

**Graeme Comrie**

**Critical Analysis of Individual Piece**

Clearly, the piece has many technical shortcomings. One of the most glaring is the variation in colour correction throughout. This was largely caused by my editing with a poor monitor that portrayed all my footage darker than it actually was. It is a lesson in time management that by the time I had exported my piece to view on a better monitor, it was too late to alter. In fact, most of the problems with the piece come as the result of poor time management. For some reason I had thought my sound to be decent when handing in. Only on sober reflection did I realise that some of my sound (particularly the narration between segments) was truly dreadful. In future, I really do need to cater for the fact that footage and audio looks and sounds different on different monitors (and without headphones on). These technical issues really detract from the piece.

Conceptually, I feel that the piece loses momentum rather drastically as the serious interviews takeover. I tried to overcome this loss of pace by the inclusion of quick, catchy voiceovers, but – as mentioned earlier – their poor sound quality is really quite frustrating. I also put in a bedding track in an attempt to maintain the pace of the piece, but on transference from the MAC to PC it seemed to lose most of its sound. I think much of the lack of continuity of the piece comes from my struggling to fit everything into the stipulated 5 minutes. In such a short time constraint, an elaborate introduction like mine suddenly takes up a large amount of the piece. This further limits the rest of the piece, meaning I only really include three very short inserts from my experts. Thus, the experts are not fully introduced and lack weightiness. And finally, an elaborate conclusion is totally ruled out because of time restraints. A short piece really does need a strong, punchy ending, and mine is severely lacking in this regard. I was well aware of this at the time and had added a loud “twang” of sound directly after Dustin’s absurd last statement to mark the piece’s end. However, as with the rest of the piece, this sound seems to have been severely dampened on transference from the MAC, and the impact of the final statement with the final sound and fade is totally lost.

Even within the time constraints, I guess I had to tackle the issue of “talking heads”, but I feel that I largely overcame this. The introduction decreases the time dedicated to interviews, and the voiceovers cut them up (but are a tad repetitive). The

inclusion of Dustin showing off his memorabilia is a further effort to move away from sit-down interviews for a short while. But, I guess, if a viewer gets bored by just over three minutes of talking heads, then he or she will get bored by anything.

I think my major problem was a confusion of genres. My introductory segments betray the direction in which I really wanted to head – mockumentary, spoof, and ridicule. And yet something (perhaps the fact that the pieces were being shortened for SABC news consideration) made me feel as if I needed to include more interview content. Thus, the piece becomes more of a feature about football fans from about the halfway point and the initial style (despite the voiceovers) is lost.

Also, clearly, some of my shots are poor. Dr Hoeane has a blue lens flare marring his face (despite my moving him away from the window). Dr van Niekerk has a distracting reflection of a light hovering above his head. These are merely symptoms of my struggling to manage every aspect of filming alone. Setting up a shot on the viewfinder and then concentrating on an interview is very different from a cameraman focusing wholly on the footage throughout. I feel that my camerawork did improve as I did more shoots, but the damage was largely done. Once again, though, I have gained invaluable knowledge and experience from these mistakes.

Having said all this, I do think the piece has strong points that deserve recognition. I think the sense of ridiculous melodrama is strongly established at the start. The entire introduction sequence is fairly successful, as it taps into norms of melodrama – most of it is in slow motion, fades in and out, is drained of colour, and so on. This appeals to norms that most viewers should be familiar with. My attempts to make a world that few are part of more accessible to viewers deserve recognition.

I also employ some effects quite effectively (although I was loathe to go too over the top with effects in post-production). The use of a “colour pass” when Dustin shows the viewer all the memorabilia he has purchased is fairly effective. Football fans identify strongly with their team’s colour and bringing out Arsenal’s red in every piece of Arsenal regalia heightens the sense of obsession and infatuation. Further, my research (and talking with Dr van Niekerk) had taught me that many fans start their identification with a sports team from an initial identification with its colours and kit.

Also, while the piece does tend to stagnate when the interviews begin, the quick cutting between the two interviews is effective in highlighting the uniformity of the fans. At one point, when they describe their weekly routines, it is as if they are completing each other’s sentences, showing how little variation there is (no matter

what team is supported, the approach is the same). I think the quick cutting (though seemingly messy at times, because both tended to mumble) builds this impression. The drawn out explanation of what they do every week before and after a game is allowed to play out to its entirety, thus highlighting the monotony of the ritual. This, I think, works quite well.

My choice of cast is also worth interrogating. My first interviews were with the two doctors, who I found less than vibrant interviewees. At that point I made a conscious decision to find subjects who, on the surface, seem rather dull (and I think I was successful here). Thus, I could construct the opposition between the way the interviewees talk about their fandom (wanting to “rip people apart”, for instance), and the rather bland reality. I could create a ridiculous dichotomy with upbeat music (hearkening to British football hooligan culture) contrasting hugely with these seemingly bored interviewees in their rooms, who are less than exciting in their mannerisms and speech. Perhaps, this construction is a little too subtle, and needs accentuation. This explains the inclusion of the sarcastic voiceovers (but, as mentioned, the poor sound makes these very difficult to follow).

One of the strengths of the piece is its strong allusion to popular British films (like *Hot Fuzz*, for instance). This gives it a solid base of reference. Thus, the stylistic introduction of the experts is not out of place. The piece held together even better when the soundtrack consisted of music by a band called Kaizer Chiefs, who capture the essence of British popular football culture (and are themselves named in homage of a football team). However, due to copyright issues, this music had to go. I still used it as a reference for the kind of soundtrack I wanted, but the music finally used lacks the impact of the original.

Thus, the final piece is flawed, but deserves kudos for its originality and general buoyancy. I think that most of the ideas I came up with were interesting and the right idea, but sometimes the execution was lacking (largely because the footage I had garnered earlier was lacking).