



DIRECTOR ROBERT CLOUSE FRAMES A SHOT OF SUZY KENDALL FOR "DARKER THAN AMBER"

Rain Puts Damper on Travis McGee's Movie Debut

By SHERRY WOODS
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The sight of rain has about the same effect on a man who's filming a movie outdoors as sunshine would on a man who's stranded in the desert without water.

It's just not what it takes to make their day.

The cast and crew of the new Rod Taylor movie, "Darker Than Amber," now being filmed in and around Miami, have had some bad days lately.

Not only have the downpours driven them inside the Ivan Tors Studios, the roar of the rain as it smacks on the studio roof is coming through loud and clear in the indoor scenes.

"How'd you like it to be raining that night," somebody shouts to director Robert Clouse when it becomes evident the rain won't let up enough to shoot the scene without bearing it on the roof.

So it's raining outside the night Suzy Kendall tells Rod Taylor it might have been better if the two men who strangled her to a block of cement and dumped her off a bridge had succeeded in killing her.

The scene only lasts three or four minutes, but it takes better than two hours to set it up, rehearse and get it on film.

First, cameramen, lighting technicians and sound men come on the set and, using stand-ins for the two stars, prepare for the scene.

Meanwhile, Taylor, clad in white shorts and a white loose knit shirt, sits back in a barber chair in the make-up area, jiffs on a cigarette and tries to convince costar Theodore Bikel to take a part in "Golden Jungle," the movie he's planning to film in Palm Beach.

"I think we've found an angel," the blue-eyed star says. "Somebody put up the money."

"Will you do it?" he asks Bikel. "Of course you'll have to shave off your beard," he adds slyly.

Bikel laughs, then takes off across the studio to convince the assistant director to let him leave rain-soaked Florida until he's needed again. "I can be back here in two hours," he coaxes.

Nearly, William Smith, the six-foot, three-inch star of television's "Laredo," whose jet black hair has been bleached a brassy blond for this show, debates with the hairdresser about matching the wig he's too wear in the film.

The comments he gets on the set are still no match for the woes his lightened locks have caused him back home.

His blonde wife dyed her hair to a brunette shade saying they couldn't have two blonds in the same household and his son was glad dear old dad was off to Florida so he wouldn't have to explain his appearance to his pals.

The call goes out from the set and Taylor and Suzy Kendall take their places by the bar on the boat.

"Wait a minute," Taylor calls, looking at the liquor bottle the prop department has supplied. "Let's get away from Mickey Spillane and get a bottle of Courvoisier or some kind of brandy. I think it's worth it. It's got more class."

Two prop men head out to search for a substitute bottle and the cast moves through a quick rehearsal.

Several minutes later brandy bottle in hand, the assistant director calls for quiet and 30 people hold their breath while the camera rolls.



A QUICK REPAIR JOB BETWEEN TAKES
... Suzy Kendall calls hairdresser in for help

After a couple of bad takes, they get a print and things break up until the next scene is ready for shooting.

The shooting schedule calls for a total of 12 days of interior filming and Florida's current rainy weather has already put quite a dent in that reserve.

So far, though, the shooting is only one day behind schedule, according to producers Walter Seltzer and Jack Reeves.

Filming will continue through this week in the Miami area and then moves to Nassau for two weeks. The final scenes will be shot back in Miami, with completion set for mid-December.

Many of the locations chosen for filming came straight from the John D. MacDonald book on which the movie is based.

MacDonald's hero, Travis McGee, played by Taylor, is a salvager who spends a good bit of his time aboard his boat, Busted Flush, at Ft. Lauderdale's Bahia Mar Yacht Club.

The boat being used for the picture cost \$40,000, with an additional \$30,000 spent fixing it up. A duplicate of the interior was built at the studio.

The heavy investment in the boat was decided on since it will be used in all future Travis McGee pictures.

Seltzer and Reeves have the movie rights to 10 of

the suspense novels and Taylor is slated to star in most of them. "Darker Than Amber" is the first to be filmed and it brings together several stars who've worked together before.

Taylor and Miss Kendall were seen together in "The Liquidator," and Taylor and James Booth, who has a small guest role in this film, recently finished making "The Man Who Had Power Over Women."

The 28-year-old Taylor was born in Sydney, Australia, and made his first film in 1965. "Darker Than Amber" is his 22nd film.

Bikel, born in Vienna and educated in Israel, has starred in movies, on stage and on television. He also spends a good bit of every year doing concerts as a folk singer. He's appearing in an episode of "Hawaii Five-O" this Wednesday.

Miss Kendall, who hails from Belpor, England, makes her American screen debut in "Darker Than Amber." She has appeared in several British productions including "To Sir, With Love" and "Penthouse."

"Darker Than Amber" is the first major commercial venture for director Robert Clouse, who won Academy Award nominations for two short subjects — "The Cadillac" and "The Legend of Jimmy Blue Eyes." Each of those films won first prize at the Edinburgh Film Festival.

Observers say Clouse comes to the set prepared with highly detailed plans for a scene, yet the actual shooting moves fairly quickly.

Unfortunately, it doesn't move quite quickly enough to fit between the raindrops that keep falling on Florida's normally sun-kissed soil.

Staff Photos

by
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CONCENTRATING ON HIS DIRECTIONS
... Rod Taylor waits at boat's bar

"Let's get away from Mickey Spillane and get a bottle of Courvoisier or some kind of brandy. I think it's worth it. It's got more class."