



Intro

Paaaapaaaaaa! Brioche!

Like every family, mine has a weekend morning ritual. Along with orange juice, Shreddies, and a mug of Earl Grey tea, that often involves watching my daughter spreading a dollop of Nutella on a brioche bun as we sit around the table and eat breakfast together while listening to Baby Shark.

Each of these elements: the ritual, the kitchen, the music, and, most importantly, Nutella, are at the heart of this film. As a Canadian, and person of colour, who lived in the US for over 10 years, I get this family, our audience, and how best to capture their everyday lives.

The Feel/Tone

When I look at this family I think *This Is Us*.

An intimate family made up of two parents and three children. Each of them an authentic, yet relatable, three-dimensional character with an interior life and external challenges that we can all identify and empathise with.

A story that feels organic, yet motivated. Culturally specific, but emotionally universal.

And a tone that feels optimistic, yet naturalistic.

By showing who this family is and what makes them unique we will ensure that they, and Nutella, connect with the widest possible audience.

Crafting Authenticity

Authenticity is at the heart of our film and spans everything from lighting to hair and make-up, location to casting, from the big picture to the tiny details.

Given that we are targeting a North American audience, our family should look and feel American. This is hard to fake, so where possible we should look to cast an American family, whether we decide to shoot in the United State or Europe.

Similarly, believable family dynamics are difficult to replicate, so I'd like to cast a real family or bring actors in to complement a family. As we all know, each family has its own way of operating and communicating. This existing dynamic and unspoken understanding will result in subtle and natural performances that will make the characters and their interactions feel authentic.

Having previously worked on a project with an all-black cast, there are conventions around lighting, hair, and make-up that we need to consider. For example, we shouldn't overlight in response to the darker skin tone but instead, use make-up that makes the skin more reflective. We also need to factor in the different processes involved in preparing and styling hair. To ensure that we are sensitive to the specific needs of each actor, we should have black stylists and make-up artists that understand these nuances.

When it comes to lighting more generally, let's eschew commercial convention and light the film in a natural way that works with our characters, reacting to their idiosyncratic behaviours and unexpected movements in an elaborate, spontaneous dance of call and response.

Although the story is based on sound and music we don't want this to feel like a music video with flashy, super quick cuts. Instead, we'll shoot long takes that play through the entire song, allowing the characters to play around, try stuff, and find those moments that feel specific to our characters and their environment then tighten them in the edit.

The Sound is the Story

Sound is the trigger for our story and works in synergy with the song throughout. For that reason, it requires even more attention than usual.

Drawing on the idea from the animatic, we will create a symphony of everyday kitchen utensils that set in motion the tone and rhythm of the film, provide a seamless transition into the song, and keep up the energy throughout.

To make this feel natural and authentic, we will need to focus on two areas: choreography and sound design.

The decision to use the utensil as an instrument will feel spontaneous, as will the decision of each family member to gradually join in. However, this cannot be ad hoc or improvised as each cut of a knife or clink of a glass will have to work in time with a predetermined rhythm that matches our song.

We should use real sound and on-set foley to add an extra layer of texture and reality to the film, making the audience feel as though they are part of the on-screen environment. For this to work effectively, we would need to factor in time and money to work with post

and sound teams to run tests and perhaps create a demo to find out which kitchen utensils produce the most distinct and interesting sounds.

Approach

Let's shoot this like a television show to achieve that visual authenticity and emotional nuance.

Rather than rigidly blocking each scene, let's hit our story beats by following the characters as they explore and discover the kitchen, creating a sense of freedom, dynamism, and spontaneity in their decisions, making the environment, the family, and the story feel as if it is unfolding in front of our eyes.

We'll shoot with two cameras in an observational, reactive style, creating an intimacy between the audience and our characters as we capture their actions and reactions, those unscripted, organic human moments, and the general chaos of family life.

This is intended to immerse our audience in the story and make them feel as though they are part of the action. This feeling of immersion is vital to every aspect of the story and will be at the heart of our approach, whether through staging, camera and lens choices, art direction, or sound design.

