

Clocked Out

clockedoutwebseries.com

Created, Written, Produced, and Edited by
Eric James Minor

Clocked Out Web Series

by

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Chapter 1: Introduction

At the time of this writing, I had recently been laid off from an employer with whom I worked for since 2006. The company consisted of the husband and wife owners and eight to ten full-time employees, depending on the sales numbers. In such a small business environment there were only two social classes: the owners (them), and the rest of us.

After a few years with the company, friendships grew and a bunch of us started going out every once in a while for happy hour. These happy hours were always highly entertaining. Most conversation revolved around our workdays and many of the stories told centered on the owners.

One night, after one of these enjoyable outings, I had an idea to write the pilot for a sitcom that would be loosely based on the company and its employees' stories. I struggled to get the idea off the ground, asking friends to help concept and write the script. After a few years and several failed attempts by myself, I gave up on it. That is, until I started looking into graduate school.

I found that the University of Baltimore's MFA in Integrated Design program would allow me to gain knowledge in both video and screenwriting. My sitcom idea began to stir again. In Spring 2015, after an independent study in screenwriting with Peter Toran, my project came to life not in the form of a sitcom pilot, but in the form of a six-episode web series called *Clocked Out*.

Clocked Out is about a group of coworkers who go out for drinks every week to blow off steam. The series explores how people from all backgrounds who are forced to spend eight hours a day with each other at work form special relationships. In a study conducted and published in the publication *Social Forces*, Lois Verbrugge found that twenty-seven to thirty-three percent of people call a coworker one of their three best friends.¹ *Clocked Out* dives deeper into this phenomenon to explore how those professional relationships morph into a different animal in a social setting and with alcohol.

My thesis project was to film live action episodes of the script that I wrote. During the process, my committee and I realized that shooting a six-episode series was ambitious. I ended up shooting Episodes 1 and 2 and created storyboards of the remaining episodes.

I acted as the creator, writer, director, producer, and editor of the series. I designed and created a website, using Twitter's Bootstrap framework. ClockedOutWebSeries.com hosts three videos, which includes a trailer, Episode 1 and Episode 2. Episode 2 includes a short preview of the remaining season. Other relevant information is hosted on the site as well. This information includes my biography, cast photos and biographies, and a location biography. The storyboards are also highlighted on the website. I created *Clocked Out* accounts on Vimeo and YouTube to host the videos. Finally, I created a social network by activating accounts on Facebook and Instagram to promote the series.

Chapter 2: Happy Hour Culture

When I began pitching my idea for Clocked Out to family, friends, colleagues, and my professors, the overwhelming response was along the lines of, “Oh yeah, I’ve attended those happy hours, they’re always so awkward”. I incorporated this feedback into the six episodes that I wrote. The pilot episode is titled “Awkward High Fives” and all remaining episodes include the word awkward.

Serge Kozak, founder and CEO of True Hero Studio writes in a blog post, “For an audience to get into a story they need to be able to identify in some way with the main character.”² With this series, I not only created relatable characters, I wrote about an identifiable theme.

During prohibition, it was common for the brave citizens disregarding the law to gather and share then-illegal cocktails before dinner was served. Drinking after work but before dinner is an age-old tradition. Falstaff, in Shakespeare’s *Henry IV* says, “Come, I will go drink with you, but I cannot tarry [putoff] dinner.”³

According to a survey conducted in 2008, twenty-one percent of the nearly 7,000 workers surveyed say they have attended happy hours with their coworkers, and nearly twenty-five percent report they go at least once a month. Eighty-two percent of workers attending happy hour say the reason they go is to bond with co-workers.⁴

Now, is twenty-one percent of the population enough of an audience or is that too niche? The creators of the popular web series, *I Hate Tommy Finch*, Julie Keck and Jessica King have a great answer to that question.

Web series are great for creators who are brave enough and dedicated enough to tell stories for a niche audience. Look at the makers of the web series *The Misadventures of an Awkward Black Girl*, *Broad City*, and *The Couple*. None of those creators squandered their time writing *Grey's Anatomy* specs or trying to cater to writing labs that only accept 10 people a year (and only if you know someone's mom's mom.) They made stuff for specific audiences that they knew had traditionally been neglected and poorly represented, put it on the web, and reached out to the audience that they knew would appreciate what they'd done. They put their noses to the grindstone, they put the pedal to the medal, they hauled ass...and they made something. And they made it well. Now all of them have TV development deals in various stages.⁵

With the concept of happy hour so ingrained in American culture, there is a clear audience that will relate to my web series.

Chapter 3: Television and the Sitcom

In order to understand the current landscape for my project, I decided to study the origin of the web series. I began the timeline with the advent of the television.

In 1930, Philo Farnsworth, a young Mormon who grew up infatuated with electricity on a farm in Idaho, was awarded a patent for electronic television. Farnsworth and Vladimir Zworykin, a RCA employee and Russian immigrant, are largely responsible for American television as we know it.⁶

The National Broadcasting Company (NBC), then owned by RCA, was making huge profits as a radio network. Although they were not the only player in the TV market, the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) had begun experimental broadcasts, NBC was the only network poised for a major launch.⁷ CBS and NBC have been rivals ever since.

In those early days, everything was broadcasted live. “Everyone was learning...anything could happen. Stage fright, flubbed lines, accidents on set,” explained Michael Winship in his history of the medium.⁸ Many television viewers in that time were affluent, familiar with the theatre, and therefore accustomed to live action. This led networks to hire employees comfortable with live circumstances and that’s why most early television shows were recreations of Broadway plays.

In the early 1950s, a shift occurred from live broadcast drama and comedy programs to taped situational comedies or sitcoms. Situational

comedy took its roots in radio, going back to 1929. The popular *Amos 'n Andy* was one of those radio shows that made the transition and was the first comedy show to establish the idea of a continuing cast in a different situation each week.⁹ Many other early television sitcoms came directly from radio including *Father Knows Best* and *The Goldbergs*.

