

Preparation

Starting Friday 14th March 1997

Made the rest of the props completing a quite convincing GNER rail card for Tony's wallet contents. I spent most of the morning on the phone double checking all my bookings and arrangements, as well as trying to get hold of Brian Hoey to find out about the camera problem. We weren't leaving until midnight tonight, so perhaps the Aaton was fixable by then? I phoned the KM (Kent Messenger) and Meridian News to find there were possibilities of a news story on Sunday morning. I then spent a ridiculous £20 on two A0 photocopies of the theatres designs as a prop.

When I returned to Erol and team who had been booking out the equipment, I found we were missing a lot of items that I'd requested and that had also been approved. We had no baby legs, we had the tiny metal clapper when I'd specified 'White Perspex', an uncharged PAG light with a loose connection, no tape measure, no slide set, no large barracuda pole, a wooden tripod as opposed to the Ronford F4 and the Arri BL instead of the Aaton. Funnily enough the store room technicians were being incredibly nice to me. I'd never seen them so friendly. It must have been quite embarrassing for them, because I had played everything by the book, specified the equipment in every detail, made no errors that they could use as excuses against me and yet still they couldn't provide me with what I had ordered. After three years of it, I wasn't surprised.

Erol picked up van and slowly but surely we loaded it neatly into the back. The next couple of hours we picked up everyone's baggage's, packed the van to the brim with the contents of my room, to take home and finally ended at Erol's where we settled for a some dinner. I phoned Maxine to confirm that we'd pick her up around 5 am. and then called for Gary. We were a little early, so we stopped for some real coffee.

The night journey down was relaxing, the further we went and more tired we got, the more things we found funny. We stopped twice for petrol and a coffee, where a lonely female cashier spent fifteen minutes telling me all about how she never has time to do anything. Completely bored and getting cold, I tried to will the receipt and change out of her hand, by using the force, yet still maintaining a polite smile on my face. Well, it was an experience I suppose.

Rehearsal Night

Starting Saturday 15th March 1997

Start

We arrived at Maxine's to find her hung over (Why is it, that all actors seem to drink and smoke far too much before a shoot?). As a result, I had to drive her car back to Maidstone. When we arrived my parents were still asleep (as they ought to be at 6 am in the morning). I sent Erol and Gary to bed, and nipped out to a school field nearby, for a chat with Maxine. After filling me with positive vibes, Maxine returned to her parents to sleep and I joined Erol and Gary, in hitting the sack.

Woke up at 5pm. Erol feeling rather peckish, cooked us a big fried breakfast, while Gary and I unloaded the van, separating my stuff that I'd brought home and the film equipment. Max returned about 7:30 pm ready to jump in the van and head for the theatre. Once there Erol, Gary and Maxine unloaded the equipment from the van, while Roy took me around the theatre. He was basically just reminding me of places to be cautious, where to locate the lighting switches, power points, things not to touch, where to find the keys and locking up safely. He left, wishing us well. This was it!

Actors

While Erol went off to pick up the rest of the crew, I took Max and Gary on a tour of the Theatre. We went through each location to allow them to get a 'feel' of the space in relation to the scene in the script. At this stage we just talked things through, they suggested ideas and asked questions about positioning, movement, and dialogue. Fatigue was already setting in and feeling tired and drained we returned to the office for a strong coffee. Back in the auditorium, I asked them to express some of the ideas they had about their characters and how they (as actors) would like to play them. The response was quite interesting. Gary had already expressed to me that he was interested in playing the whole part as a method actor, but these thoughts were fading fast as he realised he couldn't maintain this 'distance' from the rest of us. He defined a good back history about the death of Emily who in his eyes, had died of a rare illness. He described Tony's character before the death of his girlfriend, his job, experiences and everything. I was really impressed with the guy. Maxine's views were positive too. As she had worked with me early on in pre-production and was more familiar with what I wanted out of the character. She also had past experience in Sarah's situation and knew exactly what it was like. This to some degree was good, but also bad, as she was going to find it hard to reenact those past fears.

