

The Scar Audio Commentary Transcript

Film 2 – The Mouth of the Shark

00:00

Noor Afshan Mirza: My name is Noor Afshan.

00:02

Brad Butler: And my name's Brad, and we're looking at film two of The Scar.

00:10

Noor Afshan Mirza: The opening scene to the film with the woman in the red dress - this scene was written right from the start, it was always there, and it was quite a key scene, but I find it interesting how it was the very last scene that we shot, in early January of this year (2018).

00:34

Brad Butler: Yeah, and it was always an idea that we had that in film two that our female protagonist would be the voiceover, and so we had to think about what she would say, how long she would speak, whether we would intertwine her with the men speaking in the car, how much would be personal content to her backstory - which as viewers we don't know about yet - and at what point in our idea would her voiceover start to shift, to start to talk about spaces outside of the car.

01:11

Noor Afshan Mirza: In some ways film two actually feels and looks very much like film one, and we wanted to have a bit more difference between the two visually. I'm happy with the way they've come out. We shot this

film in a studio, using back projection, and I love that it's a bit more claustrophobic in terms of the space.

01:47

We feel less like we're on an actual car journey, but more like we're in a vacuum. Yenge's character was always about the transformation of this space, the space of the car, the ecosystem, so this is where she really does start to take control. That's the word - she starts to take control of the atmosphere, the ecosystem and eventually the car.

02:19

Brad Butler: It's an interesting thought, just looking at this now, and hearing what Noor was just saying. I think one of the things in terms of film structure that I find interesting in film two, is that in a way our protagonist is ahead of us - our protagonist being Yenge, the female character. As an audience, it's a growing realisation that we're catching up on her narrative, and it's written that way.

02:44

So, we start to become far less interested in the male stories, even though we give Reis the main male story, we cut away from it. It's a sense you get of starting to tune out their frequency, and the building idea that there's another much greater subtext which is about to slowly be revealed. And as the female character's subtext starts to come through, the male characters are starting to find that things are slipping.

03:20

Noor Afshan Mirza: I've got favourite scenes in this film. I love the whole film, but the scene that really sticks out for me is the scene with the voices of The Resistant Dead. When that comes in is when Yenge is shapeshifting and her consciousness is raising.

03:48

She's taking control, but she's also in dialogue, she's also aware of this other force that is starting to make itself present in the film, which sows the seed for the third film.

04:05

Brad Butler: One of the challenges we had with this was that when you shoot a feature film, you don't shoot in the chronology of the story. There are some great directors who decide to do that, but we were shooting all three films at the same time, so everything had to be extremely tight on our shot structure, so that everyone could locate themselves as to where they were...

04:34

...how they could handle things and the degrees of freedom around that. I'm just watching now, as Reis buries these feet. There are a few recurring themes throughout the film, one of them is around shoes and around feet and... I'm just watching as he smashes down.

04:59

So, the red dress scene has just popped up, and it was a challenging scene. I was just reflecting on the idea that we shot it last, because I think until the end we were trying to decide who it belonged to. Is it a real person? Is it the sister of Yenge? Is it inside, is it a psychological inside space? And just thinking about where performance sits in these films.

05:30

So, the actors, the four main protagonists are being stretched, and their performances are becoming more surreal, like Reis talking into a shoe, which he thinks is a telephone. And then you have these other kinds of

performances which are starting to erupt through, and threaten in some ways to take over. In film two it was always a little bit trickier to think about, well, where does she rest? I think in the end I'm quite happy how we resolved it, although I leave that open to the viewer to decide.

06:02

Noor Afshan Mirza: In terms of working with an actor and casting, the reason why the red dress was conceived from the beginning but ended up being the very last scene that was shot, was because of casting. Not just casting the actor, but as Brad was saying, casting where it's critical. It's a small role, but it has such a big bridge, or link across all the films.

06:41

And the actor, Clare, who we got to work with, we did a read through of the script quite early in the process, and we read through with four actors. They were all women, because we had a long discussion at one point about whether all the characters would actually be women - women playing men. And Clare was one of the actors, so the read through was a process to help us write, to help us hear the words in space, rather than them being just words on a page.

07:23

Clare is an actor, but she's also a performer that works very physically and works with circus. So the relationship of being able to tell a story through your body, and to embody something, to embody all of the complexity of, for example, Yenge's character, but to actually perform that through what it means to bind yourself, to be bound by the patriarchy, but also to implicate yourself in this binding.

08:06

So, her performance is really quite simple, but I always find it so powerful, the image of nailing yourself to this tree, and the tension of being held. Is the tree supporting you, or is she being held in the dress? Does the dress wear her, or is she wearing the dress? All these things represent the subtlety of how power and body and gender can be articulated.