I Love Lucy is considered by many experts to be the most important sitcom of all time. The show ran on CBS from 1951 to 1958 and is still in worldwide syndication today. The executives at CBS wanted their stars, Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz to leave their Los Angeles home and move to New York to broadcast the show live. But Ball and Arnaz wanted to stay in LA and tape the performance on celluloid in front of a live studio audience.¹⁰ This allowed for editing before broadcasting as well as providing high quality copies to be broadcast on both coasts. *I Love Lucy* changed television forever because, in essence, taping their shows and distributing it to stations around the country created the rerun.

Because Ball and Arnaz had a different vision of the show than the CBS executives they started their own production company and produced the show themselves. Arnaz hired a legendary cinematographer Karl Freund, known for his work on the film *Metropolis* (1927). Arnaz asked Freund to create a lighting system in the studio that would allow for three cameras to shoot wide, medium, and close up shots simultaneously. Freund was convinced that this was impossible because each shot would require different lighting. Arnaz fought back until Freund found an answer. Then the three-

camera, live-studio-audience sitcom was born. Following this tradition, I had hoped to use Arnaz's vision to shoot *Clocked Out* with three cameras.

The American sitcom has taken many turns since then, but the basic format remains the same. You have the same actors playing the same characters, week after week, who always find themselves in some sort of minor crisis. From *Leave it to Beaver* to *The Office*, from *Taxi* to *30 Rock*, all sitcoms are formulaic. All sitcoms follow an unwritten code.

The Sitcom Code breaks down what needs to happen in each episode, by the minute. As Dan Richter of Demand Media notes, "Sitcoms, minus commercials, are typically 22 minutes long [with] a script of 25-40 pages. Every sitcom episode has a main plot (story A), as well as one or two subplots (stories B and C)." There are three main acts, divided by two commercial breaks (in most American TV), with 3-5 scenes per act. One of the distinguishing characteristics of sitcoms, as opposed to other forms of television, is that the main protagonist(s) barely change from one episode to the next, let alone from season to season (Maggie Simpson has been sucking on a pacifier for nearly thirty years). Therefore whatever happens in the episode, the situation must end largely where it began. The Wise Sloth points out that 22 minutes is "not even really time enough to tell a full story. The whole story has to be on fast-forward," so simplification is key.¹¹

This code is restrictive and as the Internet becomes more and more important in this medium, new screenwriters aren't forced to follow the rules. *Broad City*, before it was picked up by Comedy Central, aired episodes as short as two minutes. The Vimeo series, *High Maintenance*, which has since been picked up by HBO for six episodes, has timeframes ranging from five to fourteen minutes. *Clocked Out* took advantage of this less-restrictive format, with episodes ranging from six to nineteen minutes in length.

Chapter 4: Streaming Video

The invention of the digital video recorder (DVR) began allowing consumers to do two things that seemed preposterous when the television business model first appeared. First, they gave the audience control over when they wanted to watch a show. Not home to watch your favorite show on Thursday at 9pm? Tape it and watch it Friday at 6pm. Secondly, the DVR allows consumers to skip advertisements.

Combine the DVR with the streaming video forerunner, YouTube, and America started seeing the beginning of the end of traditional television being the main source for watching moving pictures.¹² YouTube began in 2004 and grew quickly, archiving 5.3 billion videos with 98.8 million American viewers by 2009. Although you couldn't watch television shows on YouTube (without users violating copyright laws), their importance cannot be overestimated. Paul Soukup gives some detail about the growth of YouTube.

There are conflicting reports about exactly how many people watch online video, but there is a general consensus that the number is significant and growing. YouTube claims that 20 hours of video are uploaded to its servers every minute— which suggests that 365,512 videos are uploaded every day. This is the equivalent of Hollywood releasing 114,400 new full-length movies into theaters each week.¹³

The amount of viewership and exposure that is available on YouTube, as well as the fantastic feature of allowing free uploads explains why I have decided to post my web series on the site.

In 2008, both Hulu and Netflix came on the scene to make streaming television accessible to the public. Before their arrival, online video was restricted to videos that the public created and uploaded. But with Hulu and Netflix, users can stream their favorite network shows. “Less than a year after launch, Hulu became the Internet’s second-most-popular video site, trailing only YouTube.”¹⁴

At the time of this writing, Netflix delivers almost a billion hours of streaming movies and television shows to its customers every month on over nine hundred different types of Internet-connected devices. These devices range from gaming consoles, to tablets, to mobile phones. When Hulu and Netflix began producing their own original series, they released them within eight days of each other. Netflix dropped all eight episodes of *Lilyhammer* on February 6, 2012 and Hulu debuted *Battleground* on February 14. Hulu decided to release their series once a week in a nod to traditional television. These release strategies highlight how consumers use each service. People tend to use Netflix to catch up on past seasons of television while using Hulu to keep up with current programming.¹⁵

The Oxford Dictionary defines “binge-watch” as an informal verb: “Watch multiple episodes of (a television program) in rapid succession, typically by means of DVDs or digital streaming.”¹⁶ In December of 2013, a

Harris Interactive poll conducted on behalf of Netflix found that seventy-three percent of binge-watchers feel positive about the experience.¹⁷ I decided to take the Netflix approach by releasing all of my episodes at the same time, to embrace the new medium of streaming video as well as to encourage binge-watching. Since my episodes range from around six to nineteen minutes, it is likely that my audience will be able to watch the two episodes plus the trailer in one sitting.

Chapter 5: Webisodes

In 1995, predating YouTube, Hulu, and Netflix, Prophecy Entertainment produced the first hit web series. *The Spot* was an episodic soap opera created by Scott Zakarin.¹⁸ Not only was this video shot and viewed online, each character had their own web page that included text, photos, and other short videos. This was long before blogging became a popular practice.