I then rehearsed them through a couple of lighter scenes in the script, concentrating more on positioning and movement in terms of the camera. We worked together on the delivery of their lines but purposely made no effort to perform the scene at it's best. They would tire easily tonight and the polishing would be done on scheduled day, just before the actual take.

For the rest of the evening, Gary & Maxine, slipped closer and closer into dreamland, while the crew played with their film making toys. I woke them up about 4 am and dragged them out one last time to rehearse a complicated scene in the basement. It actually went very well, both providing little unexpected extras, that added to their characters.

Crew

After dropping myself and the actors off at the theatre, Erol set off to collect the rest of the crew from London Kings Cross. They arrived just after midnight looking tired but happy. We stopped for lunch, feeding them up with energy. But by 3 am, most of the crew had passed out on the sofa's in the office. It was already an extremely long night.

Filming

Erol set up lights in the most difficult areas. Most of his time was spent on making sure we had enough power and enough cable to set up lights for all the scenes. Luckily the fuse box has it's own cut off switch, which gave us extra protection against an overload. We had 40 amps worth of lighting, plus all the industrial 600 watt lights set up in the theatre for the daytime tours. According to Erol the readings off the light meter were good, and in many cases, red heads were sufficient, therefore more lights, which meant more creativity. Bevan could do little with the sound tonight, as although the Nagra indicated that the batteries were fully charged, they could not get any power. The Meridian News team arrived at 9 am. I chatted briefly to the journalist, about finding the best angle for the report. The camera man soon arrived and worked with us in constructing a set-up shot, (we made use of the dolly for more pretentious impact, even though we had no track wheels or seats. But hey, what do the general public know anyway?). They then interviewed me about the story and the actors on there experience and opinion of the theatre. The report was screened at 11:50am that same day. Rather an impressive speed I thought.

Schedule

Due to having such a long day, I spoke to David Spiers (Theatre renovator) in the morning and managed to change the scheduled start of tomorrow from 9pm to 11pm, giving us extra time to catch up on our sleep.

End

Wrapping at 10:30am after Meridian had finished with us, we went for a fried breakfast in a nice cafe in Rochester. The freshness of the morning air, woke us up a little as we then moved on to ASDA to buy food for the week. We all agreed we'd each put £10 in for breakfast and dinners, and James was promoted to chief caterer, having proved his cooking talents many times before.

When we arrived to Buckmore Park, we found our building was swarming with cheeky little cub scouts. It had passed 1 pm, they were all supposed to have left by now. I spoke to the accommodation officer who told me they were scheduled to be there until 4pm. I got a little upset and told him I had a van full of film students who had not slept for 24 hours and had been promised a bed by 1pm. He then explained the mistake to the cub scout leaders who reluctantly emptied out the end rooms for us to sleep in. Maxine and I however had to go on a mission before we could sleep. The office heater at the theatre was pretty pathetic, but they did have an empty portable gas heater. So off we went in search for a new gas bottle, a wheel chair (to try out as a softer wheeled dolly) and the pack lunches for tonight. The day was bright and sunny and I felt very exhilarated. The thought of sleep suddenly disappeared. We found a gas bottle at the second garage we stopped at, the wheel chair was acquired from Maidstone hospital and very easily at that. I think when I asked "Can I borrow a wheel chair" the porters thought I was just needing it to get my disabled gran out of the car or something? But never mind. I finally hit the sack at 3.00 pm feeling confident and content.

Night 1 Starting Sunday 16th March 1997

Start

Woke around 9 pm feeling knackered and walked into the kitchen to find James cooking some vegetable wonder that we all tucked into thankfully. Everyone was sitting at the table still looking tired. When we arrived at the theatre, David Spiers had also just arrived to open up the entrance to the Gods for us. He's a nice man, very funny and very camp and very rude, with a huge beer belly that seems to cause him difficulty in walking. He waddles rather than walks and awkwardly at that. Tonight he saw Bevan carrying the large barracuda pole into the theatre, close behind James and commented "You've got to trust someone behind you carrying that thing!".

