

- Diary Of Shoot -

Thursday 2nd May

Day 1

I slept in until 11.30am and phoned Gary. To my surprise he was home, in England, Newcastle and raring to go. I'd been shitting my self all week that he may not return, and it took a lot of weight off my shoulders when I heard his voice. I then made my way to college to meet everyone at 12:00pm, while picking up £100 on the way, for Rebecca to pay for the van. Liz, George and Rebecca shot off to Atlas hire, while Jason, Ann-Marie, and Toni booked out the equipment and checked it over. Meanwhile I dashed off to find Andy, (who had gone missing since last night) to remind him that we had rehearsals from 2 - 5pm.

I eventually found him in drama. He had forgotten, but managed to slip off until 3:30pm. So off we went to my house, where I briefed him on the scheduling while waiting for Gary to arrive. At 2pm I got Gary (who could not stop talking about his amazing Greece trip) and Andy to rehearse their lines in the woods, crisping up dialogue and movement. Gary had not read the adjusted script before, but picked it up quite quickly. As their performance got better I started to get quite excited. Emma arrived at 2:30 pm and Andy managed to do the attack scene, before he had to leave for college again. Gary, Emma and I then sat and relaxed for a good three quarters of an hour chatting about Gary's film part, his Greece trip and 'Black Out' (which I think did me good) Finally I went through the car scenes, standing in for Andy. They finally departed about 4:40pm, leaving me feeling very confident. I find working with the actors one of the most enjoyable aspects of directing, it is one of the least stressful and good actors (which they are) often ease stress among the crew.

I picked up some coffee, tea etc from Kwik Save for the shoot, cooked some dinner, adjusted the schedule and had an hour sleep, before Bevan interviewed me on camcorder. I actually felt happy and the old adrenaline in the chest seemed to have temporarily disappeared. I walked to Liz's, via Jesmond Dene, with Jason, while eating chips and starting on the fags. He seemed well organised and clear headed on what he had to do tonight.

We left Liz's house in the van, 15 minutes late, due to Liz forgetting to get the reflector boards from Ashley. We were also missing the tall lighting stands which pissed me off as they were Liz's responsibility too. Things went fairly smoothly. I had a short panic attack when the blonde kept apparently fusing at the blonde families house. It made Rebecca very embarrassed having to keep disturbing them for fuses etc. We finally found out they plugged our cable into one of their own extension cables that had a 6v trip built into it. So once again the problem was resolved.

In the first hour I wanted to kick the shit out of Liz. She was chatting to the actors, asking me what the next shot was, when I'd just spent two days watching her sort out the lighting plans and generally being too slow and extremely dizzy / unfocused. She eventually got better. I knew she was going to be my only problem and she just needs a good kick up the arse!

We shot the car scenes and packed up to relocate in Jesmond Dene. We were an hour behind schedule, and I was a little disappointed by that fact. As soon as we reached the Dene I tried to speed the crew up, and dashed off into the Dene with a ground sheet and cables, and started to connect up to the School House and get some light down there. I made sure from then on that Liz never sat down again, constantly giving her things to do with a time limit.

I had no other problems with the rest of the crew, Georgina was always ready to jump into place when needed and Anne-Marie was always thinking one shot ahead in terms of make-up etc. Jason and Toni set up quickly and to the storyboard and Rebecca told me whether we were ahead or behind schedule after each shot and took all the worries away from me, making the whole night very enjoyable. (Toni also made sure he kept an eye on the footage i.e. 400ft a day max.) The rape scene which we did for most of the evening was tricky in the sense of Ann-Marie's costume for Emma. It was perhaps a little too short and it became quite hard to keep Emma decent, as during the attack her dress would edge itself up to new heights which made me very embarrassed, as I didn't want a bloody peep show on set! In the end I had to make sure all male members of the crew were standing at the opposite angle. Then when we were just ready to shoot the scene, the rain suddenly started to pour from the heavens above. I shat myself for the second time that night, but to my relief it lasted for less than five minutes and from then on the sky was clear displaying a perfectly full moon (just how it was meant to be).

Anne Marie's vomit for Gary was so realistic, that most of the crew nearly heaved themselves when Gary spewed it out. I deviated from the storyboard a little at the end of the scene, as more exciting shots became apparent. When Gary is thrown off the cliff, I was going to have a blurred POV of Gary seeing Andy throw him, but instead, We had a silhouetted shot by a tree with its branches back lit, creating a more dynamic shot. In these hand held shots I worry a little about whether Jason has caught the action properly, as I am unable to see exactly what he's done. I just hope his idea of a good shot is the same standard as mine.

We finished around 3:30pm, an hour ahead of schedule, which I was amazed with, and extremely happy. Everyone worked extremely well, and we did less than three retakes per shot which was good (hence 150ft left from the 400ft roll).

Once home I viewed Bevan's Hi8 footage, to review the day and make sure I was still happy with the performances etc, and then hit the sac.