Zakarin was a visionary on this front. He saw the interactivity of the Internet as the main tool that would make his web series more effective than if it were on TV. In an interview with *The Record* in 1996, Zakarin states “If you want to yell at your TV set because Heather Locklear is going to sleep with the wrong guy on *Melrose Place*, she’s not going to listen, but if you say, Tara [a lead on *The Spot*], don’t do that, she just might listen.”¹⁹ I used this as a model for a successful multi-platform web series with character and actor bios, information on the shooting location, and sketches of storyboards. The website turns into an interactive space that is a destination in and of itself, and not just purely a site to watch *Clocked Out*.

Zakarin’s insight of interactivity led NBC to sign a deal with Scott and his partner, Troy Bolotnick to script a new TV pilot and web series. When news of the deal got out, heaps of copycats jumped into the online series platform. They would use *The Spot* as a model for both premise and format. To the creators of these new webisodes, the Internet represented a cheaper

and more viable option to television. By the middle of 1996, there were an estimated sixty cybersoaps online. The limitations of the medium at that time were, most notably, technology, hardware, and software. Users lacked quick processors and Internet speeds. Broadband accessibility was very limited and the combination of all of this led to the demise of the early episodic web series. In today's high-speed internet and wireless-ready environment, web series are actually more accessible than television shows.

With the invention of the software Macromedia Flash in late 1996, the focus of online video shifted to animation. Animations played much better on slower Internet connections and so, in the early 2000s, Macromedia capitalized on the realization and created an online network at Shockwave.com. They recruited a few popular animators to create content before it was launched. Many smaller media companies were using animation as its new form of entertainment. Firms like Mediatrip.com and Icebox.com were creating episodic animation series that were gaining the attention of networks and advertisers alike. A notable example is the Showtime network purchased Icebox's series *Starship Regulars*. Networks have shown an interest in niche web series from the beginning.

With the advent of YouTube in 2004 traditional video arrived back on the scene. Anyone with a video camera could upload anything on the site for anyone to see. This provided a valuable medium for artists just looking for an audience. Some of the early popular series were video blog inspired. In 2006, a fictional video blog called *LonelyGirl15* attracted millions of views and a

huge following.

In 2007 digital studios that were attached to large media corporations began to emerge. Sony bought a website that collected and organized online video content from other sources and renamed it Crackle.com. They used it to air shows from their current library as well as to create and distribute original content. It was also the year that Will Ferrell launched the website FunnyOrDie.com which featured short comic video skits.²⁰

2007 also marked the first time a major network, ABC, made it possible to play full episodes of their shows on their website. In 2008 the Writers Guild of America went on strike over residual payments related to online content. This led to the arrival of two of the biggest web series to date, *Quarterlife* and *Dr. Horrible's Sing-A-Long Blog*.

Quarterlife was a series released on MyspaceTV.com by creators Marshall Herskovitz and Edward Zwick. Herskovitz and Zwick also created the hit television shows *My So-Called Life* and *Thirtysomething*. On Myspace, the series was a huge success, gaining the attention of ten million viewers over its thirty-six episode run. "This was one of the first times the Internet proved itself capable of bringing in a sizeable audience for a scripted series."²¹

NBC immediately bought the broadcast rights to the series and aired an episode on a Tuesday at 10pm. It only drew 3.1 million viewers, the lowest performance for that time slot in seventeen years. It flopped and no new episodes were taped. One of the reasons that *Quarterlife* did not successfully transition to television was the main character, Dylan, was always present.

The audience was constantly seeing her perspective. “This is very different from the first-person perspective that traditional television provides.”²² There are a lot of shots of Dylan recording her video blog, and in these shots the audience is able to watch her edit and delete content. Television audiences may see this as a rough cut or an unfinished project. To avoid these pitfalls, *Clocked Out* was shot in first person using clean and traditional editing techniques.

“One of the most challenging features of a webisode is its short lifespan. As difficult as it is to gain visitors to a web site and have them take the time to view a webisode, it proves even more challenging to have them return for repeat viewing,” argues Meghan Pierce about the troubles of the web series.²³ This is another reason I uploaded all three videos at once, to captivate the audience with just one visit to the site.

Chapter 6: Proposed Methodology

Early August 2015: Tighten up the scripts.

I will be working this summer to make the six episodes that I have written over the past three months a more solid and professional piece of work.

Late August 2015: Secure my shooting location.

The entire season is set in one bar where the coworkers go every week. I have a location in mind, a dive bar in Highlandtown called The Laughing Pint. I've done some research and found that they are closed on Sundays. I will approach the owner to get permission and I plan on completing all shooting on Sundays. If this location falls through, I know the owners of two other local bars, The Dizz and Rocket to Venus.

Early September 2015: Storyboard sketches.

Mid September 2015: Poster sessions.

Late September 2015: Secure my crew.

My wife, Sue Pefferly, is a video editor in the media department at Laureate Education. Her department is made up of Producers, Production Coordinators, and other editors. They all have on-set experience and a few

have volunteered to help me behind the scenes. I also have a friend, Rachel Dwiggins who is a Predator (Producer/Editor) at National Geographic. She also acts in some Baltimore-based theatre troops and has affiliation with Fluid Movement, a local performance art organization. Rachel has contacts that will help both in front of and behind the camera. From Lighting and Camera Operation, to Sound and Script Supervision, I will need a crew of about seven people.

Early October 2015: Secure equipment needed for the shoot.

I'm envisioning a three-camera operation. Myself, Rachel, and another friend Justin Jackson will be shooting with our professional grade DSLRs. I have a tripod and dolly and will make sure my other two camera operators have access as well. Rachel has a professional quality boom mic and a digital recorder that can record 4 tracks. Anything I cannot borrow from friends, I will check out from the UB Media Lab, including lights and lavs. I may also need to purchase or borrow some steady cams. One scene requires a Hummer type vehicle. I will have to borrow or rent a vehicle for this scene.