Meet The Family

Taking inspiration from the animatic, I have sought to develop this family of characters and their backstories, so that we are better able to understand who they are why they act in the way that they do.

That said, it's important to let these characters evolve as we move through casting and production, taking inspiration from our actors, locations, and those happy accidents. We'll continue to refine them in the edit to ensure that their voices feel real and distinct.

Vanessa (40) works in the high-pressure, high-stress world of finance. She loves her job but loves her family even more. When she steps through that door she leaves the office behind and embraces the job of mum with just as much energy and enthusiasm as her work, often taking over from her husband...

David (42), a locum GP who spends most of his time looking after their children. A gentle, sensitive soul, he specialised as a paediatric doctor but wanted to give his kids the same kind of attention that he was giving everybody else's, so he decided to step back and go part-time. He's the parent that the kids go to when they want something.

Maya is (13) going on 18. Like most teenage girls her age, she possesses a self-awareness and self-confidence that is impressive and, at times, frustrating. She is engaged with the world around her, not just the screen of her phone, and is passionate about mental health and the health of our planet.

Colson (7) is at that age where Maya is his biggest role model. He'll often copy what she says and does (even if he doesn't know what she means or why she is doing it). Maya used to find it adorable, but now she just thinks it's annoying, especially when he gets hold of her nail varnish.

Wallace (3) is hell-bent on causing as much noise, mess, and destruction as possible. Deceptively smart, he'll often find ingenious escape routes from his playpen and buggy just when Vanessa and David think they can relax.

The Story

The animatic does a great job of capturing the relatability of our family and their weekend morning routine, as well as the role that sound and music will play in building rhythm and a narrative crescendo into their story. Where necessary, I have tried to develop and refine this in the script below, focusing on three areas:

1. Opening on our family amid their Saturday morning routine and giving the audience a sense of our characters and the world of our story.
2. Bringing into focus an inciting incident caused by Maya that triggers the rest of her family to respond by each making their own sounds.
3. Tying each of these sounds to specific, believable actions that feel logical, motivated, and connected to the world that we have established.

The Script

1. We open on a wide shot of the Williams family in their well-appointed kitchen - combining exposed brick walls with stainless steel implements and marble/granite work surfaces. It's Saturday morning and the sun is bursting through the windows as Maya stands at the table, laying the fourth and final place setting. Colson sits opposite, mimicking her actions. Vanessa is stood at the counter whisking some pancake batter in a bowl. And David is trying (but failing) to secure Wallace who is struggling in his highchair.

2. Close on Maya's hand as she lays a fork on the table, accidentally knocking a glass tumbler. The ensuing CLINK cuts through the hubbub of family noise.

3. We turn 180 degrees to an eagle-eyed (and eared) Colson who instinctively copies Maya, striking his plate with a knife and this heavy-handed CLANK reverberates around the room.

4. A reverse shot of Vanessa who can't help but smile as she looks out at her children, indulging her impulses and joining in as she theatrically WHISKS the pancake batter in her bowl, varying the sound but continuing the rhythm. She looks to...

5. ...David and Wallace who follow suit as David victoriously Velcro's Wallace into his high-chair, only for Wallace to RIP it off again.

Music: 'Best Day of My Life' - *American Authors* starts up.

6. And now we're back with Maya who tries to play it cool, but she is loving this and UNSCREWS the lid of the Nutella then...

7. SLIDES the jar across the table to...

8. Colson who picks it up and PULLS BACK the lid. As he reaches for a spoon we transition to...

9. ...the ladle in Vanessa's hand as she scoops up some pancake batter and pours it into a frying pan. It SIZZLES as it hits the oil which spits onto...

10. ...David as he CUTS the bread on a chopping board then transitions into...

11. ...Wallace BANGING on his highchair tray with plastic cutlery. His noise instantly drowned out by...

12. ..the steaming WHISTLE of a boiling kettle, providing that crescendo release.

VO: Breakfast sounds better together, doesn't it?

13. The steam gives way to Vanessa SCOOPING some Nutella out of the jar. Match cut to...

VO: Make it even more special with Nutella's cocoa and hazelnuts.