Actors

Gary spent the first few hours trying to saw a wooden joint properly. He needed two, one for the wide and one for the close up. He seemed to be in a jolly mood, as Erol and him took the piss out of each other all night (A tradition that's been going on since they worked with each other in the first year). Max sat patiently on set smoking cigarettes and drinking coffee and hot soup, kindly provided by Linda. I think Maxine was a little nervous, but fortunately due to our late start, her acting abilities did not need testing tonight. I tried to make sure I kept her and Gary entertained between takes and that they were not cold.

The crew worked well, even though they still hadn't caught up with their sleep. Perhaps at the end of the night we slacked a little as a team, as the last bits of equipment and cable to be packed away was left to Erol and Anthony.

Filming

It took a while to set up the first shot as cables had to be laid up to the Gods. We'd agreed the night before that all the areas where we needed to lay the cables, or carry equipment had to be lit first, as the stairwell was quite steep and damp. Insufficient lighting could be hazardous and I was intent on being as cautious about health and safety as possible.

We started setting up the first shot using the dolly. My memory of the flooring in the corridor had been of a smooth surface, but it was in fact laid with floor boards that had warped through neglect and time. The dolly wheels being hard, just bounced over them shaking the camera everywhere. We then tried the wheel chair with Erol strapped in, using the camera brace for steadiness, but we still ended with a poor result. As time was running out I made the decision to use a static. Instead of the film opening to the sound of sawing, it would open to the sound of footsteps. Instead, Gary would create the movement in the frame. It was very nice!

Once rehearsed, we went for a take, only to find the magazine jammed in a very strange way. I was concerned when I realised Erol and Anthony had placed all their equipment in the ladies toilet that Roy had told me to avoid disturbing (due to supernatural occurrences). I then moved all equipment out of the ladies toilets and to the amusement of the crew, I apologised to the spirits for the disruption. I didn't care if I looked a fool. We were behind schedule and if that was what it took to make the shoot run smoothly, then so be it. As it happened everything did run smoothly after that.

Erol to my reluctance, pulled off some tarpaulin from a window. I agreed it made a more beautiful shot, but I was a little concerned about whether we could replace it again, without Roy or David noticing. They had done me a great favour in giving me access to the theatre. The last thing I wanted to do was piss them off by taking advantage. But the shot was very nice and as promised Erol fixed the tarpaulin back safely. The birds started singing a lot earlier than I expected which was something we'd have to be aware of, particularly Bevan on sound. There was also quite a lot of camera noise which we new would be a problem. With the Arriflex BL, it was inevitable.

Schedule

We were half a day behind schedule. But the scene we shot was in fact completed within the allocated time I had originally scheduled, it was just down to our late start and having to finish early due to bird singing. I talked to Linda and agreed to start at 6 pm on Tuesday night to catch up.

End

Before leaving, when everyone was downstairs, I returned to the ladies toilet to thank the mysterious ghost one more time for being patient and not messing up the film. We returned to Buckmore Park, drank cheap & horrible red wine (kindly supplied by my Dad) and watched Erol get wasted. He entertained us for a good two hours, until finally we hit the sack.

Night 2

Starting Monday 17th March 1997

Actors

Started the day with the easier scene. Max and Gary had gone off yesterday to rehearse this scene and had come up with a faster version of it than I had in mind. I was surprised, but let them demonstrate what they meant. It worked well and I let them go for it, though by the time we shot the actual takes, they slowed it down a little, I'm not sure weather through choice or through restraint from technical details in blocking them. But anyway, both actors did perfectly well.

After lunch, everyone was moved out, away from the office so I could spend time with Gary and Max. It was the pivotal scene in the film, and their acting had to be at it's very best. I spent over an hour with them. It was very moving in such silence, without the crew twitching and fidgeting in the background. I soon discovered that the slower Gary was in running over his thoughts in his head,

the better his emotions came out on his face and the more emotional you became as an audience. When the crew finally returned for the take, I tried to keep everyone silent. We end boarded everything. On the first take I whispered the directions, but the crew hadn't quite got the idea. I said "Roll sound," Bevan said "SOUND ROLLING!", I said "Roll camera," Erol said "CAMERA ROLLING!" It was quite funny because they had no idea what they'd done. Next time round, I reminded the crew how delicate the scene was and instead, I signaled Bevan to roll sound and tapped Erol to roll camera. As soon as Gary heard the camera rolling, he'd start his scene.