Late October 2015: Secure a cast.

With the help of Rachel, who has connections with actors in Baltimore, as well as an open casting call that I will spearhead on the social media sites Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The script has a total of 11 characters. I will be looking for professional actors for these 11 roles and I will need a few

extras also. I will be counting on friends and family for extras.

November 2015: Begin shooting.

I will shoot the pilot episode, which is around nineteen minutes, on the first Sunday. It should take two more Sundays to shoot the remaining episodes.

November 2015: Create social network.

I will create accounts on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram for Clocked Out. Using content taken during casting and shooting, I will try to gain followers and the beginnings of an audience.

Late December 2015: Begin editing.

I will be editing using Final Cut Pro X. I will also be creating graphics for titles and the opening credits using Adobe After Effects. During editing, I will begin thinking about music selections.

Late January 2016: Secure music.

I have a few friends who are in bands that I'm going to ask to let me use a previous recording or have them record something specific for an episode. I will also be looking into royalty free music options.

Mid February 2016: Begin designing and creating the website.

I will be using a WordPress site with a customized theme to host the series. Figuring out what content will be on the site, besides the video, will be an ongoing process that will become more apparent with every phase of the project.

Late March 2016: Make the website live.

Once live, I will begin pushing the site and series out through social media channels and also create accounts on Vimeo and YouTube and post the series there.

April 2016: Distribution and Marketing.

I found a website called webserieschannel.com that hosts a ton of current web series. There are highlighted sections for editor's picks and promoted videos where my series might fit perfectly. Another avenue of exposure that I will explore is BMore Art, a Baltimore based art blog, written by Cara Ober. Cara is a high school friend that has shown interest in my series.²⁴

Late April 2016: Submit Thesis to committee for approval/comments.

May 2016: Defend Thesis.

June 2016: Sell series to HBO or Netflix ;)

Chapter 7: Proposed vs. Actual Timeline

Things didn't quite work out as planned. The green check marks show where I reached my goal on time, the red x's demonstrate a miscalculation.

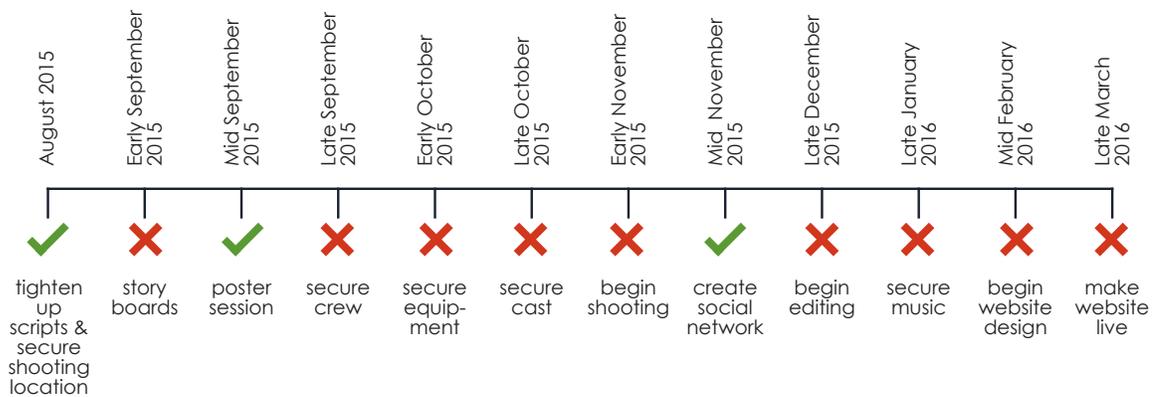


Figure 1. Comparison of proposed vs. actual timeline

Chapter 8: Actual Timeline

Secure Location

My actual timeline went something like this. I was able to secure the shooting location in August of 2015. I met with Shannon Cassidy, owner of The Lauging Pint, a bar in Highlandtown in the middle of August. She's an artist and was very open to the idea of me shooting in her bar. Luck would have it that the bar is closed on Sundays, so I was given permission to shoot any Sunday. Shannon had an employee that lived down the block from the bar that let us in when we arrived and locked up when we wrapped.

Tighten Up Scripts

The script wasn't completely finished until October. I spent a few months going back and forth with Peter and a friend Kevin VonRinteln agreed to read it and give me feedback. All of that was very helpful as I didn't want to start shooting until the script was final.

Create Social Network

That's when I began recruiting. The first step was to create a social network, so I started a Facebook and Instagram account to try to reach friends and friends of friends who might be interested in cast or crew.

Secure Crew

I was able to secure my crew in November of 2015. My wife volunteered to be my script supervisor, I had two friends volunteer to be my second camera operator, rotating available days. A stranger responded to my Craigslist post to help behind the scenes and ended up working lighting and the boom mic. My nephew was also gracious enough to help me one day with the recording sound.

Character Bios

I realized when I started getting responses to the casting calls that I would need to create Character Bio's to send the actors. This would help them get a feel for the roles that needed filling. I finished those in time for my first audition date and included them on ClockedOutWebSeries.com.

Secure Cast

I needed to cast eleven actors and wasn't having much luck with Facebook and Instagram, so I had to research other outlets. I posted on Craigslist and three audition sites, mandy.com, auditionsfree.com, and starnow.com. I began getting some feedback and volunteers. I then had to figure out where to hold auditions. A friend of mine own's the local bar/restaurant Rocket to Venus. He allowed me to use the upstairs which they rent out for private parties on November 14. I spent all day there and had eighteen appointments set up in 30 minute increments. Nine of those people

appointments were no shows. I extended casting and decided to do the remaining auditions using Skype and Facetime. Casting the eleven actors was complete early December 2015 and I scheduled my first shoot date of December 13. (see Appendix A)

Secure Equipment

I ended up shooting using handheld DSLRs, so I had to purchase two shoulder rigs. I borrowed a lighting kit from the University of Baltimore Media Lab and purchased equipment from Home Depot and Ikea to make my own Lighting Kit. I ended up using the homemade kit because it proved more effective and user friendly than the Media Lab's equipment. I borrowed lighting stands from my previous employer to mount the new lighting kit. One of the camera operators, Rachel Dwiggin, allowed me to use her Canon 5D and I borrowed a Nikon D800 from my previous employer. Rachel also allowed me to use her boom mic and digital sound recorder.

