

ACKERMANS

DIRECTOR'S TREATMENT FOR "LIFE SHOULD BE ABOUT" BY xxx

DIRECTOR'S INSIGHT

This is a feel-good commercial made up of a number of vignettes that each tell a simple but upbeat story. It has a fun, slightly nostalgic tone; a sense of reality with a touch of zaniness. The choice of titles or descriptions provide a humorous element that links normal, everyday and slightly quirky behaviour of the children with comments that are typically associated with an adult's day, making the viewer yearn for the carefree nature of childhood. The children are happy and healthy and fully engaged in their various activities without being aware of the camera - they are just doing what comes naturally.

The intention is to give the commercial a fresh, unpretentious feel that appeals to a broad economic group - appealing to a range of ages and races. I intend to shoot it using clean, natural lighting and long lenses on a lightly handheld camera, which helps to create the feeling of being "in the moment" - as if the camera just happens to be there, capturing authentic, unstaged moments.

Of course each of the scenarios are there to showcase Ackermans' range of clothing - the comfort of movement, the fun and quirky colours and styles that appeal to this wide range of children.



FILMING TECHNIQUE

My intention is to create an environment that seems real and intimate to the viewer. There should appear to be genuine interactions between the various children, their toys and friends and the camera just happens to be there to capture the moment. So the impression that is created is that these are real rooms, spaces or environments. Their surroundings are important in setting the scene that these are authentic spaces. While I don't plan on focusing on these surroundings, they need to be there to establish the honesty of the commercial.

The look that I'd like to achieve is based predominantly on using long lenses, which help to create a strong sense of honesty and intimacy with the various characters. It enables us to create a sense that the viewer is right there, within the scene. It also means that the other elements of the room are not that obvious nor specific, and allows us instead to focus completely on this single moment in time. In this way, I'll be able to frame the individual shots in interesting ways and create some unusual angles. The idea is to create a look and feel where life is real and not captured straight on, providing the end result with a truly candid observational quality. This sense can be enhanced by including some lightly handheld shots, as well as focus pulls.



LIGHTING AND GRADE

I would like to achieve a look that creates the sense of beautiful, natural light, both indoors and outdoors. For the inside sequences I'd like to create scenes as if the room has been lit by the bright glow of (indirect) sunlight streaming through the windows. This soft, diffused light appears completely natural and light. The overall effect is of a 'soft naturalism', which supplements the emotional tone of the moment.

For the outside scenes I'd like to incorporate soft lens flares and gorgeous golden lighting, filming at the time of day when the light is not too bright and harsh.





SITUATION SETTINGS

My intention is to shoot the commercial in real home and outdoor environments, with an almost documentary sensibility in the staging of the scenes. I imagine the characters unposed, more or less just going about their usual business, while the title or voice over create the humour and tell the story. Our characters appear to not even be aware of the camera. I'll be going for a very candid, in-the-moment feel, and a picture that constantly surprises, delights or amuses.

PERFORMANCE

In this spot it is really important to capture the 'moments' that are real and show a true portrayal of the fun, laughter and activities that the children are engaged in. In this way we'll capture a fleeting smile or an uncontrollable laugh, the moments when they run with enthusiasm, lick an ice cream whole heartedly, hug a friend with all their might. I want the viewer to feel that they are privy to a private moment and feel privileged to be allowed in. I want it to appear as if their actions and expressions are entirely products of their own imaginations and thought processes rather than something that they've practiced. I use a particular method of achieving this kind of on-camera spontaneity, whereby I sit just out of frame and work directly with the children, patiently building up their performances through a playful kind of mimicking game. I keep adjusting according to their responses, keeping the process light, fresh and interesting - which invariably translates directly into light, fresh and interesting performances. Of course, the older teens might not need as much coaching, but it is still essential to ensure that they don't 'overact'. I want their performances to appear as real, fresh and intuitive as those of the younger children.