Friday 3rd May

Day 2

I popped round to Georgina's house in the afternoon to listen back to last night's sound recording. It suddenly occurred to me that I hadn't checked anything. It was fine, though occasionally there is camera noise which she didn't identify on the night. I think she has her headphone levels far too low. I was impressed to find she had already written up everything recorded, right down to dialogue and sound effects. This was going to be useful for transferring to DAT.

Tonight was an interesting night, as we had to simulate the car moving, in an empty car park. The first three shots took up quite a bit of time and we were running about an hour late, but they were tough shots. Jason, being so tall, found it difficult to fit in the back of the car and I had to climb a huge tree to set up a blonde from one of the branches. The effect however was very convincing. Rebecca was worrying about disruptions from kids and teenagers who were starting to congregate in the car park, but they soon went off to play their games and we were left on our own for the rest of the night (which was nice!).

The car simulation set up took a while to set up in terms of realism. We had the van lights behind the car, a stationary red head representing moonlight, another red head on the opposite side of the car simulating the passing of street lights, then Ann Marie and Toni layed down at the front of the car pushing with their feet, the car's suspension around to simulate uneven roads, then occasionally giving it a sharp push as if it had gone over a man hole or something. After all this I decided that it still wasn't good enough, it was all too smooth. Finally after a bit of thought I asked Jason to hand held the camera, as this had proved to work in 'You tell Me', I checked the rehearsals on Bevan's hi 8 and the shots was much better. My fear was if the car didn't look as if it was moving, people would laugh and then the whole atmosphere of the film would be destroyed.

The actors were pretty easy going tonight, apart from Gary who was (as always) suffering from a heavy cold, but once he had his pampering, he was fine. The actors went off for chips while we set up the car simulation shot, this saved them eating later I guess. Emma's shots were over by 1:30 am so I gladly walked her back to her street, it meant I could have more hours from her tomorrow if necessary. (she could only do two days worth i.e. 16 hours, due to exams).

We actually wrapped an hour and a half early (3:30 am) which was a great achievement by all. I was a lot more confident now, that the shoot would be successful (that's if the weather held out).

Saturday 4th May

Day 3

Although we blooped badly last night, and had to pick up shots from Heaton Park, this was the best day yet! I phoned Emma to remind her of her schedule, only to be told by her that we'd missed out half of the dialogue in shot 12 last night. This was a problem, as it was our busiest night and we had Linda coming down to take stills of

the cast and crew. After a chat with Rebecca, we rescheduled and re-phoned everyone, hitting the road an hour and a half earlier for Heaton Park to pick up the shots. We set up well before it was dark, and became quite bored. So Linda grabbed us all and took some amusing crew photos. The actors were in high spirits tonight, and I was actually very relaxed.

We arrived and set up in Jesmond Dene an hour behind the original schedule but the first few shots were quite simple and we sped through them quite well. Keeping Emma warm became a problem again, as Ann Marie applied her dastardly blood effects to her neck and legs. We had more crew photos by the old twist rooted tree (which I think will be nice) and then came the dragging body shots. I think Emma appreciated my concern for her decency as I kept adjusting her skirt all the time to stop it revealing anything naughty, I probably wouldn't have been as concerned normally, but I guess I have a soft spot for the wee lass. When her shots were finished, and she got a lift home with George and Linda, the shoot didn't seem as exciting. But we did some groovy shots and as for time, we excelled as we were ahead of schedule and completed the contingency shots with time for an extra three more shots. We were on top form tonight, and Rebecca actually said "You should be proud of yourself". Which made me feel chuffed inside, as all the work seemed to be paying off. I think Georgina and Ann Marie felt exhausted by the end of the night. I think the speed we were going, I'd forgot to be pleasant to the sound crew and they were probably feeling a little unappreciated.

Tuesday 7th May
Day 4

Dosed all day, and eventually headed off to pick up my Grant cheque from Four Lane Ends, and also my storyboards of 'Release' from Rachel. I then bought some blank VHS tapes for copying 'YTM' and a DAT to transfer the sound from 'Black Out' for the Avid edit. Popped in to Safeways to get some food for the rest of the week, splashing out a little, only to end up, running out of time to even eat it. When I got home Rebecca had discovered that Liz had used the van without asking and had left it empty. To Rebecca, it was the last straw, and from then on a huge argument on the telephone ensued, ending with myself being the one stuck between the two. Liz's actions, were certainly not professional, but at the end of the day you accept it, in order to maintain the peace on set. Unfortunately I got uptight being thrown in to an argument that really had nothing to do with my role, and unfortunately I made the situation worse. Liz was threatening not to even turn up as now, she felt unwanted. During this whole incident, Emma had come round a little drunk (after taking her first exam), to drop of the shoes and witnessed the whole telephone conversation! Later, as a joke, I gave her a schedule for tonight with her revision plan on. Her exam went better than she expected, but she's still possibly going to blame me if she fails!@*\$?!