Just before Maxine's scene, I spent about fifteen minutes putting her make up on, she was being a little lively as I was placing the bruises on her neck. I wanted her to be more focused and serious, but then again, it was probably her nerves. This was her first film and she was not used to having her performance broken down into small shots. Later though, Maxine's 'sorry' expression in the last scene in the office was very believable.

Crew

Got up at 2pm to take James to Maidstone to sign on. This was one of the reasons why his commitment to the film came so late. It was another nice day and I was getting to like driving the van all the time. Stopping in Maidstone, I couldn't resist popping into see my friend (who'd contributed greatly to my developing script). We had a cuppa and a chat. It was the first time I could reflect on what I was doing. Your head gets full of problems and questions about production and direction that you never come up for breath. When I did, drinking my cuppa, I couldn't believe I'd successfully brought ten people down to Kent to make a film and that (so far) it was all going to plan? My friend Richard wished me luck as James gave him the last of his cigarettes. Richard (having no money) thought it was a gift from heaven. We returned to base camp and hit the sack again for two hours.

Schedule

We had no problem with the scheduling tonight, everything seemed to go to plan. Occasionally we'd slip behind, but that was only because Erol rigged one lighting set up that would serve several shots and therefore we could shoot them one after another with out any more lighting changes and eventually be back on schedule.

Equipment

Erol and Anthony started setting up lights, while I dressed the office set. I added two A0 copies of the theatre blue prints on the walls to fill the frame. The office walls were pretty bare and boring compared to the detail in the theatres corroded walls. I also put up a pretend timetable that showed that Tony only worked nights (putting the first names of the crew on the chart as other renovators as a little in-joke), a target with a hook for elastic bands to be pinged at and some photos from the theatre's promotional displays to add a bit of colour. Although the surroundings were not as exciting, there were some nice shots. The coffee spilling was well captured and Maxine, blurred in the foreground in one shot also looked good.

In the second half of the night we filmed the intense shots of Gary thinking. Two takes took up nearly a whole roll of 400 ft. It was a challenging shot, as Gary's acting had to interest the audience enough for them not to get restless. I'm used to cutting quiet fast and to have a single shot lasting so long on screen, for me was quite daring.

One concern was the closeness of the camera to Gary. This created problems for the sound. In the first take the sound was on the edge of being unusable, I asked for a playback and heard this bass rumbling sound all the way through. The Arri BL actually doesn't have the normal purring camera noise, it is more like a distant car engine. Anyway, on the second take we covered Erol in coats and blankets. It took most of the treble out, but there was still a faint rumbling that concerned me. I didn't have enough film to take it again so we went on to the next shot.

Time caught up a little and the urge to finish ended in a couple of rushed hand held cut always of the target board and rubber bands which I was a little worried about. I'm not sure if the shots are long or steady enough?

End

Wrapped and headed home Drank more bad red wine and this time, I was the fool, eventually turning green and having to lie down. James had us in stitches for most of the morning doing his 101 different fart impressions. It was only when I stopped laughing that I realised how ill I felt. I staggered off, fell on the mattress next to Maxine and conked out.

Night 3

Starting Tuesday 18th March 1997

Start

Woke up fully clothed and wet with sweat. My arm was dead having been under Maxine's head all night. James cooked us a great Sweet & Sour for the evening, while Max and I nipped back to my house to pick up the pack lunches for this evening and to record James' second year film onto VHS. He was short listed to direct one of the The Channel 4 / Loyds bank film challenge winners, and was requested to send in more of his work. We could see the comet clearly tonight. It was actually the first time I'd heard about it existing.