Storyboards & Shot List

After I finished casting and secured the first shoot date, I sketched out storyboards of the entire season with rough text to guide me through days of shooting. I also created shoot lists of every episode. This proved more time consuming than I thought. These were complete the night before the first shoot date.

Filming

Shooting proved to be the most time consuming process. I was finally ready to begin and the first shoot day was scheduled for December 13, 2015. I began creating a shoot schedule for which scenes I wanted to shoot. I woke up early that morning to prepare and I had an e-mail from one of my actors.

His daughter got in a car accident and was in the hospital. He couldn't make the shoot. I had to quickly figure out what to do. I decided to rearrange the shoot schedule and shoot scenes that the actor was not featured.

I arrived on location at 10am with my wife to prepare lighting, move furniture, and setup for the first scene. Cast and crew started showing up at noon for pizza and a meet and greet. At 1pm, we began shooting. The set was crowded, there were about fifteen of us in this narrow bar.

By 4pm, we had just finished shooting the first scene and I realized that this was going to take a lot longer than I expected.

I had not anticipated the need for shooting each scene multiple times and the time it would take to move lighting for reverse angles. Scenes needed to be ran through multiple times to get close-ups of important lines, reshot if an actor messed up a line. At the end of the first day, the cast and crew were amazing, but I realized that I had underestimated the time it would take to shoot six episodes.

After shooting on the first day, December 13, I was hoping that everyone could make it back the following week for the second day of shooting. The holidays got in the way and actors were unavailable.

The next day that everyone could make was January 20, 2016. We got a snowstorm that day so I had to reschedule again to January 31.

I realized I didn't need all actors on set all day, so I planned accordingly and told actors what time we'd need them, and let actors go home when we were finished. That day went a lot smoother, but still was very slow.

It was shortly after the second day of shooting that my committee and I decided that shooting all 6 episodes would be nearly impossible. So we made it a priority to finish episode 1 and get as much as 2 and 3 as possible.

During the first day of shooting, I shot scenes in episodes 1, 3, and 6. So, the third day of shooting, which couldn't get scheduled for another month, February 21, I focused on shooting everything we needed for episodes 1 and 2.

At the last minute, two more actors backed out of shooting on February 21, one moved to Atlanta, and one had to attend a funeral. I was able to shoot around one, but had to recast the other. Luckily, a friend of mine who was perfect for the role, had an open schedule that day.

So I contacted all actors and told them I planned on finishing episodes 1 and 2 and to bring the wardrobe needed. I asked if anyone needed screenshots for reference. A couple of them did, most didn't.

So on February 21 when we finished shooting all scenes from episode 1, I asked the actors to change into wardrobe for episode 2. One of my actors spoke up to say she forgot to bring it. Unfortunately, she lived in Virginia and we didn't have time for her to go pick it up. That was a wrap. I ended up being able to salvage footage from the first day of shooting to compile what

was needed to finish episodes 1 and 2 with a few “next on” scenes composed at the end. (see Appendix B)

Editing (Syncing & Color Correction)

Because shooting took so long, I wasn’t able to begin editing until March, 2016. In between shoots, I ingested the footage and began syncing the two cameras with the audio. I was finished syncing and then began the edits.

During editing, I researched how other sitcoms handled cuts between two scenes in the same location. I studied *Arrested Development*, *The Office*, and *It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia*.²⁵ I decided to go with a cut to black, then a lead in establishing shot with leading audio of characters speaking before cutting to the video of those characters.

In order to cut the trailer, I had to create the message I wanted to convey. I wrote a script and had a friend record some voiceover for me. I created two versions and it was suggested to compile the two and switch up some music. You’ve seen the trailer already.

During editing, I realized the opening sequence I planned for would require some After Effects work. I would also need to color correct the footage to look more like nighttime in a bar.

Secure Music

The last part of my editing was to secure the music. Originally, I planned on having a friend create an entire score for both episodes. What ended up happening was he gave me his back catalogue of the bands he's been in over the past ten years and I chose what I wanted from that. He was able to roughly record two theme songs which I hope to remix and remaster in the near future.

Build Website

Final edits were complete in September 2016 and I began designing and building the website. Originally, I proposed buying and customizing a Wordpress theme, but to save money, I built a responsive site using Twitter's Bootstrap framework.

Clockedoutwebseries.com is a single, scrolling page and uses the trailer as the lead-in attention grabber. Below are the two episodes, displayed using the industry-standard format for video episodes (a thumbnail on the left and the title/description on the right). The committee and I decided to highlight my biography as the creator, and the cast biographies with headshots with the intention of helping them find more acting work. I also added the character biographies to give the audience a more complete experience.

I also featured a small write-up on the shooting location to show appreciation to Shannon at The Laughing Pint for allowing me film there.

I designed the site using a color palette taken from the footage. The Laughing Pint has blue walls and cream tile floors, so I used those colors to compliment the color in the videos.

The trailer is hosted on my server and Episodes 1 and 2 are embedded from Vimeo.

Chapter 9: Lessons Learned

I learned a lot throughout the thesis project process. I learned about all of the different avenues producers can find actors and crew members, such as mandy.com, freeauditions.com, and starnow.com.

I learned that you shouldn't hold casting calls at your house with complete strangers. You're going to want to find a public venue or complete auditions virtually, through Skype or Facetime.

