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## THE MAKING OF THE RUSSIAN AT CHRISTMAS

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THE MAKING OF *THE RUSSIAN AT CHRISTMAS*

By

ARMANDO SILVAS JR, Bachelor of Fine Arts

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

Stephen F. Austin State University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements

For the Degree Of

Master of Fine Arts

STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2024

THE MAKING OF *THE RUSSIAN AT CHRISTMAS*

By

ARMANDO SILVAS JR, Bachelor of Fine Arts

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis will explain the process of making my feature film, *The Russian at Christmas*, which I wrote, directed, and edited myself. I will discuss my influences for the film, and how those influences led to my own visual and writing style. By walking through the stages of pre-production, production, and post-production, I will discuss the film from conception to completion. My time in the SFA film program – including working on four other summer features – prepared me to direct my own feature film. Completing this feature film was a daunting task that has no comparison to directing short films.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I must first thank my film professor and mentor, William Arscott, for giving me the opportunity to make this film and pushing me to make it the best film it can be, along with guiding me through my undergraduate and graduate studies.

I'd like to thank my main cast of actors in the film – Drake Willis, Triston Dodson, Bill Small, Brad Maule, Jody Ryan, Herbert Midgley, Tim Hogle, Athena Hayes, Ben Snedecor, and Lloyd Kaufman for their hard work. I must also thank the entire class of undergraduate and graduate students that worked as crew members during the long, hot, five weeks of shooting the film. I could not have asked for a more hardworking and enthusiastic crew, and I hope that everyone involved carries what they learned to future films.

I'd like to thank Brad Maule, Jack Heifner, Derek Wayne Johnson, and Trey Cartwright. Jack helped me with the script writing process. Derek helped with the pre-production, production, and post-production aspects of the film, and Trey Cartwright helped greatly by teaching the short-film class. I would also like to thank my thesis committee members, William Arscott, Amanda Breitbach, Michael Tubbs, and Steven Marsden.

Finally, I want to thank my partner, Riley Green, for staying with me during this chaotic ride from the beginning.

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## PRE-PRODUCTION

### **The Story of *The Russian at Christmas***

*The Russian at Christmas* is a buddy comedy-action film set during the holidays. The story centers around Frank, a man who loses his job as a mall Santa and then witnesses a murder committed by The Russian. Alongside his best friend, Todd, Frank must navigate survival on Christmas Eve while being hunted by a Russian hitman. The film combines over-the-top action with absurd humor, maintaining an underlying theme emphasizing the importance of family and the idea that nobody should be alone on Christmas. This feature film is an expansion of a short film I created, wrote, directed, and edited during my undergraduate studies in 2019.

Frank, grappling with the recent loss of his father has taken up the role of a mall Santa—a job his father previously pursued, aiming to honor his father's memory and carry on the tradition. However, as the story unfolds, we discover that Frank had distanced himself from his father in his final years, a decision he regrets deeply. His dismissal from the job, a reminder that he'll never measure up to his dad, pushes him further down a path of setbacks. Frank appears as an outcast who continually faces misfortune: losing his father on Christmas, getting fired, discovering his ex-girlfriend's new relationship, and confronting a hefty debt owed to loan sharks. Amidst this turmoil, he witnesses a murder committed by a Russian hitman, known as “The Russian.”



Todd, Frank's best friend and the quintessential buddy in this comedy duo, finds himself stuck in a loveless relationship. Working at a job he detests, Todd gains the courage to break up with his girlfriend, largely thanks to Frank's support. Despite being nearly the opposite of Frank, Todd remains steadfast at Frank's side as they confront the perils of Christmas Eve. However, their friendship faces severe trials as their journey grows increasingly dangerous.

The Russian emerges as a formidable force with an intense hatred for Christmas, stemming from his childhood disappointment in not receiving the desired gift—an event that led to a tragic fire and his transformation into the ruthless hitman. Though he projects an emotionless exterior, he carries a heavy emotional burden due to his father's lack of affection during his childhood—a feeling he attempts to suppress but cannot entirely escape.