Crew

After completing the stairwell scene we all prepared to return to the scout center for dinner. But we really needed someone to stay and look after the equipment while we were gone, but who? I suggested to Linda that I should stay, but she insisted I was needed back at the center (why I can't remember?). So anyway I scanned the crew for the perfect candidate and my eyes landed on Anthony Delany. I thought while we were gone, he could roughly set up the lighting for the next scene which would save a good hour. I approached him cautiously to put the question to him, but he was surprisingly okay about it. Delany really is a first class star, there was nothing he wouldn't or couldn't do.

Anthony and Erol were in fact the stars of the night. They worked continuously and creatively for 15 hours, while the rest of us lounged in the office, waiting for them to set up the next shot. It was kind of frustrating as any offers of help would of made things more complicated for them. They were a team and had an efficient way of working together. It was a bit like the phrase 'Two's company, three's a crowd'.

Actors

When we rehearsed Tony being thrown to the ground by Sarah, Gary's fall was consistently violent. I'm surprised he didn't hurt himself. I'm looking forward to seeing it on film. They both did this scene really well. In rehearsal, Maxine's expression when the doors are kicked violently behind her, says it all. You can see the pain she had suffered underneath this blank shut of expression. I just hope she did the same on the actual take (Unfortunately I didn't see it, as I was standing in as the man kicking the door). I think the whole scene's going to look very dramatic.

In the corridor scene, I was having problems with Max's 'struggling' look. She is one of those people whose expression when shocked, can look like she's smiling. It took a while to change it, but in the end we got it. It was during shooting this scene that Max became a little hyperactive. She was being quite undisciplined and I was finding it hard to restrain her. I was hard to explain

her behavior to the crew who at times found her a little distracting. I knew why she was behaving like that but it was because of something personal to her, that I couldn't share with them.

Later on while waiting for the lights to be set in the basement, I managed to get a man to man chat (or an actor to director chat) with Gary about his thoughts on the film, his acting, my directing and his co-star Maxine. He had restrained telling me his thoughts on 'Black Out' until after the shoot, which on reflection would have been more beneficial for both of us if he'd expressed them at the time. On this shoot we agreed to be open to any problems opinions or thoughts and now was the time to share them.

Half an hour later we were grinning with positive vibes and patting each others back. He was enjoying every minute of the shoot, and I was pleased to find he and Max had made a positive connection. This would make those emotional moments in the film much more realistic. I like Gary very much (which is why he has been in my last three films). I think he has the talent and dedication to fulfill his ambitions and I'm glad that he too is intent on both of us working together in the future.

We had practiced the basement scene quite well on the rehearsal night, so it didn't take long to set up their movement down the corridor. I was very pleased with the result, as the choreography of their movements truly represented their characters. Gary was heavy headed and tiresome in his walk and Maxine took strides in her steps, turning and teasing him along.

After we wrapped and headed off to bed. I found Max had now changed from being hyperactive, to being quite distant. When I asked her what was wrong, she told me she wasn't doing her best. Maxine is a very talented actress. I cast her as Sarah because I knew that out of all the actresses I auditioned she was by far the best. Her acting so far, may not have been her best, but I was still happy with it. She felt she'd let me down, but to me she was doing more than her best considering the pressure she was on, playing a part that was uncomfortably familiar.

Schedule

Our first scene to shoot was at the bottom of the stairwell where we first meet Sarah. It was supposed to be completed on Sunday night, but due to lack of sleep, we had to put it back. We started at 6 pm, having an extra half a nights schedule to catch up on.

I got muddled with schedule. deciding to shoot the corridor scene before the basement, as it seemed a more appropriate scene to start on, considering we had just shot the stairwell scene. I had forgotten I had scheduled the basement for one whole night. But after a few scribbles, Linda sorted it out and it worked out a lot better.

The Basement seemed to be taking a long time to set up, but we pushed on until 9 am and managed to complete an extra half days worth of shots. We were now well ahead of schedule, which meant I could cut Friday short, giving us more time to sleep before being chucked out of the scout Centre. It was a hard night, having completed 15 hours of filming, but it was exhilarating and everyone worked really well. I did miss out one (kind of) important shot, of Sarah popping her head out of the room from Tony's P.O.V., but it was not necessary.