I learned that unpaid cast and crew are unreliable.

And I learned when in doubt, get everyone to sign a release form. All cast and crew signed talent and consent releases as well as confidentiality contracts. The owner of Laughing Pint signed a Location Release and the artists with work hanging on the wall signed an art consent form (see Appendix C).

I learned that if you're going to shoot in a bar, you're going to need prop beer, wine, and liquor. The reason that The Laughing Pint is not open on Sundays is their liquor license does not cover that. Because of that, I was not allowed to distribute alcohol on set. It was fortunate also, because I'm sure having a sober cast and crew was a blessing.

I learned that locations can redecorate, especially when filming over a three month period. When I wrote *Clocked Out*, The Laughing Pint had a Ms. PacMan machine that I incorporated into a few scenes. When I arrived to

secure the location, the machine was no longer there. The Laughing Pint had redecorated and removed Ms. PacMan. I began searching for rental machines or possibly just a shell of the game to buy or rent. After a few months of searching, the committee and I decided simply to move those scenes to center around the shuffleboard table.

I learned problems can arise from almost anywhere. On set, it was truly Murphy's Law. For instance, during shooting, I realized that there was a bunch of artwork on the walls at bar. I found out that I would need to get permission from the artists to show their work in my videos. I had to then research what documents to use and get in touch with all of the artists to sign release forms.

I learned that coordinating fifteen people is difficult and something that I would prefer never doing again. I do not want to be a producer. The next script I write will have a maximum of around four characters.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

During the editing phase of this project, I realized things that I probably would have noticed if I wasn't a camera operator. Next time, I'd like to have two camera operators so I can be the director and pay closer attention what's actually happening on the scene as opposed to just worrying about framing. I also have become aware of the time that it takes to film a fictional scene. Before I started, I thought I could film six episodes, which would have been one hour of footage in four full days. This is an average of fifteen minutes per day. I ended up shooting two episodes, which spanned twenty-four minutes. That took three full days, which is an average of eight minutes a day. So with that logic it would take an hour to film one minute of a final product.

I'm very thankful to everyone that helped me in this journey. Thanks to my committee members, who guided me through *Clocked Out* from start to finish. Thanks to the actors and the crew, who volunteered their talents on three Sundays, over the past year and a half, for cheap pizza and soda. Thanks to my family and friends for being so supportive. I'm very proud of the work I have accomplished. It's been a long time in the making, but it was well worth every little step.

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<http://www.webserieschannel.com>

KEYWORDS:

Happy Hour

Sitcom

Streaming

Television

Web Series / Webisodes

Workplace Relationships

Appendix A: Cast Headshots



Appendix B: Behind The Scenes Photos



Appendix C: Release Forms

Confidentiality & Nondisclosure Agreement

This Agreement is made on the date indicated below, by and between Eric J Minor ("Company") and the undersigned ("Recipient") in order to prevent the unauthorized disclosure of Confidential Information, as defined below, regarding a film production by Company presently entitled Clocked Out ("Project").

1. The Purpose. The Company and The Recipient wish to explore a potential business relationship in connection with which the Company may disclose its Confidential Information to the Recipient, ("Relationship").

2. Definition of Confidential Information. Confidential Information means any information disclosed by the Company and/or those individuals or organizations working in collaboration with the Company, whether written, electronic or oral, that relates or refers directly or indirectly, to the Project including the script itself. Confidential Information does not include information; (i) prior to or after the time of disclosure becomes part of the public knowledge or literature other than as a result of any improper inaction or action of the Recipient or, (ii) is approved by the Company, in writing, for release.

3. Nondisclosure of Confidential Information. The Recipient agrees not to use any Confidential Information disclosed to it by the Company for its own use or for any purpose other than to carry out discussions concerning the undertaking of the Relationship. The Recipient will not disclose any Confidential Information of the Company to parties outside the Relationship or to employees of the Recipient other than employees or agents under appropriate burden of confidentiality and who are required to have the information in order to carry out the discussions regarding the Relationship. The Recipient agrees that it will take all reasonable measures to protect the secrecy of and avoid disclosure or use of Confidential Information of the Company to include the highest degree of care that Recipient utilizes to protect its own Confidential Information of a similar nature.

4. Return of Materials. Any materials or documents that have been furnished by the Company to the Recipient in connection with the Relationship will be promptly returned by the Recipient, accompanied by all copies of such documentation or certification of destruction, within (10) days after (I) the Relationship has been terminated or (ii) the written request of the Company.

5. Copyright Infringement. Nothing in this agreement is intended to grant any rights or licenses to the Recipient with regard to any and all of the Company's copyrights in the Project.

6. Term. The forgoing commitments of each party shall survive any termination of the Relationship between the parties for a period of three years after application of Section 4 above.

7. No Guarantees. This Agreement in no way guarantees, or suggests, that the undersigned will be employed or compensated for time or expenses as it pertains to the development and evaluation of the Project. If Company resolves to employ or compensate the Recipient, other contractual instruments will apply.

8. Miscellaneous. This agreement shall be binding upon and for the benefits of the parties, and their successors and assigns, provided that Confidential Information of the Company may not be assigned without the prior written consent of the Company. Failure to enforce any provision of this Agreement shall not constitute a waiver of any term hereof and if any provision of this Agreement is held to be invalid or unenforceable for any reason, the remaining provisions shall continue to be valid and enforceable. This Agreement is the complete understanding of the parties and any amendment must be in a writing signed by the parties. This agreement shall be governed by and enforced in accordance with the laws of the State of _____. The Recipient agrees that any violation or threatened violation will cause irreparable injury, both financial and strategic, to the Company and in addition to any and all remedies that may be available, in law, equity, or otherwise, the Company shall be entitled to injunctive relief against the threatened breach of this Agreement by the Recipient without the necessity of proving actual damages.