14. ...David SPREADING it across a pancake. Match cut to...

15. ...Maya biting into a CRUNCHY piece of toast with Nutella on top. Then we pull out to...

VO: The weekend has officially begun.

16. ...the family all sitting around the table.

Picture blurs and text appears:

Nutella - Wake Up to Wow.

The Sound Script

Sound will be embedded in every decision we make, informing our choice of location, the art department, and how each beat of our story connects to the other. Below I have included a sound-specific script that gives a sense of length, texture, the rising action, and inevitable crescendo.

2. CLINK - a light, high-pitched ding which dissipates almost instantly.

3. CLANK - a heavy-handed thwack that echoes and reverberates around the room.

4. WHISKS - the whipping of a thin, wet liquid and scrape of the metal whisk against the glass bowl.

5. RIP - a loud, fast polyester scratch.

6. UNSCREWS - a scrape, followed by a satisfying pop.

7. SLIDE - the scrape of plastic on wood.

8. PULLS BACK - a light, stickiness increasing in pitch.

9. SIZZLES - crackling of oil and a slight hiss as the batter spreads across the base of the pan.

10. CUTS - the crumble of bread and serrated scrape of metal on wood.

11. BANGING - click-clack of plastic on plastic.

12. WHISTLE - like a high-pitched, alternating scream.

13. SCOOPING - soft, moist lever.

14. SPREADING - a gentle, continuous lather.

15. CRUNCHY - the brittle crush of breadcrumbs against enamel.

The American Look

It would be great to shoot in America, but wherever we end up making this film it has to feel authentic and ground our stories in the world of our audience. I live in London and have previous experience shooting commercials intended for an American audience in the city. I am confident that we can find a house, and especially a kitchen, that possesses American architectural traits, stainless steel kitchen utensils, and modern appliances that you would find in an everyday American house.

Given how I intend to shoot the film, the size and layout of our kitchen are also important. We need something visually interesting, but which also provides us with space to manoeuvre and windows that allow us to use natural light where possible.

Our kitchen should reflect the characters and family that live in it. There's a layer of lived-in textures - keys on the counter, a jersey on a chair. It's not messy, but it doesn't feel clinical either.

[Here's a spot](#) I recently shot in London that has a similar look.

Nutella On-Screen

It makes sense to integrate Nutella into the film where it makes sense, but it shouldn't interrupt the flow of the story. It should be visible, but not forced. Part of our characters' lives, rather than at the centre of it.

But when we do show Nutella, we should look to do so in a varied and appetising way that captures the anticipation and satisfaction that comes with seeing it, opening it, spreading it, and eating it.

Included below are some detailed descriptions of how Nutella will be shot and portrayed throughout the story.

Shot

6. Maya unscrewing the lid of a Nutella jar.

A slow, but seamless twisting motion that builds anticipation and shows how easy it is to open the jar of Nutella. All the while keeping the front of the label in view.

7. Maya sliding the jar across the table.

Showing Nutella being passed between family members in a way that is fun and playful and which reinforces the idea that Nutella is a communal, family product to our audience.

8. Colson pulling back the lid.

A seamless movement that builds anticipation, but which also conveys the freshness of Nutella and its smooth surface.

13. Vanessa scooping some Nutella out of the jar.

Showing the soft, stickiness of Nutella as it is levered out of the jar with a knife, indulgently curling around the edges yet remaining in place.

14. David spreading Nutella on his pancake.

Slowly lathered over a warm, thick American-style pancake with ease as it starts to melt and glisten.

15. Maya bites into a crunchy piece of toast with Nutella on top.

Layered on a thick, toasted slice of bread and just creeping over the sides as she crunches down on it with her teeth, getting a little bit on her lip as she smiles with satisfaction.

Thanks

For many of us, the last year or so has been spent with family, whether that's the one we're born into or the one we choose for ourselves. Spending time with the people that we love has been invaluable and in the years to come those simple, everyday moments at the breakfast table will be the things that we look back on with nostalgia and look forward to repeating. Let's make **Nutella** part of those moments.