After witnessing the murder and narrowly escaping, Frank inadvertently leaves behind his Santa hat, containing his name and place of employment, for The Russian to discover. This triggers The Russian's relentless mission to eliminate Frank and tie up loose ends. Frank and Todd receive unexpected assistance from The Stranger—an unlikely ally and ex-cop fueled by revenge. The Stranger reveals a surprising connection: both Frank and The Russian share an absence of paternal affection. Meanwhile, The Russian, on a ruthless quest to locate Frank, eliminates anyone in his path. Ultimately, Frank saves his friends

by reuniting The Russian with his long-lost father. In the end, both Frank and The Russian find the Christmas they always wanted, surrounded by their loved ones.

### **Writing the Script**

My childhood passion for movies, like Robert Rodriguez's *Spy Kids*, deeply inspired me (Fig. 1). This action/comedy, emphasizing family importance, a key element in *The Russian at Christmas*. Rodriguez's guerilla filmmaking style and individualistic approach fascinated me and contributed to my desire to attend film school. Rodriguez is seen as a very resourceful filmmaker by working with what is readily available to him. This is a trait that I have learned myself. I've learned the importance of writing scripts around available resources. While my film had thirteen different locations, most were familiar places either because I'd shot there previously or knew others who had. For instance, having access to the SFA Nursing School inspired a scene set in a hospital, and familiarity with a local gas station led to scenes there. Similarly, when crafting characters, I often had specific actors in mind, thanks to connections forged while working on various sets during film school. This experience enabled me to plan roles suited to these actors, simplifying the casting process.

I had a pivotal moment when Brad Maule read one of the early script drafts. Among the numerous notes, he highlighted something about my writing of main characters that I hadn't consciously realized. He pointed out my tendency to create films featuring characters who start as outcasts, seeking redemption and proving their worth by becoming unlikely heroes. This insight was illuminating; it traced back to my second graduate short film, *Sloppy Joe* in 2022, influenced by German expressionism. *Sloppy Joe* centered on an egotistical TV host transformed into a meat monster, an outcast embraced by another outcast. My final graduate short, *Tarnation* in 2023, depicted a new sheriff challenging an oil baron, despite her lack of gun skills, highlighting the underdog theme. It was a realization that struck a chord, prompting me to delve into why these characters resonated with me.

Due to the limitations inherent in a short film—such as time constraints, available actors, and locations—several initial ideas had to be omitted. The short film version was not a project for a specific class; it was a personal endeavor, free from the pressures of class deadlines. The opportunity to develop this into a feature film presented itself, I eagerly revisited and expanded upon the story.

I've always held a fondness for Christmas films, considering them among my favorite sub-genres. What intrigued me most was the tradition of watching certain films annually. Yet, I was particularly drawn to unconventional Christmas movies—films set around the holiday but incorporating elements not typically

associated with such stories. Influential examples include *Gremlins*, centered on small monsters wreaking havoc in a town, and *Silent Night, Deadly Night*, featuring a man on a murderous rampage dressed as Santa Claus (Fig. 2). Though unconventional, these movies still capture the essence of Christmas. Keeping these influences in mind, I envisioned infusing a Russian hitman into a Christmas-themed narrative, an idea that opened doors to intriguing visuals and concepts. Imagining a Russian hitman wielding Christmas objects as weapons—candy canes, Christmas lights, and ornaments—fueled my creativity.

The core plot of the film remains faithful to the short film version: our protagonist witnesses a murder committed by a Russian hitman, triggering a cat-and-mouse chase on Christmas Eve, resulting in comedic chaos. Retaining the buddy element from the original story was crucial. Drawing inspiration from Kevin Smith's films featuring Jay and Silent Bob (Fig. 3) —two characters with captivating chemistry—I aimed to create two likable characters with distinct qualities and a dynamic that resonates. This dynamic allows for humorous interactions and exchanges, offering ample opportunities to weave jokes into the dialogue. Expanding and fleshing out both characters became an enjoyable challenge, aiming to evoke genuine care and investment from the audience.

