

*Jus' Gaps***Interview with the film-maker: Adrian Browne****Could you describe your way into making short films? What is your background? How did you start off?**

I attended film workshops at Wandsworth Adult College [WAC] where I met a guy who had a film camera. I wanted to direct a film, and he wanted to shoot some drama so we decided to work together on a short film project I wrote called *Leaving*. *Leaving* was born out of a three-month film course I attended at WAC where students were asked to pitch script ideas that could be made into a short film. Class members were required to vote for two ideas to be made into films. My idea didn't get selected; however the number of votes it received was a real confidence booster for me.

How long did you spend working on this project? How long did the filming take? And how long the post-production?

The *Step Up* episodes [of which *Jus' Gaps* is one] were written in spring 2001 and shot in the summer of that year (June-September). It was a very fast process to begin with which then slowed down in the post-production stage. The project was actually written and shot as a feature film. However, due to budgetary restraints it was difficult to complete as originally conceived. That's how the idea to create short episodes came about. It was important that people were able to see this stuff, whatever the format.

How many people were involved in the filming process?

There was an average of six people behind the camera. A comparatively small set.

How do you finance your short films?

Part-time work and film contracts. *Step Up* was mostly financed by the production company I was working with at the time.

What was your budget and how did you spend it?

Budget? Well whatever we could afford to spend at the time really. I think our main error on the project was that we thought only in the present regarding budgets. I recently directed a short film called *Sweet Obsession*. It was shot in two days with no budget headaches and no real post-production problems. It proved that we had learned from some of our previous mistakes.

How did you come up with the idea for this film?

The producer and I knew we wanted to make a comedy from the outset. So I went off and came up with a few ideas. I came up with a concept about a guy with a huge financial debt he had to pay off before his business partner girlfriend found out. The producer liked this and I

began writing. About 15 or so pages in I was feeling that the script needed a new dimension, so I decided to bring in a new character called Lucy. She was a thorn in the main character's side and brought a new comedy dynamic to the script. I also decided to give her a sub-plot where she was desperately trying to find a new job. After I made the decision to re-edit the feature film, this sub-plot made the perfect ten-minute episode; *Step Up: Jus' Gaps*.

There are few funny short films around, what made you want to shoot a comedy?

That very reason. There are very few around. The producer and I thought there was a definite gap in the comedy film market.

Do you find it hard to write comedy?

Only when I'm finding it hard. That may seem like a silly answer but it's true. When you're writing well you feel like the best comedy writer in the world. When you're writing badly you curse yourself for having no talent. But as a writer you learn that these difficult periods are part of the process. I find that the best way to overcome them is to keep writing until it starts getting funny again.

You obviously shot in a real barbershop? How difficult was that?

Yes it was a real barbershop. I thought it was important for authenticity. It was quite spacious, so there were no real difficulties there. The only problem we had was the mirrors. They were everywhere and limited our choice of shots and movement. However this was less of a problem in *Jus' Gaps* where only a third of the film takes place in the barbershop.

How did you cast people?

We went through an audition process. It's the best way to cast. Tameka Empson who played Lucy was hand-picked though. I had known her for a few years and wanted to work with her.

Who did you get to see your film first? Did it make them laugh?

My mother and my brother and it still makes them laugh today.

We'd really like to know if there were any ideas for events or characters that were in the original script, but that you didn't film, or scenes or dialogue that you filmed then either didn't use or cut substantially - and reasons in each case for doing so.

Well, due to the fact that this started life as a feature, there is tons of unseen footage. However, regarding the *Jus' Gaps* sub-plot very little has changed.

In the opening scene of the film Lucy enters the shop and recounts her stories to her good friend Shakes. In the script she talks to Maxine. One of the reasons I decided to make the change was that I thought Lucy's entrance into the shop would have more impact if there were no other women around.

In the opening scene there is more banter between the guys in the script than there is in the final piece. This stuff was filmed but not used because I thought it was unnecessary and delayed the main character's entrance for too long.

And also Snakes has become Shakes. The main reason for this change was that this guy is an amiable character, the good guy in the script. Calling him Snakes didn't feel right, especially after we had cast the actor, who had a very likeable persona.

Do you see yourself as a political film-maker?

No. My comedies are just meant to be funny and my dramas are pretty much about family.

Do you have any current and possible future projects, for example a feature film?

I'm looking to develop features now that I have some solid shorts under my belt. I think the presence of these shorts will make my proposals that bit stronger.

Can you name a few films that inspired you?

Here is a brief list in no particular order:

E.T.; Bullet; The Graduate; The Odd Couple; Do the Right Thing; The Good, the Bad and the Ugly; The Third Man; Mean Streets; Jaws; North by Northwest; The Blues Brothers; Secrets and Lies; Superman; The Concrete Garden; The King of Comedy; The Untouchables; One Sunday Morning; The Italian Job; Star Wars (A New Hope); Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back; The Sound of Music; Ferris Bueller's Day Off; The Indiana Jones trilogy; Reservoir Dogs; We Who Are Not As Others; House Party; This is Spinal Tap; Double Indemnity; Goodfellas; The Godfather Part II; West Side Story, and many others.

What tips would you give students wanting to make their own short films?

Work really hard on your scripts. Many people can't wait to get filming (the fun part?) and often get on set with a script that's just not ready. Then they find themselves trying to fix the script as they go along. Meanwhile the production is becoming more expensive by the day. Rewrite your script to a good standard and you will be rewarded on set. And remember, writing can be fun too.