

THANKSGIVING FILM

by Mike Matthews

LAPHROAIG®





INTRODUCTION

Having directed the last two campaigns for Laphroaig – the thing I’ve loved most is their unpredictable, slightly off-kilter, funny yet beautifully looking, anti-ad approach. Both previous campaigns have been very different in their execution but always from the same heart – just speak your mind, do your damndest. If your words give us a giggle and make utter sense, however random, off the wall and, well, Laphroaigian – then we’re game and up for what you want to chuck at us. It feels fundamentally wrong to criticize the brand until you hear it in context – and then it feels fundamentally right.

The forthcoming campaigns must retain this principle – this is the essence of the brand – but it’s always important to give each film their own voice and visual trope so that they stand alone as unique, insightful films.



APPROACH

As with Poets, it's vital we find a breadth of different characters – all bringing something unique and special to the mix. The emphasis with our search will be on extrovert, fun-loving people who have lots to say – but the tone in which they express this will be contrasting so that en masse, we have a lovely blend of voices. We will find lovers and haters. They may not even know they're drinking Laphroaig – but we will identify in advance whether they are prone to a whisky tippie – AND whether or not peaty is their thang.

As before, we have an excellent Casting Producer who will pull no punches in finding a selection of grade A, witty, diverse, vocal, whisky imbibers who tell it like it is.

My approach when filming is to hang back; not be too heavy with the producer hand – but to always have a structure in place to guarantee the film delivers. At its heart, these should be less performance, and more gut instinct. We want to capture those first initial reactions; those contrasting opinions. Chatting between themselves. I will try to intervene as little as possible so that the dialogue becomes between them. However, I still love it when they give a pithy comment off camera – as if in response to what the other person has just said that they totally disagree with.



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We find ourselves observing 5 people sat around a round table, a green bottle of whisky sat proudly in the middle, glasses, drinking, we dip in and find them mid conversation. In the background we see a familiar location – but with a different vibe to the previous films – there may be a fire lit, it will feel more intimate – less spartan and bright light, this one a little cosier – a conversation taking place.

We cut to the graphic text ‘one thanksgiving, one drink, many opinions’

We will orbit the conversation with a circular track that gives this film its own unique identity. There will be other cameras also filming, but this revolving circular track will give it a stylish, observational trope that defines it as the film about family and thanksgiving.

There will be one family. All conversation centres around this one family. We will shoot two (one as a backup), but the intention is to only feature one in the final edit.

There will be no contrivance to food and thanksgiving. This is purely a reminder of how families get together at Thanksgiving and spend time talking and most likely, bickering. Because let’s face it – that’s what really happens doesn’t it?

The topic up for discussion is the ever familiar laphroaig whisky – and our families will have polarizing opinions. Some of them will love, some will hate.

But only time will tell who thinks what.



CASTING

We will cast 3 local US comedians – they will not be famous but they will be the anchors for the film – and their families will help tell the story with humour and passion and that ever present oddness in how they describe the drink.

The benefit of this kind of person is that they will be produce-able – we can give them beats – they can lead the conversation – but they will not be a presenter – rather a regular person with the confidence to lead the conversation in a comedic and editorial way.

As with Father's Day – the same Casting Producer will be used to find comedians who are funny, bright, left field, opinionated and excellent orators – and then we will open it up to their families to find the best foils and characters who can clash/compliment/celebrate/love/loathe (delete as applicable, and or all of the above).