Creating a flawed yet sympathetic character like Frank was pivotal for me; it was essential that the audience could empathize with him and root for his success. To establish this connection, I sought a relatable trait in Frank. In the

original short film, Frank was portrayed by an actor in his forties. However, transitioning to a feature film aimed at a young adult audience demanded altering the main character's age to his late twenties, which coincides with my own age. This change allowed me to write Frank's character more authentically. To intensify Frank's journey, I amplified his troubles significantly—a principle I adopted from *Lethal Weapon*, another atypical Christmas film (Fig. 4). The protagonist, Martin Riggs grappling with his wife's recent passing, inspired Frank's backstory of coping with the loss of his father. This aspect of Frank's life drew from my own experience, as my father's role in my upbringing fueled my passion for films. My father's passing when I was young, parallels Frank's struggle, navigating loss, the pressure to live up to a father figure, and the yearning for reunion.

When developing The Russian's character, I aimed for complexity and vulnerability. I envisioned him as a seemingly tough and ruthless assassin burdened with inner turmoil. Injecting comedic elements, I crafted an evil hitman plagued by father issues, who detests a beloved holiday—his obsession occasionally hindering his professional pursuits. Additionally, my admiration for older movies where Russians often played antagonistic roles, like Egor Korshunov in *Air Force One* and Ivan Drago in *Rocky IV*, influenced The Russian's characterization (Fig. 5). Ultimately, I strived to reveal parallels between Frank and The Russian. Their shared sense of loss, especially the

premature absence of a father figure, becomes the catalyst for Frank's redemption. The realization that both characters share this feeling empowers Frank to halt "The Russian's" destructive path.

The script underwent five drafts before reaching its final version. A significant alteration involved the film's conclusion. Initially, Frank killed The Russian, aligning with typical action movie tropes. However, as I evolved Frank's character to incorporate his father's loss, this resolution felt wrong. Instead, the final script ends with Frank helping The Russian reunite with his father. This poignant conclusion is a more fitting resolution for a Christmas—themed narrative.

### **Planning the Film**

With the script finalized, the next daunting task loomed: securing funds to bring the film to life. Fortunately, Stephen F. Austin State University covered three crucial expenses essential for any film production: equipment rental, crew expenses, and catering. The crew comprised undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in the summer feature class, who enrolled in the class for college credit. The university also provided equipment and a truck for transportation, crucial for shooting at locations away from campus. Catering—the

crew's daily lunch on set—was also covered by the school. However, additional funding was needed to focus on locations, art direction (props, set decoration, costumes, makeup), and casting.

After thorough research, I opted to start an Indiegogo campaign to supplement the required funds. Indiegogo specializes in assisting creators, especially independent filmmakers, in fundraising for their projects. Overseeing this fundraising campaign became a full-time commitment, involving daily outreach to contacts, including individuals I hadn't communicated with in years, to seek financial support—an unexpectedly stressful part of the pre-production phase. I was awarded the Bil Arscott Scholarship amounting to \$3,000, significantly bolstering the film's budget. Additionally, the Indiegogo campaign raised \$1,250, and I contributed an additional personal amount to cover various expenses during production.

Being affiliated with the university granted access to several local businesses in Nacogdoches who graciously allowed us to film on their premises for a day or two. In the professional filmmaking world, acquiring locations constitutes a substantial portion of the budget, even for brief shoots. Securing locations was particularly challenging for two houses featured in the script. Houses—generally, are arduous to find as shooting locations due to the reluctance in allowing a film crew on their premises. Recognizing the necessity to compensate for these locations, I initiated negotiations early, clearly outlining the

film's shooting requirements. While some homeowners declined upon hearing about the crew and equipment involved, eventually, I found two suitable nearby Airbnb rentals that met the script's criteria (Fig. 6). These became the only locations I had to pay to utilize.