Filming

The colours and the shots in the first scene at the bottom of the stairwell were fantastic. Even the close ups were nice. We were running smoothly, even though we were interrupted about 7.30pm by the photographer from Kent Today.

The main problems today in terms of the camera was the dolly shots. Without track, they were too uneven. I couldn't use the track because the last shot pulled back so far, that you'd see it in shot. Once again I decided to go for a static. I would use the close up of Gary crying and then cut to the wide.

The real nightmare came in the basement. Ideally I would have wanted a steadycam. following Tony & Sarah through the passageway, instead we went hand held, with the arm brace attached to Erol (The dolly and wheel chair were too big to actually fit in the corridor). Although Erol maintained the movement was acceptable, we had no way of fitting in the sound, who was picking up four sets of foot steps as opposed to two. Erol's shadow was also cast over Sarah and the only way of getting rid of that was to stand further back and zoom in a bit, which made the shot even more jumpy. I was getting disappointed. I hadn't used any of the dolly shots I'd wanted. But when we set up for the statics I realised what a mistake I could have made. There was so much in the basement to be seen, that if we had moved with the actors, we'd just see blurs of colour in the background. By maintaining the static you had time to see everything.

After a while I decided I'd abolish all dolly shots, because as the dolly and jib arm were new in college, everyone was using it, often just for the hell of it. Hopefully 'talk to me' will stand out slightly, for not having any glamorous shots and prove you don't need dolly's and jib arms to make a good film.

Later we had problems shooting Sarah pulling out the contents of Tony's wallet. I'd assumed Erol could just rest the camera over Maxine's shoulder as she walked, but I had envisioned an Aaton not the huge bulky Arri BL. Instead, I got Erol to shoot the wallet from the front, hand held, with Maxine stationary. She would simulated walking by bouncing her knees backwards and forwards, and I used my hand to cast shadows over her to give more impressions of movement. They might be a bit dodgy, but they are only quick cut always and I think we'll get away with it.

The last shots to be done, Erol and I had planned a long time ago, many drafts before, when he'd visited the location back in November. They had since covered the window we were intending to use with Tarpaulin. Feeling a little guilty again, I helped Erol ease out the pins that were holding the plastic sheet down, to reveal the true window frame. It's view was of another room with large pillars, which we lit with one light around the corner. Basically Tony and Sarah stand in the foreground and you have what looks like a picture frame behind giving tremendous depth to the shot. I think we were both happy with that one.

End

For some reason after wrapping, the whole cast & crew had fag on the road outside. I guess it was because the morning was so fresh. That's the great thing about doing night shoots, when you wrap, go outside and feel the morning air, it kind of revitalizes you. We had a short session of jokes and gags back at the scout hut, before everyone hit the sack. Erol woke up in a freezing bath for the second time this week? crazy kid!

Night 4
Starting Wednesday 19th March 1997

Start

Slept through the alarm and didn't get the scaffolding tower. I was disappointed with myself, but I was too exhausted and sad to care really. The shoot was nearly over and having achieved so much yesterday. I knew that we couldn't top it, because we only had eight hours worth of shots left to do, I was feeling a bit down. It was like coming to the end of a holiday. Just when you're really getting into it and everyone's rocketing along, you suddenly realise four days have flashed by you and the shoot is practically over.

Actors

Once the actors arrived on set, I took Maxine and Gary through the moves of the final scene carefully. Out of the whole film this was possibly the most important, in the sense that it would be the last performance the audience would remember. Acting had to be spot on. After a few rehearsals without the crew, I left them for half an hour to chat and get focused. When I returned I found Maxine had the remains of tears on her cheeks. Gary and her had shared some emotional pasts, to help them focus. Inside I was jumping with joy, as surely this would be beneficial. By the time the crew set up, Maxine had become hyperactive again, trying to block out the emotions until the take. I didn't attempt to calm her down.