Executed by Recipient this ___ day of _____, 20__

Signature: _____

Print Name: _____

Print Title and/or Occupation: _____

Appendix C: Release Forms

MATERIALS RELEASE FORM

1. For good and valuable consideration the receipt and adequacy of which is hereby acknowledged, the undersigned (I, me, my) agree to furnish the materials described below (collectively "Material") intended to be incorporated in and used in connection with a motion picture ("Film") being produced by **Eric J Minor** ("Filmmaker") on or about **January 10, 2016** (the "Project").

The description of the Material is as follows: **Artwork Hanging in The Laughing Pint, 3531 Gough Street, Baltimore, MD 21224.**

2. I hereby irrevocably grant to Filmmaker ("Producer") the right to incorporate the Material, and any portions or images contained therein, in whole or in part in the Film in any manner at Producer's sole discretion, and to use and exploit the Material (as incorporated in the Film) in all media, versions and forms, whether now known or hereafter devised, in all languages, throughout the universe, in perpetuity, including, without limitation, television, the Internet, DVD, books, merchandise and all ancillary exploitation, and in any advertising, publicity or promotion for the Film, or the Project. Producer has the right to alter or modify the Material in any manner, at its sole discretion. Producer shall accord me credit in the Film and/or otherwise for such use.

3. I represent that I have the right to grant to Producer the right to use the Material without the necessity of obtaining the consent of any third person or entity, and that the Material does not infringe the copyright or violate any right of publicity, privacy or any other right of any person or entity. Nothing herein requires Producer to use the Material. I agree to indemnify and hold harmless Producer and any person claiming under Producer, and the officers, directors, shareholders, employees, agents and representatives thereof, from and against any liabilities, losses, claims, demands, costs (including, without limitation, reasonable attorneys' fees) and expenses arising in connection with any breach or alleged breach by me of any above representations or agreements. I hereby agree not to assert any claim of any nature whatsoever against anyone relating to the exercise of the permissions granted hereunder. I acknowledge that, in the event of any breach by Producer or any third party, the damage, if any, caused me thereby will not be irreparable or otherwise sufficient to entitle me to seek injunctive or other equitable relief. I acknowledge that my rights and remedies, if any, in any such event will be strictly limited to the right, if any, to recover compensatory monetary (but not punitive or consequential) damages in an action at law, and I will have neither the right to rescind or terminate this Agreement or any of Producer's or its licensees' or assigns' rights hereunder, nor the right to enjoin the production, exhibition or other exploitation of the Film or any subsidiary or allied rights with respect thereto, nor will I have the right to terminate my obligations hereunder by reason of such breach.

4. I agree to timely execute and deliver (or to procure the timely execution and delivery to Producer of) any additional documents which Producer may require to evidence its rights. I hereby appoint Producer, or its nominee, as my irrevocable attorney-in-fact, with the right, but not the obligation, to prepare or complete any such documents and to execute the same in my name, or to obtain execution thereof by others.

5. In addition to any of its other rights or remedies, Producer will be entitled to seek injunctive relief in the event of any breach of my representations, warranties and agreements hereunder. Producer shall have the right to freely assign and license this agreement and all or a portion of its rights and remedies hereunder, without my consent. This Agreement will inure to the benefit of and will be binding upon the parties' respective affiliates, successors, licensees, assigns, heirs and representatives. This Agreement constitutes the entire understanding and agreement of the parties hereto with respect to the subject matter hereof and cannot be amended except by a written instrument signed by the parties hereto.

6. I give Producer the foregoing grant of rights with the full knowledge and understanding that Producer may incur substantial expense in reliance thereon. Producer may at any time elect not to use the Materials, in which case neither party will have any obligation to the other hereunder.

Materials Release Form Agreed and Accepted:

Name: _____
 Signature: _____
 Date: _____
 Phone: _____
 Address: _____
 Email: _____

Appendix C: Release Forms

Casting Call Release Form

PARTICIPANT'S NAME:

TENTATIVE FILM TITLE (Hereinafter referred to as the "Production"): **Clocked Out**
 Producer(s) (Hereinafter referred to as "Producer(s)": **Eric Minor**

I have voluntarily agreed to be filmed or videotaped in connection with my interest in being potentially considered to participate on the Production. I agree that the Production may be broadcast and/or distributed without limitation through any means and I shall not receive any compensation for my participation. I also understand that the Production's title listed above is tentative and can change without releasing me from the terms of this contract.

I grant the Producer(s) the irrevocable and unrestricted right of use of my name, likeness, image(s), voice, and biographical material produced via my participation in the Production. Producer(s) may exhibit, advertise, promote, and otherwise exploit Production or any portion thereof in any medium, whether or not such uses contain audio and/or the visual reproduction of myself and whether I am identifiable or unidentifiable. I understand that the Producer(s) has the right to use the materials created for the Production in any way he/she chooses and I have no right to inspect or approve those materials.

I further agree that my participation in the Production confers upon me no rights of use, ownership, or copyright. I understand that all materials and intellectual properties produced in association with my participation become properties of the Producer(s). I release the Producer(s), their employees, individuals assisting with the Production, agents, assigns, and/or third parties associated with filming locations from all liability which may arise from any and/or all claims by me or any third party in connection with my participation in the Production. I agree to pay for damages to any and all items, property, and/or equipment related to the Production that results from my negligent and/or reckless behavior.

It is understood that the Producer(s) are under no obligation to broadcast or distribute the Production. I give the right to the Producer(s) to assign all terms stated in this contract. I also understand that by agreeing to the terms of this contract, I am not guaranteed participation in this Production.

I expressly understand that Producers are under no obligation to select me for participation in the Production or to select me for advancement to any level of consideration for participation in the Production. In the event that Producers do further consider me for participation in the Production, I understand that I will be required to sign all of Producers standard application and agreements in connection with such consideration.