The crew and I embarked on location scouting. A team comprising myself, Emily Perry (assistant director), Tristen Robertson (director of photography), and Shanee Cody (production designer), personally inspected the locations, outlining the specifics for each scene. This involved planning camera placements, identifying electrical outlets, staging equipment, organizing crew parking, and allocating a green room for actors. As part of this process, the team captured photographs for reference and conveyed pertinent information to the rest of the crew. Additionally, we engaged in detailed discussions with location owners, ensuring transparency about shooting requirements to avert any surprises on the shoot day.

Early on, I collaborated with Tristen to establish the film's visual aesthetic and shot preferences. I drew inspiration from films like *Pineapple Express* and the *Clerks* franchise, which feature ensemble casts navigating unlikely situations. Notably, these comedies predominantly utilize two-shot compositions, often focusing on the two main characters—Dale and Saul in *Pineapple Express* and Randall and Dante in *Clerks*. Borrowing from early Judd Apatow-produced films such as *Superbad* (Fig. 7), I sought to replicate certain scene styles, particularly evident in the police station scene in my film. Furthermore, scenes diverging from



comedy drew inspiration from the tension-building dynamics seen in classic horror franchises like *Halloween* and *Scream* (Fig. 8). These cinematic references aided the director of photography in capturing the desired visual essence of the film.

Securing the cast was my next priority, a task ongoing throughout the fundraising and location selection phases, given the considerable number of actors required. Opting for local actors for the main roles was a practical choice, streamlining expenses as they remained available throughout the shoot period. The three pivotal characters—Frank, Todd, and The Russian—were my initial focus. Drake Willis, an SFA theater student at the time, and Triston Dodson, a recent theater graduate, were key contenders. Having previously collaborated with Triston on my third graduate short film, *Tarnation*, I knew that he was easy to work with. Bill Small, who portrayed The Russian in the short film version, enthusiastically reprised his role for the feature. Given my connections in Nacogdoches, I recruited actors for minor roles who would be available for shorter shoot durations. This would be more straightforward compared to securing actors for extended periods. An exciting aspect of the process was working with actors that I had never worked with before, including some that I had always wanted to work with.

I had the incredible fortune of collaborating with one of my idols, Lloyd Kaufman, the President of Troma Entertainment and creator of *The Toxic*

*Avenger*. His work, particularly *The Toxic Avenger* and other Troma films, served as a significant influence on me as a filmmaker (Fig. 9). Arranging this collaboration was made possible through Derek Wayne Johnson (co-producer), who had prior experience working with Lloyd on his documentary film, *John G. Avildsen: King of the Underdogs*. After several email exchanges and phone calls, Lloyd enthusiastically signed on to portray the character of Mr. Winters. Notably, Lloyd has been instrumental in launching the careers of visionaries like Trey Parker and Matt Stone of *South Park* fame and James Gunn, renowned for his work on Marvel's *Guardians of the Galaxy* movies. Lloyd's involvement necessitated covering his professional fees, stipend, and travel expenses from New York City to Nacogdoches, with the school covering lodging. Although, casting every actor wasn't as straightforward as this.

Athena Hayes and Ben Snedecor were the two out-of-town actors. Ben auditioned through an online casting call, reaching actors in the Austin and Houston areas. Athena, whom I had previously collaborated with on a feature film in 2019, agreed to join the cast. The remaining actors were locals from Nacogdoches. Managing actors' schedules later became a significant challenge during production.

With the cast finalized, my focus shifted to acquiring props and managing the film's art direction. One reason for choosing the Christmas setting was the reusability of decorations throughout the movie, cleverly concealing their

repetition. For instance, we managed to incorporate the same Christmas tree in about five different scenes, and sourcing affordable, pre-owned Christmas decorations proved relatively easy. SFA alum—Ricky Kennedy generously lent us a significant portion of decorations, previously used in his 2019 Christmas-themed feature, *A Year from Now*. I also knew that by making the film set during Christmas would allow us to get more creative with lighting and decorations in the background. A common mistake a lot of film students come across is that their frame is visually lacking in the background. Given the artistic intricacy of the film, this phase required extensive time and attention. The production designer, Shanee Cody, meticulously compiled a list of required props and set decorations, which I later procured. Simultaneously, the first assistant director, Emily Perry, was finalizing the shooting schedule. With pre-production wrapped up, we embarked on the extensive twenty-four-day shoot.

