radio

✓ Overhead shot of sink, similar to first scene. P rips open a box of hair dye, discarding the plastic gloves. Over time, more items build up: cash, work badge, credit card, makeup, jewelry, etc. P is rebuilding a new life.

Meals, driving, relationships, birthday cake.

Sudden flash cut in between the cake scenes - knife, candle.

11 EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS FROM SCENE #1 11

*(music chill)
→ handgates
+ static crackle*

P finds them back at the backyard. (:25 - :59, credits)

BOSS
Welcome home.

simple / piano / static

A knife is on the floor, but this time, P realizes they have full gloves on. Flash cut to birthday cake.

*nostalgia, melancholy
→ turn, subsides, reveals reality*

P's gloves. Flash cut to bathroom. It was a delusion, a dream.

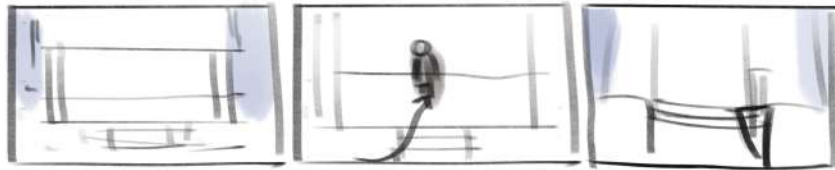
P lights a match. Flash ~~cut~~ to candle. The match is dropped.

They stand in front of the fire, staring.

They then put their hands into jacket pockets.

✓ A file is opened, containing information about the murder.
(unsolved)

✓ Roll credits. (on file)



Open-
zoom in #1



#1



#2 | #3 | #4



Fingerprints





Quickly puts on gloves again



#5



swift

#6



#6

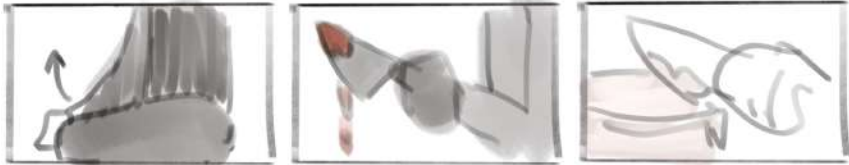
box dye

throws away



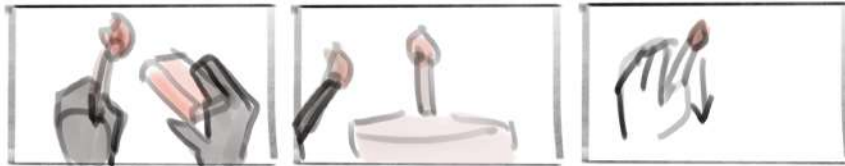
me → ↗





breathing #7

crackle



dropped →
burst into flames