Once Emma left (for the second time), I had to dash off to see Linda and choose the photographs from 'Black Out' to be enlarged. She had some real crackers and had done a good job! By the time George dropped me off again at 112, We were already behind Schedule. This was to be a pretty disastrous evening as we already had bad

vibes on set (They actually didn't last long as I apologised to Liz for my thoughtless outbreak over the phone, which made communication a lot better. Though Her clash with Rebecca has still not been resolved).

Our next problem was no power, Someone in the Dene School, had obviously unplugged our cable from the mains, it was only by chance, I found a member of staff having a fag on the roof, that I could get the problem resolved.

Then there was no sign of Gary. We waited for over an hour, scouting the South Gosforth area and Heaton, but to no avail. Eventually I phoned his house to find he was still asleep in bed, having had no sleep for the past two and a half days. We picked him up, (looking half dead) and started the first shot about an hour and a half behind schedule. Things ran fairly smoothly after that, though Gary's performance was a little weak due to his condition, and Andy was hassling me to do his scenes first, as he had classes in the morning. So reluctantly I did. Andy left by 2:00 am leaving Gary to do his embankment falling until 4 am. Tonight was thankfully clear again, but incredibly cold, our breath being clearly visible.

As we got set up for the first take, the solder connection in the headphones broke making it harder for George to monitor, after the scene, she dashing off to Heaton to pick up the spare set. While George was away, I became a little concerned when I explained to Ann-Marie (who took over) that once you set your level on a take, it does not move during the take. She understood, but feared Georgina may have been turning it up and down during a take quite considerably, and therefore varying the volume of atmos. in the shot. I had tried to explain this to George on Saturday night, but in a slight fluster, I don't think she really understood what I meant. Now I had got Anne - Marie to understand, I asked her to explain this to George, on her return.

Lighting and camera were excellent all night. Liz making an exceptional effort, possibly due to my outbreak, where I accused her of being lazy which in fact she was not ('easily distracted' was the word I should have used). I was glad to finish tonight's shots, as it hadn't been the luckiest day, or the most uplifting, though there was a lot of humour on set in the last two hours, which lifted our chins somewhat.

Wednesday 8th May

Day 5

It was a much more successful night than yesterday's and a very easy going one too. Although we still had thirteen shots to get done, there was only one lighting set up required. Rebecca and Liz had one more telephone clash before the shoot, which along with Rebecca's bad news back home mad her quite upset. As a result, she preferred not to join us until later on in the evening.

I walked through the Dene to Liz and Toni's (stopping by the waterfall for 10 min. to listen to the relaxing sound of rushing water), where I picked up a shovel, and started to dig the grave half an hour before the crew were to arrive. It was much

harder than expected, as 70% of it was rock! Erol just sat there enjoying watching me sweat my bollocks off.

Gary & Andy were in a lot better condition than the previous night, and were raring to go. As to night was the whole end scene, I rehearsed the actors through the whole scene until they were fluent. We spent a long time on dialogue, performance and lighting, as it was important for the final scene to be as effective as possible. I was very chuffed with the whole evening, and as the actors were in high spirits, it rubbed off on the rest of us too (Though not Rebecca due to her bad news).

Early in the night, we were disturbed by some drunk Geordie lads out in the Dene to smoke hash. They didn't look the most harmless looking of characters, and I was wary of asking them to leave. Later they interrupted our sound recording with laughing etc. But finally when Toni and Liz went to find them, they vanished, never to return with the spliff that he promised us?

The camera crew did a great job, keeping a close eye on the footage, as we had over run on last nights stock, leaving only 300ft left for tonight, but everyone was aware of the situation, and worked well, allowing us quite a few 'one take wonders'. By the last scheduled shot (having all ready done four takes for the Hell of it) we still had plenty of footage left and it was only 1:30am.

We continued until 2:00am, picking up three shots we'd dropped during the shoot. Out of 76 shots scheduled, we only dropped two, and one of those had been accidentally covered in another shot. There were big goodbyes all round for Gary and Andy, as Gary offered all the crew a swig of whiskey from his bottle as a offering of good will.

I was a little saddened to think that this will be the last time I work with Gary for some time, as during the production he hit big time, getting an agent, three feature film parts and is now demanding a minimum of £360 a day! Which until I hit 'Big Time', Gary will be well out of my price range! I feel good in away though, as Erol and I had promise to give him the leading role in 'You Tell Me Part 2', and I had felt quite guilty when we decided to drop the project. With 'Black Out' I was able to keep my promise, get a great actor, in a part that he sees as ideal for promoting his talents.

Once wrapped, we drove back to Heaton Park to do one final Atmos.. that Georgina had missed, and low and behold, as soon as she said 'O.K. finished', it pissed down with rain. Rebecca and I looked at each other and laughed hysterically with amazement. My one biggest fear of the whole shoot was if it rained for just One night, we would have been completely fucked! Yet it pissed down in the two days before the shoot and then again literally 10 seconds after the shoot. That's what I call the 'Force' being with you!