LIFE IS ALL ABOUT

This storyboard focuses on life's little moments. Moments that in the greater scheme of things may not be that important. But these moments are what memories are made of. When a young child scribbled on the wall. Remembering hot summer days running through the sprinkler. Eating an ice cream cone that almost seems bigger than the kid. And of course, as they become teens, to look at the things that they think are cool - connecting with their friends, practicing a new skate board trick, being part of a crowd.

All these individual scenes are overlaid with a title or explanation. And these few words for each scene add a layer of humour and fun. The majority of the titles that have been picked seem to come from a very busy, adult world. "Kick starting your day" - normally with coffee. "Bringing your A game" - at the office. "Picking your battles" - regarding disciplining of children. "Being the better man" - during office politics. These phrases, with their adult connotations, bring the youthfulness and innocence of children into sharp focus. Almost making us reconsider our own very busy lives. The contrast is very appealing. I think therefore that it's important to keep the theme consistent throughout the commercial and there are a few areas where I would like to suggest some alternatives to make the language and theme make sense throughout the ad, but also make the scene even more amusing in contrast to the words. Of course, I'd be happy to discuss any of these ideas to adapt them as you see fit.

The final thing I'd like to mention with this concept is that I believe it would work better with a voice over than with titles - there are so many scenarios and so much to look at that I think hearing the title or the idea being spoken is much easier to take in as a viewer rather than having to read each title on screen as the scenarios progress.



KICK STARTING YOUR DAY

I think it would be great to start with “kick starting your day” rather than “power naps” as it seems to be a more positive concept and gets the commercial off to a more logical start. Especially with babies I like to make use of macro shots to emphasise individual body parts, in this case the plump, kicking little legs. I think it would be great to either make use of a strong depth of field so that the rest of the baby’s body and head is out of focus, or to only include the little legs and feet in the shot, showing the cycling activity.

FOOD FIGHTS

Here I would like to use a child who is actually capable of feeding him- or herself, giving him/her something relatively messy (and that they like) to eat and film the end result. I'd like to focus on those tiny hands grabbing and pulling and shovelling some food into a very messy little mouth.

It may be nice to consider an adjustment to the title. By calling it "Nutrition" it takes it back into the adult genre which contrasts it with a messy way that a baby eats, with very little ending up in its mouth.



POWER NAPS

For “power naps” I’d again like to focus on a close up shot of the eyes slowly closing and the eyelashes dropping onto the baby’s cheeks. This may be more easily achieved in a bedroom situation than in a high chair (which may be better as we’ll already have used a high chair for “food fights”). This can really be a beautiful shot to capture as the baby drifts off and will in all likelihood tug at parents’ heartstrings. It also contrasts so nicely with the normal idea of a “power nap” to recharge batteries in a really short period of time.



BRINGING YOUR A GAME

There are a number of ways that this scene could be interpreted. It could be a toddler who is struggling with either the size of a ball, or a piece of equipment, both of which would clearly be too large for them to be able to do anything properly, or they are doing something unusual with the ball or bat. Alternatively it could be a child who clearly is trying very hard to do something. They are concentrating so hard to learn a new skill, be it to hit a ball with an oversized golf club, kick a ball and falling over in the attempt, or for the first time getting an action right, like peddling on a tricycle. Focusing on their determined facial expressions could be a lovely moment.





FINANCIAL SECURITY

In this little vignette I'd like to show the child proudly grasping a little fistful of bronze coins. It's not a lot of money but they are so keen to save it. They count it out in their lap or on a table before we show one shiny coin entering the piggy bank slot.



WAITING FOR PAY DAY

For this scenario it is best explained by a child actually wiggling a loose tooth (without it being too gross or bloody). Especially since he or she is still waiting for the tooth to fall out before they can get paid. Alternatively we could show a young child with a gap in his mouth holding the recently removed tooth. He or she is clearly delighted as the prospect of having one less tooth, and getting paid for their trouble.



REDECORATING

For this scene I would like to film around a piece of furniture or through a doorway into the bedroom. As if we are seeing the child drawing completely undisturbed. He or she hasn't been discovered yet by a parent or sibling and they are completely absorbed in their creative task. And preferably it should be a right old mess on the wall - parents should relate to the scenario and almost groan inwardly. But the child is loving every moment and is covered in paint or koki pen himself.