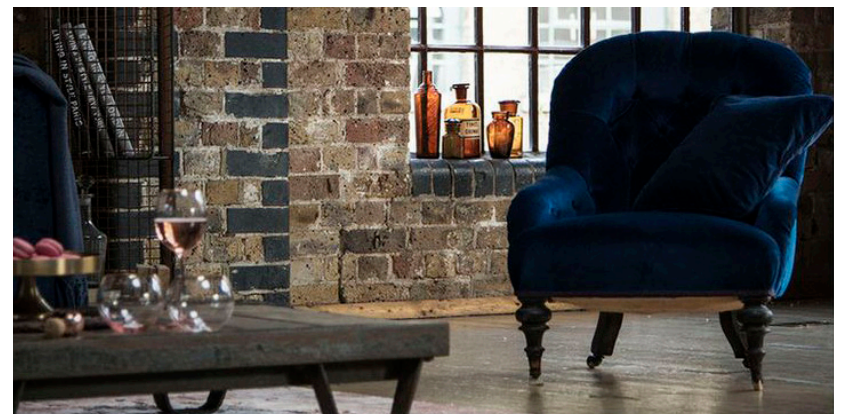
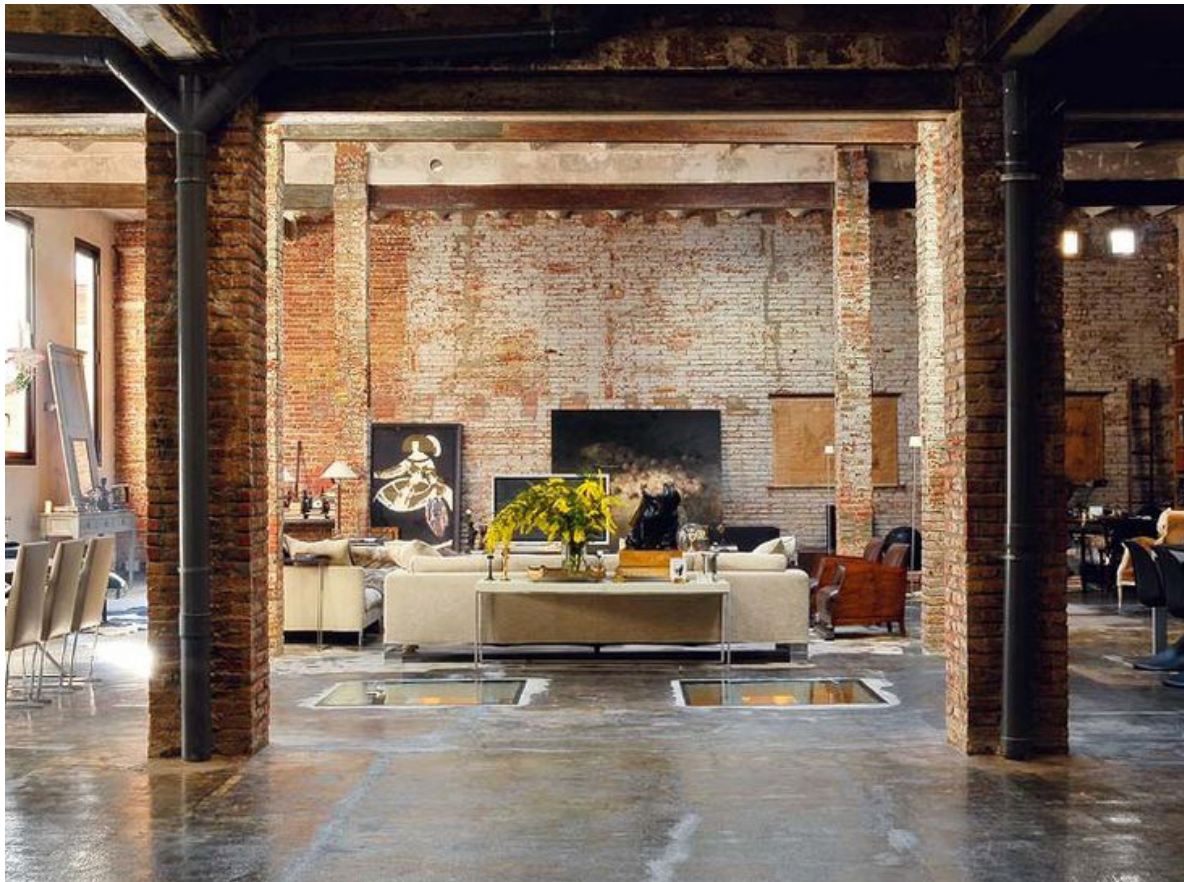
We want humour, people with brilliant turns of phrase, we want that candid access to inter family squabbling – it would be great if they let reveal tiny secrets of family habits; but above all else, it's about the liquid. We want it to be authentic and always with the purpose of showing how different opinions exist – especially when it comes to something as divisive as Laphroaig.



LOCATION/ ART DIRECTION

This film will continue to have the white distressed painted exposed brick work and will have an urban warehouse vibe – but perhaps we will film it to feel less daylight, more intimate, maybe this is chit chat after dinner, perhaps a fire lit even? We may use the same space as for 'Father's Day', but it will feel very different.

They will circle a round table – there will be little on it – just the bottle, glasses, they will be sat in wooden, classic, solid chairs that feel like they wouldn't be out of place in Shoreditch House. People will be dressed for winter – but never contrived, never overly art directed – they will just all look and feel themselves – in different colour hues so that we can distinguish between families.





CINEMATOGRAPHY

We will shoot on 3 cameras – one on a circular track that orbits the round dining table. Two other cameras picking out reactions and singles.

It may have a slightly more intimate vibe to set it apart from other films – possibly with a fire in the background.

As always, we will pull back and let the action happen without being too invasive. We will get reactions, looks, we will be searching for humour and we will overshoot – we will use those brilliant out takes – and I will stand next to the camera so that they can talk to me off camera, occasionally – so that the viewer remains connected and there isn't a complete barrier between us and them.

Lighting will be subtle, naturalistic, understated. We want it to feel intimate and inviting.





CONCLUSION

This is a film that we can all completely identify with – sitting around a table with your nearest and dearest – those people you don't spend nearly enough time with - and really should. And when you get together, those funny conversations; the silly, emotional, real, awkward, annoying, aggravating and utterly brilliant things that your close relatives say to you – this is what I'm hoping this film will be – a truly authentic, lovely but never saccharine insight into family, at one of the biggest best times of the year – through the liquid of Laphroaig. Thanks so much for giving me the chance to pitch this film. I'd love to be a part of it.

*Cheers,
Mike*