We shot the scene from several different angles, and their performances were great except one moment in Maxine's dialogue that wasn't right. I tried to explain what I wanted from her, which she said she understood, but then she'd do the same thing again. Funnily enough though, when we went for the close up, (which was the shot I was intending to use for that piece of dialogue) she was perfect. I think that was her plan all along. I had noticed she'd done this a few times over the shoot.

Schedule

Time flew by on the balcony scene, which left us a bit short of time for the rest. The early morning birds started to sing, which didn't help Bevan's sound recording.

Filming

We had no scaffolding tower, but there was a small one set up in the foyer where the renovators had been plastering and Mr. Spiers said we were welcome to use it if it helped. This was only about seven foot high and we needed at least ten foot to see over the first balcony. I wandered around the store rooms and discovered they had more rigging, so we all carried the pieces into the auditorium and started constructing the tower securing cross beams as we went along. Once completed the platform stood about fifteen foot high which to my amazement was just right. I'd saved myself £60 in rental fees. For safety, the camera, the tripod and Erol were all tied securely to the tower, just in case he lost his balance, the wheels were locked and a support pole was screwed to the side of the tower for extra security. For the shots on the tower, sound had never been better, as Erol was so far away from the actors, the camera noise could not be heard.

Bevan had suffered problems with the Nagra all week. Although fully charged, there was obviously a loose connection inside the equipment, as it would often not register when switched to battery and like today, Erol and Anthony had to reserve sufficient power and a spare socket for Bevan to plug the Nagra into the mains.

A lot of the delay in the final scene of the film was where Erol was having a nightmare cheating the side shots of Gary and Maxine. We both wanted the Victorian arches in the background, but the

way the balcony curved round, it was realistically impossible from the position the actors were seated. Basically he ended up shifting them around by about forty five degrees, which to our eyes looked dodgy, but through the camera it seemed to work. Just hope it's okay!

We used the scaffolding tower one more time for the 'looking up at the dome' scene. Erol and I made a gap in the flooring of the tower, to place the camera over. We shot the actors lying underneath, as I steadied the camera for Erol. For this to cut well with the shot of the dome, we needed to be right over them to get their eye line looking directly at the camera. The only worry was the close up shot where Erol zooms in. Because we were shooting hand held, the slight shaking was going to be increased.

Finally Linda took a couple of crew stills from the tower and then we wrapped, took down the tower (rebuilding the seven foot version for the plasterers in the morning), packed away the equipment and headed back to base camp.

End

The morning sessions were getting quieter. We'd exhausted all our jokes and soon people dispersed to their rooms to get some sleep. I think like me, they were a little disappointed that the film was nearly over. Either that or they were sick to death of it?

Night 5

Starting Thursday 20th March 1997

Start

Got up about 2:30 pm to get a roll of film for Linda in town. It was another sunny day. These little excursions to pick things up were great for me to reflect on how the shoot had been going. I went into a magazine store for some milk and came out with milk plus a new Star Wars lolly. They're great! you get a free sticker, bubble gum on a stick, stamped with a star wars character, covered in a strawberry flavored lolly coating. Nice!

I nipped in to my mums house and picked up our last packed lunches. We still had packets and packets of crisps left over, the yogurts and fruit accumulated over the week however, were creatively used as part of the fruit salad that James concocted the night before.

Crew

It was an easy night tonight, several cutaways and two sync sound shots. There was no real challenge, nothing to really strive for, no scheduled goal and so I think this rubbed off on us all. Our enthusiasm wasn't as high. But the short schedule, enabled us to find time to unwind.

Schedule

Dinner for tonight was late, the pizza's were taking longer to prepare than James had thought. So I had to dash out to meet Mr. Spiers and get the theatre opened. The plan was when Erol and Anthony arrived, they would shoot the cutaways of the theatre and then I'd go back to the scout hut for my pizza and bring back the rest of the crew and the actors ready for the last sync sound shots.

Filming

I think we captured some nice shots of the balcony with the 500 and 200T. It's hard to tell, as you can't really take accurate light readings for shots like the dome that are fifty foot above you. We just flooded the theatre as much as possible, trying to capture the rotting decor as dramatically as possible and rely on reflected readings that are not that accurate. It'll work, it'll work!

