

Gone Fishing

reels audiences in

Most fishermen have gone home and proudly displayed their catch only to follow it up with the line that “you should see the one that got away.” Well short film *Gone Fishing* might just be the one that didn’t get away..... from the Oscars® that is. The film was only publicly launched last August at the Soho Shorts Festival in London, in the Kodak competition, where it immediately won audiences over, collecting the Best Film Award. One week later, it beat more than 250 films at the prestigious Rhode Island Film Festival and collected the Grand Jury Prize (Best Film) which puts it in the running for an Oscar.

This is particularly gratifying for the film’s writer and director, Chris Jones who, when seeking funds for the production, made the bold statement that, “we will get to the Oscars in 2009.” Chris worked with producer Ivan Clements on a budget and they very quickly realised that they would need about £20,000 (\$33,000) to finance the film. Chris is the author of *The Guerilla Film Makers Handbook* which has sold nearly 100,000 copies over ten years and he has personally tutored more than 1000 emerging filmmakers so he asked for their help.

Chris comments; “The idea was simple. Ask everyone I’d ever met for

£50 and if enough people agreed, we had our budget. No profit share, no hope of returns. Just a ticket to the premiere in London, a DVD and an Associate Producer credit. And for the emerging film makers, I committed to blogging the whole journey, which carries on even now. Amazingly this very simple idea worked and it’s thanks to the very generous level of support and enthusiasm for *Gone Fishing* that the film became made.”

The film, which was shot entirely on KODAK VISION2 500T 5218, is a touching story of a boy and an old man coming to terms with bereavement through their shared

love of fishing. It’s the legend of Goliath, the biggest pike ever caught. Chris describes it as “*Jaws*, but for kids.” At just 13 minutes long, the film is an extraordinary emotional rollercoaster that is crammed with sumptuous images that leave audiences both laughing and crying.

Fairy dust

But why would someone who has written virtually the Bible on subverting the system wave a flag and shoot on film? Chris explains that it goes back to his philosophies about storytelling and filmmaking.

“My pragmatic approach to it is that you’re going to spend a lot of time, energy and money getting to the point where you are going to shoot your movie,” he said “so you don’t want to make any compromises on what you actually capture and that, for this story, began with the choice of film.”

“Slightly esoteric but I know this to be true,” he continued, “When you are running film through the gate, everyone raises their game. It’s almost like fairy dust is sprinkled on stage. I’ve shot digital and I’ve shot film; on the whole, actors produce better work on film.”



Gone Fishing was shot by DP Vernon Layton, BSC, and he wholeheartedly agrees with Chris on the last point saying "When using video, many producers think that if they just throw the tape in and keep running all the time, it won't matter. But it does, as it breaks the discipline. The perceived limitation of trying to get something in just a few takes actually works in your favour most of the time."

Vernon came on board to shoot *Gone Fishing* very much at the last minute and for free. He takes up the story; "I was walking my dog along the beach one Sunday when I got a text message on my phone asking if I was interested in shooting a short

film called *Gone Fishing*. After I'd spoken to the producer and read the script, I decided to do it. This decision was even more justified when I met the writer/director, Chris as he was just full of enthusiasm and I knew this was someone I could work with."

Lyrical quality

"Having shot films like *The Englishman who went up a hill and came down a mountain*, I know that film has a lyrical quality which would be just right for *Gone Fishing*. My feeling too is that when efficiently used, film is just as cheap as video.

It's more flexible and even lighter weight in many respects and it produces a nicer image, particularly Kodak film because of its wonderful patented process, the T-grain system. Video is good for reality TV but it still doesn't compare with film for cinema or big scale projection on a large screen."

Gone Fishing was shot over five days mainly using an ARRI 435 camera. Chris remembers: "During the shoot, almost every time we needed it, the sunshine would appear. This gave the movie a magical light and added immensely to the look. Rumours spread that Vernon could even control the sun."

Vernon is equally complimentary. He said, "I knew Chris's beautiful story needed a sort of timeless and lyrical look to the flashback scenes, rather like an old colour photograph. We needed a method of subtly conveying to the audience that something was different. We achieved this with a technique I used to employ on commercials in the 70s and early 80s which now because of the ability to digitally grade the negative worked even better than it did back then."

If you'd like to read more about the making of *Gone Fishing*, Chris Jones has posted a blog at www.livingspirit.typepad.com which gives a detailed day-by-day account of the film's genesis and production.