LUNCH WITH THE GIRLS

To match the language in the other titles, I think this should possibly be changed to “lunch with the ladies” to make it more adult in context. I think it should be a mix of a little girl, one or two of her friends and then some dolls. They are dressed up in character with as much their gaudy jewelry and dress up gear as possible and are completely engrossed in pouring the tea, passing out snacks to the ‘guests’ and giggling amongst themselves.





GOING CAMPING

I think it would be lovely to show little boys actually building their blanket fort inside the house. They are terribly busy attaching the ends and moving the pillows. In the background we could see their supplies - a rucksack, some snacks and maybe even their pet dog watching them patiently. Light streams in through a nearby window, making this a lovely scene drenched in natural soft lighting.



TRIPS TO THE MOON

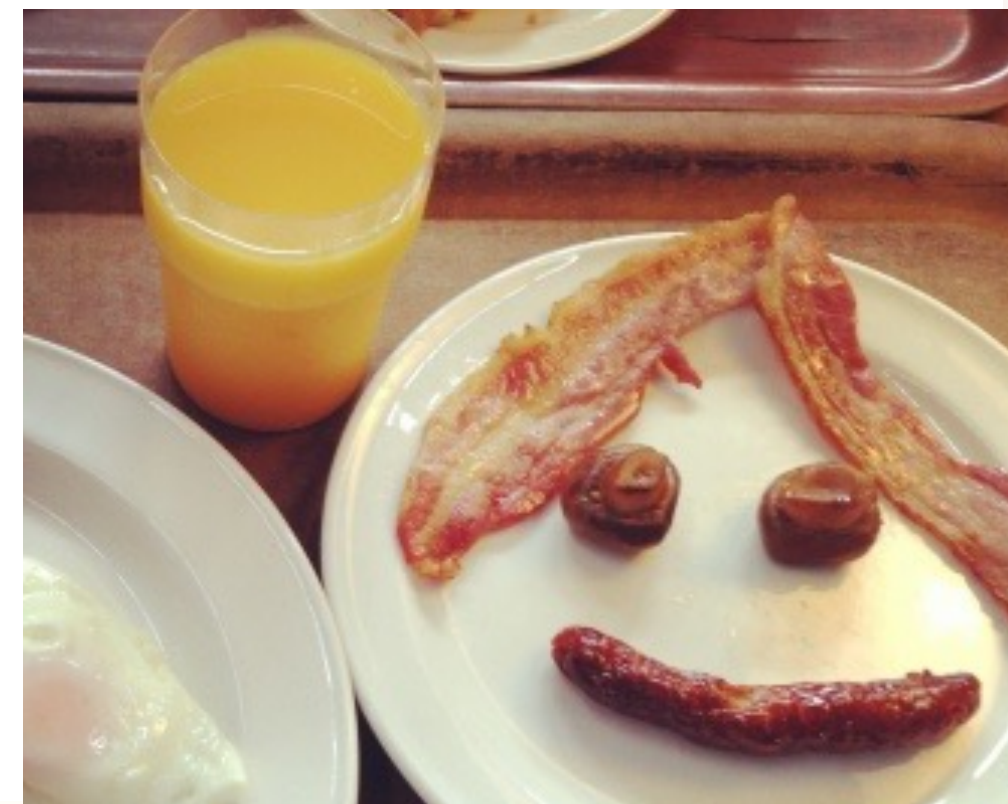
Again here I think it might be better to introduce different language around this title to bring it in line with the other descriptions. Something along the lines of “planning a trip” or “travel plans” makes the scene a little more quirky and humorous and isn't as ‘obvious’, I would really like this to be a home made rocket ship. Something the little boy has struggled with himself - there are bits of tape and some drawings. He's even attempted to dress up like an astronaut to a small degree and we can see his mouth making the sounds of the engines thrusting before take off.