We skipped through the last two sync shots quite smoothly and being so far ahead of schedule we agreed to do a couple of extra shots I thought could be added into the edit. We moved the sound crew and Maxine back into the basement to where a great shaft leads up to the God's. Anthony ran cables up to the top of the shaft, where he suspended a blonde pointing down. The shaft originally had served a purpose in an earlier draft and it was a shame to lose such a great part of the theatre, so I decided to try and incorporate it by inter cutting with Gary sitting on the steps talking to Sarah as she wandered in and out of the rooms. We see her enter the shaft from below, as she says "what?" and then exits.

The shot proved to be awkward. Although looking good, Max looked like a speck of dust at the bottom and being hand held the camera wobbled too much when we zoomed in. It was worth a try, but thinking about it, the shot probably wouldn't fit comfortably into the scene anyway. The other simpler shot we filmed should work. It's just of Sarah wandering in one of the small rooms, kicking a bit of wood and walking out. It's all before Gary says anything so it fits in quite nicely.

Afterwards Bevan and Isabel recorded atmos.' and spot effects around the theatre to cover any obtrusive camera noise, while Linda was off taking photos of Gary for his actors C.V. We ended the evening with a crew photo shoot. Here we relaxed and laughed and joked, coming up with the most imaginative, weird and humorous crew photos I think I've seen. It was an enjoyable way to end the last day.

End

On leaving the theatre, when everyone was outside waiting for me to lock up. I paused in the auditorium below the dome and in my head thanked any supernatural spirit that might have been here, for leaving us in peace. My only other fear was that they might have played around with the film stock. What was I going to do if some Victorian guy appeared on the film stock floating around in the back ground. I guess I could make a lot of money out of it?

Back at 'Jabba The Hutt' (scout hut), as the crew named it, everyone sat back and relaxed after stocking up for fags at the garage one last time. I advised everyone to hit the sac as soon as possible, as we had to be out by 12 noon. Three to four hours sleep would be better than none.

The Wrap Film Starting Friday 21st March 1997

Linda woke me at 12:10. We were late, but it didn't matter as I was paying for six full days worth and therefore according to our payment agreement, we could stay until 4pm as that was the time we were let in on the Sunday. I started clearing up the drink and fags from the dining tables and organising everyone's bags in the corner. Soon people were up and slumping around, tidying up in their sleep.

I rearranged the equipment in the van for a smoother ride and by 1pm we were off to my dad's to unload all the equipment until Sunday afternoon. Linda and I did an amazing producing job on the spur of the moment, dashing into a 1 hour photo shop with the shoot stills and five minutes later getting a 1 hour process of two sets of three films for free! Unfortunately the first film roll was blank and Linda was quite upset. It was odd as it was impossible for the film not to load. Strangely enough the photos were of the Gods where the ladies toilet ghost is supposed to roam. Erol and I are worried about the first film roll now!

(weeks later when she moved to Glasgow, Linda opened her camera bag to find the missing roll of film. She'd given the shop an unexposed roll.... I don't know!).

I took the group down into Maidstone to my local, where I started them off on their first round. I was a bit disheartened as I was on Kalibre 0% Alcohol, as I had to drive them to London to see Star Wars (but it was my own fault, I organised the damn event). We stayed in the pub from 3:00 pm to 8:30 pm and by then several friends of mine had joined us. Everyone was drunk (except me). We stopped off at Dads so certain crew could get changed and while I was brushing my teeth in the bathroom, I heard the faint sound of people singing. I opened the window and looked out to see the van rocking from side to side. it was quite comical and warming to see the crew enjoying themselves, even though I had to spend the next hour and a half trying to drive with all of them in the back singing out of tune.

Star Wars (Special Edition) was great. the atmosphere was unbelievable, but within twenty minutes into the film, half of the crew, having had very little sleep and who were all pissed, had fallen asleep. Gary slept for the longest, who once outside the cinema commenting "What happened? One minute they were in the desert and the next they were getting medals?". He obviously saw an alternative 'Special Edition'.