## PRODUCTION

The contrast between the effort required for a short film versus a feature is stark. Throughout the production of *The Russian at Christmas*, my mind was constantly consumed by the film, even on supposed days off. Every moment seemed like a workday, a testament to the immense workload. However, my experiences as both a graduate and undergraduate student had primed me well for this colossal undertaking. This marked my fifth summer feature project but the first one I directed. Having witnessed other directors crumble under pressure and experience public meltdowns on set, I took notes from past mistakes and implemented effective strategies. Completing a feature film during film school is a rare feat, and I was determined to be among the select few who accomplish it.

Our crew consisted of twenty-four members, including four recent graduates who willingly returned due to their positive experiences working on my short films. Notably, Emily Perry, who served as the first assistant director, shouldered one of the most demanding and stressful roles on the team. I personally selected the above-the-line positions, including the assistant director, director of photography, production designer, script supervisor, and audio mixer, typically entrusting these roles to students with prior summer feature experience. The remaining below-the-line positions were filled through the vignette class instructed by Trey Cartwright. Directing a crew of this scale, especially for an extended feature shoot, was a considerable adjustment from my usual

experiences managing smaller teams during shorter film shoots. The increased number of actors and locations inherently elevated the likelihood of encountering issues.

Murphy's Law is a film school mantra—anything that can go wrong, will go wrong. While I anticipated a plethora of problems, the reality was less troublesome than expected. However, I distinctly recall a challenge encountered during the initial week of production. An actor, scheduled to film the next day, suddenly claimed that the provided schedule was incompatible—a schedule they had in hand for months. Although I'd encountered actors dropping out before, facing this predicament a day before shooting was unprecedented. I confronted a critical decision: either rearrange the shoot to accommodate this actor or swiftly find a replacement to maintain our schedule. Considering it was early in the shoot, setting a precedent for the crew was crucial. Opting to maintain the schedule, I swiftly recast the role.

Collaborating with Lloyd Kaufman marked the pinnacle of my experience within the film program. Kaufman, widely regarded as the torchbearer of independent cinema, has built his entire production company around the ethos of independent filmmaking. Reflecting on my time working with him on my first feature film, I recall it with immense fondness, and our communication has persisted since. Due to Lloyd's tight schedule, he couldn't commit all the dialogue lines to memory before arriving in Nacogdoches. Consequently, I rearranged the

shooting order on set to accommodate this challenge. Ordinarily, we initiate a scene with a "master" shot—a wide-angle view encompassing the entire scene. Subsequently, we move in for tighter shots of the actors, following the principle of starting wide and gradually narrowing, which aids in lighting setup. However, for Lloyd's ease, I opted to begin with close-ups, then proceed to the master shot (Fig. 10). This adjustment facilitated his performance, with the script supervisor off-camera, ready to prompt any forgotten lines. Additionally, I encouraged Lloyd to adlib or rephrase dialogue, offering him more flexibility and comfort with the lines. As a director, sometimes veering away from the script and discussing how the characters would express themselves is crucial. Film is a collaborative endeavor, and actors play a pivotal role in this collaboration. I've observed a common weakness among film students—being rigidly attached to the script. While the script is vital, being open to dialogue changes and embracing actors' input often leads to improvements.

One significant lesson I gleaned from directing this film is the value of being receptive to change. I've never adhered to the notion that my vision is infallible or that there's only one definitive way to execute it. Embracing suggestions to enhance various elements—be it camera shots, lighting, staging, or performance—was a core principle. There were instances where my supervising professor, Derek proposed alterations to staging or blocking a scene for its enhancement. If a certain angle didn't resonate, we halted and

brainstormed alternatives. Derek emphasized that his input aimed not to seize control but to teach and bolster the film's success.