MAKING NEW FRIENDS

This is potentially the only scene where the kid isn't really seen - if we only show 'food faces'. I would prefer to show a child making a new friend, although I think it would be really cool if the friend is rather unconventional. Maybe they've made friends with a worm or strange pet, maybe they're copying the stance of a statue or mime artist, or even pulling faces at their own reflection in a window.

We could possibly think about changing this title to "relationship building", again to give it a more adult and humorous slant.





MAKING TOUGH DECISIONS

What could be tougher than deciding on an ice cream flavour or which toppings to add. This story is quite simply accomplished by showing the faces peering at the toppings or ice creams through the glass counter from the server's side. To capture the concentration and focus on the little faces would be delightful.



CHILLAS WITH YOUR CHOMMIES

I would really like to focus on the actual ice cream eating in this scene, as it's usually done with great enthusiasm, and a bit of mess. We could see the ice cream van and a little queue of kids in the background. But each of the children in the scene are completely focused on their ice cream with the sunlight catching their hair in the late afternoon light.

Also I'd like to suggest a change in title to something along the lines of "keeping a cool head".



LEKKER

It would be really great to incorporate some sun flares in this scene as well as filming the water drops in slow motion and possibly out of focus to create quite a dreamy effect. The kids will be screeching with laughter as they run and jump through the water.

Again here I think it might be better to introduce different language around this title to bring it in line with the other descriptions. Something along the lines of “keeping your reputation clean” or “washing away the cobwebs” makes the scene a little more quirky and humorous.



SAVING THE DAY

For this scenario, "saving the day", it could be really entertaining to have some home-made elements in the outfit. So of course part of the clothing would be from the Ackermans' range but it could also be fun to incorporate unconventional materials for the cape or to have ties around their eyes with holes cut into them. I really see this scene as a couple of friends who have been using their imagination to make their own superhero outfits and making do with what they have found around the house. They are completely engrossed in their game, possibly with the one pushing the other on a skateboard.





MAKING MAGIC

I would like to film this scene as two little girls baking something together. Maybe the one has been visiting her friend for a sleepover (or they could be sisters) so they're both still dressed in their pyjamas, and their hair is all messy. One is cracking eggs into a bowl of flour so the flour sprays up as the egg lands, and the other is mixing away furiously, with bits flying out of the bowl. The counter top is covered in spilt ingredients and various containers.

We can see mom in the background busy with something but she's there to look over their creation.



PICKING YOUR BATTLES

I see this as an outdoor scene - a typical battle that kids love having with their dads. It could be a water pistol fight, he could be chasing after them in the garden or it could be a game of rough and tumble on the lawn. Most importantly it should appear natural and not forced. I'd like to capture warm afternoon light and the thrill of kids about to be caught and tortured.



PLAY WAYA WAYA

It would be lovely to have a few little boys all with their own wire cars, maneuvering their vehicles across a flat open surface - a field or sandy patch. It'll be great to shoot this from a low angle, capturing the boys in the background as they run after their cars. It might even be fun to attach a Go Pro to get a really wide shot with the 'driver' filling the frame in the background.

The title could be more effect if we say something like "being a driver", "negotiating through traffic" or "driving for success" to draw the link with real adult drivers.



SHOWING OFF

This could be really humorous if we change the description to “being in balance” or “a sense of style”. Adults are always talking about work life balance. Being more balanced in their outlook. And how perfect to see a young teenager in perfect ‘balance’ performing some fantastic stunt on their bicycle that as adults, we can only dream of. Maybe we can see some friends (including some girls) looking on admiringly in the background.

