

# Reflective Analyses

(Bryce McNamara)

My central role in the production of "Dying to Live" was that of camera operator as well as helping out with setting up sound, although we did not designate strict roles to each member of the group. We tried to perform specific roles, while at the same time mixing roles in order to gain a greater range of technical experience. This worked well for me, in that it allowed me to break away from editing and post-production and enabled me the opportunity to focus on another aspect entirely. That is not to say, however, that I had no part in the editing process. Although Palesa was the main editor on this project, we all took turns at the editing process.

The production of this piece proved challenging from the very beginning. While the story idea was there, we experienced a tremendous lack in terms of people that were actually willing to talk openly about the issue of defaulting on ARV medication. We spoke to a number of people that suggested quite strongly that this was indeed a major issue, yet we had no luck. Needless to say, there were certain points in the production where the overall morale of the group was quite low as we felt that the piece was not going anywhere. In re-evaluating our strategies however, and in persisting with certain interviews, we were able to provide a new look at the topic in terms of reasons as to why people default. Through constant interaction and 'brainstorming' as a group, we were able to conceptualize new perspectives to the piece that worked very well in looking back at the production. The process of conceptualizing arcs and links was tedious. The post-production process was off to a slow start because introducing the piece proved to be incredibly difficult.

Other challenges that we had to overcome at various stages of the production were technical challenges. We had a variety of issues which included the camera not operating properly, loss of footage due to hard drive failure, and losing time due to failing batteries in the audio equipment (our fault, perhaps). This production has proved to be quite a learning curve for us in terms of technical difficulties and ways in which to overcome them. The run-down on the audio equipment that we had earlier this term proved most beneficial in improving the quality of our recorded sound on the field and during interviews. This is one aspect of our production that we will now hone in on and improve in the next production.

We were constantly faced with ethical problems. Approaching a story on HIV/AIDS is challenging, and as a television crew it was important that each of us approached the people that we conversed with in a very sensitive manner. In the post-production process, we were also constantly aware of certain ethicalities throughout. Who, for instance, did and did not receive titles? We, of course, made the ethical decision to give everybody titles as any other decision (despite the interviewee appearing for a very brief period of time) could be seen as discrimination to some extent. Interviewing Notutu Matini was also a highly sensitive procedure. We had to ensure that she consented entirely to the interview and that she did not mind having her face shown on television. We were very supportive throughout the interview to her needs and to her condition.

One of the main problems that we experienced in post-production, was the overexposure of an interview conducted with Annelie "Jabu" van Niekerk, one of the central interviewees throughout the production. The sound worked very well in the interview, however the visual of the interview was overwhelmed with a yellow hue that proved most distracting for the eye and upset the entire aesthetic balance of the piece as a whole. Time was running out and we had to make a critical decision. In order to redo the interview with Annelie, we had to settle for handing the project in a day late. At first we were weary about going through with this decision, but doing so was definitely for the best. We were able to shoot another interview with Annelie in which the lighting and setting was much more pleasing. The informational value of the interview was also very high and we were able to work this in to the piece at the last minute. Due to technical difficulties after this second shoot, we lost a large segment of Annelie's interview in which she discusses the process by which the HI Virus mutates and becomes resistant to ARVs as people default. She did, however, discuss this issue rather succinctly in the previous interview with poor visuals. In order to save this crucial segment we introduced Annelie with visuals and sound from the new interview, and then cut to a relevant discussion on mutation from the old interview using visuals of Xoliswe taking her ARVs to cover the overexposed visuals. This worked very well and we were pleased with the result. The decision to hand our project in a day late also enabled us the opportunity to attain a few more cutaways that were needed. It also allowed us to design a DVD that cover that would enable a well-presented and professional looking product.

In terms of the interpersonal relationships in the group, I feel that we fared very well. Even during the low moments of the production (during the earlier

stages), the people in the group were constantly supportive and we all worked towards turning the shortcomings of the story during its early stages into something that was productive and positive. I was surprised that there was no conflict between group members (nothing serious, anyway) despite the fact that all four of us spent so much time together. During the final stages of the production we had been together for 30 consecutive hours at one stage. I am very pleased and proud of the progression of Ragingferret Productions in this regard, and I feel confident that this relationship will only strengthen as the year goes on.