Often overlooked is the fact that the summer feature functions primarily as an educational class. Its goal isn't solely to birth an acclaimed film—although no one would object if that were the case. Rather, it serves to teach professionalism on a film set, giving students the opportunity for invaluable experiential learning. Ultimately, remaining open to diverse suggestions proved beneficial, fortifying the film. It's a crucial lesson for any director: being receptive to changes often yields superior outcomes, surpassing initial expectations.

## POST-PRODUCTION

Completing the film brought a mix of emotions—bittersweet feelings surged as this endeavor, which consumed my life from pre-production to wrap, reached its conclusion. Yet, the journey persisted; the post-production phase was beginning, known to be the most meticulous stage of any film. I've edited the short films I directed and taught the editing class during the Fall of 2022 and Spring of 2023, granting me substantial familiarity with editing a feature film. One advantage of being my own editor was the assurance of quick edits, eliminating the waiting time on someone else to meet deadlines. Editing, in a way, parallels directing. As an editor, I wield control over scene pacing, setting the film's tone and style. When someone else edits your film, it's akin to handing over the directorial reins.

During production, I was fortunate to have an assembly editor, Mitchell Partlow. His role involved editing the film in chronological order as we shot it—a practice that helps identify any overlooked aspects or areas needing reshoots. Two weeks post-wrap, I had a rough cut, clocking in at eighty minutes without credits. Given the summer schedule, I couldn't screen it for professors or fellow grad students immediately, and had to wait until September. The initial feedback was positive, yet the recurring critique centered on the film's length—specifically, a drag in the middle. That's where the meticulous editing process began.



Expecting cuts in the final film was no surprise; it's customary in film production. While the script offers a framework, the final film often diverges. I needed to assess the film objectively, disregarding the script at times to discern what worked and what didn't. I trimmed unnecessary dialogue and amped up pacing where required. An impactful note from my professors, Bil Arscott, Brad Maule, and Derek Wayne Johnson pertained to the ending. Although the film is a comedy, the theme of family's significance was evident. Thus, letting The Russian have a blissful ending despite his misdeeds felt incongruent. Upon reflection, their insight was spot-on. I introduced a sequence depicting The Russian's apprehension by the police, an essential addition that aptly concludes his story arc (Fig. 11). By November, I achieved a picture lock of the film at seventy-two minutes, including credits (Fig. 12).

Having completed the picture lock, the focus shifted to color, VFX, sound, and music. Graduate music student Jimmy Bartley composed the music, marking a new experience for me. Short films, typically around ten minutes long, often resort to readily available public domain music due to time constraints. Though not a musician, I could discern the mood required for each scene's music, guiding Jimmy on when to start and end it. His input was invaluable. I aimed for a singular composer for this film, recognizing that multiple composers in the past led to mixed and unfocused musical styles. A single composer unified the music's voice.

In retrospect, I'm immensely proud of the film. The learning curve was steep, and I aim to carry those lessons into future film projects. The crew evolved into a tight-knit family, as is common with summer features (Fig. 13). Now, with the final cut complete, my intention is to submit it to various film festivals and subsequently release it on Amazon Prime. By making it available for streaming, I hope to reach a broader audience and showcase the hard work invested by SFA film students.

## IMAGES



Figure 1. *Spy Kids* (2001) an action/comedy directed by Robert Rodriguez that was influential to me from a young age and on *The Russian at Christmas*.

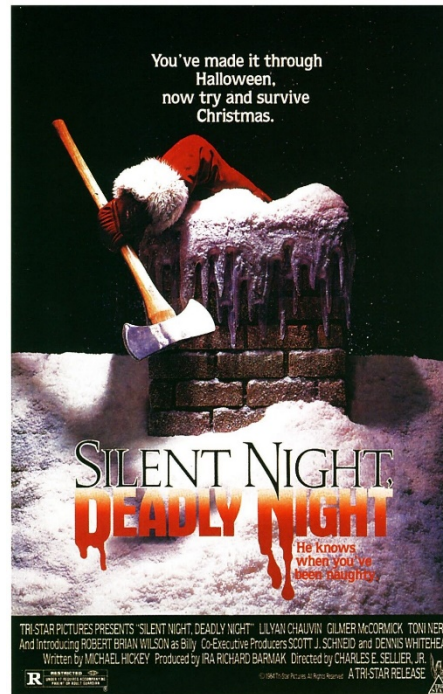


Figure 2. Posters for *Gremlins* (1984) and *Silent Night Deadly Night* (1984), two unconventional Christmas films.



