

# Noise

## turns simple conflict into battle of wills

**N**oise is a deceptively simple short film written and directed by Greg Spottiswood. A boy and his father are playing in a park, and the father gives the boy the car keys. The boy locks himself in the car and makes a game of keeping the father out. The fun soon turns ugly, and ultimately a long-hidden truth emerges.

The film was shot in a parking lot with the boy inside the car and the frustrated father talking to him through closed windows. Cinematographer Brian Harper lit as naturally as possible. "The real challenge was managing the difference in luminance between the father outside of the car, and the son inside it, so they can be visually engaged," he says.

There were no lights inside the old Lincoln car, which had slightly tinted windows. There was a sunroof that Harper used to good advantage. He bounced light from Pars through heavy silent frost diffusion.

"We relied on the film's latitude to record the differences in lighting inside and outside the car," Harper says. "The interior was within two stops of the exterior light levels."

He chose Kodak Vision 250D 5246 film to stretch the day out. "Until this project, I'd only used 5246 at the beginning or end of the day," Harper says, "but, it gave us the edge we needed. Both days, we shot right up to darkness. You wouldn't know how dark it was from looking at the footage."

Harper worked without color filters or gels, utilizing only a neutral density filter behind the lens. His goal was to be shooting at T2.4 to T4 whenever possible. "I wanted the unessential parts of the images to go soft," he says.

Noise was shot primarily with a Panaflex camera with a Panavision 17.5-75mm Primo zoom lens. He also used 17.5, 27 and 35mm prime lenses for a few shots, in addition to slant lenses for overhead tracking shots that open the film.

The entire film was shot over a two-day weekend. "It was a big challenge getting it all done in two days, especially with the seven-hour schedule we were allowed for the boy actor," Harper says. They used a body double for the boy in some shots to stretch the shooting day out.

"It was a tribute to Hugh Thompson (the actor portraying the father) that he was able to be so convincing, when a lot of his dialog was played against either an empty car or the body double," says Harper. All told, he shot about 20,000 feet of film in making the 17-minute film.

Another challenge was creating a feeling of motion, given the static situation. Harper had the camera on a dolly outside the car, and handheld inside, looking out through the window to the father. He used the prime lenses, including a 50mm and 75mm for the handheld shots inside the car. But Noise isn't about dynamic moving shots.

"This film is all about the performances, the interplay between father and son," Harper says.

While the car exists in only two locations according to the storyline, it actually was moved much more. "We weren't above turning the car a bit to get some nice rim lighting

working for us," Harper explains. He took advantage of the soft greenery in the background and shallow depth of field to camouflage the movement of the car.

Noise was nominated for a Genie Award for Best Live Action Short, and has been screened at many festivals. The festival prints are on Kodak Vision Premier color print film 2393. "It gave us better contrast and more durability," Harper says.

To learn more, visit [noisethemovie.com](http://noisethemovie.com). ■



**Below:** DP Brian Harper in the front seat of a car preparing to shoot handheld for a scene in *Noise*.

**Above:** A scene from the film.