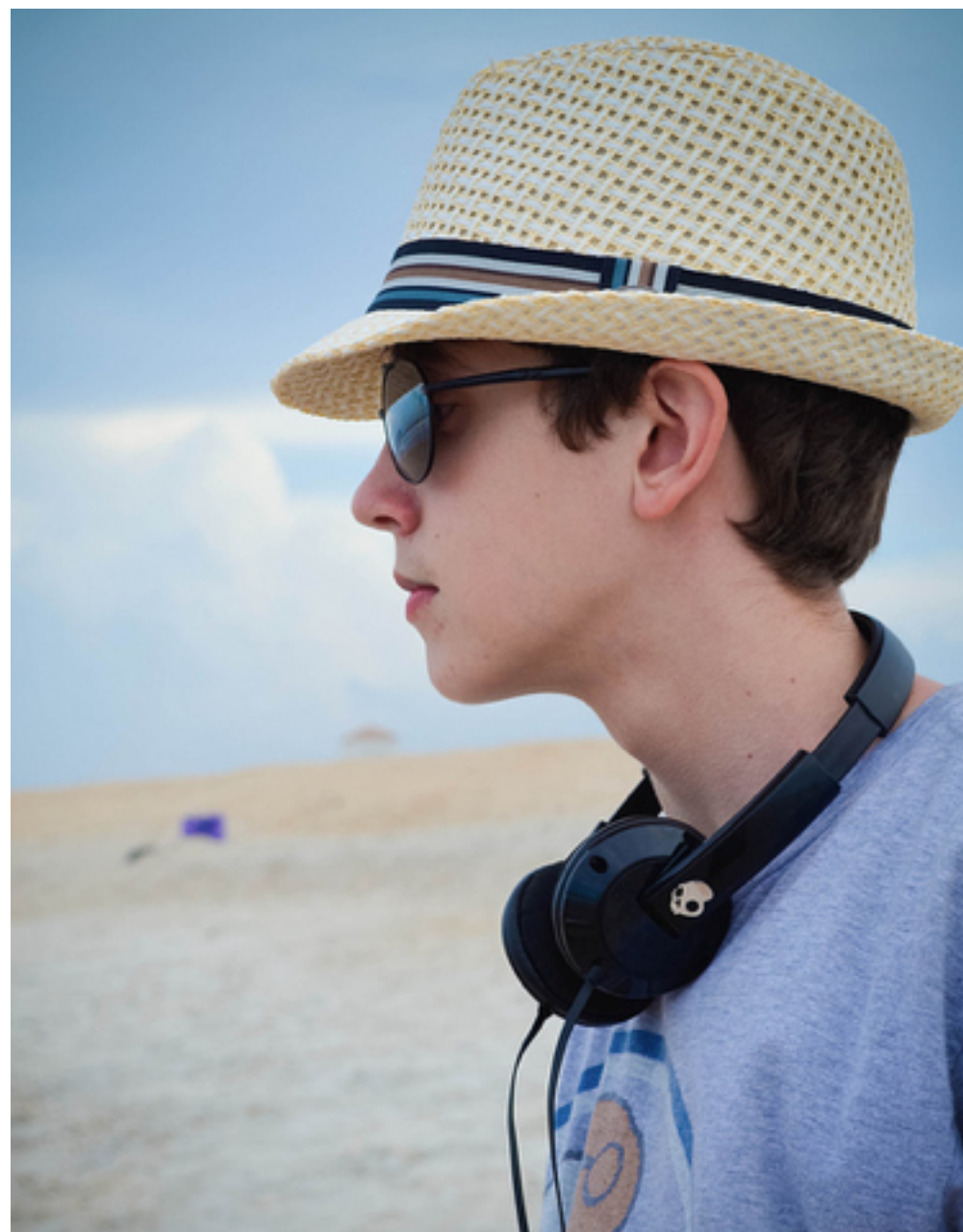




GETTING THE GIRL

I'd love to show the concept of either a teenage guy or girl looking up rather shyly, and then breaking into a huge smile with braces. The title could be "self confidence" or "never being afraid to smile" or "grin and bear it". As adults, we often forget to smile. We're too busy with our lives. But these teens, surrounded by their friends are gorgeous, with or without braces and they have the confidence to just be who they are.

If we decide to stay with "getting the girl" maybe she kisses him on his cheek, he smiles showing his braces, and then she smiles, showing that she has them too. So they have something in common which would make them even more drawn to each other.



GOING WITH THE FLOW

In this case, instead of our teenage boy being stuck at a red robot, I would like to show him in a top shot, moving with the crowd across an intersection. The adults are all walking normally and at quite a rushed pace, while he is grooving while he walks, listening to his music. He is oblivious to everyone around him and he is completely surrounded by the song. His movements in comparison are less rushed, are smoother and he moves with complete confidence and attitude.