08:39

We ended up shooting most of this film in the long nights of August, but this bit was shot in January, so it was freezing cold. It's very hard to see or to feel that in the image, but so much has gone in to working with actors and collaborating to make these images.

09:09

Brad Butler: We're watching an area of the film now that I think was the hinge. Although it's a three-structured work, three clear chapters, it has got a middle hinge where something shifts, and it's this scene with the tunnel, which starts with Yenge on her own in the car. There's a breath where she's without them, and then it cuts to a roadway.

09:38

Then it suddenly takes you into an area that Noor talked about earlier, of this cycle of disappeared names, and she's in a tunnel with these men. I always feel the men seem quite separate from each other. That's how we shot it and structured it, this metronome happening. We cut this scene long enough that it feels like you're going down the rabbit hole, you're going deeper into something.

10:10

We wrote it in such a way that as you finally pass deeper into this, it's stuffy and she asks can you open a window and refers to her breath. You

come into the three Reises together in the car, each occupying the seats around her.

10:33

Noor Afshan Mirza: We're still on this scene, which I called The Resistant Dead scene, and the names that are being called out - they're coming from the radio but it's a frequency that, no matter how much Ağa tries to tune it out, he can't, because the agency of The Resistant Dead cannot be tuned out.

11:06

For us it was really important that when we're trying to speak in a accessible way about these deep structural, violent structures, that the names of the disappeared also spanned lots of different positions, places and contexts.

11:32

We've got Mark Duggan - structurally removed from society, from his family by institutional racism - to names of people that have been disappeared from the southeast of Turkey. There's a lot of thought that's gone into the names in representing different positions of structural violence, and those that have been disappeared from structural violence and different states.

12:12

Brad Butler: So in the scene with the three Reises in the car, which is the height of absurdity, I wasn't sure we knew that this was going to work. In the end I like it a lot as a structuring moment in the piece where the final, male absurdity ends, and I always consider that you come out of the scene into something else - in fact Yenge says it in her voiceover.

12:44

It's beginning to unravel, they can't hold all of this. So, as he buries the feet there's a cycle of doing so. He buries one, but in fact he sees another one, or the same one come back, it doesn't stay under. It starts to come around.

13:03

Noor Afshan Mirza: I think the scene has come out much better than I remember when we were talking about writing it. I remember thinking, is it going to be too much? Too much of this character, because personally his character is a man that I don't feel drawn to. But the actor, Devrim, plays this character so well, and it has been such a pleasure to work with him.

13:35

It's about how much you want to bring a character like this to life. I'm not talking about the original source, I'm talking about his character in the film - but he played it so well. I find that this scene has a lot of dark humour in it. It's dark because this guy's talking about bashing people, and it's about death and disappearance, but it's also this whole kind of humour about how you bash a feminist and out pops an anarchist, and then you bash an anarchist and then at the end out pops a Trotskyite.

14:16

I think it's how it's delivered, that whole idea of him, because it's Yenge's point of view that we take up as the viewer, so wherever she looks she's trapped by this multiplying Reis and his bashing people.

14:32

Brad Butler: I'm just noticing the edit - we return to her driving on her own, but now her narrative has seemed to expand out of the car. Even though we place her back in with the men, we don't translate the men

anymore. So she starts to talk in a different way about understanding her terrors. She starts to think about a break, and she doesn't specify yet what that is, but you can start to feel...

14:58

...and at that point we bring back the woman with the red dress. There's an interesting discussion Noor and I had for quite a long time about resistance, and what kind of resistance, and whether there's body knowledge, and where knowledge exists in the body and in the mind. This moment between the narrative of Yenge and the woman in the red dress, you can see us just slightly moving around that issue in a visual way.

15:34

Noor Afshan Mirza: I just want to talk more about the actual shoot. It's the first time I've worked in such a narrative way, storytelling, the depth of the script. Brad talked about how structured the shooting script was and it was a big crew. There was probably about 30 people on set, so there was a lot to hold down. We were working nights so I ended up feeling a bit like a vampire...

16:17

...because we'd go out at 6:00 in the evening, and there's all the trucks, the lighting, the rigging, and you've got to set things up. You have something to eat. You become like a family so quickly, with all the dynamics that you have with family. So there are funny jokes, and there are all sorts of things that are going on, and then you start getting into the work. We worked through the night until sun up, and then it was about 7:00 in the morning.

16:43

But at every point we were like, 'we've got to drop that shot, no we've got to keep that shot'. It was beautifully intense, but I ended up becoming this machine where I slept during the day, but was trying to produce these images at night, in carparks in Dagenham and Barking and the woods in Croydon.

17:11

I have lots of incredible memories of the shoot.

(end of transcript)