Figure 3. The characters of Jay and Silent Bob, created by Kevin Smith, influenced Frank and Todd's relationship in *The Russian at Christmas*.





Figure 4. Martin Riggs in *Lethal Weapon* (1987), a key inspiration for the character of Frank in *The Russian at Christmas*.



Figure 5. Russian villains such as Ivan Korshunov in *Air Force One* (1997) were influences for the character of The Russian in *The Russian at Christmas*.





Figure 6. Local Airbnb's that were rented to shoot *The Russian at Christmas*.





Figure 7. Films such as *Pineapple Express* (2008) and *Superbad* (2007) inspired the look and style of *The Russian at Christmas* when breaking down the script for the camera.





Figure 8. Early *Halloween* films influenced the pacing, lighting, and editing in scene where two cops are stalked by The Russian in *The Russian at Christmas*.



Figure 9. *The Toxic Avenger* (1984) directed by Lloyd Kaufman, President of Troma Entertainment.



Figure 10. This close-up shot of Lloyd Kaufman was shot first instead of the traditional master to better prepare Lloyd for the rest of the scene in *The Russian at Christmas*.



Figure 11. A pickup shot that was added after principal photography to include a scene where The Russian gets arrested in *The Russian at Christmas*.

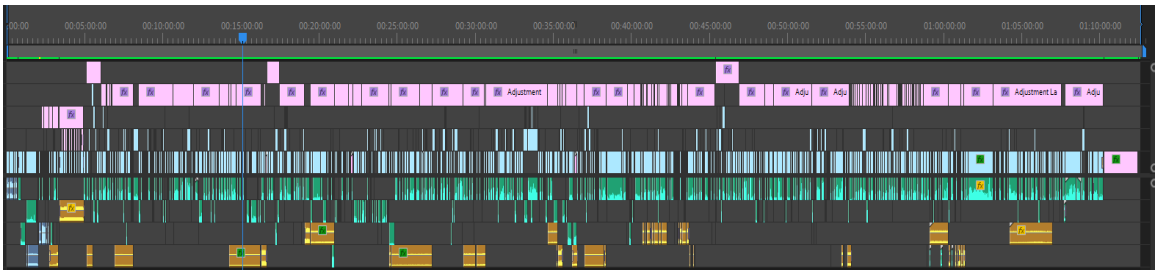


Figure 12. The editing timeline for the picture lock cut of *The Russian at Christmas*.



Figure 13. The crew of *The Russian at Christmas* on the last day of shooting.



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*Guardians of the Galaxy*. Directed by James Gunn, performances by Chris Pratt, Vin Diesel, Zoe Saldana, Dave Bautista, Bradley Cooper. DVD, Marvel Studios, 2014.

*A Year from Now*. Directed by Ricky Kennedy, performances by, Athena Hayes, Brad Maule, Cassidy Kelly, Thomas Elam. DVD, Pineywood Pictures, 2021.

## VITA

Armando Silvas Jr. grew up in Cleveland, Texas before moving to Nacogdoches to attend Stephen F. Austin State University in 2016. In 2020 he graduated with his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Cinematography. He soon returned to SFA in 2021 to begin the MFA filmmaking program.

During his time as an undergraduate and graduate student he has worked on five different feature films in various positions and written/directed dozens of his own short films, while working as crew on numerous short films for other students. As a graduate student he would discover a passion for teaching. He began to teach the film-video editing class during the Fall of 2022 and Spring of 2023, then the digital media-motion graphics class during the Fall of 2023. He has won the Nac Short Film Fest Audience Award two times in a row for his graduate short films in 2022 and 2023. He has also been awarded with The Ruth Buzzi Honorary Dean's Award in Filmmaking in 2022 and The Bil Arscott Scholarship in 2023.

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MLA format

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