

Accomplished filmmakers Hugues Dalton and Jeff Garton imagined a five-minute black-and-white, silent, short film about Otis, an elevator operator with a secret crush. After more than a year of work, their ambitions have resulted in *Lift* – a touching and stylish thirty-minute film starring Dominique Pinon (*Amâie, Delicatessen*).

Lift was photographed in 35mm, and is earning much recognition on the festival circuit. The duo share writing, directing and producing credit on the project.

"The film grew and grew on us," says Garton, who also served as the film's cinematographer. "Our careers were going well, but we got into filmmaking to make films, and we were hungry to do something where we had creative control."

Once Pinon read the script and signed on, momentum gathered. Local Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, talent agreed to provide production design expertise, and friends and acquaintances found time to help out. The filmmakers supervised construction of an elevator set and made a DV storyboard.

speeded up or slowed down. Heavy Light also handled optical work on some scenes shot Super 35mm due to a camera mix-up.

"We trusted Rob Luttrell (president of Heavy Light), and he walked us through how to do it," says Dalton, who edited the film. "We did the compositing and after-effects ourselves, sent it back out to them and they output it back to film. Everything came out looking great."

Garton lit the elevator set using an elaborate system of louvered soft-boxes that allowed him fine control over the angle, direction and intensity of light on the actors while keeping light off the walls. The soft-boxes were augmented with Kino Flos hidden around the elevator set. Scenes in the typing pool, where the object of the elevator operator's desire toils, were portrayed in cooler tones. Focal length tended to be wide to emphasize the cramped spaces and to show off the

Below: Filmmaker Jeff Garton (standing, far left), crew, and filmmaker Hugues Dalton (sitting, far right), on the set of *Lift*.



This Otis regrets

A short film with quality



"We built a full-scale mock-up, did an entire shot list, and then shot it with the actors and a stand-in for Dominique," says Garton. "That really told us what was necessary, and what wasn't working. On the actual shoot, we had Dominique for only five days, and we probably only shot half of our original shot list. That allowed us to concentrate on what we really needed."

On the actual 14-day shoot, the filmmakers sent the video assist feed to a laptop running Avid Express. They could look at a preliminary cut right on the set to determine how the pieces were fitting together.

Garton and Dalton knew from the start that the project would be done on 35mm film. They enlisted Heavy Light Digital in New York City to help with 2K scans for some effects scenes, including some opening shots where Pinon seems to float in the moving elevator. Heavy Light ended up scanning some shots that were

beautifully realized production design.

Garton used Kodak VISION2 500T 5218 film. "I chose the 5218 for many reasons, but one aspect I like most is how it handles highlights, which was important in those tight spaces, where actors are close to the light and the inverse square law starts working against you. I also noticed in other films that highlights on Dominique's skin tended to be a little cooler. So a film that would handle highlights pleasingly would be to our benefit, especially since I knew we'd have to work very quickly."

Lift premiered at the Montreal Film Festival, won Best Short at the Savannah Film Festival, and is slated to screen at Cinequest in March, and in Los Angeles at the American Cinematheque at the Egyptian Theater in April. For more information on *Lift*, visit www.liftthemovie.com. ■

Above: Claude Lavallée in a scene from *Lift* shot by DP Jeff Garton.