This agreement expresses the entire understanding between me and the Producers and replaces any and all former and contemporaneous agreements, understandings or representations between me and the Producers. Any laws that require or suggest that the interpretation of a document or agreement, or the resolution of any ambiguities contained therein, should be resolved against the drafter of the document or agreement, are hereby waived. No modification, alteration or amendment of this agreement will be valid or binding unless in writing and signed by both me and the Producers. No waiver by the Producers of any term or condition of this agreement will be construed as a waiver by the Producers of any other term or condition; nor will any waiver by the Producers of any default under this agreement be construed as a waiver by the Producers of any other default. The Producers may freely assign, in whole or in part, any of their rights or obligations under this agreement. I may not assign my rights and obligations under this agreement.

I, _____, agree to and sign this on the 14th day of November, 2015.

_____/_____/_____
 Participant's Signature / Street Address / City, State, Zip

_____/_____/_____
 Home Phone Number / Emergency Phone Number / Date of Birth

Please bring a valid driver's license or photo ID when returning this agreement. For any questions/concerns regarding this contract or the production, please call or email one of the producers listed above.

Appendix C: Release Forms

Film Project Location Release

DATE:

NAME:

ADDRESS OF PROPERTY: The Laughing Pint, 3531 Gough Street, Baltimore, MD 21224

Owner hereby grants to Eric J Minor ("Producer") and their respective subsidiaries and affiliates, licensees, successors and assigns (collectively "the Released Parties"), for good and valuable consideration, receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, permission to access, enter upon and use the Property identified above and the contents thereof and the appurtenances thereto (the "Property") for the purpose of photographing and recording certain scenes in connection in and in connection with a motion picture ("Film") being produced by Eric J Minor ("Producer"), as well as in connection with any "behind the scenes" recordings taped, filmed, recorded and/or otherwise produced.

All physical embodiments of filming, recording and photography on the Property shall hereinafter be known as the "Materials". Producer may place all necessary facilities and equipment on the Property and agree to remove same after completion of work and leave the property in as good of condition as when received. Producer will use reasonable care to prevent damage to said Property. Owner irrevocably grants to Producer all rights of every kind in and to the Materials including without limitation the right to exploit the Materials throughout the world, in any and all languages, an unlimited number of times, in perpetuity in any and all media, now known or hereafter invented, in and in connection with the Film and/or the Documentary Footage, and for advertising and promotional purposes in connection therewith and all rights, including copyright in the Materials shall be and remain vested in Producer.

In no manner limiting the foregoing, Producer shall have the perpetual right to edit, dub, subtract from, add to or modify the Materials in any manner, combine the Materials with any other material and/or incorporate it into other Film and/or the Documentary Footage(s).

Owner's signature hereon subsequent to the production of the Materials shall have the same effect as if Owner had signed in advance thereof. Owner hereby waives any right of inspection or approval of the appearance of the Property in the Materials, and the uses to which such appearance and/or the Materials may be put. Owner acknowledges that Producer will rely on this permission and this Release potentially at substantial cost to them and Owner hereby agrees that neither Owner, nor any tenant, nor other party now or hereafter having an interest in the Property (collectively "Releasing Parties"), shall have any right of action against the Released Parties or any of them or any other party arising out of the production (including without limitation trespass to real or personal property and/or invasion of privacy) or any use of said Materials whether or not such use is, or may be claimed to be, defamatory, untrue or censorable in nature.

In no manner limiting the foregoing, none of the Releasing Parties will be entitled to equitable or injunctive relief in conjunction with any claim or action of any kind against the Released Parties or any of them. The undersigned represents and warrants that the undersigned has all rights and authority to enter into this agreement and to grant the rights granted hereunder. No other authorization is necessary to enable Producer to use the Property for the purposes herein contemplated.

Producer is not obligated to actually use the Property or produce the Film and/or the Documentary Footage or include the Materials in the Film and/or the Documentary Footage for which it was shot or otherwise.

This is the entire agreement. This release shall bind Owner and Owner's personal representatives and/or executors. This release shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the state of Maryland.

Agreed and Accepted:

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Phone:

Email:

Address (if different than above):

Appendix C: Release Forms

TALENT CONSENT AND RELEASE FORM

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Eric J Minor

LOCATION

The Laughing Pint

PROJECT TITLE

Clocked Out Web Series

3531 Gough St

Baltimore, MD 21224

I have participated as indicated on the above motion picture (the "Picture"). In consideration of my appearance in the Picture, and without any further consideration from you, I hereby grant permission to you to utilize my appearance in connection with the Picture in any and all manner and media and all rights of every kind and character whatsoever in perpetuity in and to my performance, appearance, name and/or voice and the results and proceeds thereof (the "Performance") in connection with the Picture, and I hereby authorize Production Company to photograph and record (on film, digital, video, tape, or otherwise), the Performance; to edit same at its discretion and to include it with the performance of others and with sound effects, special effects and music; to incorporate same into the Picture or other program or not; to use and to license others to use such recordings and photographs in any manner or media whatsoever, including without limitation unrestricted use for purposes of publicity, advertising and sales promotion; and to use my name, likeness, voice, biographic or other information concerning me in connection with the Picture, commercial tie-ups, merchandising, and for any other purpose. I further acknowledge that Production Company owns all rights to the results and proceeds of my services rendered in connection herewith.

I agree that my participation in the Picture may be edited in your sole discretion. I consent to use of my name, likeness, voice and biographical material about me in connection with Picture publicity and related institutional promotional purposes. I expressly release you, your agents, employees, licensees and assigns from and against any and all claims which I have or may have for invasion of privacy, defamation or any other cause of action arising out of production, distribution, broadcast or exhibition of the Picture.

Talent Signature

Print name

Phone

Date

IF TALENT IS UNDER 18:

I represent that I am a parent (guardian) of the minor who has signed the above release and I hereby agree that we shall both be bound thereby.

Signature

Print name

Date