LEARNING TO FLY

I'd love to show off some really cool skateboard tricks in this section, preferably from a low angle and possibly incorporating some late afternoon shadows. The kid doesn't actually have to do the trick perfectly because he's still learning, but he keeps at it determinedly to get it right. This could possibly be called "strategic moves".



HEARING IT FIRST

I would film this in a typical teenage girl's bedroom. Two friends are lying close together on the bed and they are both huddled over one phone reading a text. The screen is blurred so we can't see what it is they are reading but they are chatting and laughing about the news.

I would like to call this "staying ahead of the pack".





GROUP CHATS

Here I would like to have a few black girls all braiding one friend's hair. They are all working together, each sharing one section to achieve a complicated design. This could be "teamwork" or "group therapy".



CLICKING

I'd like to film the selfies from the screen of the camera so that we can see the pose or expression on the screen, but the actual girl and her friend and the background are out of focus.

I'd like to call this "self expression".



LEARNING THE ROPES

In this scene there are many funky options that could be incorporated. We could focus on the feet doing a complicated skipping pattern as we see the rope whip by. Or we can attach a camera to the skipping girl to get her perspective on the inside of the whirring ropes and this would work really well if two skipping ropes were going at the same time. Or we could shoot over the shoulder of one of the girls twirling the rope to watch the girl in the middle coming into frame, doing a few turns and then exiting the loop.



BEING YOURSELF

I think that the idea of “being yourself” is a lovely way to end the commercial. Because essentially before kids are moulded by norms, expectations and society they are merely being themselves and that is hopefully what I will be able to portray throughout the ad. Alternatively, we could end by repeating the opening line, “Life is all about... YOU”. Which is exactly the same message, just more simply stated.

So we could end off with a shot of teenagers striking a pose or the younger kids pulling a face. I think either option can work.



MUSIC

The music for this commercial will play a really important role in creating the right mood. It needs to be upbeat and funky. It needs to accompany the actions of the teenagers and I think that something with the beat and rhythm of a pop track could work. The faster rhythm will also help us achieve a faster edit which I believe is required to show all these scenarios in the time allowed for the ad.



CASTING

In trying to create something that feels real and honest, I would cast for interestingly ordinary looking children, rather than 'model-type pretty stereotypes - kids who bring a smile to your face the moment you see them. To get the performance out of them that I'm after, they need to be sociable and confident. I would much rather have to tone them down, than wind them up if they're shy. Healthy, upbeat children and teenagers will make for a lively, happy and fun commercial.

REFERENCE - MOOD

In this spot, the quirky, imaginative and creative nature of children come to the fore. They do things that we would probably never think of and in watching them, it seems so cute. We wonder what was going through their minds as they dreamed up these crazy ideas. In addition the performances seem very real, natural and unstage. I would like to capture some of this idiosyncratic essence in this spot of Ackermans.



REFERENCE - OVERALL LOOK & FEEL



These commercials are shot in the way that I have been describing. Little vignettes that tell a story in an instant, seeming completely real, beautifully lit with natural lighting and a mix of wides and close ups, long lenses and some hand held footage. The performances are comfortable and authentic.

REFERENCE - OVERALL LOOK & FEEL



This commercial has a few of the scenarios and techniques that I have been describing in the previous slides - shooting through a doorway or around objects with a long lens, a range of emotions and lighting and very natural performances. We can also see that just a glimpse of a scene can convey the situation very quickly if shot correctly.

REFERENCE - CAMERA & LENSING



A lightly handheld camera and long lenses that appear to 'find' the characters in their environments. I like the way the scenes are framed through foreground detail and I will make use of this technique where appropriate.

REFERENCE - LIGHTING AND PERFORMANCE

This reference that has been filmed both indoors and outdoors, has a consistent lightness to it. The light looks natural throughout. The performances seem completely natural and real and as a viewer we can easily believe that this is a real family, with important family moments being captured.



